



The Mystery of the Gold Coins, Part 2

The story so far: Five Squad—Christopher, Susan, Earl, Kento, and their newest addition, Karen—had spent the day with Mr. Colin, an old man who had been a missionary in his younger years. Mr. Colin had given Five Squad a box with twenty ancient coins. The

five returned the next day to visit Mr. Colin but found an empty house. A neighbor told them that Mr. Colin had died in the night. Sadly, they returned to their clubhouse, the Lodge.

When giving the coins to the kids, Mr. Colin described them as “very old and very

valuable”; however, when they went to have them evaluated, the brusque owner of Coin World told them they were worthless. The five set off back to their homes; they hadn’t noticed the figure following them. But Susan felt something wasn’t right...

That evening at the Lodge, once Earl, Kento, and Karen had left, Christopher sat at the table that stood against the wall and perused the box of coins for which he was now responsible. After a few minutes, he put the box in a chest that stood in a corner where the five stored their clubhouse valuables—not that these items were necessarily valuable or many—they were more like memories. And although the coin shop owner had deemed the coins worthless, the children considered them a treasure because Mr. Colin had given them to their group.

Christopher locked the clubhouse door, and, hastening indoors from the chilly night breeze, he failed to notice a man’s nearby shadow or the

curl of smoke that rose from his cigarette.

“They’re gone!” Christopher shouted the next morning, after searching the chest for the coin box.

“Are you sure you put them in there?” Earl asked.

“Of course I’m sure.”

“Where could they have gone?”

“I’d look there right now, Susan, if I knew. I put them in here after you all left, and I locked the ... Oh, no! Look at this. I didn’t realize it before.” Christopher held up the padlock. “It’s been opened.”

“It’s broken,” Kento said, fidgeting with it. “Someone’s forced it, the keyhole is all scratched, and it doesn’t close.”



“Isn’t that the lock we just bought?” Susan asked.

“Yes! And now the coins are missing.”

The clubhouse and the children went quiet as they stared at each other. Their gaze lingered on the chest. Finally, Susan spoke. “I was hoping something like this wouldn’t happen after yesterday,” she whispered.

“What do you mean?” Karen asked.

“I should’ve told you then, instead of thinking you’d laugh or—”

“Tell us *what?*” said Christopher.

Susan sighed and covered her face with her hands. “Before we went to Coin World, I had this feeling that something wasn’t right. Actually, I started having it before we even left the clubhouse. Then just as we were standing outside the shop, I remembered what we’d forgotten.”

“Right,” said Kento. “But you never told us.”

“Well, I remembered we hadn’t prayed.”

The others looked downcast. “I didn’t even think of it,” Christopher mumbled.

“Me either,” said Karen.

“But that’s not all,” Susan went on. “Remember, Karen, you had to call me several times before I answered when we were on the bus?”

Karen nodded.

“Well, again, something didn’t feel right, and when you all went back to the Lodge, and I started on my way home, something whispered for me to turn around. I did, and I saw this man who looked as though he was trailing you. I ran to my bedroom to get a better look, but then he suddenly turned down the other road. I figured I was just imagining things.”

“That road has a pathway that leads right back to the road we were walking down,” said Christopher. “Just ten paces further.”

“Then maybe he took the coins,” said Susan. “Oh, dear ... whatever are we going to do?”

The rest of the team sighed and shrugged.

