

NANCY DREW MYSTERY STORIES®

*The Secret
of the
Forgotten City*

BY CAROLYN KEENE

GROSSET & DUNLAP
Publishers • New York

A member of The Putnam & Grosset Group

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Table of Contents

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright Page](#)

[CHAPTER I - Fleetfoot Joe](#)

[CHAPTER II - Safari Plans](#)

[CHAPTER III - Vanished Guests](#)

[CHAPTER IV - The Wiretapper](#)

[CHAPTER V - The Fake Tablet](#)

[CHAPTER VI - The Dangerous Hole](#)

[CHAPTER VII - Petroglyphs](#)

[CHAPTER VIII - Say It in Code](#)

[CHAPTER IX - The Weird Valley](#)

[CHAPTER X - Call for Miss Antler](#)

[CHAPTER XI - New Clues](#)

[CHAPTER XII - A Deadly Necklace](#)

[CHAPTER XIII - Telltale Wallet](#)

[CHAPTER XIV - Hidden River](#)

[CHAPTER XV - Gold!](#)

[CHAPTER XVI - A Skeleton Dance](#)

[CHAPTER XVII - A Capture](#)

[CHAPTER XVIII - Surprise Gift](#)

[CHAPTER XIX - Nancy Disappears](#)

[CHAPTER XX - A Fagot of Treasure](#)

