

The Bone Collector?

By DiAnna Tindell

It might shock and amaze a stranger who wanders into the shadowy bowels of a restoration studio. So many armless and legless figurines are awaiting new body parts. So, what could be happening to all those lovely pieces? Is there a phantom bone collector on the loose? In the gruesome movie, *The Bone Collector*, the loss of so many bone-related appendages was no coincidence. There might be a bone collector visiting your fine figurines to rob them of their fingers, toes, hands, arms, feet and more. If it was just a tooth fairy, maybe those missing parts could be found under a pillow. So, what can be done for those poor figurines?

At the crime scene, efforts should be made to determine how the figurine was dismembered. By understanding how the figurine lost its

body part, the search for the missing limb will have a better chance. For example, if the loss was caused by other objects

might be the culprit. The search for the missing body part should begin by setting up a grid around the damaged piece.

should be carefully packaged and sent with the injured figurine for restoration.

It may be possible to order special replacement pieces off a website, if the figurine is a current manufacture. If the figurine is an antique, retired, or a one-of-a-kind piece, replacement parts might still be obtained at a restoration studio. Often, they will store spare parts for all types of emergency situations.

Photos of the figurine prior to injury are always helpful to be certain that the missing parts are restored properly. If you have no photos available, some might still be found at the manufacturer's website. Some effort may be required to research the figurine in books featuring historical collections or specific character story lines. After all, it would be embarrassing to replace those tiny fingers in the wrong direction.

It would be great if there was an elixir for bone regrowth like the nurse had in the movie, *Harry Potter and the*

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Dental bonding products are strong and can be mixed to match colors.

falling from above, a family pet

The forensic team at the scene should carefully inspect all carpeting, furniture and containers within the grid, even sifting through the vacuum bag. If the missing body part is found, it

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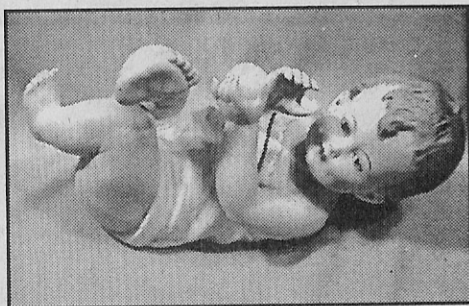
Chamber of Secrets. Unfortunately, the replacement of parts for fine porcelain figurines involves much more than a simple potion.

Materials needed to insure a strong hold should be the best available. Most putty, epoxy, or other soft-bodied materials just won't do the job. Restoration with those types of products won't produce great finishes and over time may shrink, change color and fall off. It is best to use products available through the dental industry. There are some excellent dental products that offer the tiniest area of newly applied fill or part with the optimum strength and adhesion. This is extremely important for parts such as the fragile, slender, detailed fingers lost off many highly collectible figurines.

Dental products include materials which are plain white opaque, various hues of tooth shades (great for body types such as alabaster and ivory) and translucent materials of vibrant jewel colorations, frosted or clear. These products can be used in



Piano Baby Boy bisque figurine with broken leg and fingers. Photo below shows baby all "cured."



their basic formulas or can be adjusted to match specific colors with a huge array of fine color pigments. Color matching can provide a replacement part that is durable and permanent. There are products available from industry other than dental with workable solutions, but dental are more geared to maximum strength of minutely detailed works.

Those tiny extensions such as long, slender, detailed fingers and toes often include distinctions such as knuckle lines and nail contours. They are normally so thin that there isn't an inner hollow hole in which to place center support material. Therefore, the adhesive qualities of the restoration must be exceptional. To insure a better hold, the restoration materials should slightly overlap areas of the original body. This overlay of added material must be applied in a very thin, gradual sloping formation to avoid creating an area thicker than it should be in proportion to the other areas.

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Sometimes a new part will gain additional support if it holds an object or lies against another area that provides a secondary point of attachment and more stability.

Dry those tears and rest easier knowing that, should your fine collection of figurines encounter a visit from *The Bone Collector*, it isn't as bad as it may first appear. Follow the procedures mentioned above and walk the grid for any missing parts. Contact a restoration studio that has several years of qualified experience dealing with those nasty situations. Let them know how the casualties looked before disaster struck, and wait patiently for the final outcome. Most figurines can be restored as good as new, if done properly, and continue to offer value and beauty over the years to come.

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