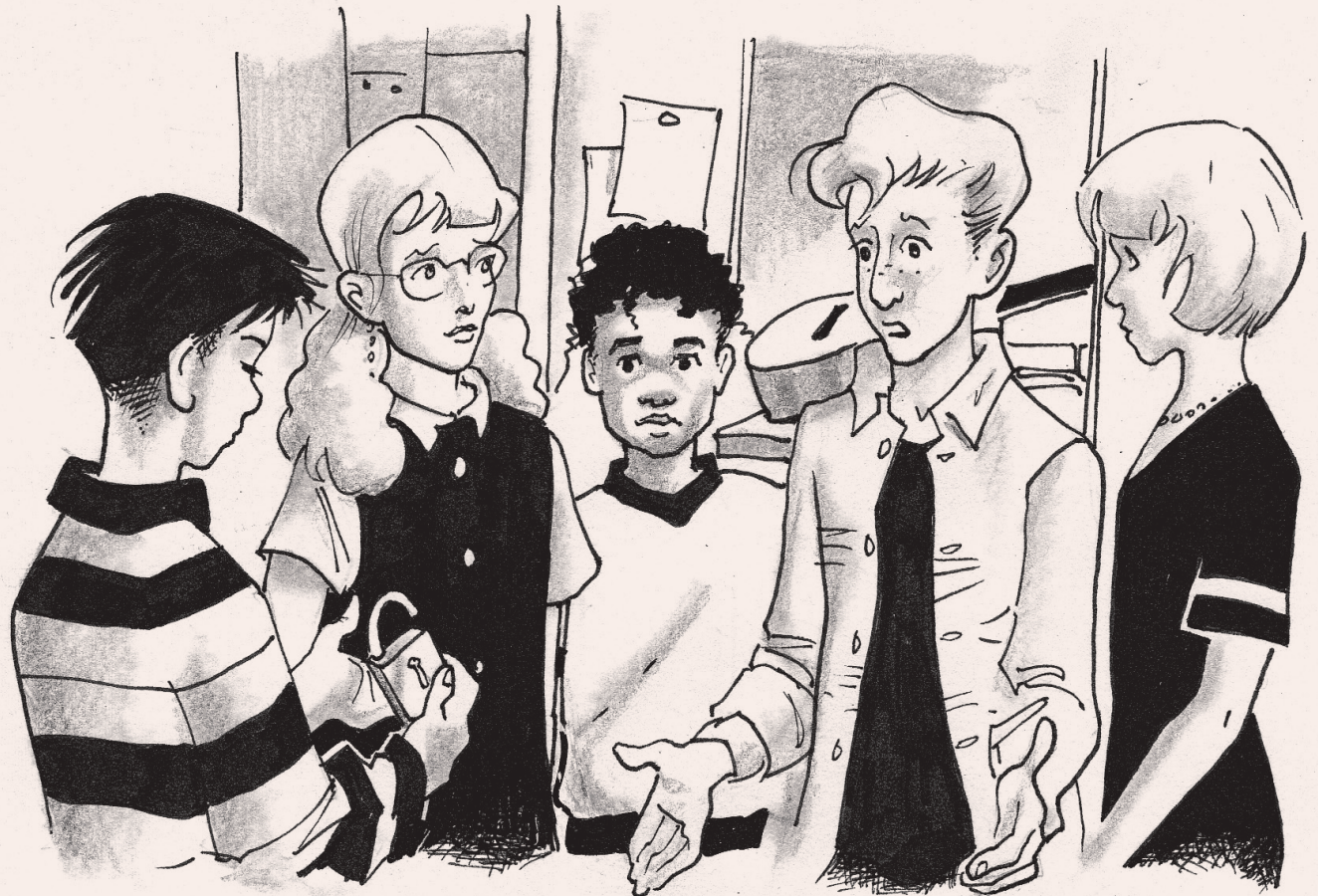
“*Wait,*” Susan blurted out. “Just before I fell asleep, I remembered that verse Mr. Colin used to repeat, ‘All things work together for good.’ I felt so much better, and

I went to sleep right after that. Before that, I was worried something bad was going to happen.”

“I don’t see how any good can come out of this,” Karen muttered.

“I don’t either, but there must be something. We just need to find it.”

“We should pray, like Mr. Colin told us to do when we don’t know what to do next,” said Christopher.



The others agreed, and when Christopher had finished praying, no one spoke; they just sat thinking about everything that had taken place. Something was different, however; they were doing the right thing by praying, and it felt good.

“Anyone like ... *get* anything?” Christopher asked. “Thoughts? Impressions?”