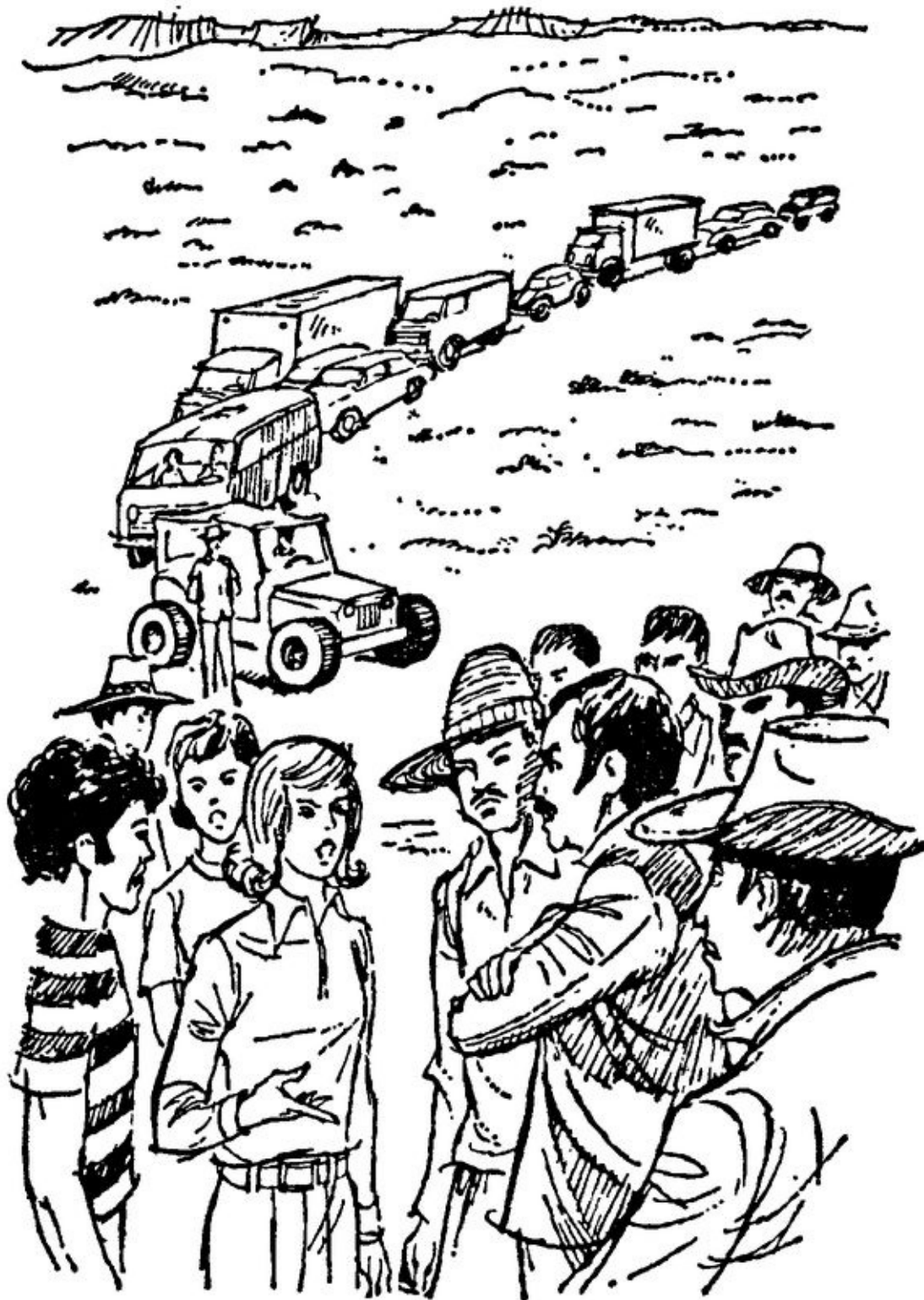
THE SECRET OF THE FORGOTTEN CITY

Gold! There are rumors that long ago a treasure was hidden in a city now buried under the Nevada desert.

Nancy and her friends plan to join a dig sponsored by two colleges to hunt for the gold. Before she starts, the young sleuth receives an ancient stone tablet with petroglyphs on it. With this amazing clue, however, come a threat and danger from a thief who also wants the treasure.

One harrowing adventure after another besets Nancy, Bess, George, Ned, Burt, and Dave in 100-degree temperatures as they pursue Nancy's hunches above and below ground. They are assisted by a fine Indian woman and a young geology student, but both are unwilling participants in a strange plot.

In the end Nancy and Ned nearly lose their lives, just after she has discovered the priceless hidden treasure of gold.



“Perhaps I can translate what these men are saying,” Nancy said.

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CHAPTER I

Fleetfoot Joe

“Au! Au! Au!” cried Ned Nickerson, as he eased himself out of his car and hurried toward the open front door of the Drew home.

Nancy, who was waiting for him, leaped to his side. “Ned, what happened? You’re hurt!”

The tall dark-haired athlete burst into laughter and kissed her. “No hurts at all. I didn’t say ‘Ouch, ouch, ouch!’ I said, ‘Au! Au! Au!’ ”

“What does that mean?” asked the attractive strawberry blond, as she led him indoors. “Please stop talking in riddles.”

The couple sat down on the living-room couch. “Well?” Nancy prompted.

“Au refers to a treasure buried deep underground,” Ned replied. “Want to help find it?”

“Of course,” Nancy said, excited at the thought of a mystery. “Where is it and what is it?”

Ned grinned. “I’ll give you a hint. Think of some chemistry symbols.”

At once Nancy guessed the answer. “How stupid of me not to have thought of gold. *Au* is the symbol for it. Tell me where and what this treasure is.”

“Not until everyone gets here,” Ned replied.

“Everyone? Who is everyone?” Nancy asked.

Ned’s eyes twinkled. “First there were two. Then there were four. Now we number six.”

“You’re being exasperating,” Nancy said. “Shall I guess again?”

When he nodded, she mentioned her closest friends, Bess Marvin and George Fayne, who were her cousins. The three girls lived in River Heights and had been friends for years. Then she named two boys who were fraternity brothers of Ned’s at Emerson College.

“Right,” Ned replied. “Your Dad, who, by the way, is enthusiastic about your recovering this gold, invited them here to dinner tonight. Your kind housekeeper, Hannah Gruen, knows the secret and is preparing my favorite dish.”

“Which is—hot-pepper salad,” Nancy teased. “But tell me, why all the secrecy? It’s not my birthday!”

Ned answered with a grin. “We wanted to see if we could keep our plan a secret from the world’s most famous girl detective.”

Nancy blushed, but before she had a chance to answer, she and Ned heard shouting out in the street.

Ned leaped to a front window. Nancy, glancing out of a side window, saw a man dashing down the

long Drew driveway toward the rear of the property.

A woman's large handbag swung from one hand!

“Quick, Ned!” Nancy shouted. “Follow me!”

As the couple dashed through the kitchen, she called to the startled housekeeper, “Hannah, run to the front door. I think a woman on the sidewalk has just been robbed!”

