

Nancy Drew Mystery Stories

THE QUEST OF THE MISSING MAP



By
CAROLYN
KEENE

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NANCY DREW MYSTERY STORIES

THE QUEST OF THE MISSING MAP

BY
CAROLYN KEENE

Author of
THE MYSTERY AT THE MOSS-COVERED MANSION

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The Quest of the Missing Map



“WE’VE FOUND THE TREASURE!”

The Quest of the Missing Map Frontispiece (Page [210](#))

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CHAPTER I

The Haunted Studio

Golden hair flying in the wind, Nancy Drew ran up the porch steps and let herself into the front door of her home. The voice of Hannah Gruen, the housekeeper, plainly reached her from the back of the dwelling.

“Why don’t you tell your mysterious story to Nancy?” she heard the woman say to someone. “She’s the very person to help you.”

The girl dropped the books and portfolio she was carrying onto a sofa.

“Hello, I’m home,” she announced.

Nancy could not imagine to whom the housekeeper had been speaking. Her curiosity had been aroused, however, and the mere mention of a mystery quickened her pulses.

“Oh, it’s you, Nancy!” Mrs. Gruen said, coming forward with a dark-haired, blue-eyed girl of about twenty.

“Art school was dismissed fifteen minutes early,” Nancy replied.

Her gaze fell upon the housekeeper’s attractive visitor who smiled in a friendly manner.

“This is Ellen Smith,” Mrs. Gruen introduced quickly. “You’ve frequently heard me speak of her.”

“Yes, indeed.” Nancy spoke heartily as she responded to Ellen’s greeting. “Our good housekeeper was with your family before she came here, I believe.”

“I was always sorry she left us,” said the caller, “but when Mother and Father returned from their trip around the world, Mother took charge of our home herself.

“Father has suffered some serious financial reverses,” the girl continued. “More recently he has become crippled through an automobile accident.”

“I’m so sorry,” said Nancy sympathetically.

“Ellen has been telling me that she has been offered a summer position here in River Heights,” spoke up Mrs. Gruen. “If she takes it the salary will go a long way toward paying her tuition at Blackstone Music College.”

“Do you study piano?” Nancy asked Ellen with increasing interest.

“At present I am taking vocal lessons, although I play the piano also.”

“Ellen has a lovely voice,” Mrs. Gruen interposed. “A few weeks ago she sang over the radio, and her teacher encourages her to devote all her time to music.”

“If only I could!” the student murmured wistfully. “But already I’ve borrowed money and I’m worried about how I shall pay it back,” the girl went on, her pretty face drawing into a pucker of concern. “I want to take the position because it pays very well, but the place and the people have an air of mystery about them. I’m afraid I won’t be able to get along with Trixie.”

“Who is she?” inquired Nancy curiously.

“Oh, Trixie is Mrs. Chatham’s seven-year-old daughter. I’ve never met the child but I understand she’s hard to manage.”

“Your task would be to look after her?”

“Mrs. Chatham wants me to live there and give Trixie piano lessons. The mother is a strange person, a widow, and trying at times.”

“Surely you’ve heard of her, Nancy,” the housekeeper interrupted. “She owns that estate called Rocky Edge along the river.”

“Yes, I know the place.”

“I am to call on Mrs. Chatham today,” said Ellen, “but I dread going alone. I really stopped in here to see if Hannah Gruen would go with me.”

“Why not have Nancy go with you?” the woman asked thoughtfully. “She’s had a great deal of experience in judging people. If she thinks it is all right for you to take the position, I am sure it will be.”

“I’ll be glad to go,” Nancy said at once.

She was eager to be of assistance, and rather looked forward to meeting the wealthy and eccentric Mrs. Chatham.

“I don’t like to put you to so much trouble,” Ellen protested. “All the same, I’ll be glad to have you with me.”

“You’re not afraid of Mrs. Chatham?”

“Not exactly. I shall try desperately to get along with her and Trixie. I love children and like to work with them. At Rocky Edge I’ll have time to practice my own music. I understand there’s a small music studio on the estate.”

As the two girls were about to leave the Drew house, Mrs. Gruen suggested to Ellen that she tell Nancy about the other matter they had been discussing. At once the Drew girl was reminded of the words she had heard when she entered the house. Something about a mystery!

“It has to do with a map and a buried treasure,” said Ellen, stepping into the car.

Nancy was to be disappointed about learning anything more, however, and though her curiosity piqued her, she would not think of prying further into the other’s secret. Ellen turned the conversation toward the two girls’ interest in art; one of them in music, the other in drawing.

“What are you specializing in?” she asked Nancy.

“Drawing figures and faces,” replied Nancy. “As a child I always filled in the o’s on magazines and newspapers with eyes, nose, mouth and ears, so I guess Dad thought it might be a good idea if I should turn my diddling to good account!” she laughed.

The car sped to the outskirts of the town, then turned into a shady road. Nancy presently drew up near a sign which read *Rocky Edge*, and drove slowly toward the house. It proved to be a large, old-fashioned place, half-hidden from the road by masses of high, overgrown shrubs. A curving drive led to a pillared porch.

“It’s rather creepy here, isn’t it?” Ellen remarked nervously, as they left the car.

“Oh, I don’t think so,” Nancy responded. “No trimming has been done on the grounds, but that gives the place atmosphere.”

“I could do without it myself,” Ellen said a bit uneasily.

She went ahead of Nancy, pressing her finger on the doorbell. Almost at once the door was flung open, and the two astonished girls found themselves facing Mrs. Chatham’s daughter Trixie.

“I don’t know what you’re selling!” the child cried. “Whatever it is we don’t want any! So go away!”

“Just a minute, please,” Nancy interposed. “We came to talk with your mother about Miss Smith giving you music lessons.”

Trixie’s dark eyes opened wide as she stared first at Nancy, then at Ellen. She wore her hair in two long braids, and her short dress made her thin legs seem mere spindles.

“I don’t want anyone to teach me!” the child exclaimed. “There are too many now. If another one comes, I’ll—I’ll run away.”

“Trixie!”

Mrs. Chatham, a stout woman dressed in a flashy red and white silk dress, had come to the door. Seizing the child by an arm, she pulled her away from the door. Then as Trixie began to whimper, she said contritely:

“There, my pet, I didn’t mean to hurt you.”

Ellen introduced Nancy, and Mrs. Chatham graciously invited the girls into an elegantly furnished living room. She began a lengthy account of her daughter’s shortcomings, unmindful that the child was listening to every word.

At the first opportunity Nancy arose from her chair and asked Trixie to show her the grounds. She was a little puzzled by Mrs. Chatham’s critical attitude toward her child. Always eager to help others, the Drew girl at once decided to try to determine the reason for Trixie’s behavior. She smiled at the little girl, told her a few stories, and soon had her laughing gaily.

“I wish you were going to be here instead of that other girl,” Trixie announced abruptly as they walked along a shady path. “I like you.”

“You’ll like Ellen too,” Nancy assured her. “And I’ll come to see you sometimes.”

“All right. But I hope she won’t try to boss me like the others do. No one can manage me!”

“I’m afraid you’ve heard your mother say that so often you believe it,” Nancy laughed. “Now let’s forget about being naughty. Suppose you show me the grounds. Shall we go first to that little house?”

Through the trees at a spot overlooking the river she could see the red roof of what appeared to be a tiny cottage. To her surprise Trixie held back.

“I won’t go there! No, no!”

“Why not, Trixie?”

“Because the place is haunted, that’s why!”

Nancy gazed at the child in astonishment, believing that she must be joking. But Trixie was not joking. Her freckled face was tense with anxiety.

“I wouldn’t go inside the Ship Cottage for anything!” she said.

“The Ship Cottage?” Nancy repeated. “Is that its name?”

“It’s what I call it. Please, let’s go the other way.”

Trixie tugged at Nancy’s hand but could not make her turn in the opposite direction.

“I’m sure there’s no reason why you should be afraid,” Nancy said kindly. “If you won’t come, then I shall go alone. I’ll prove to you that the place is not haunted.”

“Please don’t go there,” the child pleaded frantically. “You’ll be sorry if you do.”

“What makes you so afraid of it?”

The little girl would not answer. Jerking free, she raced in the opposite direction.

“Poor child,” thought Nancy, shrugging. “I do feel sorry for her.”

Not for a moment did she believe that there was any basis for the child’s fears regarding the so-called “Ship Cottage.” Because she knew that Trixie would watch from afar, she walked slowly down the path to the quaint little white house. The door was unlocked and Nancy let herself in. She beheld a dusty but otherwise pleasant room lined with many shelves of books. At once her gaze traveled to several ship models which were placed on the mantelpiece above the fireplace and on many articles of furniture.

“So that’s why Trixie calls this place ‘Ship Cottage,’ ” she thought, examining one of the finely made models. “It’s really a sort of studio.”

Nancy replaced the tiny vessel on the mantel and crossed the room to seat herself at an old grand piano. The ivory keys had turned yellow and cobwebs festooned the mahogany case.

“It’s probably badly out of tune,” she mused, running her fingers over the bass keys.

Not a sound came from the instrument. Nancy gasped in astonishment, and played a series of chords. Although the keys were depressed, the piano gave forth no sound.

“Well, of all things!” she exclaimed. “What can be the matter?”

She bent to examine the pedals to see if the piano had a spring lock which prevented the strings from being struck. She could discover nothing of the kind.

As Nancy straightened she thought she heard a sound behind her. At the same moment she caught a reflection in the mirror above the fireplace. The sight sent icy chills racing down her spine.

Unmistakably a wall panel behind her had slid open. Even at this moment cruel eyes were watching her every move.

“Leave here at once and never come back!” came a hissed, rasping whisper.

CHAPTER II

A Secret Panel

Nancy wheeled about and caught a fleeting glimpse of a long row of brass buttons down the front of a man's coat. The next instant the panel had closed.

In her excitement the girl's hand brushed over the piano keys. A weird crash of chords broke the eerie stillness of the cottage.

Usually steady of nerve, Nancy tried to be calm but her heart thumped madly. Deciding it might be dangerous to investigate the cottage further at this time, she hastily left the studio. Once outside, she gazed about the grounds, but no one was in sight.

"I'm glad Trixie didn't come with me," she said to herself. "I've never believed in ghosts and I refuse to do so now. All the same, something is very wrong at this place."

Always of an inquiring turn of mind, Nancy nevertheless understood the wisdom of using caution in any investigation she might attempt. Nothing intrigued her more than a mystery. At River Heights where she had lived since her mother's death, the Drew girl had won an enviable record as an amateur detective, solving such cases as "The Secret of the Old Clock" and "The Mystery of the Brass Bound Trunk."