“Well, every time I think about the coins, I’m reminded of that man’s face at the shop. He really wasn’t nice,” said Earl.

“I wonder...” Susan’s voice trailed off, and the others waited for her to continue. “No one else knew about the coins. Did any of you tell anyone?”

The other four shook their heads.

“So then why would anyone break into our clubhouse?”

“Come to think of it,” said Karen. “Isn’t it strange how Mr. Manchester said the coins were not valuable, but Mr. Colin had told us the exact opposite? It would

be good to find out their true value somehow. After all, that’s why we went to that shop in the first place.”

“They should have books about old coins in the library,” said Susan. “Simple.”

“Or even simpler ... look online *first*,” said Kento, pulling out his phone.

The others agreed and gathered around Kento, squinting over his shoulder at the device’s screen.

“Here we are,” Kento declared after some online searching. “A whole site about ancient coins.”

“Are our coins in there?”

“Let’s see ... ah, what about this?” He had opened to a page with a color photograph of an ancient coin. “Looks familiar?”

“Just like the ones that we had—a Roman coin!” said Susan, peering closer.

“And how much is it worth?” Karen asked.

“It says that this one coin alone is worth 100,000 dollars!”

“100,000 dollars?” the others chorused.

“Are you serious?” said Earl.

“It’s what the site says! Look at that!”

“That is if they were real,” said Karen. “If the shop owner was right about them being fakes, then they’re not worth anything.”

“But then why would they disappear?” Earl asked.

“I don’t know. I’m just presenting the other side,” Karen said rather morosely. “I suppose I don’t want to get my hopes up.”

“Okay,” said Susan. “Let’s just say that Mr. Manchester stole them or had someone steal them from us. If so, how could we get them back?”

“We could call the police,” said Earl. “And tell them who we think stole our coins.”

“The police? ... Hmm...” Christopher said faintly. He had withdrawn from the debate and had been gazing pensively at the angel painting Mr. Colin had given them.

"It was just a thought," said Earl.

"Unless we had something more to go on," said Susan, "I don't think the police would believe our story. We don't even have any proof that we own the coins."

"Look at this!" Christopher suddenly said, waving an envelope and some documents.

"What's that?"

"I was adjusting the string to hang the painting straight, and I saw a corner of this envelope wedged in the back of it," he said, laying the documents on the table. "It's an official appraisal of the coins, along with a receipt and photographs too."

"Wonderful!" said Susan.

"At least it proves the coins weren't fakes, like Mr. Manchester said they were," said Karen.

"Maybe we should go back to Coin World and check the place out," Earl said.

"It won't be that easy," said Christopher. "You can't just go in there and say we think he stole our coins."

"I know. But I have this feeling that Mr. Manchester has something to do with this."

"Anyway, sitting around here isn't going to make the coins reappear," said Susan.

The rest indicated their agreement, and once again, the five set off to Coin World.

"So, what brings you lot back here?" Skeets asked as the children entered the shop. "You decided that the twenty bucks was a tempting offer for your little collection?"

Karen narrowed her eyes as she addressed the man softly but firmly. "Actually, sir, those coins are missing. It seems someone has taken them."

"You're saying that someone stole them? That's unfortunate. Well, the culprit is in for a sad surprise ... he or she is not going to get much for them."

"Actually, we have proof that those coins were not worthless," said Christopher.

"Oh? I'd be interested to see that proof."

Susan stepped up to the counter. "To be frank, sir, seeing as you're the only other person outside our group who knows about the coins, we just came here to..."

"Are you accusing me of having something to do with their, umm ... disappearance?"

"N-no. We just..."

"Look," Skeets said with a sigh. "I understand how distressing this must be for you. Unfortunately, I am unable to be

much of a help, seeing as I have not seen your coins since you left my shop yesterday."

"Is that really the truth?" Kento said, pointing at the man. "You told us the coins were worth nothing, when actually they're very valuable. How do we know you're not lying now?"

"Kento," Christopher whispered. "Don't get angry, it's not going to help anything. Besides, it's disrespectful."