Nancy and Ned rushed from the kitchen door in time to observe the thief pausing at the thick hedge that separated the Drews' yard from the property at the rear. Seeing the couple, he pushed his way through the bushes, since they were too high for him to vault.

“Nancy, run to the side street,” Ned suggested. “If that man tries to escape that way, yell and I'll come running.”

As Ned finished speaking, he was halfway through the hedge. Nancy ran back of the garage to the side street. She looked up and down the pavement, then into the yard. Suddenly the thief dashed off from behind a neighbor's house toward a car whose motor was running. A man sat at the wheel.

“Stop!” Nancy cried out. When the suspect kept going, she ordered, “Drop that handbag!”

The stranger did neither, but just as he reached the car, Ned leaped toward him. The man tossed the bag at Nancy with a vicious thrust and jumped into the car. It roared off. Ned had missed him, and Nancy had had to move aside to avoid being hit by the car.

Her mind, however, had recorded a good image of the suspected thief. He was five feet ten, rather large-boned, had tanned, tightly drawn skin, black eyes, and shiny black hair.

“Part Indian,” Nancy told herself, as she picked up the handbag and was joined by Ned.

“Too bad that fellow got away,” he commented. “I memorized the license number.” He repeated it to Nancy. “The man should be easy to trace.”

Nancy and Ned walked to the front lawn to find out what Hannah had learned. An odd picture met their eyes. A short, stout Indian woman, about fifty years old, sat on the ground with her legs crossed under her. She was staring into space, oblivious of Hannah Gruen, who was trying to comfort her.

The Indian kept murmuring, “Nancy Drew, Nancy Drew!”

As the girl appeared, holding the handbag, she said kindly, “Here is your bag, and I am Nancy Drew.”

The woman looked up, took her property, and without speaking opened the bag. An expression of dismay crossed her face and she uttered an involuntary “Oh!”



A woman's large handbag swung from the thief's hand.

"Is something missing?" Nancy asked.

"Records. My ancestors' records."

Then the woman thought of something. She unzipped a pocket in the lining of the bag and drew out a thin stone slab about five by seven inches, on which several crude figures and symbols had been chiseled.

"These are petroglyphs and very old," the woman explained. "There were six other tablets in the

bag. I planned to bring only this one, but I didn't want to leave the others unguarded in my house, so I brought them."

Hannah Gruen spoke. "I think we should all go into the house and talk."

"And call the police," Nancy added. "I'll do that immediately. Oh, by the way, what is your name and address?" she asked the Indian.

"Mrs. Wabash. My home is in Nevada, but I am staying at the River View Motel across town. I walked over here."

As Mrs. Wabash rose, with Ned helping her, Nancy hurried into the house to phone police headquarters. By the time she had given all the pertinent facts to the sergeant on duty, the other three had walked inside. Everyone sat down in the living room except Hannah, who went to get cool drinks and pieces of nut-covered sponge cake for the guests.

Mrs. Wabash apologized profusely for all the trouble she had caused, and thanked Nancy and Ned sincerely for recovering her handbag and at least one of the stone tablets.

"I'm sure the thief will be caught soon," Nancy assured her. "Anyway, what could he do with the records?"

The Indian woman sipped the drink Hannah had served. "I'm not sure," she said. "I have studied ancient stones with petroglyphs—that's picture-carving on stone—and made a sort of dictionary of their meanings. The only copy I had was in my handbag."

There was a pause, then Nancy said, "It's a shame the pages were taken. Had you translated the history of your family or of any tribe?"

"It is still a puzzle as to what the history is, but I've done the best I could," Mrs. Wabash replied. "Many symbols could have two or more interpretations. For instance, the mark of a hand with twisting, turning lines emerging from it could have indicated a journey's end; or it could be the artist's signature. I have heard you are clever at codes and thought maybe you could solve the mystery."

As the Indian finished speaking, the phone began to ring. When Nancy answered it, a man's deep voice said, "Is Mrs. Wabash still there? Yes? Tell her I have her stone tablets and papers and won't give 'em up. As for you, Miss Drew, don't try to help her. You're quick, but you're no match for Fleetfoot Joe. My spying on Mrs. Wabash has paid off. Now the Great Flying Bird is carrying me away." The man hung up.