In her quest for clues she frequently was assisted by her father, Carson Drew, who was a well-known criminal lawyer, or by her chums, Bess Marvin and George Fayne. The latter always enjoyed the surprise people registered when they heard her boyish name. Recently the three girls had shared an exciting adventure when they had visited a secluded Moss-Covered Mansion. Not only did they solve the mystery of various strange sounds which issued from the quaint old dwelling, but they were responsible for the recovery of a missing person.

Now as Nancy stared moodily at the Ship Cottage, she wished that Bess and George were with her to talk things over. Why had the piano made no sound when first her fingers had moved over the keys?

"It wasn't imagination," she mused. "At first it didn't play, then for no reason at all, it did!"

Just then the girl heard her name called. Turning, she saw Ellen motioning to her from far up the path.

"Coming!" Nancy answered.

"I'm ready to leave whenever you are," Ellen announced, joining her new friend. "What became of Trixie?"

"She ran off."

"An impossible child, isn't she?"

"Oh, I rather like her," Nancy declared with sincerity. "I can't say as much for her mother."

"Nor I. She speaks so harshly to her daughter, and then the next minute she is as sweet as honey. I can't understand her."

"You've decided not to come here for the summer, I hope?"

"Mrs. Chatham offered me a very good salary, so I told her I would think it over a few days."

"I've been considering the matter," Nancy said slowly. "There's something about Rocky Edge I don't quite like. I wish you wouldn't come here—at least not until we've made a

complete investigation of the place.”

“Why, Nancy!” Ellen stared at the girl in astonishment. “You speak so seriously! Have you learned anything about Mrs. Chatham?”

“Not a thing,” Nancy answered truthfully. “It’s mostly a feeling I have. I’ll explain it later. When must you give your answer?”

“Mrs. Chatham didn’t say, but I imagine she’d want to know soon.”

During the ride into the city Ellen, sensing that her friend was keeping information from her, sought to draw her out. Smilingly, Nancy refused to divulge what she had learned.

“I’ll tell my secret when you tell yours,” she joked. “But seriously, please don’t accept Mrs. Chatham’s offer until after I talk with Dad.”

“All right, I won’t,” Ellen promised.

Nancy took the girl to a bus which would carry her back to the Music College, then drove to her father’s office. Although he was unusually busy, the man laid aside his papers, kissed his daughter affectionately, and listened attentively to her tale about the mysterious Ship Cottage.

“You’re certain you saw the panel open and close, and heard the warning?” he asked when she had finished the story.

“Yes, I did, Dad. Also, the piano was mute at first. Then later it played. How do you account for such happenings?”

“I can’t,” replied the lawyer soberly. “However, I am sure of one thing. You must not go there again.”

“Oh, Dad!” Nancy protested in dismay. “How can I help Ellen?”

“Well, don’t go alone,” he amended, flashing her an understanding smile. “You’re all I have, Nancy, and I can’t have you taking unnecessary risks.”

“You believe it would be unwise for Ellen to accept Mrs. Chatham’s offer?”

“I should say it would be most unwise until we’ve checked the place thoroughly.”

“I had hoped you might be able to tell me something about it, Dad.”

Mr. Drew gazed out of the window for several seconds. Then he said slowly, “It seems to me I do recall some trouble a few years ago at Rocky Edge. But that would have been before the Chathams bought it.”

“Who owned it?” asked Nancy.

“I can’t remember the name of the man,” her father answered, “but I think he was an inventor and there was a strange lawsuit against him, due to one of his gadgets. As soon as I can, I’ll look into the matter for you.”

“I wonder if there might be some connection between the gadgets and the strange things that happened today,” suggested Nancy.

“I don’t know. It seems to me Mr. Chatham was a friend of the owner and bought the place after the man died. Mr. Chatham himself passed away less than two years ago. He had lived on the estate only a short time.”

Nancy was silent a moment, then asked her father what she should tell Ellen.

“Advise her to stall,” Carson Drew responded promptly.

The Drew girl decided that instead of telephoning to Ellen she would drive the next afternoon to Blackstone Music College. The talented young woman was to take part in a recital and Nancy was eager to hear her sing. She invited her chums, Bess and George, to accompany her.

“We seem to be late,” George remarked as the group entered the college auditorium. “Nearly all the seats are taken.”

“We’ll squeeze in somewhere,” declared Nancy cheerfully. “I see two places down front where the performers are seated.”

She induced George and Bess to go forward and take the vacant places, asking them to introduce themselves to Ellen Smith afterward and tell her the Drew girl was there. As Nancy’s gaze roved over the audience she saw Mrs. Chatham, half-hidden beneath an enormous picture hat, near the rear of the auditorium. There was an empty chair beside the woman. Impulsively the girl made her way to it.

“Are you saving this seat, Mrs. Chatham?” she asked politely.

The woman shook her head slightly. The next moment, recognizing the newcomer, she beamed upon the girl as if she were an old friend. Thus encouraged, Nancy began a conversation which she adroitly steered in the direction she wished it to take. By declaring that she had found Rocky Edge picturesque, she induced the widow to reveal that the property originally had been purchased by Mr. Chatham from the estate of an inventor.

“We have found a few ingenious gadgets of his in the house,” she said lightly.

Tucking this interesting bit of information away for future consideration, Nancy next inquired if Mr. Chatham ever had collected ship models.

“Oh, dear, no, the ship models I have belonged to my first husband,” Mrs. Chatham responded with a pensive sigh. “He was such a good, kind man. It made me so sad to see those darling little boats in the house that I asked Mr. Chatham to move them to the studio.”

Nancy watched the widow’s face closely.

“Do you frequently go there?” she inquired casually. “To the studio, I mean?”

“Oh, no, almost never.”

“I suppose it was built by your husband?”

“Indeed not,” the widow corrected. “It was on the property when we took over the place.”

Nancy would have asked additional questions had not the orchestra begun to play. For an hour and a half she enjoyed the recital and was proud that Ellen Smith’s vocal solos were by far the best numbers on the program.

“Do come and see me sometime,” Mrs. Chatham invited casually as she arose to leave the auditorium.

“I should love to,” Nancy answered without an instant’s hesitation. “I’ll try to drive to Rocky Edge within the next few days.”

“Yes, do,” the widow responded.

Just then Bess, George and Ellen came through the auditorium, seeking Nancy.

“Oh, here you are!” exclaimed the latter. “We’ve looked everywhere for you.”

She paused, slightly embarrassed to find herself face to face with Mrs. Chatham.

“My dear, your singing was marvelous, perfectly marvelous,” the widow gushed. “I had no idea you were so talented. I’ll be happy to have you teach music to my Trixie. You *are* accepting the position?”

Ellen glanced at Nancy, seeking a cue as to the proper response.

“I—I don’t know what to say,” she stammered nervously. “I want to think it over.”

“I must know at once,” insisted Mrs. Chatham.

CHAPTER III

The Lost Twin

Nancy was afraid that since Ellen needed the money so badly she would accept the proposition without further delay. She was greatly relieved, therefore, when the girl replied:

“I am sorry, Mrs. Chatham. I can’t possibly give you my answer for at least a week!”

“Why, that is ridiculous!” the widow protested haughtily. “You can’t expect me to keep the position open indefinitely.”

The situation had become an exceedingly awkward one. Sensing that Ellen was on the verge of making a decision, Nancy quickly spoke up.

“Don’t you think it would be difficult to find someone else who knows as much about music and who would be kind to Trixie?” she asked, hoping to gain time for Ellen.

Mrs. Chatham admitted unwillingly that this might be true. She turned again to Ellen. “Since you request it, I’ll wait a week, but no longer.”

“Thank you. I promise I’ll give you my answer by that time,” the girl replied.

Without waiting to meet Nancy’s other friends, the widow quickly left the auditorium. George and Bess, who had overheard the conversation, were not favorably impressed by the woman’s manner.

“She’s so bossy,” remarked George with a grimace. “I certainly wouldn’t want to work for a person like her.”

“I hope you can do something about her clothes,” giggled Bess. “They’re definitely not appropriate for her.”

As the girls were about to say good-bye, Ellen startled them by offering a suggestion.

“Nancy, if you haven’t any special plans, would you like to drive to my home and hear the secret Hannah Gruen spoke of?”

Nothing could have pleased the Drew girl more, and her chums listened eagerly for further words.

“You mean you’ll tell us on the way there!” asked Nancy.

“Not exactly. The secret really isn’t mine to tell. It’s Father’s.”

Soon the group was spinning along the road toward the Smith home in Wayland. The curiosity of the three girls from River Heights was great, but they were forced to wait, for Ellen did not refer to the matter again.

“Do you go back and forth to Music College every day?” Bess presently asked Ellen.

“Oh, no,” replied the singer. “I board at Blackstone. Tomorrow morning I have no classes so I shan’t have to be there early.”

When they reached Wayland, Ellen directed Nancy to a small, old-fashioned house. As the latter slowed down to a stop, she saw a heavy-set, middle-aged man in a brown suit hurriedly leaving the dwelling. His jaw was set and his eyes blazed. Without looking to left or right he jumped into a blue roadster at the curb, slammed the door, and shot away.

“Nice caller,” giggled Bess.

Ellen frowned. “I—I hope nothing has happened,” she stammered, quickly getting out of the car.

Nancy, true to her instincts as a detective, noted the license number and model of the rapidly disappearing car. Then she followed the others into the house. Nancy was presented to

Mrs. Smith, a kindly, white-haired woman in her late fifties.

“Mother, who was that man in the blue roadster?” Ellen inquired at the first opportunity.

“His name is Mr. Bellows,” the woman responded, a note of suppressed excitement in her voice. “He came to see your father about a very important matter.”

“Not the map?”

“Yes, but you must ask your father to tell you what he said.”

The girls crossed the hall to a room which had been made into a combination studio and bed chamber. Crippled in an automobile accident some months before, Mr. Smith still was confined to a wheel chair. His eyes lighted with pleasure as Ellen introduced her friends.

“Well, well, it does me good to have young people in the house,” he said heartily. “Sit down—that is, if you can find empty chairs.”

“Isn’t this a charming room!” George exclaimed approvingly, her gaze wandering from the shelves of travel books to a large map of the world which occupied one wall. “Are you interested in geography, Mr. Smith!”

“He’s interested in finding a treasure island!” Ellen answered eagerly. “Hannah Gruen thinks Nancy may be able to help you, Father. She has solved lots of mysteries.”