Kento drew back, his face flushing.

"True," said Skeets. "Very disrespectful. I've answered your questions; now if you don't mind, I need to be about my business. Good day."

Downcast, the five left the shop and took the bus back to the Lodge, where they convened to discuss what to do next.



“Look, I’m sorry for getting all upset like that in the shop,” said Kento. “But if you ask me, Skeets probably is the one who took our coins. And I just don’t like him.”

“That’s okay, Kento,” said Christopher.

“He’s an easy man to dislike,” Susan chimed in.

“He gives me the creeps,” said Karen.

“What are we going to do now?” Christopher asked.

The only answer was silence. No one had a clue.

Kento took the envelope that had the coin appraisal in it, and he pulled out the papers to look at them again.

“Hey, I never saw this before! It’s a handwritten note from Mr. Colin!” he said, pulling a slip of paper from the envelope.

“What’s it say? Read it, will you?” Susan said, and Kento started reading it.

To the Five Squad,

Even if it looks like you have lost everything, there is always a way to get it back. It is never too late to do the right thing. The answer is just a phone call away.—Jeremiah 33:3.

*Love,
Colin Hedgcome*

“That’s pretty cryptic,” said Karen. “But it’s almost like he knew we were going to lose the coins.”

“What’s that part about the telephone?” Kento asked.

“Remember, Mr. Colin told us about how God can give us counsel or show us the future?” Christopher replied. “That’s what this is saying.”

“Ah, yes,” said Kento. “He said that Jeremiah 33:3 is God’s telephone number, ‘Call unto Me, and I will answer you, and show you ... great and mighty things, that thou knowest not.’”

“We most certainly didn’t pray over our last visit to Coin World,” said Susan. “We just acted on impulse again.”

“But we can ask now,” said Christopher. “Maybe God still has something to say.”

After a short prayer, everyone got quiet, waiting for a supernatural indication of what to do next. Even Frisky respectfully curled up quietly in a corner.

Shortly, Susan hesitantly spoke. “I was reminded of this Bible story. I just don’t see how it goes with this situation, though...”

“Tell us!” urged the others.

“Well, like I said, I’m not sure what it means, but I just remembered it so clearly.”

“What was it?” Christopher asked.

“It’s when Jesus said that some of his enemies were like white tombs, looking beautiful on the outside, but inside were full of dead men’s bones.”¹

“Interesting, but...?” said Christopher.

Susan shrugged.

"If it's of any help," said Karen, "the outside of the Coin World shop is painted white."

"And the owner wasn't honest," Earl added.

Susan shivered. "But the 'dead men's bones' thing ... without getting macabre, I hate to think what that could mean..."

"At least if we find out he's doing something illegal, we might be able to get the police in there to arrest him," Karen said. "Then we could get our coins back."

"It might not be that simple," Christopher said. "But after we prayed, I did get this feeling that we should look in the back of the shop—that we'll find something there that will help us retrieve the coins. It's risky, but if we set up precautions, like just two of us go, and the others keep watch from a distance..."

"I was thinking the same thing..." Kento said, and they agreed that Christopher and Susan should go first, being the eldest of the group. The other three would stay not far behind.

It was late afternoon when they reached Coin World, and with the other three following at a distance, Christopher and Susan slipped into the narrow alley behind the shop. There they hid in a doorway and waited.

"Maybe nothing is going to happen today," Susan whispered after some time. "We could try again tomorrow..."

Just then, a black Cadillac pulled up nearby, and a man wearing sunglasses and

a long, black overcoat emerged from the car. He handed a large package to another man who had come from the back entrance of Coin World. The other man then crumpled and dropped a document into one of the trash cans.

"This could be interesting," Christopher said. Susan pulled out a pen and jotted the car's license number on her palm.

"Once he's gone inside, we can look in that trash can and see if that document has something interesting," said Christopher.

They approached the garbage cans and gingerly lifted one of the lids.

"A *ton* of papers," said Susan as she rifled through the contents. "And most of them are ripped. Hard to read ... something about horse gambling..."