Nancy stood lost in thought for a few moments, then returned to the living room. "Mrs. Wabash," she said, trying to keep her voice calm, "do you know a Fleetfoot Joe?"

"I've heard of him out in Nevada. He's only part Indian. A bad man. He steals things, then sells them to tourists as old artifacts he claims to have found himself."

Suddenly Nancy jumped from her chair, excused herself, and hurried to the telephone, repeating the words, "'The Great Flying Bird.' Surely that's an airplane. But is it privately or commercially owned?"

She dialed the number of the River Heights Airport, got the information desk, and asked whether a plane had just left for New York.

“Yes,” was the answer.

“Did anyone make a reservation for someplace in Nevada?”

Nancy waited while the assistant checked. The answer was no, and the woman could not recall from Nancy’s description any passenger who resembled the suspected robber.

The young detective now asked, “Did a private plane take off?”

She was transferred to another office. There she learned that a privately owned plane had left ten minutes earlier. Its destination was St. Louis.

“The owner is named Robert Wapley,” the speaker concluded.

“Thank you,” said Nancy.

Before leaving the phone she called her friend Police Chief McGinnis and gave him a word-for-word account of what had happened since her previous report. He was astounded and said he would get in touch with security officers at the St. Louis airports, public and private.

Then he added, “Great work, Nancy! We’ll have this Fleetfoot Joe in custody in no time!”

Once more Nancy returned to the living room. Everyone was standing, and Mrs. Wabash was saying good-bye.

“Mrs. Wabash,” said Nancy quickly, “what was your real purpose in coming to see me?”

“It’s no use now,” the Indian woman replied. “All the papers and most of the plaques I planned to show you are gone. I have no clues to offer.”

“Clues to what?” Nancy asked.

Mrs. Wabash looked at the girl with tears in her eyes. “Clues to a lost treasure in the Forgotten City.”

CHAPTER II

Safari Plans

EVERYONE in the Drew living room leaned forward in his chair, eagerly awaiting more of Mrs. Wabash's story.

"There are many, many pictures cut into the stolen tablets," she said, "but the main theme seems to tell when and where a treasure of gold was hidden. As you know, the ancient Indians in the United States did not use gold to any extent. Probably one reason was that it was too difficult to work with and their tools were crude.

"It is a great mystery as to the exact nature of this treasure, but from what I can judge, the tablets depict several golden sheets. How big they are, one cannot tell. And when they were made and where they came from is also a mystery."

Just then someone pounded on the front door, and the bell rang loudly. Puzzled, Nancy went to open the door.

"Hi, Nancy! Surprise!" cried four voices together.

Nancy beamed. Bess Marvin, George Fayne, and their dates were standing there, grinning.

"The surprise is great," Nancy replied. "Come in. I have a surprise of my own to show you."

George, a girl who enjoyed her boyish name, walked in first. She was slender and athletic looking and wore her hair short. Bess in contrast was blond with longer hair. She was slightly plump and pretty.

Burt Eddleton, George's date, was a stocky brunet and one could surmise at a glance that he was a football player. Dave Evans, Bess's friend, had dark hair and eyes, and though he too was a football player, he had a much slighter build than Burt.

The young people walked into the living room and were introduced to Mrs. Wabash. "I am very glad to meet you," she replied. Smiling, she added, "I am Nancy's surprise."

Ned laughed. "Well, kids, the joke is on us. We thought we were going to keep a secret from Nancy Drew, and I find she's way ahead of us. She has a wonderful lead."

"What is it?" George asked eagerly.

Nancy requested Mrs. Wabash to repeat the part of her story she had already told, and then to continue with the rest of it.

"You probably wonder how I happened to come to see Nancy Drew. A friend of mine who sometimes lectures at the University of Nevada, Professor Donald Maguire, has been trying to help me decipher the petroglyphs. The tablets came into my possession a few months ago. We concluded that the pictures indicate that several golden sheets were hidden, probably in the desert."

Dave spoke. "Mrs. Wabash, have you any idea how old the gold sheets are?"

The woman shook her head. "I am hoping that when they are found, they will contain symbols that will tell us their age and where the gold came from."

