

The Jewel Beetle

Cohen Tristram was on the trail of a bug. Not any bug, mind you, but a metallic blue, red and gold beetle.

A professional bug hunter since the age of three, Cohen was now six. But never in all his years as a bug hunter had he captured this brightly colored insect.

He had caught many fireflies, especially in the evenings at his grandfather's farm when he could see them twinkling like little stars up and down the lane. He always placed them carefully in a jar with holes in the top. Finally, he would show them to grandma, shaking the jar so they would shine their little lights. Then he let them go in the night sky. His record so far was twelve fireflies in one evening!

Cohen had also caught stink bugs (ugh), rollie pollies, ant lions, June bugs, horseflies, and many other insects. Usually, he put them in a small observation jar with a magnifying lid. Then, he could watch them as they crawled around on a leaf or twig. Through the magnifying lid they looked so very large that you could see every little detail--all their wonderful colors, feet, eyes and mouths. Seeing bugs up close was awesome. But after a while he always let them go so they could scurry home for the night.

Cohen also caught tadpoles, leopard frogs, earthworms and even big Katydid and grasshoppers. But, he never tried to catch wasps or bees or spiders or snakes because his mother told him that they could *sting* or *bite*! And knew that was true because he had been stung on the foot by a honeybee and it REALLY hurt.

The jewel beetle, as it is really called, had last been seen by the back door. But when he returned with his collection jar, it was gone! With his special plastic bug collector tweezers he carefully poked through the grass around the doorstep. Next, he looked in the nearby flower pots--carefully lifting up each leaf. Still no beetle.

Then, he saw it crawling up a back porch window screen. He stood on his overturned wagon and stretched his arms way out. Suddenly he had the beetle with the tweezers and into the collection jar it went. Through the magnifying lid he could see all the beautiful metallic colors reflecting the light just like a tiny jewel. How wonderful! He had to show his mom.

"Mom, Mom," he yelled, and tore into the house. Cohen's mom looked into the jar.

"Why that's like a little jewel," she said.

"I know," said Cohen. "It's a jewel beetle. Where can we keep it? In my room?"

"But, Cohen you always let your bugs go before bedtime. I'm not sure keeping it in your room is a good idea."

"Aww, mom. He's too beautiful to let go."

"OK," she said. "Put it on the window sill. But you'll have to let it go in the morning."

"I will, I promise," Cohen replied excitedly and he ran to put it on the windowsill next to his wooden airplane. The tiny jewel beetle scratched at the glass but couldn't get out.

"Don't worry. I'll let you go in the morning," Cohen said. Then he took his bath, watched TV for a while and went to bed.

That night Cohen heard a little voice saying, "Where's my baby?"

He looked all around the room. But no one was there. Then he heard it again.

"Where's my baby boy?"

Cohen sat up in bed. He rubbed his eyes. He must be dreaming. He listened for a while but there was only the distant sound of cars going by in the street and the air conditioner humming in the living room. So, he lay back down and closed his eyes.

"Where's my darling baby boy?" The voice said.

Now Cohen was AWAKE.

"Mom," he yelled. "Mom, wake up."

Cohen's mom hurried into his room, turning on the hall light behind her.

"What's wrong, Cohen?" she said. "Are you sick?"

"No, I heard something in my room," he said.

"What did you hear?"

"It was a little voice. It said 'Where's my baby boy.'"

"And whose voice do you think that might be?" asked Cohen's mom.

"I think it might be the jewel beetle's mom because I didn't let him go home at night. I think his mother might be looking for him."

"Oh, Cohen, you have such an active imagination. You can let it go first thing in the morning. Now lie down and go to sleep. I'll leave the hall light on."

"No, mom. We have to let him go home right now."

"Oh, Cohen. Is this really necessary?"

"Yes, mom. It's really, really necessary. Right now." And, he climbed out of bed and ran to the window. He looked inside the jar and there was the tiny jewel beetle still scratching at the glass.

"Don't worry," he said. "I'm letting you go right now."

Cohen's mom turned on the kitchen light and opened the back porch door. Cohen bent down and unscrewed the jar lid. With a little flicker of blue and gold from its wings, the jewel beetle crawled away in the darkness.

Cohen's mom locked the door and turned off the porch light. But then she said:

"You know I think there's some ice cream left in the freezer. Would you like a bowl of ice cream? I would".

So, Cohen and his mom sat at the kitchen table eating ice cream. Finally, Cohen said:

"Mom, I think that was just a dream."

"I think so too," Cohen's mom said.

"Still, I'm glad I let him go," Cohen said thoughtfully.

"Me too," said his mom. Then, she rinsed out their bowls and they went off to bed.

THE END