"And something about Colombia," Christopher muttered as he read a receipt.

"This one is for a money deposit in a bank in the Cayman Islands. Wonder what this all means," Susan said.

"It seems shady..."



Just then, the back door swung open, and a man emerged. Susan gasped at recognizing the same gaunt figure she had seen trailing the four the night before. Christopher and Susan turned to run, but instead they rammed into a big bruiser, who stood on the other side of the trashcans. He grabbed each of them and shook them until they stopped struggling for release.

“What are you kids doing snooping around here?”

“We were looking to see if there is any useful stuff in your garbage,” said Christopher.

“Really? And did you find anything you were looking for?”

Christopher shook his head. “Just a bunch of paper.”

“It’s him,” Susan whispered.

“Him who?” Christopher asked.

Susan nodded in the direction of the gaunt man who stood nearby. Susan caught his eye, and he gave her an eerie smile. Susan shivered. The man turned his back and exhaled a puff of cigarette smoke.

“Take them to the boss,” he told the bruiser who was still holding Christopher and Susan by their collars. He then walked back down the alley and away from the shop, while the other man dragged Christopher and Susan into the back room and sat them down on two chairs which he had set back-to-back.

“Hey, Boss!” he called out. “I got something for you.”

“It’d better be something good, Clive. I don’t have time for your ‘discoveries,’” Skeets Manchester said as he strode into the room.

“Just caught these kids snooping out back. Said they were looking for ‘useful’ stuff.”

“Useful stuff, eh? Aren’t you the kids with those coins?”

“You took them!” Susan screamed. “We want them back!”

“So sorry, kid—things don’t work like that in this world,” Skeets said calmly. “But I must thank you, though, for making me fabulously wealthy.”

“You sold them?”

“We’re going to sell them tomorrow night,” the bruiser said.

“Zip it, Clive. It ain’t their business.” He then turned to Susan and Christopher. “So, you thought you were going to find something in the trash? Let’s see about that. Search them, Clive.”

Clive did so and when he’d finished frisking them, he plopped them back on their chairs and scrutinized the papers he had collected from them.

“Looks like receipts, banking bits and pieces...”

“You dumped those papers out back?!” Skeets yelled. “Don’t you ever learn, you dimwit?”

Skeets simmered down and, grinning slyly, turned to the two kids. “But that wasn’t very smart of you either, was it? Sticking your nose in other people’s business.”



He drew close to Susan and lifted her chin. "Now then, didn't your parents ever teach you anything? Silly kids, thinking you uncovered some dirt on me! Who's ever going to know now?"

He turned to Clive. "Lock our little friends in the cellar."

Clive grabbed Christopher and Susan, opened a door, and shoved them down a flight of stairs. At the bottom, he opened another door and threw them inside a small room. Its foul, musty smell started Susan and Christopher coughing.

"We're going to keep you here for a while till we figure out what to do with you."

"How long will that take?" Susan asked.

"No telling. We never did figure out what to do with our last guests," the bruiser said with a snigger.

The door slammed shut, leaving Christopher and Susan in darkness. Even though the two children were tired, thirsty, and very uncomfortable, they stayed positive by singing and quoting Bible verses that they could remember, and most of all by praying.

Meanwhile, the others had not seen Susan and Christopher being dragged off.

"It's been a while," Kento said. "What are they doing?"

"They must have been caught," said Earl.

"Maybe it's time to get on the phone again?" said Karen.

"Phone?"

"You know, *pray*."

After they prayed, they waited silently for direction.

Earl spoke first. "You know the verse, 'He shall give His angels charge over thee'? Well, that and a picture of a policeman just came to my mind. I think it means that..."

"Yes," said Kento. "It's time to call the police to help us."

The others agreed.

"Maybe this trouble is going to help us catch these crooks and get our coins back somehow," said Earl.

"Whatever," said Karen. "We'd better hurry. The police station is a couple of streets down."

"How can I help?" an officer asked as Kento, Earl, and Karen stepped up to the police desk, with Frisky tagging behind.