The whole story intrigued Nancy, who wanted to start out at once to hunt for the precious treasure. Each new case fascinated her from the time she first was asked to solve *The Secret of the Old Cloak* through many adventures up to the most recent one, *Mystery of the Glowing Eye*.

Mrs. Wabash went on, "Don Maguire heard at the University of Nevada that Nancy was going on to dig out in the desert."

"I was what?" Nancy interrupted.

The other young people laughed and Ned said, "That was really the surprise we had for you. Some Emerson students and their friends are joining a group from the University of Nevada and going into the desert to search for a forgotten city, or at least some of the artifacts the ancient people may have left."

Nancy's eyes sparkled. "How wonderful!" she exclaimed. "You all did manage to keep the secret and even though I accidentally came upon what may be a clue, you did surprise me. I think this is exciting. When do we leave?"

Ned replied, "We consulted your dad and he said you may go any time, but you will probably want to finish a little job he has given you. He thinks it will take two or three days."

Mrs. Wabash said, "Professor Don Maguire told me that Nancy is the finest amateur detective in the country, and that is the reason why I came all the way to River Heights to see her."

She informed Nancy's friends about the theft of her dictionary and her precious stone tablets and concluded by saying, "I don't know whether I have an enemy or the thief merely wanted to get hold of the tablets. With them he could try solving the mystery himself and find the gold."

"In any case, I have decided to leave this one tablet with you, Nancy. See what you can figure out and if you can possibly trace the others, it will make me very happy."

"Thank you," said Nancy. "I'll make a drawing of this plaque and keep the original in a safe place. When I come out to Nevada, I'll return it to you."

Before saying good-bye the Indian told the young people that a young woman in Nevada named Miss Antler might be of great help to them. "Try to locate her when you get out there."

Dave offered to drive Mrs. Wabash back to the motel and she accepted. Nancy's thoughts returned to the tablet, which she picked up to study.

Suddenly the young sleuth wondered if her eyes were deceiving her. A small figure in the lower left-hand corner was glowing. It looked like a scorpion, its head raised high.

"Look, everybody!" Nancy cried out.

As her friends crowded around the tablet, the figure faded. Though Nancy tried hard to explain what she had seen, the others thought the girl detective was joking.

"Nancy Drew, you're imagining things," Bess said. "I don't see a thing there. All those funny little pictures are on the other parts of this tablet."

No more was said, but Nancy wondered about the strange occurrence. The scorpion did not light up again, but through her magnifying glass, Nancy could see the arachnid plainly. She continued to study the scorpion. Had some trick of the sunlight coming into the room suddenly made it glint? She tried holding the tablet in the exact position she had held it before. Nothing happened.

“What is the thing you saw?” Bess asked.

Nancy shrugged and said she would get a book on wild animal life in the southwestern United States. Presently she came to the conclusion that what she had thought was an arachnid was a chuckwalla, a sixteen-inch lizard, which was harmless, although it looked menacing. She reported this to her friends.

“Here’s something amazing about it,” Nancy said. “The chuckwalla can wedge itself into a crevice and then inflate its body. This makes it almost impossible for an enemy to drag the creature out. By the way, it says here that at one time the chuckwalla was used as food by the Indians.”

“Maybe,” George said, “there was a group who called themselves the Chuckwalla Tribe.”

Afterward, Nancy begged her friends to tell her more about the trip they had planned. Ned explained that it would be a caravan.

“There’ll be trucks, cars, Land Rovers, and even a whole kitchen on a truck chassis.”

George grinned and looked at Bess. “That’s the place for you, cousin. You can cook all the goodies you want.”

“Okay,” Bess retorted. “I’ll fix you. I’ll make a tasty dish just for you and fill it with red peppers!”

The others laughed, and Burt remarked, “I guess that will hold you for a while, George.”

At that moment the young people heard a car turn into the driveway. Mr. Drew was arriving home. In a few minutes the tall, attractive lawyer entered the living room and greeted Nancy and her friends.

When he heard how Nancy had received advance information about the treasure hunt, he laughed. But his smile turned to a frown a little later, when he was told about Fleetfoot Joe and his attack on Mrs. Wabash.

“I’m sorry to hear this,” he said. “Nancy, of course you’ve notified the police.”

“Yes, Dad. They promised to call if there were any leads on the thief, but I haven’t heard from them.”

