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The Buried Bones Mystery (Clubhouse Mysteries)

By Sharon M. Draper



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In simultaneous hardcover and paperback editions, the first book in the Clubhouse Mysteries. Ziggy and his friends Rico, Rashawn, and Jerome call themselves The Black Dinosaurs, and share exciting adventures. In The Buried Bones Mystery, the boys build a clubhouse in Ziggy's backyard, where they uncover a box of bones while digging to bury their secret treasures. But when the boys try to hide their treasures, they're swept up in a mystery more intriguing -- and scary -- than anything they could have imagined. Who could have buried a box of bones behind their clubhouse?



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ZIGGY'S THOUGHTS BOUNCED LIKE HOT POPCORN as he ran through his backyard to the clubhouse of the Black Dinosaurs. *An overnight camping trip* he thought eagerly. *Fishing Hiking Cooking over a campfire* He couldn't wait to talk to Rico, Rashawn, and Jerome, the other members of the Black Dinosaurs, about the letter from Camp Caesar.

Ziggy's huge backyard was wonderful. It was a place where flowers, weeds, rabbits, and ten-year-old boys could grow wild. It was a place to dream and create—a perfect location for secrets and adventures. Ziggy followed a path, probably used by raccoons, which ran back through the thick underbrush to the clubhouse.

Using the remains of an old fence that the boys had found in Ziggy's backyard, they had built the clubhouse themselves the previous summer. They had cut holes that looked a lot like windows in the two side walls, and for the door, they'd used a smaller section of the fence wall. It closed with a bent piece of wire coat hanger.

Inside, the clubhouse was about ten feet by twelve feet—not really big, but large enough for four boys to sit and talk. In it was one lawn chair with most of the webbing missing, one folding chair left over from a church picnic, one three-legged kitchen chair (they used a large rock to balance it), and a bicycle with two flat tires. This was their seating arrangement, or they could push everything aside and sit on the blanket that Ziggy's mom had given them.

Just as Ziggy got to the front of the clubhouse, he tripped over his shoelace, lost his balance, landed on his backside, and rolled with a laugh to the door, where Jerome was waiting for him. Ziggy never walked anywhere—he bounced or jogged or galloped wherever he went. He was always in a good mood, always excited about whatever was happening around him. So Jerome was not surprised when Ziggy landed at his feet, bubbling with excitement.

He helped Ziggy up and asked with a laugh, "What's up, Ziggy?"

"Did your letter come, mon? Are you packed? Where are Rico and Rashawn?" Ziggy's eyes were bright. Behind him, the boys could hear the rustling of something in the bushes.

Rashawn's Siberian husky, Afrika, with one blue eye and one brown eye, trotted out of the bushes, found his favorite spot under a tree, and went to sleep. Rashawn, tall, brown, and skinny, and wearing his favorite army boots, stomped through the backyard and sat down on a large rock in front of the clubhouse.

"What's goin' on, fellas?" he asked. "Where's Rico?"

Ziggy was still hopping around enthusiastically. He wore a green vest, a blue shirt, and bright red jeans. Today a large knitted cap covered his braids, which usually bounced as much as he did. Ziggy's family had come from Jamaica to Ohio several years before and had moved onto the street in Cincinnati where Rico, Rashawn, and Jerome lived.

The four boys had been friends since first grade.

Rico was coming down the path to the clubhouse. He had a huge wad of bubble gum in his mouth and was attempting to blow the world's biggest bubble. He walked slowly, concentrating on blowing and balancing the bubble, which was almost the size of his face. He didn't see Ziggy, who leaped into the air, bursting to tell his good news.

"It's almost time" cried Ziggy. As Ziggy began to speak, he waved his arms around wildly. At that moment Rico and his bubble walked right into Ziggy's hand. *Splat* went the bubble gum, and Rico's surprised face

and thick brown hair were instantly covered with sticky pink bubble gum.