Kento took a deep breath and started his explanation. "Two friends are in big trouble

because we believe they were captured by the manager of Coin World, who stole our ancient coins from us."

The officer looked up from reading a newspaper. "Captured ... *coins*?"

"Yes," said Karen. "They need rescuing right away."

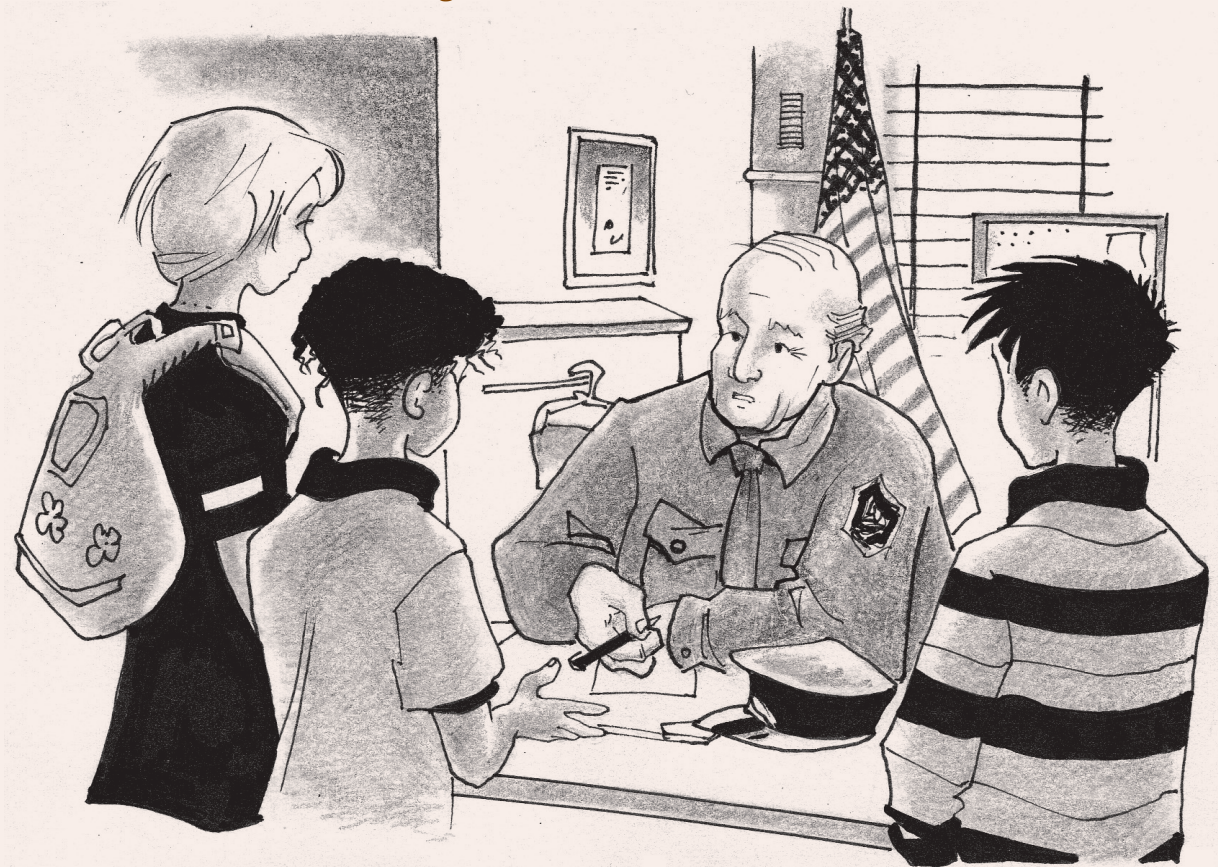
"Quite the story, miss."

"But it's true, sir. We've got to get there quick before something bad happens to them and..."

"Happens to who?"

"Our two friends."

"Friends? Which friends? Just the facts, kids, just the facts. You know—names, ages, addresses, stuff like that."