Ten minutes later Hannah Gruen came into the living room and announced dinner. Everyone went into the dining room, where the housekeeper had set a lovely table.

Nancy gave the motherly housekeeper a hug. “Now I know why you wouldn’t let me in the kitchen,” she said. “How attractively you’ve arranged the flowers! And what a delicious-looking salad!”

This was to be the first course. After everyone was seated, Mr. Drew said grace, then the meal started.

The group was about halfway through dinner when Togo began to bark frantically. He raced from the kitchen through the dining room and into the living room. Here he jumped onto a chair and gave a series of short, quick barks. Then he ran to the front door and barked again insistently. Nancy left her chair and followed him.

“What’s the matter, Togo?” she asked. “Do you hear another dog outside, or is somebody at the door?”

The bell had not rung, but Nancy opened the door and let Togo out. Seeing no one, she was puzzled and ran after Togo.

Suddenly a man’s voice cried out from the darkness, “Don’t follow me! And call off your dog, or I’ll shoot him!”

CHAPTER III

Vanished Guests

WHISTLING loudly and clearly, Nancy hoped Togo would hear her and come back. She called his name, clapped her hands, and whistled some more. The little terrier did not return.

Suddenly she heard a shot. Nancy's heart sank. Had the dreadful man carried out his threat?

"Oh, it just can't be true!" she told herself. Again she called loudly, "Togo! Togo! Where are you?"

By this time Nancy's friends and Mr. Drew had rushed outdoors. They could not see Nancy but could hear her, and set off in the direction from which the sounds came. Finally they reached her.

"What happened? What's up?" Ned asked.

Quickly Nancy explained and there were murmurs of anger and sympathy. Ned and George had brought flashlights, and now everyone searched for footprints. Apparently the fugitive had been standing in mud, and it was easy to follow the indentations left by his shoes. Right beside them were Togo's tiny prints. The group hurried on. Finally all the impressions ended at a main road.

Mr. Drew said, "The man must have entered a car here."

Bess's eyes were filled with tears. "Do you think he took Togo with him?"

The lawyer said he had no idea, but there was one thing of which he was sure: up to this point the dog had not been shot.

"Let's hope," said Bess, "that the man didn't take Togo away and kill him somewhere else."

It was a doleful group that walked back to the Drew home. Hannah had prepared a delicious apple snow pudding with raspberry sauce. Everyone ate it, though there was little conversation.

When everybody had finished, Nancy said she wanted to examine the man's footprints. From a casual first glance at them, she was sure they would match those that had been left before by Fleetfoot.

Mr. Drew said, "After you do that, I think we'd better call the police, especially if the footprints do match those in our yard."

All the young people went outdoors, some to follow Nancy and the others to look at the prints at the rear of the Drew home.

"There are good impressions near the hedge," Nancy told the group, as she beamed her flashlight on the latest series. She was convinced they belonged to the same man, Fleetfoot Joe.

"I'll call headquarters," Nancy said, "and ask if there's any report on Fleetfoot."

When she reached the phone, Nancy changed her mind and called Chief McGinnis at home instead of headquarters. He was astounded at the latest bit of news and angry about the dog's disappearance and possible death.

“We have no leads yet on Fleetfoot,” he told Nancy, “but my men are working on it. Up to now we assumed he had skipped town, but evidently he’s still around. What do you think he wants?”

“I believe,” Nancy replied, “he’s looking for the one tablet he did not take from Mrs. Wabash’s bag. We have it here.”

During Nancy’s telephone conversation, her friends scoured the neighborhood in all directions. It was possible that Togo had been shot just before the man got into the car and was trying to make his way home. After a twenty-minute search they returned to the house and reported failure.

Bess put an arm around Nancy. “This is dreadful, but don’t give up hope. You know Togo is a very smart little dog. Let’s hope that somehow he gets away from Fleetfoot.”

Nancy smiled and gave Bess a hug. “Thanks. You’re sweet to be so concerned.”

The girl detective felt that with Fleetfoot still in the area, Mrs. Wabash might be in danger. She decided to alert the woman to the possibility. She dialed the motel where Mrs. Wabash was staying and was shocked at the reply she received from the operator there.

“Mrs. Wabash checked out and left no forwarding address.”