“Are you an expert at finding lost maps, young lady?” Mr. Smith asked, a twinkle in his eye.

“I never tried searching for one,” Nancy answered, matching his tone. “But I must say, all these hints of treasure sound intriguing.”

“Do tell your story, Father,” Ellen pleaded with growing impatience.

Thus urged, Mr. Smith began an absorbing tale which was to amaze his young listeners.

“First of all, I must tell you my true name,” he began. “I am known as Tomlin Smith, although Tomlin is really my last name. Years ago I added the name of the people who adopted me—Smith.

“My mother died when I was fourteen. Father was captain of an ocean-going freighter, the *Sea Hawk*. He had followed the sea his entire life, as had his father before him. After Mother’s death he was unwilling to trust my twin brother and me to the care of others, so he took the two of us aboard the freighter. We lived in his cabin and had the best the ship offered.”

“You must have visited a great many interesting places,” George remarked admiringly.

“I never saw half a dozen ports,” Mr. Smith contradicted. “Why, except for a turn of luck, I’d have gone down to Davy Jones’s Locker along with my father.”

“The ship sank?” Nancy asked, leaning forward in her chair.

“Yes, she went down in a hurricane. One of the worst on record, it was. The ancient seams of the old freighter cracked wide open. Every pump was manned by the crew but the ship was doomed. No one knew that better than my father.”

“What did you do then?” Bess inquired anxiously. “Take to the lifeboats?”

“I’m coming to that part in a minute. When my father realized that the old ship wouldn’t hold together much longer, he called my twin brother John Abner and me into his cabin. Knowing he might never see us again, he told us a strange story. He said that our seafaring grandfather once had hidden a treasure on a certain uncharted island in the Atlantic. He had left a map showing its location.

“Father took a parchment map from the safe,” Mr. Smith went on, “but instead of giving it to either of us, he tore it diagonally from corner to corner into two pieces. ‘You’re to share the treasure equally,’ said he, ‘and to make sure of that I am dividing the map in such a way that no one can find the buried chest without both sections.’ ”

“Then what happened?” George asked as Mr. Smith paused for breath.

“My brother and I were put into separate lifeboats, and I never saw him again. My father went down with the ship. A sudden explosion ripped her from bow to stern before he was ready to leave.

“Along with six sailors I landed on a small island. We lived there a year before we were picked up and brought to the United States. I tried without success to learn what had become of my brother John Abner, and finally was adopted by a family named Smith.”

“What became of your section of the map?” Nancy inquired. “Was it lost?”

“Nothing of the sort,” replied Mr. Smith. “All these years I’ve kept it, always hoping to find my brother and hunt for the buried chest. For a long time I had plenty of money and thought little about ever needing any. But now——”

The invalid looked wistfully from a window, while there was an awkward pause.

“Even if we should find the other half of the map, we wouldn’t have any money to look for the treasure,” sighed Mrs. Smith sadly.

“It would give me more satisfaction to learn what became of my twin brother,” her husband spoke up. “As for the treasure, I couldn’t rightly touch it if it should be found. My brother or his heirs would be entitled to a half portion.”

“We’ll not worry about the heirs just yet,” said Ellen, trying to cheer her parents. “You see, Nancy, my father looked up everyone named Tomlin he could find. Maybe his brother changed his name, and since he didn’t look like Dad nobody would think of the two being related. The torn map would be the only clue.”

Nancy had listened spellbound to the tale. Now she wanted to start at once to solve the mystery and to help the Smith family in every way she could.

“May I see your half of the map?” she asked eagerly.

Mr. Smith asked his daughter to bring the paper from the top drawer of a desk on the second floor. “I keep it up there so that it will be safe,” he said while Ellen was gone.

Presently she returned with a piece of aged parchment. Eagerly Nancy bent to examine the curious markings.

“Now right here is the treasure island,” Tomlin Smith indicated, “but as you see, the name has been torn off. All that appears on my half is ‘Im Island,’ which isn’t much help.”

“I wish I could make a copy of it,” Nancy said after studying the parchment a moment. “Do you mind?”

“Not at all,” Mr. Smith answered. “Only I’m sure you can’t make much out of it the way it is. As I told Mr. Bellows today, it’s not worth a nickel without my brother’s half.”

“Do you refer to the man who drove away in the blue car?” Nancy asked alertly.

“Yes, he left the house just as you girls arrived.”

“Mother said he came to see you about the map,” Ellen declared quickly. “How did he learn about it?”

“He claimed he heard the story from the son of a man who was first mate on my father’s lost freighter—an officer by the name of Tom Gambrell. Bellows offered me fifty dollars for my section of the map. Said he wanted it as a souvenir.”

“You didn’t agree to take it?” Nancy asked, genuinely distressed.

“No, I told Bellows I wouldn’t sell at any price. Even if the parchment is worthless, it was my father’s last gift. I’ll always keep it.”

“I’m glad you had no dealings with Mr. Bellows,” Nancy said in relief. “Of course I know nothing about him, but I didn’t like his looks. Also, since you changed your name, how did he

find you?"

"That's a good question," said Mr. Smith in admiration. "I never thought to ask him. But he'll probably be back and I'll put that up to him."

"Did you show him your piece of the map?" Nancy inquired.

"Yes, I had Mrs. Smith bring it downstairs," Ellen's father replied. "But Mr. Bellows didn't see it except for a second; not long enough to remember what was on it, if that's what you're afraid of."

Nancy said no more and busied herself copying the torn parchment while the others talked about the recital. Bess and George spoke glowingly of Ellen's singing and her parents smiled proudly. Presently Mrs. Smith appeared with a tray of refreshments which immediately brought a groan of protest from the plump Bess.

"Oh, what shall I do? That lovely cake, and I'm supposed to be on a diet!"

"Why worry about a few pounds?" teased George wickedly.

"I shouldn't if I were as skinny as you," Bess retorted. "Oh, well, I shall eat one small piece even if I do get horribly fat."

The afternoon was quickly slipping away, and soon the callers arose to leave. Nancy carefully folded the copy of the treasure map and put it into her purse.

"Probably I shan't learn anything pondering over it," she said to Mr. Smith as she bade him good-bye. "But it will be good mental exercise. And I'm eager to start figuring on how to go about finding your brother."

With Nancy at the wheel, she, Bess and George motored toward River Heights. Presently they stopped for a traffic light. Directly ahead, waiting at the same intersection, was a light blue roadster.

"Why, that looks like the same car we saw at the Smith place!" Nancy exclaimed, peering at the license number.

"It *is* the same one! The driver is that Mr. Bellows!" exclaimed George.

The traffic light turned green, and the blue car was away like a flash. Nancy, though, was equally fast, keeping directly behind the other automobile.

"Are you going to follow him!" asked Bess.

"I'd like to find out more about him," replied her chum. "It's my conclusion he has a more selfish interest in the Smiths' treasure map than he'll admit."

Bess and George were inclined to believe Nancy impetuous in deciding to follow the blue roadster. However, as the car raced ahead and turned corners recklessly it became apparent to them that Mr. Bellows was trying to elude pursuit. Twice the man glanced uneasily over his shoulder.

"He knows we're trailing him," George commented. "But why should it worry him?"

"He certainly does act suspicious," responded Nancy. "His interest in Mr. Smith's map seems odd, to say the least."

"We're interested, too," chuckled George. "Especially you, Nancy."

"Well, that's different! We want to help the Smiths. It looks as if Mr. Bellows is after their property. My, how that man can drive!"

"Do be careful, Nancy," Bess cautioned, gripping the edge of the seat. "We're coming to a railroad crossing."

A semaphore warned of an approaching train. Knowing that it would be dangerous to attempt a crossing, Nancy stopped. Not so the car ahead. Reckless Mr. Bellows stepped harder on the gas and the roadster shot onto the track.

CHAPTER IV

A Strange Lawsuit

Bess closed her eyes, expecting a crash. But the driver ahead got across with only seconds to spare.

“One might almost think the police were after him,” said George.

As the long freight train thundered past, Nancy looked through the spaces between the cars to see if Mr. Bellows were in sight. But there was no sign of the blue roadster.

“We’ve lost him now,” she declared gloomily. “It will be useless to try to overtake him after this delay.”

She drove slowly to River Heights. After depositing George and Bess at their homes she arrived on her own street just as her father’s automobile rolled into the Drew driveway.

“Hello, Nancy,” the lawyer greeted his daughter fondly. “I came home early today—had a rather hard session in court.”

Nancy and her father wandered arm in arm through the garden.

“Dad, let’s sit down here,” she urged after a few moments, indicating a stone bench. “I have something to show you.”

“A letter from Ned Nickerson?” he teased, rumpling her hair. “Or is it from a new boy friend?”

“Now you know Ned doesn’t waste time writing me letters,” Nancy laughed. “At least not very often. It’s part of a map to a treasure island!”

“You’re joking, I suppose.”

“No, it’s genuine, Dad. Here it is.” Nancy placed the paper in his hands.

“This looks suspiciously like your handwriting, my dear.”

“Oh, it’s only my copy of the original,” Nancy replied.

She then repeated everything she had learned that afternoon at the Tomlin Smith home. Rather anxiously she awaited her father’s comment.

“I think I’d much rather help the Smith family in a financial way than to have you concerned with a lost treasure which a man like Mr. Bellows is interested in,” he said at last.

“Oh, but I want to be concerned! It isn’t only about the map and its treasure. Mr. Smith wants me to find his lost twin brother. He says it never would do for him to keep all the treasure if it could be found. He insists that his missing brother must share equally with him.”

“That difficulty could be solved easily by putting half the money in a trust fund,” Mr. Drew remarked. “But what nonsense! Of course there’s no treasure.”

“The real half-map Mr. Smith possesses has an authentic appearance, Dad. My copy probably doesn’t impress you properly.”

“I can’t tell much about the place from this,” he admitted. “The parchment was torn in such a way that one can’t figure out what any of the names or directions mean. Have you tried checking it with an atlas?”

“Not yet, Dad. Let’s do it now, shall we?”

More to please Nancy than for any other reason, Carson Drew accompanied her to the study where for some time they pored over the map. By the time Hannah Gruen announced dinner the lawyer was so interested that he was reluctant to leave.

“Old Captain Tomlin was a clever fellow,” he conceded. “By tearing the map as he did the shape of the island is destroyed, so now it’s practically impossible to learn its location without the missing section.”

“I’m glad you said ‘practically,’” Nancy chuckled, following her father to the dining room. “You see, Dad, I mean to attempt the impossible. Tomorrow I’ll do a bit of sleuthing at the public library.”