Karen gave the police officer all the needed details.

“And what’s this place called?”

“Coin World,” said Earl.

“Oh yeah,” the officer replied. “We know the place. We won’t get a search warrant on the grounds of your story with no evidence, but we’ve wondered for a long time about some dubious activity going on there, and this could be our chance to confirm those suspicions.”

* * *

Earl, Karen, and Kento arrived at Coin World with three police officers.

A hastily written sign on the front door read, “Closed. On vacation.”

“We saw them last go around to the back of the shop,” said Kento, and directed the officers to the back entrance.

Frisky was already running to the back, barking all the way. He jumped on the door, scratching. The door was closed as well. Trash cans were overturned, and garbage was strewn everywhere.

“Check this out,” one of the officers called, picking up a wallet.

“That’s Chris’ wallet!” Kento exclaimed. “Check.”

He took the wallet from the officer’s hand and fumbled through it. “‘Christopher Fulton.’ Just like you said.”

The lieutenant looked concerned and turned to the other officer. “Did you get the warrant, Hooper?”

“Yeah.”

“See if anyone’s inside. But first let’s get the kids back to the car where Warren can keep an eye on them. We don’t want any unnecessary trouble.”

Though Karen, Earl, and Kento protested, they acquiesced, realizing that their cooperation was needed if the police were to help them.

Officer Hooper knocked on the door several times. “This is the police,” he shouted. “Open the door!”

There was no answer.

“Open up, or we will have to break the door down,” Hooper called out.

They heard the shuffle of feet and some voices, and the door opened.

“What can I do for you?” Skeets nonchalantly asked.

“We are looking for these two missing persons—a boy named

Christopher Fulton and a girl named Susan Grimbaldi. They are about twelve years old. Have you seen them?” The lieutenant asked. “We received a report that they were last seen around this back entrance. Do you know anything about that?”

“Can’t say that I do.”

“Hmmm, is that the case? Funny, because I have three witnesses who followed the two missing children here,” the lieutenant said, pointing to the three kids sitting in the police car.

“Those kids again—”

“So, you have seen them before.”

“They came with some worthless coins the other day. And they returned today with some accusation or another, when their coins went missing. Terribly rude children, if you ask me. I sent them on their way and asked them not to return. Is that a crime?”

“Do you mind if we look around?” Lieutenant Gibbs asked.

“Umm ... of course not. I have nothing to hide.”

“Warren, keep the kids and the dog in the car while we go in to search the place,” the lieutenant called out.

Karen, Earl, and Kento waited for close to an hour until the police finally returned.

"It looks clean," the main officer said. "We searched everywhere."

"There must be some mistake," Karen said.

Frisky was now barking loudly. Kento held the dog back the best he could, but finally Frisky bowled him over and began to dash madly toward the open back door of the shop.

"Maybe he's looking for Susan and Christopher!" Kento exclaimed.

"Follow that dog!" the lieutenant yelled.

When everyone had caught up with Frisky, he had stopped in front of a section of the wall where there was a bookcase and was barking furiously.

Skeets Manchester tried to kick him away, but the dog kept coming back to the same section of wall.

"What is behind this bookshelf?" the officer asked.

"A wall. Cement, and then some more cement—"

"Examine this area carefully, Hooper."

"Hey, look at this, Lieutenant. Looks like there's something behind this bookshelf." After searching for several minutes, they found a small crack along the side of the bookcase that they forced open with a crowbar.

"Look, a tunnel!" Gibbs said.

"Well, I'll be!" Skeets offered lamely. "And all this time, I never even knew it existed!"

The two policemen were so preoccupied with their discovery of the tunnel that

they failed to notice that Skeets was slowly making his way to the stairs to escape. Clive stood between Skeets and the police.

The lieutenant called on his radio for backup.

Frisky was now barking loudly at Skeets Manchester and grabbed ahold of his pant leg. The dog wouldn't let go, no matter how hard Skeets tried to shake him off.

