

## The Gilded Urn



“Come here, Amy!” Claire called from the attic window to her ten-year-old daughter in the yard. “Look what I found!”

Amy ran inside, skipping up the steps to the open attic. Since moving into Gram’s one-hundred-year-old house, they found antiques everywhere.

Her mom struggled to move a large pot.

Amy brushed the dust from the gilded green pottery.

“What is it?”

Her mother leaned close to Amy’s ear and spoke low and spooky. “Maybe a cauldron? An urn? A stew pot for boiling skulls?”

“Mom!” Amy’s eyes got big.

Claire chuckled. “Just joking. It’s a planter.”

“Well, it’s ugly. Look at those awful faces.”

Setting it up in the sunroom, Claire planted a few African violets. “It’ll be pretty in here.”

Amy wrinkled her nose at the gilded urn as tall as she. Tracing her finger over each macabre face, her curiosity piqued. “Why don’t they have eyes? There are only holes!”

“Sounds like a Grandma Jo mystery. We’ll invite her for supper.”

“Thank you for rescuing me from that stuffy old retirement home. Even if only for supper,” said Grandma Jo as she entered the house.

“Grandma Jo!” Amy threw her arms around her elderly grandmother. “Come, look!” She pulled her grandmother’s hand into the sunroom.

“I’ve always loved this room,” said Grandma Jo. “This house has been in the family for four generations now.”

“You wrote many mysteries here,” reflected Claire.

Grandma Jo nodded as her eyes were drawn to the green planter. “I see you’ve found her. Many memories in that old gal.”

“I think it’s ugly,” said Amy. “The faces don’t even have eyeballs!”

Grandma Jo gave a knowing smile, subconsciously twirling the green gemstone ring around her finger. “Some say the eyes were once large emeralds.”

Amy’s face lit up. “Where’d they go?”

“Maybe someone stole them....” Grandma Jo cupped her hand to her mouth. “Or maybe...” she closed her eyes in thought. “...maybe they’re still hidden.”

“Where, Gram?” Amy’s eyes bugged.

“Might be anywhere, child.” Gram winked.

“Mother. Seriously?” Claire spoke with half a scold. “You’re such a storyteller.” Claire shook her head. “Another mystery, Amy. You can’t believe everything Gram says.”

“Search the attic,” she whispered to her granddaughter with a wink.

Amy squealed as she scampered up the stairs.

“Mom, stop encouraging her,” Claire said. “She believes every word you say.”

“She has a great imagination. Let her have fun with it. Someday, you may believe me, too.”

A few years later, Grandma Jo passed. No emeralds. Only mysteries. Amy searched everywhere but found nothing. She'd since stopped believing in Gram's tall tales.

At the reading of the will, Claire was surprised when handed a lockbox. She thought the house and land were her only inheritance. Inside was a letter addressed to 'Amy,' a small box holding her mother's rings, and a beautiful single pendant emerald necklace. Claire gasped. *Could it really be?*

Amy read aloud:

*"My dear Amy,*

*Your imagination brought me great joy! Your treasure hunts were a delight, and it was fun to see how you searched for the emeralds. Never give up hope!*

*My stories were all true. The urn did have eight large uncut emeralds. After Great-grandad's death, Great-grandmother became a housekeeper for a governor who gave her the urn as payment. It was a Godsend. The emeralds bought this house and property. Jewelry from the chipped pieces was made as heirlooms. My emerald ring goes to your mom. But the emerald necklace and emerald bracelet are yours. Their worth should get you through college...or give you a lovely wedding someday.*

*Never stop looking for the unknown, sweet Amy. Solve the mysteries that life brings because clues are everywhere...even in small cabinets where you least suspect. ~Grandma Jo*

"Mom! Told you! Amy laughed. "The ring and necklace are here, but where's the bracelet?"

"Another mystery, Amy. Another treasure hunt." Claire sighed.

"Gram knew I love mysteries!"

But the 'small cabinets' puzzled her. Suddenly, she knew. *The doll cabinet Gram gave me!* She ran to her room and began pulling out drawers. Nothing. Shining a

flashlight in the openings, she saw a tiny lever. She reached inside and pulled, making a hidden drawer pop out underneath. Inside – a folded flowered handkerchief.

Amy’s heart pounded as she picked up the heavy bundle. Unfolding it revealed a dazzling emerald bracelet sparkling with brilliance. She put it on and twirled her hand in the light.

Her mother called from below. “Did you find anything, Amy?”



“Still looking,” Amy called back with a huge grin. This would be her secret now. Her faith restored and hope renewed, Gram’s words rang true again. *Never stop looking for the unknown...the clues are everywhere.*