The following morning Nancy spent many hours examining old geographies and records. Although the librarian permitted the girl access to the books, she could find no chart which bore any resemblance to the scrap of map in her possession.

Disappointed, she next turned to business directories and biographies. She carefully studied the names listed.

“There’s not a John Abner among them,” Nancy sighed.

In one minor matter success did reward her efforts. An old book on lost ships offered a brief account of the sinking of the freighter, the *Sea Hawk*, with a Captain Abner Tomlin in charge, and gave a list of the officers and sailors who had shipped aboard her. As Nancy carefully copied the names, she noticed there was no Tom Gambrell among them.

“That is point Number One against Mr. Bellows,” she mused as she arose to go.

Upon leaving the library Nancy went directly to the nearest newspaper office and asked if she might look through the files. Soon she was busy searching old copies for stories concerning the Chatham place. Without much trouble she found an article telling of the sale of Rocky Edge, after the owner, a Silas Norse, had died.

“Now to see if there are any items about strange gadgets there,” the girl said to herself, turning sheet after sheet.

Her efforts were rewarded when her eye lighted upon a startling headline:

BURGLAR STARTS LAWSUIT

Thief Injured at Estate Claims Damages

The story went on to tell how one Spike Doty had broken into the home of Mr. Norse. As he was about to escape with valuable loot, he had been caught between sliding panels and hurt rather badly. Though held for robbery, he had made a claim for damages.

“I wonder if he ever collected!” smiled Nancy. “I must ask Dad to find out.”

She hunted further and found a photograph and an article about the inventor himself. There were pictures of various rooms in his home showing trap doors, secret closets and all kinds of gadgets. Nancy was on the point of deciding that Rocky Edge was no place for Ellen Smith when she read that Mr. Norse was having all these things removed.

“But he forgot to take out the one in the Ship Cottage. That I know. And maybe he didn’t remove all the others either!”

Nancy decided she would like to talk things over with Ellen, so upon reaching home she telephoned the Smith girl who invited her to come over that evening and spend the night with her.

When she had finished her telephone conversation, Nancy told Hannah Gruen that she would stay overnight with Ellen at Music College.

“Tomorrow I am going to Emerson College to the dance with Ned, you know,” she added gaily. “Blackstone is on the way.”

“Yes, and I must remind you your new evening dress hasn’t been hemmed yet,” replied the housekeeper. “Put it on right away and I’ll fix it.”

While Hannah marked the bottom of the long skirt, Nancy told the woman what she had learned at the library.

“I don’t like the sound of any of it,” remarked Hannah when Nancy had finished. “Turn around. There. That’s far enough. No, not any of it. I believe Ellen better not go to the Chathams, and the Smiths had better look out for that Mr. Bellows. I think, too, that sometimes lost relatives had better stay lost. Mr. Smith might be sorry if he does find his brother!”

Saying this, the woman arose, puffing a little. She waited until Nancy had taken off the dress, then left the room with it. The girl stood looking into space a few moments, reflecting upon Hannah’s well-meant but rather sharp words. Presently she went to the telephone and said good-bye to her father.

“Have a good time, dear, and be careful,” he cautioned her. “Forget this new mystery—at least while you’re away.”

Nancy spent two hours at her Art School, where she was surprised to find a sketch she had made of one of the model’s faces hung in an exhibit. Then she started for Blackstone, reaching Ellen’s dormitory just before dinner.

“Oh, I’m so glad to see you,” the Smith girl exclaimed. “Come and meet my friends. By the way, would you mind going to my home tonight to sleep instead of here? We are giving an operetta here tomorrow and I’ve promised to bring over several things.”

“I don’t mind a bit,” Nancy replied. “We’ll have a better chance to talk if we’re alone.”

The Drew girl thoroughly enjoyed herself at dinner and watching the dress rehearsal later. To her surprise it was after ten before she and Ellen got away, and eleven when they reached Wayland.

“I imagine Mother and Father went to bed long before this,” Ellen remarked, as they turned into the street on which she lived. “They seldom stay up late.”

True to her prediction, the Smith house was dark as the car rolled up before the front door a few minutes later.

“You have your key, Ellen?”

“Oh, dear, I forgot it!” the girl exclaimed. “I’ll have to ring the bell.”

No one answered. After a long wait Ellen tried again, but still there was no response.

“Mother must be sleeping soundly,” she commented. “I wonder why she doesn’t answer?”

“Let’s try the back door,” Nancy suggested. “If that’s locked we may be able to get in through a window.”

Moving quietly so that the neighbors would not be disturbed, the girls went around the house. Nancy halted suddenly, clutching Ellen’s hand.

“Look!” she whispered tensely.

A tall ladder leaned against the house wall, terminating at an open window on the second floor. As the girls stared at it, they saw a dark form move stealthily down the rungs!

CHAPTER V

The Stolen Parchment

“A prowler!” Nancy whispered into Ellen’s ear. “Don’t make a sound! We may be able to capture him.”

Remaining motionless, the girls waited until the man had nearly reached the base of the ladder. Then, at a signal from Nancy, they made a concerted rush for him.

“Hey! What the—” the man exclaimed as their arms locked about him.

After the first moment of surprise he began to struggle. With one push he sent Ellen reeling backwards into a clump of dwarf evergreens. Nancy held on, but she found herself unable to cope with the strength of the muscular fellow.

“Let go!” he said harshly. “If you don’t I’ll git rough!”

Headlights from a passing automobile momentarily focused on the struggling pair, and in that second Nancy caught a clear glimpse of the man’s face.

“I won’t let go!” she defied him.

In the wild struggle the ladder was pushed away from the wall. It toppled, narrowly missing Ellen, and struck the garage with a loud crash.

“Help! Help!” screamed Nancy, hoping that her cry would awaken the neighbors.

Instantly the prowler’s gnarled hand was clapped across her mouth. Shaking free from her grasp, he lifted her bodily and threw her down on the grass.

Nancy fell so hard that the breath was knocked from her. As she struggled to her feet she saw the man running across the lawn. He disappeared beyond a hedge and was lost in the protecting darkness.

“Are you all right, Nancy?” Ellen gasped, limping toward her friend.

“Yes, but we let that man get away. I hope he didn’t steal anything.”

At the house next door lights were being snapped on. The upper floor of the Smith home suddenly was illuminated. Ellen’s mother raised a window and called to ask what was wrong.

“Mother, it’s I, and Nancy Drew is with me. I’m afraid our home has been robbed,” Ellen told her. “Nancy and I just tried to capture a man who was coming out of the house!”

“Oh, goodness me!” Mrs. Smith exclaimed. “Did he get away?”

“We couldn’t hold him. Is Father all right?”

There was no answer from above. The girls guessed that Mrs. Smith had run downstairs to her husband’s room.

A few minutes later she unlocked the back door. By this time several neighbors had arrived to inquire into the cause of the commotion. Nancy explained what had happened, and one man summoned the police. Ellen and Nancy found Mr. Smith in a state of nervous alarm. Already he was asking what had been taken.

“Probably my desk has been rifled!” he proclaimed. “I’m sure the parchment map is gone!”

“Now don’t get excited, Tomlin,” Mrs. Smith soothed. “Maybe the girls got here in time to prevent a robbery.”

“If I were you I would look to make sure,” Nancy urged. “The man may have ransacked every room in the house.”

While she and Ellen checked over the silverware to ascertain if any of it was missing, Mrs. Smith hastened upstairs. In a few minutes she returned and one glance at her stricken face told the girls that the precious piece of paper was gone.

"I was afraid that map was what the prowler came for," Nancy commented. "Nothing else seems to have been stolen."

"That's what I call a low-down trick," Mr. Smith fumed. "Now who could that scamp be, and why should he want the map?"

"Obviously to obtain the treasure!" exclaimed Ellen. "Oh, Father, the parchment must have genuine value! And to think we've lost it!"

"You forget that I made a copy of the original," Nancy reminded the girl. "It's crudely drawn but fairly accurate."

"Why, that's so! I had forgotten. Nancy, what a clever girl you are!"

"I have my map with me," said Nancy. "I'll make another copy for you."

Mr. Smith echoed his daughter's praise. Somewhat to Nancy's embarrassment he introduced her to the group of neighbors who had gathered on the front porch and told them what she had done. On the edge of the crowd in the shadows stood a man and a woman. Obviously they were strangers.

"Did you hear that, Irene?" whispered the man.

"Sh, Fred. Here comes the police car."

Quietly the two slid out of sight around the corner of the house, where through an open window they could see and hear without being observed themselves.

Nancy and Ellen were questioned by Sergeant Holmes as to the appearance of the intruder. The Smith girl could remember nothing about him but his surprising strength. Nancy, however, not only provided the police with an excellent description of the man, but drew for them a rough sketch of his face.

"Say, you're something of an artist!" the sergeant said admiringly. "A good observer, too! This fellow looks like one of our old friends."

"Looks like Spike Doty," another policeman added, studying the sketch. "He has a record a mile long, and is wanted for another robbery. Did you notice a tattoo on his left arm?"

"It was too dark to see," Nancy replied. "I caught only one glimpse of his face."

"He wasn't a short, squat man?" Sergeant Holmes inquired thoughtfully.

"Yes, he was," Ellen answered before Nancy could reply.

"That's Spike without question, then. He's a sailor, and a fairly good one when he's willing to work."

Just before the police left Nancy walked to the front porch. She was in time to see a man and a woman come hurriedly from the side of the house and step into a car which had been parked some distance up the street. The automobile was too far away for her to distinguish either the make or the license number.

"That's queer," she thought. "I wonder if they were just curious bystanders or if they've had some part in the robbery."

In the morning she and Ellen arose about nine o'clock, helped with the dishes and then drove to Blackstone Music College. They assisted in setting the stage for the operetta and had luncheon. Then Nancy started for Emerson College to attend the dance.

"I'm staying only one night," she said to Ellen in parting. "On my way home I'll stop at Rocky Edge and investigate some more."

“Thanks so much. I do want to earn the money Mrs. Chatham offers so that I can come back here next fall,” Ellen said wistfully.

Nancy motored leisurely along a winding country road. A gray automobile followed only a short distance behind. So absorbed was she in her thoughts that she paid it no heed until many miles had ticked off on the speedometer.

“Why doesn’t that car pass me?” she wondered finally.

Deliberately she slowed up, but the car behind likewise slackened pace. For the first time it occurred to Nancy that perhaps she was being followed. With increasing uneasiness she remembered that she had the precious copy of Tomlin Smith’s half-map in her purse.