"Skeets is trying to get away," Kento suddenly called out, having run in after Frisky. The other two had followed as well.

At that moment, Clive pulled out a gun and fired at the police. The bullets zinged past them.

"Get down!" the lieutenant called out to Earl. Earl and the others fell to the floor behind an overturned table.

Skeets had managed to shake the dog off and was now running up the stairs, with Clive close behind. The police tried to follow, but Clive turned every few seconds and shot at them.

The lieutenant pulled out his gun and returned fire. A bullet caught Clive in the lower leg and the big man fell hard. Within seconds, the lieutenant had confiscated Clive's gun and handcuffed him.

Officer Hooper dashed after Skeets and leaped on him, bringing them both to the floor. After a struggle, Hooper snapped handcuffs on Skeets.

"You kids will pay for this," Skeets shouted.

"I wouldn't get into that. You have a lot of explaining to do, Mr. Manchester," said Lieutenant Gibbs.

Once backup arrived, the two men were taken to the police station. While several of the other police busily continued checking Coin World, Earl, Karen, and Kento took off down the stairs to find Christopher and Susan, calling out as they descended. Soon, they heard a banging on one door and some muffled yells.

After they unlatched and opened the door, Christopher and Susan came out into the hallway, squinting as their eyes adjusted to the light.

"Are we happy to see you!" Christopher said, hugging his friends.

"It's a good thing you came when you did. No telling what they would have done to us," Susan said.

"You know, I'm starting to like this stopping-to-hear-from-God thing!" Karen said to the others.

"We'll need to take you down to the police station to get your statements and the full story from each of you about what happened. Then we'll take you home," Gibbs said to the five.

After the Five Squad had answered the questions the police asked of them, Lieutenant Gibbs and Officer Hooper drove them home. As they left, they told the five kids, "Tomorrow morning, we will come by to see how you're all doing, and also in case we need any other information that may have slipped our minds today. Could everyone meet at Christopher's house at 10:30?"

"Certainly."

"Lieutenant," said Christopher. "Could we ask you a favor?"

"What's that?"

"Were the coins found?"

"We haven't found anything yet. But we're looking."

* * *

At exactly 10:29 a.m., Lieutenant Gibbs and Officer Hooper appeared at the front door of Christopher's house. After a lengthy interview, the police were satisfied with the information they had gathered from the children and were on their way to do a further investigation into Skeets Manchester's affairs.



“Thank you for your help in breaking this case; we’ve been after Skeets for some time,” the lieutenant said as they rose to leave....

“Sir, did you find the coins?” Karen asked.

The lieutenant smiled. “The coins? Ah, I almost forgot!” He nodded to the officer with him, who went out and pulled the familiar box out of the trunk of his car. He returned and handed it to the lieutenant.

“Here. Apparently, you have yourself quite a treasure here. I’d be careful where you put them now. They may not be so easy to get back next time.”

“Thank you, sir!” Christopher said, overjoyed as he took the box.

“We trust there won’t be a next time!” said Susan.

“But if something like this happens again,” said Officer Hooper, “call us first before trying to solve things on your own.”

“Believe me, we will,” Christopher said, and the others voiced their agreement.

“I’m amazed at how it all seemed to work out for you kids,” Lieutenant Gibbs whispered. “You’re very lucky children.”

“Actually, sir,” Susan replied. “It’s because we prayed when we didn’t know what to do that helped us. It’s what Mr. Colin, the man who gave us the coins, taught us to do.”

Officer Hooper was staring at the angel picture. “I’d say so. And right here in this eerily significant picture ... gold coins and all!”

“Mr. Colin gave it to us,” said Susan.

“Is this done with acrylics?”

“Ask Chris. He’s the art expert around here!”

“It’s oils,” said Christopher.

“You paint, kid?”

Christopher nodded.

“My son does, too. He’s about your age ... a genius. Hey, did you see *that*?”

The Five Squad members and the other policeman gasped.

“We did!” said Earl. “The angel winked and smiled!”



Footnote:

¹ See Matthew 23:27.