Nancy was surprised that the Indian woman would leave without telling her, but perhaps she had received some message from home and had decided to go back at once. Nancy tried to learn from the desk clerk and the porter whether or not Mrs. Wabash had made a plane reservation.

“No, she didn’t,” was the reply.

She had scarcely put down the receiver, when Nancy heard aggressive barking at the front door. She literally leaped across the hall and flung the front door open. Her little terrier jumped into his mistress’s arms.

“Oh, you’re safe! You weren’t shot after all!” she cried out, hugging her pet.

His response was to lick her cheeks, then jump out of her arms and race toward the kitchen.

Hannah greeted him with a joyful, “Togo! You’re back! And you want something to eat. Well, certainly think you deserve it.”

Everyone had followed the little dog into the kitchen and George remarked, “If Togo could only talk!”

Suddenly Nancy leaned down and looked at the dog’s collar. “Here’s a note!” she told the others. Quickly she opened it, read the message, then reread it aloud:

Leave stone with pictures by old oak tree at entrance of abandoned mine in Ironton after sunrise tomorrow.

“So Fleetfoot was here to get the plaque!” Nancy exclaimed.

Hannah beamed at Togo. “And this little fellow scared him away.”

Nancy asked her father what he thought they should do about the note. He felt that it should not be ignored and suggested they contact Chief McGinnis. Once more Nancy dialed the officer’s home and spoke to him.

Upon hearing the message, he chuckled. “You work fast on your mysteries, Nancy Drew,” he

commented. "Let me see, now. I guess the best thing would be to play along with this fellow. Suppose you find a stone about the same size as the tablet and wrap it up in a package. I'll send a plainclothesman for it tomorrow afternoon."

At once Nancy told him that Ned, Burt, and Dave were at the house. "Couldn't they leave the package?" she asked.

Once more the man chuckled. "Well you've made pretty good detectives of them, I admit," the chief said. "All right, you do it that way and let me know what happens."

After hanging up, Nancy had a sudden idea and she said to her friends, "If we give the thief a plain stone, he'll know right away we didn't carry out his wishes, and will probably return to do us more harm. Why don't we try to please him and yet frustrate him?"

George wanted to know how Nancy intended to do this.

The young detective smiled. "Evidently the series of tablets tell an important story, and perhaps even give directions to the treasure. One wrong link in the chain of pictures might spoil the whole thing."

Mr. Drew, who was in the background, listening, grinned. "An excellent idea, Nancy," he said. "What do you have in mind? Carving some petroglyphs?"

Nancy replied, "Exactly." She turned to the boys. "Tomorrow morning, would you mind hunting for a stone that looks like the one here?"

The boys agreed and took a good look at the tablet. Nancy found a short ruler and measured the length, width, and thickness of the stone.

Bess remarked, "This old tablet is quite reddish. Do you think you can find anything that color around here?"

Mr. Drew answered the question. "Over in the next county the earth and the stones are quite red. I suggest you go there."

In a short while the boys left with Bess and George to return to their homes for the night. Nancy and Ned stayed up for another hour while she made a careful drawing of the tablet that belonged to Mr. Wabash. Then she began designing a new set of petroglyphs to put on the stone the boys would bring back.

When the drawings were finished, Ned laughed. "That's misleading all right," he said. "You've turned a sheep into a goat, rain into sunshine, and a long line turning to the right directly to the left."

Both young people began to yawn. Nancy picked up all her work and headed for the stairs. "I'll finish this tomorrow."

Ned kissed her good night and said, "See you in the morning."

"Good night, Ned. Sweet dreams."

Soon after breakfast the following day, Ned set off to pick up Burt and Dave. In a short time George and Bess arrived at the Drew home.

Up in her room Nancy showed them the drawings she had made for the new tablet.

"It's so much like the other and yet so different," Bess remarked.

“The whole thing, I hope,” said Nancy, “will portray a misleading story to be put on the stone that the boys will bring.”

Bess looked at the work, then asked, “Would you mind explaining to me what all this means? It’s worse than a jigsaw puzzle.”

Nancy smiled. “Part of this is guesswork, of course, but here’s my interpretation of the original story.”

CHAPTER IV

The Wiretapper

BESS and George sat on the floor in Nancy's bedroom and waited for the young detective to tell her story. She held up the drawing and pointed.