“It’s time that I find out what’s what!” she chided herself. “We’ll play a little game of hide-and-seek.”

Again with deliberate intent Nancy slackened pace, turning into a paved side road. She felt certain that unless the occupants of the gray car were trailing her they would not make the turn. Watching in the mirror, she was alarmed to see that the automobile did leave the main road.

“I *am* being followed!” she thought anxiously. “And they’re gaining on me, too!”

By this time the gray car was so near that she could see two persons in the front seat, a man and a woman. They were the ones who had hurried out of the Smith driveway the night before! Gradually, so as not to disclose her concern, Nancy speeded up but was unable to lose her pursuers.

“They mean business,” she thought grimly. “If I don’t lose them quickly, they’ll probably try to stop me when we come to the first lonely stretch.”

Directly ahead was a dirt road which Nancy knew led to the town of Hamilton, two miles away. Without hesitating she turned into it, even though she realized it would carry her out of her way.

Another burst of speed put her far ahead of the pursuing machine. Nevertheless, as she entered the town of Hamilton she saw that the man and woman had not given up the chase.

Nancy drove directly to the railroad station, parked the car, and ran into the building. Entering a telephone booth, she called Ned Nickerson at Emerson College and told him of her predicament.

“You stay where you are until I get there,” the young man advised. “A train leaves for Hamilton in fifteen minutes. If I hurry I can catch it. Whatever you do, don’t give those folks a chance to approach you when you’re alone.”

“I’ll be safe enough until you get here,” Nancy said to reassure him. “I think I’ve given them the slip.”

Even as she hung up the receiver, the gray car pulled up some distance behind her own. Unaware that her whereabouts had been discovered, Nancy sat down in the waiting room. On the back of an old envelope she began to make a second copy of the half-piece of treasure map, as she recalled she had failed to leave one with Mr. Smith.

She became so absorbed in the task that she did not glance up until a woman sat down beside her. The newcomer was perhaps thirty-five, inclined to stoutness, with a cold, steady gaze which rested on Nancy’s work.

“She’s the one who followed me!” the girl thought instantly.

Abruptly getting up, she thrust both drawings into her purse and hurriedly left the railroad station. A glance assured her that the woman’s accomplice was waiting near by, so she started walking up the street in the opposite direction.

“I’ll be safe from having my purse snatched if I stay within sight of other people,” she reasoned, clutching her handbag. “What I must do is finish the second copy of the map quickly.”

A block away Nancy came to a large department store. Turning into it, she made her way to the third floor. Locating a telephone booth in a corner, she closed herself into it.

“I’ll be undisturbed here for a few minutes,” she chuckled, opening her purse. “Now to copy the map, only this time——”

It required less than five minutes to complete the sketch. Realizing that both drawings could be stolen, Nancy sealed her original one into an envelope which she addressed to her father. Then she discovered that she had no stamp.

“I’ll mail it at the post office,” she decided. “I may be followed, but I must take the risk.”

Nancy hoped that she had not been observed entering the store, but when she emerged from the building she saw the same man and woman waiting at the entrance. As she walked hurriedly along the street they followed in their car.

“They’re afraid to approach me now,” she reasoned, “but if I’m alone for a minute I’ll have trouble.”

Entering the post office, Nancy bought a stamp and mailed the letter. She remained in the building for a few minutes, allowing herself exactly enough time to reach the railroad station before Ned’s train should arrive.

Her watch proved to be accurate, for as she came within view of the depot she saw the train coming down the track. With a sigh of relief she quickened her step and joined the crowd of passengers on the platform.

The engine came to a standstill. Nancy caught a glimpse of Ned alighting from the last car. She eagerly waved to him and for an instant forgot to be alert.

As the passengers pushed toward the train, someone brushed against her. Nancy felt a slight tug on her arm. Startled, she whirled around in time to see a man running down the platform.

“My pocketbook!” she gasped in dismay. “It has been snatched!”

CHAPTER VI

The Warning Message

At Nancy's cry of alarm a number of passengers turned around, but no one had sufficient presence of mind to try to stop the fleeing man. He mingled with the crowd and quickly was lost to view. A policeman, appearing from inside the railroad station, questioned the girl as to the appearance of the thief.

"I can't describe him," she admitted in chagrin. "The truth is, I was looking the other way when he jerked the pocketbook from under my arm."

"Afraid we haven't a good chance of catching him then," the officer said regretfully. "Did you have much money with you?"

"Practically none in the purse. However, it did contain a number of small articles I hate to lose."

As Nancy was talking to the policeman, Ned Nickerson, a handsome, athletic youth, came through the group.

"Hello, Nancy," he greeted her anxiously. "Is anything wrong?"

"I'll tell you all about it in a minute," she promised.

Thanking the officer for his trouble, she and the lad went to a quiet corner of the waiting room where they could talk.

"I was scared half silly when you telephoned, Nancy," Ned declared, seating himself close beside her. "Those folks didn't bother you again?"

"Yes, they trailed me here, but I was able to elude them until your train arrived. Oh, I'm so glad to see you! I was getting pretty excited!"

"I should think so!" Ned exclaimed. "But tell me everything. What did I hear you say to the policeman about losing a pocketbook?"

"My purse was snatched just as your train came into the station."

"By that same couple who followed you in the car?"

"I didn't see the person, but my guess is that it was done by the man or someone working with him."

"You have no idea what they're after?"

"Oh, yes," Nancy smiled, "I have a very good idea. However, I fooled them!"

"Trust you for that!" chuckled Ned admiringly. "What did you do?"

"When I realized I was being followed I transferred everything of real value from the purse to a pocket of my dress. All I lost was a compact, a handkerchief, some small change and a few knick-knacks."

"Smart girl!" Ned approved, squeezing her hand. "You think they weren't after money?"

"This is what they want," Nancy responded.

From her dress pockets she removed the most recent copy of Tomlin Smith's treasure map, and laid it on his knee.

"I don't get it!" Ned complained, frowning as he studied the crude drawing. "This looks like a lesson in geography."

Nancy lowered her voice. "It's a portion of a map showing where a treasure has been buried."

"Belonging to Captain Kidd?"

“Now don’t tease me, Ned. I know it may sound fantastic, but this is a clue to a buried treasure. We might even organize an expedition and go sailing for gold!” the girl added gaily.

“You do have elaborate plans,” Ned laughed.

“Suppose you tell me all the details and maybe I’ll agree to ship on your treasure schooner as first mate!”

Nancy related the entire story and was pleased to note that it impressed her companion, especially the part about the gadgets at the Chatham home.

“You’ve certainly walked into a double-barreled mystery,” he commented when she had finished. “I’m beginning to feel sorry for myself already.”

“Why, Ned?”

“Because I probably won’t see much of you for the remainder of the summer, while you’re hunting for that missing twin brother. When you get up to your ears in a new case you forget everything else.”

“Don’t you think I should try to help Ellen and her parents?”

“Oh, sure,” he replied quickly. “It’s just that I hoped we could see a lot of each other after college is over.”

“We may,” Nancy laughed, “if we go hunting for buried treasure!”

“Then let’s hold the thought!”

Ned glanced at his watch, an act which reminded Nancy that time was slipping away. If they were to reach Emerson College before the dinner hour, they must be on their way.

“Do you mind delaying a few minutes longer while I buy a purse and articles I must replace?” she requested. “I can’t go to a dance without a compact!”

“Oh, you’ll be a smash hit even with a shiny nose,” Ned rejoined, grinning. “Every dance on your card has been taken, and the fellows have warned me they’re going to cut in.”

Slightly embarrassed, Nancy quickly changed the current subject to a less personal one. They shopped for a new pocketbook, then started the journey to the college town in the Drew car. Arriving at the fraternity house where Nancy was to stay, the girl was greeted by Mrs. Haines, the chaperon, and a bevy of young women who had been invited for the night.

As she was starting upstairs to change into a party frock, someone sang out, “Telephone for Nancy Drew!”

“For me?” she asked in surprise, retracing her steps. “Maybe it’s from Dad.”

The call proved to be from Ellen Smith, who spoke in an agitated voice.

“Nancy, I’m sorry to bother you,” she apologized. “It’s about Mrs. Chatham. She came to see me at Music College today and absolutely insists that I give her my decision about the position within three days.”

“You weren’t able to stall her off?”

“No, she says she’ll not wait beyond three days. What shall I tell her?”

“I’ll talk to Mrs. Chatham tomorrow,” Nancy promised. “Don’t do anything until I see you.”

“I really can’t afford to turn down the work.”

“I understand,” the Drew girl responded soberly. “Don’t worry about it, Ellen. If it seems unwise for you to take the position, I’ll try to find another for you.”

“You are so kind,” the other murmured gratefully. “Mother and Father think you’re grand, too!”

After Ellen had hung up the receiver, Nancy debated for a moment and then telephoned her own home. Her father was not there as she had hoped, so she talked with Hannah Gruen.

"I am so glad you telephoned," the housekeeper said, her voice unsteady.

"Why, is anything wrong? You seem quite upset."

"Oh, I am!" the woman responded. "About half an hour ago a man telephoned. He didn't give his name, but he had the most sinister voice!"

"What did he say?"

"'Lay off the Tomlin matter or you'll be sorry.' Those were his exact words. Oh, Nancy, the warning must have been meant for you. And to think that I induced you to take an interest in Mr. Smith's treasure map!"

"Now don't let it upset you," Nancy responded soothingly. "Only cowardly persons resort to anonymous calls."

"I wish you would have nothing more to do with the case. Ellen and her parents need help, but not at the expense of your safety."

After a somewhat lengthy conversation Nancy convinced the housekeeper that there was no immediate cause for alarm. She refrained from reporting the incident at the Hamilton railroad station, knowing that it would only add to kindly Hannah Gruen's uneasiness.

"I wonder who it was that telephoned the warning," she speculated a little later as she dressed for the evening. "Oh, well, I'm going to forget about it tonight and have a good time."

Nancy's new white dress made on simple lines accentuated her attractiveness. As she descended the stairs to meet Ned she saw his face light up with admiration.

Dinner was a great success. There was a lively conversation between Nancy and one of the young professors on the subject of bringing lost relatives together. Afterwards, an excellent ten-piece orchestra played for dancing in the gymnasium. It began with a grand march and the presentation of guests to the college president and faculty committee.

From the first hour Nancy thoroughly enjoyed herself. She danced with the boys whose names appeared on her card. Then, as Ned had predicted, those on the stag line began to cut in. During an intermission Ned said he would introduce the next student on Nancy's card.