Rashawn and Jerome hooted with laughter; Ziggy rolled on the ground with delight. Rico didn't laugh much. But it was clear he wasn't angry as he sat on the grass, picking gum out of his hair.

"That bubble would have gone in the *Guinness Book of World Records*," he said, faking disappointment. "I bet it was the biggest one in the world so far"

"Aw, mon, I blow bubbles bigger than that every day" boasted Ziggy. "But you gotta mix the bubble gum with mashed potatoes first That's the secret ingredient"

"Yuck" exclaimed the others. They were used to Ziggy's unusual tastes in food. He stirred his chocolate milk with pickles and put mustard on his cornflakes.

"So tell us, Ziggy," Jerome said finally. "What's up?"

"The mailman just left," Ziggy told them, "and my letter from Camp Caesar came today We've been waiting forever, but the trip is finally here We're going camping at Caesar's Creek State Park next week"

"We got our letters today too," Rico said. "It's gonna be a cool trip." He had almost finished pulling the bubble gum out of his hair.

Rashawn cheered. "Let's hear it for my dad" Rashawn's father was a member of the Black Heritage Club. They had decided several months ago to sponsor field trips for the young people of the community, and this camping trip was one of the first activities.

"I've never slept outside in the woods before," admitted Jerome. "I wonder what we ought to take."

Ziggy pulled a folded piece of paper from the back pocket of his red jeans. "Not to worry, mon" he announced. "Here's the list of things to bring. Let's see here ... flashlight, sleeping bag, backpack, extra socks, bug spray ..."

"Bug spray?" asked Jerome. He hated insects. He carried bug spray every day in his book bag, just in case. "You know how I am about bugs I'll probably never get to sleep, looking for bugs in the night."

Ziggy laughed and said again, "Not to worry, mon It will be so dark in those woods at night you'll never even *see* the bugs that bite you"

Jerome picked up a handful of dry leaves and threw them at Ziggy. "Hey, you really know how to make a dude feel better, man"

"Who else is going?" asked Rico.

"I'm not sure," Rashawn answered. "I think a few more kids from school. There might be some kids from other schools near the campsite, my dad said."

"Any girls?" asked Rashawn.

"Who cares, mon" Ziggy replied. "I'm more concerned with the lions and tigers and bears"

"There are no lions and tigers in the woods here in Ohio," Rico declared. "But I'm not sure about bears."

“Bears?” asked Rashawn fearfully.

“There’s no bears around here,” Jerome stated, “but I know the woods are full of bugs”

“Don’t forget, we’ll have bug spray,” reminded Rico.

“Bug spray won’t do much against a bear” muttered Rashawn, who didn’t want to admit he was a little worried.

Ziggy checked the list again. “Not to worry, mon,” he announced again with cheerful assurance, “nothing on here about bears”

“That doesn’t mean there aren’t any,” Rashawn continued, smiling in spite of himself.

“What about Indians?” asked Rico.

“I don’t know,” Jerome said with a frown. “There used to be millions of Indians in Ohio—a long time ago.”

“What do you suppose happened to all of them?” Rico wondered.

“Hey, mon, I bet there are thousands of Indians living in the woods up there right now”

“No, Ziggy,” Rico said thoughtfully, “I think they got pushed out—from their own land. My dad told me that it used to be really beautiful around here before there were roads or bridges or even houses.”

“Can you imagine,” Rashawn thought out loud, “nothing but forests for miles and miles? The Indians had it so good”

“Yeah, except for one thing.” Jerome grinned.

“What, mon?”

“There was no place to stop for hamburgers and French fries”

“Or pizza”

“Or tacos”

“Or chocolate-covered spaghetti, mon”

At that, they all grabbed dry leaves and grass from the yard to throw at Ziggy, until he ran laughing and shouting through the backyard.

“Not to worry, mon” they heard him yell in the distance, still laughing. “I’ll bring my own”

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