"You see this big man here? I believe he was the leader of a group represented on this plaque. You'll notice he has something on his head that could be a fancy headdress. I understand that in ancient times the leader always covered his head to indicate this rank."

Bess interrupted to ask, "And this string of smaller people, who are they?"

Nancy's guess was that they might be his family or his servants.

George remarked that some of the human figures wore skirts. "Did women wear skirts thousands of years ago?"

"Apparently," Nancy replied. "I read some place that the skirt was really like a working outfit. It may have had pockets or loops through which cooking utensils could be slipped."

Bess began to giggle. "Imagine carrying a stone fork and spoon around with you for cooking!"

George added, "To stir up venison stew, flavored with some bitter tree roots. Probably better for you, Bess, than that sweet, gooey gravy you make out of chicken-leg gelatin and honey."

Nancy laughed, then said, "Venison is delicious if you have good strong teeth!"

She now continued with her guess about the meaning of the petroglyphs on Mrs. Wabash's table. "Whether it was the weather or the long trek or some other reason, I believe a great many members of the tribe became ill or died. This is indicated by the figures in the line who are lying on the ground."

"Then too some of them may have been attacked by wild beasts or poisonous scorpions or vicious birds. Here are pictures of all three. This is a bucking ram. Over there is a huge raven. And down here is a rock scorpion."

George asked, "Are there any poisonous scorpions?"

"According to this animal book, yes," Nancy replied. "They have slender tails and are yellow in color. It says here that the poison causes pain over one's entire body."

"Ugh!" said Bess. Then she asked, "How does a scorpion sting anyone?"

Again Nancy referred to the book and read, "The sting is located at the end of the tail. It consists of a very sharp, curved tip attached to a bulbous organ. This organ contains glands that secrete poison. It's like a poison reservoir."

Bess looked alarmed. "And we're going to find scorpions out at our campsite in Nevada?"

"Sure thing," George replied. "If you get bitten, it'll be a long walk for you back to town to

doctor. And of course the rest of us will be too busy to drive you there.”

“You’re horrid,” said Bess, tossing her head. “Just the same, I don’t want a scorpion to bite me!”

Nancy interrupted George’s kidding to say that the article explained what could be done for scorpion sting.

“First you tie a tourniquet near the puncture between the sting and the victim’s heart. Then put an ice pack over the sting. Even better than that, fill a vessel with half ice and half water, and have the person completely submerge the stung area.”

“Please, no more,” Bess begged.

Nancy changed the subject and went on with her story about the tablet. “See this symbol that looks like a rake? Mrs. Wabash said it is supposed to indicate rain, probably heavy rain.”

“I see it,” said Bess. “Maybe these poor people were lost in a flood.”

“That’s possible,” Nancy agreed. “At one time there must have been plenty of rain because the whole area was very lush and in places quite swampy.”

George was skeptical of this. “How can they tell that?” she asked.

Nancy said mainly through the trees. “In the Valley of Fire in the desert outside of Las Vegas, there are pieces of petrified trees. They had to be submerged in water with chemicals in it for a long, long time before they became petrified.

“Also, by reading the rings on tree trunks, as you know, one can count the age of a tree because each ring represents a year. If the rings are wide that means there was plenty of water. If they’re very narrow, there’s been a drought.

“Apparently in the place where we’re going to camp, the vegetation went from very green and watery, probably millions of years ago, to less and less rainfall. The result was that by ten thousand B.C., streams slowly began to dry up. Finally the area became a desert.”

George asked, “What are these lines for?” She pointed. “They look like steps with no sides or support.”

Nancy nodded. “I think it represents a stone stairway chiseled out of the rock by the people who lived at a certain spot. George, do you know what this means? The steps might even lead down to the buried golden treasure!”

George grinned. “Don’t get carried away, Nancy.”

Bess interrupted. “Here come the boys.”

The three girls raced downstairs, and each asked, “Did you find anything?”

Burt took a slab of rock out of his pocket. It was a perfect specimen for Nancy to use for a substitute stone.

“That’s great!” she exclaimed. “You boys are going to be wonderful at the dig in the Nevada desert.”

“Hope you’re right,” Ned replied.

He took a package tied in cloth from a bag he was carrying.

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