"I don't know this fellow very well, but he's an excellent dancer," he explained. "He came to Emerson just this year. His name is Bill Tomlin."

"Did you say Tomlin?" Nancy asked, glancing up.

"Why, yes, do you know him?"

"I didn't tell you, Ned, but the old sea captain who buried the treasure had that same last name."

"You don't say! Then I take it you might like to meet this chap."

"Indeed I should," Nancy responded with emphasis. "Probably he's not even remotely related to the old sea captain, but I believe in investigating every clue."

Bill Tomlin proved to be a pleasant, rather naive youth of twenty. He danced very well, but somehow in the crowd Nancy's dainty slippers were stepped on many times by passing couples.

"Gosh, I'm sorry," he apologized in deep embarrassment. "I guess I'm not much good at this sort of thing with so many people around."

Nancy tried to put him at his ease. She casually inquired if any member of his family ever had followed the sea.

"Why, yes," was his response, "my grandfather's brother was a sea captain."

"Can you tell me if he had twin sons?" Nancy asked with bated breath.

"Right again," the young man admitted, regarding her curiously. "One of them was a sea captain, I understand. I don't know what became of the other brother."

“Is the captain still living?” Nancy inquired, trying not to disclose her mounting excitement. “Do you know where he might be found?”

Before Bill Tomlin could reply the music stopped abruptly. One of the orchestra men thumped the bass drum loudly, and the chairman of the dance committee arose to speak.

“Ladies and gentlemen, your attention, please!” he proclaimed dramatically. “I have a very important announcement to make!”

CHAPTER VII

Escape

Everyone waited, wondering what the important announcement might be. Homer Garwin began to speak once more.

“The next event on our program is the presentation of a pantomime produced by members of the Emerson College Dramatic Club,” he said in a loud voice. “Now, as you all know, it is our custom to select each year a beautiful young lady to preside over this event—one who will wear the Festival Robe and Crown. After careful consideration a choice has been made by a committee of faculty and students.”

“Gosh, I wonder who the lucky girl will be?” Bill Tomlin commented. “It always goes to the prettiest and most popular one in the audience.”

Young Garwin clapped his hands for attention once more, as the room had become noisy with excited conversation.

“Will Miss Nancy Drew please come to the stage?” he requested, smiling down at the girl.

Everyone began to clap and whistle, for beyond question the choice was a pleasing one. Though somewhat startled, Nancy responded graciously, mounting to the improvised stage where she donned a white robe, a golden paper crown, and occupied the seat of honor.

Lights were dimmed and the presentation of the pantomime began. It was impossible to tell who the various players were, for all wore tiny black masks. Nancy thought she could identify Ned as a Black Demon, but before she could be sure, the room lights suddenly were extinguished.

“Hey, what’s the big idea?” masculine voices called. “Is this part of the show?”

After several minutes of confusion the lights were turned on.

“I am sorry for the interruption,” Homer Garwin said in apology. “Some prankster evidently thought he could heighten the entertainment by this very stupid joke.”

“Say, what became of the queen?” Bill Tomlin demanded, gazing toward the stage.

The draped chair which Nancy had occupied was vacant.

“Yes, where is she?” Ned asked, stepping forward in alarm. “This isn’t all part of the show?”

“I assure you it isn’t,” the announcer said in distress. Then aloud he added, “No doubt Nancy Drew has stepped outside for a breath of air.”

The explanation satisfied the audience, but both Bill and Ned realized that Garwin did not believe this himself. As the orchestra began to play they quickly joined the chairman on the veranda, where they could discuss the situation without being overheard.

“Something has happened to Nancy!” Ned declared anxiously. “Shouldn’t we call the police?”

“Not yet,” pleaded Garwin. “It would get into the papers and give Emerson unfavorable publicity. Besides, we aren’t sure anything has happened to her.”

While the three were searching for her on the campus, Nancy already was several miles away, a captive in a gray car which raced over the country road. When the lights at the dance had been extinguished, a man with a mask, whom she assumed to be one of the players, had glided to her side.

“Come with me!” he had commanded.

Thinking that it was all part of the show, she had obeyed. No sooner had she reached the hall than a woman had appeared from behind a screen of palms. Together the pair had gagged and hustled Nancy to a waiting car. Too late, the girl had realized that she had fallen into the hands of the same man and woman who had followed her to the town of Hamilton.

“Now I’ve removed your gag,” a cool voice said in her ear. “Don’t make a move or try to escape. Just hand over that map and you won’t be harmed.”

Nancy squirmed sideways on the car seat, peering at the woman who held her arm in a vise-like grip. A heavy veil covered her face. The car was being driven by a man who still wore a dark mask over his face.

“So it was you who switched off the lights,” Nancy remarked in as offhand a manner as possible. “You followed me to Emerson College!”

“None of your talk,” the woman answered harshly. “Just hand over that map or I’ll take it from you.”

“I have no map.”

“I know better. Oh, you thought you pulled a clever trick, taking it from your pocketbook this afternoon! Hand it over, I say.”

“I tell you I have no map,” Nancy repeated. “I’m not in the habit of bringing such things with me to dances.”

“You must have taken it there,” the woman insisted. “I’ll get it, too!”

With ruthless hands she began to search Nancy’s person, but she did not find the article.

“What have you done with it?” she demanded angrily.

Nancy remained mute.

“All right, don’t talk!” the woman snapped. “See how far it will get you! You’ll be held a prisoner until that map is placed in our hands.”

The threat filled Nancy with despair, for she did not doubt that the couple would do as they promised. She realized, too, that if her father should learn of her plight he would give up the map immediately to insure her safety.

If only she could think of some way out of this situation!

The automobile was approaching an intersection marked by a traffic light. At the moment the signal was green, but Nancy thought if luck should favor her it might turn red before the car reached the crossroad. She determined to make a desperate attempt to escape. First she must distract the woman’s attention.

“It will be very foolish of you to try to hold me a prisoner,” she said distinctly. “Especially since the original map has been stolen.”

“Oh, we know all about that,” the man answered from the front seat.

“Perhaps you engineered the theft,” Nancy said slyly.

“No such thing! I heard Tomlin Smith telling about it. A duplicate was made and you have that duplicate!”

“You sneaked it out of your pocketbook this afternoon!” added the woman.

“Are you sure it was I who removed it! Perhaps your friend here can explain what became of that map.”

The driver of the car slammed on the brakes to keep from running through the red traffic light. Angrily he peered over his shoulder at Nancy.

“What are you trying to do, stir up trouble?” he demanded. “I never took that map from your pocketbook.”

“Your conscience seems to be pricking you,” Nancy said sweetly.

“Fred, if you’ve tried to double-cross me—” the woman cried in a suspicious tone. “If you have——”

“Oh, quiet down,” the man commanded. “You make me tired!”

“You’ve been working with Spike Doty and leaving me out!” she accused him, her voice rising to a shrill pitch. “You want to get all the money for yourself and leave me in the lurch!”

With the two absorbed in their quarrel, Nancy knew that she had a good opportunity to escape. In a moment the traffic light would flash green again. She dared wait no longer.

Exerting all her strength, she tore free from the woman’s grasp. In a twinkling she had jerked open the car door. Springing to the ground, she began to run.

“Stop her, Fred!” she heard the woman shout. “Don’t let her get away!”

Frantically Nancy wondered what to do. On either side of the highway there were deep ditches and barbed fences separating her from open fields. Hampered as she was by the long flowing white robe, she knew she could not elude recapture if the man should take after her on foot.

As Nancy despaired, a long beam of bright light flashed back of her. Her heart leaped with hope for it was the headlight of an automobile.

The kidnapers would not dare bother her with witnesses approaching. If she could only get a ride aboard the oncoming car, she would be safe from the couple.

Nancy knew it might be unwise to signal strangers at night, but her plight was a desperate one. Indiscreet or not, she must try to stop the approaching automobile!

CHAPTER VIII

Ghosts

Nancy held up her arms as a signal for the driver to stop. There was a scream of brakes. The automobile, an old model, drew up a few yards away.

“Don’t stop, Henry!” the woman who sat beside the driver cried tremulously. “Go on! It’s a ghost! Drive on!”

Nancy had forgotten that the white robe covered her from head to toe. Fearful that the elderly country couple would not help her, she called to them in a half-frantic voice.

“Wait! I’m not a ghost! Please wait!”

To her great relief the driver obeyed. Nancy ran to the car. Without waiting for an invitation, she climbed into the front seat beside an elderly farmer.

“Drive on quickly,” she urged. “The people in that car there are trying to kidnap me!”

The man and his wife regarded Nancy in blank astonishment.

“You’re not a ghost?” the elderly woman quavered as her husband shifted gears and the car moved forward jerkily.

“Far from it,” Nancy replied with a laugh. “I am supposed to be a queen.”

“You mean you come from a distant land!” the country woman asked in awe.

“Oh, no, I am only queen for a night. You see, I was chosen to preside over a dance being given at Emerson College. Unfortunately, I didn’t play the part very long. I was kidnaped by the people in that gray car.”

Nancy noted with satisfaction that the driver of the other automobile was making no attempt to pursue her.

“Shoo, you don’t say!” the farmer chuckled. “I might have known it was all a lot of high-jinks. What these college boys and girls can’t think of! I reckon the kidnaping was kinda like an initiation?”

“Oh, no, it had nothing to do with the dance,” Nancy started to explain.

Observing that the farmer and his wife were staring at her with renewed alarm, she decided to say no more about the matter.

“Will it be out of your way to take me to the gymnasium?” she requested in an altered voice.

“I’ll be glad to drop you there,” the farmer replied, obviously relieved that the uninvited passenger could be disposed of so easily.

Twenty minutes later the old car rattled to a standstill in front of the college building. Nancy thanked the old couple and jumped to the ground. As she ran up the walk, Ned and Bill Tomlin appeared from behind a clump of bushes.

“Nancy, is it you?” the former called, for he could not see her face in the darkness.

“Yes, the queen herself!” laughed Nancy. “Were you wondering if I had abdicated my throne?”

“We were worried sick,” Ned declared, hastening to her side. “Whatever happened to you?”

“I was kidnaped by that same couple who followed me this afternoon. But we must keep the matter quiet.”

“You mean you’re not going to notify the police?” Ned demanded disapprovingly.

“No, not until after I’ve talked to Dad. I don’t want anyone to guess that my disappearance was serious. We must pass it off as a prank.”

“Homer Garwin went inside just a minute ago to telephone the police station,” Ned told her. “If you think I should, I’ll try to stop him.”

“Please do,” Nancy requested. “It will ruin all my plans if this affair has any publicity.”

While Ned hurried into the building, she and Bill Tomlin walked at a more leisurely pace. Nancy related the highlights of her harrowing experience. Then, making the most of an opportunity, she reminded the young man that he had not answered her question about the missing Captain Tomlin.

“You were kidnaped before I could tell you,” Bill answered with a laugh. “Captain Tomlin died when I was just a youngster. I really don’t know much about him or his twin brother. My father could tell you a great deal more.”

“I suppose your parents live in another city,” Nancy commented thoughtfully.

“At Kirkland,” Bill supplied.

“Why, I pass through there on my way to River Heights!”

“Then why not stop and talk to my father? He owns the Elite Department Store and has his offices there.”

“I shouldn’t like to intrude——”

“He’ll be glad to see you,” Bill declared heartily. “For that matter, I’ll phone and tell him you may stop.”

Before Nancy could reply, a group of young men and girls swarmed into the hall to surround her. She answered all questions skillfully, giving the impression that her disappearance had been nothing more than a part of a merry adventure in connection with the festivity. Her explanation satisfied everyone and she was escorted back to the dance with great ceremony.

Until a late hour the party went on with increasing gaiety. Then the strains of “Home Sweet Home” marked the end. Weary but happy, the girls bade good night to their escorts.

In the morning Nancy was awake early, eager to start for Kirkland and River Heights. To her disappointment she did not see the Tomlin boy again, but Ned brought a message from him.

“Bill says he telephoned his father, and Mr. Tomlin will be expecting you.”

“That’s splendid,” Nancy declared as she stepped into her car. “I’ve had a wonderful time, Ned. Thanks for everything.”

“You might have stayed until after luncheon,” he complained good-naturedly. “Please don’t take any short cuts. Stick to the main roads and you won’t be kidnaped!”

“I’ll be alert, Ned. You may depend upon that.”

The trip to Kirkland required less than an hour and Nancy felt certain that she was not followed. Without difficulty she located the Elite Department Store. As soon as she gave her name to the office girl she was escorted into Mr. Tomlin’s presence.

“Good morning,” the middle-aged store owner said cordially, motioning her to a leather chair. “Bill telephoned me about you, Miss Drew. You are interested in the Tomlin family history, I believe?”

“Indeed I am,” Nancy responded eagerly. “If you aren’t too busy, may I ask you a few questions?”

“I’ll do my best to answer them.”

Nancy then inquired about Captain Tomlin, the third in his line to follow the sea. The store owner readily confirmed that the man had died many years earlier, having been stricken while on a voyage to Japan.

“Captain John Tomlin was a cousin of mine,” he remarked musingly. “A very hearty, kindly man. Everyone thought highly of him.”

“Can you tell me if he had a twin brother?”

“Yes, I am pretty sure he did,” the store owner replied without hesitation. “I believe the lad was lost at sea when the *Sea Hawk* sank.”

“Did Captain Tomlin leave a wife and children?” was Nancy’s next question.

“He married but had no children to my knowledge. I regret I can’t tell you what became of his wife. Mrs. Tomlin disappeared soon after her husband’s death and was never heard from.”

“What was Captain Tomlin like?” Nancy asked after a moment. “Did he have any hobbies?”

“Yes, he enjoyed collecting things, particularly rare sea shells. I still have one he gave me—I’ve kept it all these years.”

The store owner opened a desk drawer. After hunting through a pile of papers, he brought forth a small colorful sea shell.

“This is called a Lion’s Paw,” he said, offering it to Nancy. “Pretty, isn’t it?”

“Beautiful! Did the captain have other hobbies besides collecting shells?”

“He was considered an authority on old songs of the sea. He could sing dozens of them.”

“Then he must have had a good voice,” Nancy commented, much interested in the information.

“He did indeed.”

Everything Nancy had learned seemed to prove that Captain John Tomlin was Tomlin Smith’s missing twin brother. Feeling that she owed the store owner an explanation for her many questions, she mentioned her theory to him.

“I should like to meet Tomlin Smith,” he said at once. “Does he bear a resemblance to the captain?”

“I wish I knew.”

“Somewhere at home I have a photograph of Captain Tomlin,” the store owner said thoughtfully. “Would it help you to have it?”

“Yes, unless he didn’t look a bit like his brother or father or mother.”

“Then I’ll mail the picture to you if I can find it,” Mr. Tomlin promised. “Just write your address on this scratch pad.”

Nancy was highly elated by the successful interview, feeling that she had taken a long step forward in solving the mystery about the owner of the other half of the treasure map. As she walked lightheartedly through the store on her way to an exit, she espied a counter laden with fishing tackle. The merchandise was of exceptional quality but had been reduced in price for a quick sale.

“This is my lucky day!” thought Nancy, pausing to examine a rod and reel. “Dad needs a new outfit, and I know this is exactly what he wants.”

She chose a special one and paid for the purchase. While it was being wrapped, she entered a telephone booth to call Bess Marvin in River Heights.

“This is Nancy,” she began, forgetting that her chum never failed to recognize her voice. “I am on my way to Mrs. Chatham’s estate, but Dad doesn’t want me to go there alone. Would you and George be willing to meet me in about half an hour?”

“I’ll be glad to come,” Bess answered instantly. “No doubt I can get George too.”

“This is what I want you to do,” Nancy instructed, lowering her voice so that it would not carry outside the booth. “My plan is to investigate the Music Studio, and I wish you girls would keep Mrs. Chatham engaged in conversation so she doesn’t guess what I am about.”

“We’ll do it,” Bess promised. “I only hope you’ll be careful.”

After chatting for a moment longer, Nancy left the telephone booth. Receiving her package she carried it to the parked car and then drove toward Rocky Edge.

Even so, she arrived at the mansion ahead of her chums. As she glanced up the road, wondering how long they would be delayed, she was startled to hear a shrill scream. Unmistakably the cry had come from the direction of the building which Trixie called the Ship Cottage.

Nancy sprang from the car and ran down the path toward the spot. Emerging along the oak trees, she caught a glimpse of the little Chatham girl. The child was running away from the studio, her hair blowing wildly across her face.

“Ghosts! Ghosts!” she screamed. “I saw ’em! They’re in the cottage!”

The child did not see Nancy nor hear the girl’s soothing voice. In panic Trixie scrambled through a hedge, straight into the path of an oncoming car!

CHAPTER IX

Nancy Investigates

Acting instinctively, Nancy darted after the terrified Trixie, seizing her by the dress. She jerked the child backwards from the roadway just as the fast-moving automobile whizzed by.

“Let me go!” the little girl cried, trying to pull away. Then, seeing who it was that held her, she relaxed slightly. “Oh, it’s you,” she said.

“What has upset you so, Trixie?” Nancy asked kindly. “My dear, you were nearly run down by that car.”

The girl began to sob, her thin little body shaking convulsively. While Nancy was trying to comfort her, another car approached and drew up alongside the road. George was driving, with Bess occupying the seat beside her.

“Why, what is wrong?” the latter asked, stepping from the car. “Has Trixie been hurt?”

“No, she’s all right,” Nancy answered, “but she had a narrow escape. Something frightened her and she ran into the path of an automobile.”

“What was it that scared you, Trixie?” George inquired, bending to pat the child’s hand.

Trixie moved nearer Nancy, away from the other two girls.

“It—it was a ghost,” she answered, her voice trembling. “A great big one with horrible eyes! It glared at me from the window of the Ship Cottage!”

“Oh, Trixie, surely you don’t believe that!” George laughed. “We know there are no ghosts.”

“Then what was it I saw?” the child demanded. “There’s something with big eyes hiding in there!”

George, in her boyish, outspoken way was on the verge of saying she thought Trixie must have imagined the entire matter. Before she could speak Nancy said quietly:

“I’ll tell you what we’ll do, Trixie. You run along to the house with Bess. George and I will go to the music studio and try to learn what it was that frightened you.”

“Maybe that thing will hurt you,” the Chatham child responded anxiously.

“We’ll be careful. You go along with Bess like a good little soldier.”

Somewhat reluctantly Trixie allowed the Marvin girl to lead her up the path. George and Nancy turned in the opposite direction, walking swiftly toward the Ship Cottage.

“Trixie didn’t imagine that she saw glaring eyes watching her,” the latter declared, lowering her voice. “The first day I came here, some very strange things happened while I was inside the building. That’s why my father won’t allow me to come here alone.”

“You think someone may be hiding there?”

“Naturally, I’ve wondered about it. Before Ellen accepts work with Mrs. Chatham we must investigate this place thoroughly. You’re not afraid?”

“Where you lead I’ll try to follow!” George said courageously.

Cautiously the girls circled the quaint little building. They saw no one and heard no unusual sounds.

“We may as well go inside,” Nancy said at length. “Just be on your guard.”

She tried the door, expecting to enter as she did the first time, but to her surprise it would not open.

“That’s funny,” she remarked in a puzzled tone. “The studio was unlocked when I was here before.”

“Perhaps we can get in through a window,” George suggested, testing one on the front side of the house.

It could not be raised, nor could any of the others be forced open.

“This ends our little investigation,” Nancy said in disappointment. “I wonder if I dare ask Mrs. Chatham for the key?”

“Why not?” George shrugged her shoulders. “At worst she’ll only refuse.”

Arm in arm the girls walked to the main house where they found Bess sitting on the front veranda with Mrs. Chatham. On the steps Trixie was playing with a beautiful white cat. The child’s shrill laughter grated upon her mother’s nerves.

“Can’t you please be quiet for a minute or two?” the woman asked irritably. “You’re driving me crazy!”

“How can I be quiet when I feel jumpy?” her daughter sighed. “I like to make noise and have fun, and you always say ‘Be quiet; don’t do that!’ I wish my Daddy were alive. He’d let me do things!”

“Trixie!” Mrs. Chatham commanded. “Not another word or you’ll go to your room.”

“Yes’m,” Trixie mumbled, subsiding into silence.

Nancy felt sorry for the child, knowing how upset she had been. For the first time it occurred to her that the girl’s behavior might be the result of nervousness due to fear. She was almost certain that Mrs. Chatham knew nothing of the unusual happenings at the Ship Cottage. To test out this theory, she presently asked the woman who it was that used the little house.

“Why, no one,” Mrs. Chatham replied, surprised at the question.

“You never go there yourself?”

“Almost never. Since my husband died I’ve been reluctant to stir up old memories.”

“You keep the studio locked, I suppose?” Nancy inquired casually.

“Usually I do,” the owner returned. “For a while I left it unlocked thinking Trixie might use it for a playhouse. However, she very stubbornly refused to step inside! Did you ever hear of a more peculiar child?”

“Oh, I shouldn’t call Trixie peculiar,” Nancy said, smiling at the little girl who was listening intently to the conversation. “No doubt she has good reason for not wishing to play within the studio. Did you ever ask her why she dislikes the place?”

“It would do no good,” Mrs. Chatham returned, sighing. “She has a very vivid imagination and tells the most outlandish stories. You don’t know her as I do.”

Nancy had not entirely made up her mind regarding Mrs. Chatham’s character. She was inclined to believe that the woman loved her daughter but failed to understand her. Certainly the widow had no suspicion that Trixie’s misbehavior might result from a feeling of loneliness. If her mother did not believe her and the servants were not kind to her, the poor child did indeed need a friend. Ellen Smith could be just that person!

“You mentioned the other day that your husband collected ship models,” Nancy remarked after a moment.

“Would you like to see the collection?” Mrs. Chatham inquired politely.

“Indeed I should.”

“I’ll get the key,” Mrs. Chatham said, arising from the porch swing.

More than ever Nancy was convinced the widow had no suspicion that anything was amiss at the cottage. As Trixie refused to approach the building, her mother and the three girls went without her to the little house at the far edge of the estate.

Unlocking the front door, the widow pushed it open and stepped inside. The girls followed. Swiftly Nancy's gaze roved about the dusty room. Nothing appeared to have been disturbed since her last visit. There was no sign of either an intruder or an open panel in the wall.

"Oh, what darling little ships!" Bess exclaimed, hastening across the room to examine the model of a sailing clipper on the mantelpiece.

While her chums were talking to Mrs. Chatham, Nancy seated herself at the piano. Hesitatingly she touched the keys. The notes sounded clear and loud, echoing in the room.

"That's certainly strange," she remarked to herself.

Turning around, she asked Mrs. Chatham if the piano had a secret spring which at times kept it from being played.

"Oh, goodness no!" the woman laughed. "At least I don't think so. Of course, this building was erected by an inventor who made many queer gadgets, so I've been told. But as far as I know, they all were removed."

"Was the piano here when you took over the place?"

"Yes, it was. Nothing has been changed. In fact, this building never has been used."

"You haven't found any secret panels?" Nancy inquired eagerly.

"There's one in my bedroom, but it serves no real purpose. Once Trixie got behind it by accident, and has never wanted to come into my room since. Thank goodness, this studio is free of the inventor's handiwork!"

Nancy could not refrain from telling of her strange experience in regard to the piano. As she had hoped, Mrs. Chatham immediately became interested. She said that the girls might feel free to search the studio for hidden springs, secret doors, or mechanical gadgets.

"But I'll be surprised if you find anything," the woman added.

Nancy, Bess and George industriously began tapping the walls in their search for hollow spaces. Near the fireplace they thought one of the panels had a dead sound, but they were unable to locate a section which moved aside.

"I'll go outdoors and see how the exterior of the building compares in size with this room," George offered.

Bess and Mrs. Chatham followed her, leaving Nancy alone in the cottage. The girl resumed her work, turning up the corner of a rug which lay under the piano. To her surprise she found several wires which evidently ran down one leg of the instrument through the rug and the floor.

"There must be a switch to turn the piano off and on," Nancy mused. "I wonder where it is?"

A search of the wall revealed nothing.

"Now how could anyone have operated this while I was in the room!" she reasoned. "The switch must be controlled back of a secret panel!"

Try as she would, Nancy could not locate such an opening. She decided to go over each section again, moving her hands along the wall an inch at a time.

A wooden peg which seemed to secure the wide panel to the sheathing drew her attention. As she fingered it, she felt a slight movement beneath her hand. Between the boards she could see a tiny crack of space.

“I’ve found the opening!” she thought jubilantly.

Nancy pushed and pulled, increasing the gap only a little at a time. Then unexpectedly the woodwork gave, sliding back easily. She turned to shout her discovery, but before she could do so a shrill scream broke upon her ears.

“Help! Help! Nancy!”

The cry came from outside the building. Instantly Nancy recognized the voice. It was George who had called her name. For some unrevealed reason her chum was in dire trouble.

CHAPTER X

A Hidden Room

Forgetting her own important discovery, Nancy darted from the studio to learn why her chum had called. George could be seen far up the path, pursuing a man who ran with his head bent low.

Quickly guessing that the runner had been caught prowling near the building, she joined in the chase. In a moment she caught up with George, but the two were unable to overtake the fleet-footed fellow ahead. Suddenly he scrambled through the privet hedge. By the time the girls reached the estate boundary he was nowhere in sight.

"It's no use," George puffed, halting to catch her breath. "We'll never get him now."

"Who was the man?" Nancy asked. "Did you see him near the music cottage?"

"I saw him come out of it!"

Before Nancy could question George further, Mrs. Chatham and Bess hurried down the path. Several minutes before they had gone to the spring house for a drink of water and the cry for help had alarmed them thoroughly.

"What happened?" Bess asked anxiously. "Are you hurt, George?"

"No, I'm all right," she answered, her tone one of disgust. "But it makes me mad not to have caught that fellow. After you and Mrs. Chatham went off he apparently thought the coast was clear. At any rate he pushed aside part of the outside wall of the cottage and stepped from his hiding place."

"Oh, goodness!" Bess exclaimed nervously. "There must be a secret room or passage connected with the place just as Nancy suggested. He probably listened to our conversation while we were in the place, and could have harmed us too!"

"The little house does have a secret panel," Nancy entered the conversation. "I found it only a minute ago."

"You did?" Mrs. Chatham asked in astonishment. "Where is it located?"

"I'll show you. But first I wish George would point out the hidden door."

"It's on the back of the building," George answered, starting down the path. "I think I can find it."

"I'll join you in a minute," Mrs. Chatham said, turning in the opposite direction. "I am going to call the police. It frightens me to have a stranger prowling about the premises!"

George had no difficulty in locating the concealed door which served as a secret entrance and exit to the studio. Nancy pushed against the wall and stepped through the narrow opening.

"This passageway must lead along the back wall to a tiny room behind the piano," she called, her voice muffled. "Come along and we'll explore!"

"I'm not as thin as you are, Nancy," Bess complained as she attempted to follow her chum. "I'll never make it!"

"Then go into the studio and enter through the secret panel. I left it open. George and I will meet you somewhere!"

Obedying Nancy's suggestion, Bess vanished around the building. The other two girls moved along the inner wall until they came to an unlocked door which opened into a dark room.

"I can't see a thing!" Nancy complained. "Why didn't we bring a flashlight from the car?"

“Ouch!” George exclaimed, for she had bumped squarely into something sharp. “This room must be filled with rock!”

Cautiously the girls groped their way toward the half-open panel which could be seen a little distance ahead. They were glad when Bess pushed it the remainder of the way, allowing light to flood the gloomy quarters.

“What have you found?” she called to her chums.

“The place seems to be filled with boxes and everything else imaginable,” Nancy replied, gazing about her.

“Can it be a storage room?” George speculated dubiously.

“Either that, or some thief has been hiding loot here,” Nancy commented, stopping to examine a large Chinese vase.

While the girls were inspecting two good-sized trunks, a patter of rain could be heard on the tin roof above their heads.

“Just listen to that!” Nancy said in dismay. “Oh, dear, and we haven’t even inspected the ground about the house. I noticed a number of footprints near the hidden door.”

“If we hurry perhaps we can beat the storm,” George urged.

Leaving the tiny room by means of the secret panel, the girls went hastily around the building. The footprints, made by a man’s large shoe, were still visible, for they were under a tree and the raindrops had not yet obliterated them.

“Girls, see if you can find a board or a rock—anything which will cover the prints,” Nancy urged her chums. “In the meantime I’ll try to make a rough sketch of one of them.”

As the rain descended with increasing force, she took pencil and paper from her purse and rapidly drew an outline of one of the marks. The toe of the shoe was very wide, she noted, while the rubber heel had left a peculiar star-design imprint.

“This was all we could find,” George reported, coming back with a large, flat rock. “It won’t do much good, I’m afraid.”

“The marks are nearly washed away now,” Nancy admitted ruefully. “But at least I have a record of them.”

Placing the rock over one of the best footprints, the girls scurried into the studio. Ten minutes later Mrs. Chatham arrived with a supply of umbrellas. Soon afterward a police cruiser reached Rocky Edge.

The officers questioned the owner and the three girls regarding the mysterious man who had been caught leaving the secret room. Unfortunately George had not obtained a clear impression of him. The only tangible clue was the sketched footprint which Nancy had made.

“This should be of some use to us,” one of the policemen declared, pocketing the drawing. “We’ll check various shoe shops to see if we can find a heel similar to it.”

Before leaving, the officers looked about the hidden room, remarking upon the strange assortment of antiques, curios and boxes of every size and description. Only a routine inspection was made, for Mrs. Chatham readily identified many of the articles as being the property of her former husband. After the police had gone, however, she excitedly proposed to the girls that some of the containers be opened.

“I didn’t tell the police everything because it seemed unwise,” she declared. “The truth is, I never dreamed these things were here. Some of them I’ve never seen before.”

“Isn’t it possible that Mr. Chatham knew of the hiding place and stored goods here without your knowledge?” Nancy asked thoughtfully.

“You may be right,” the widow acknowledged, “but I don’t see why he didn’t tell me. Unless,” she paused, “it was because the things belonged to my first husband and it made me sad to have them around. Oh, I do hope nothing has been stolen. It would break my heart to lose anything belonging to him.”

From the floor she lifted a miniature ship, similar to those which the girls had seen in the studio room. Tears glistened in her eyes and she turned her head so they would not observe her distress.

For the first time Nancy felt herself warming to Mrs. Chatham. It was plain to see that the widow was unhappy. No doubt her strange actions resulted from grief or loneliness.

The question that troubled Nancy most was whether or not the various treasures had been stored in the secret room by Mr. Chatham or by the mysterious stranger who had narrowly escaped capture. In the latter case, she must assume that he was a thief and was hiding loot on the premises.

“But how did he learn of this place?” she thought. “And judging by the looks of these valuable articles, he’s no ordinary thief.”

As she mused over the matter, Nancy absently raised the lid of a leather-covered box. She stared in surprise and delight. Inside, carefully wrapped in tissue paper, were many large, rare shells.

“Mrs. Chatham, did your first husband collect these?” she asked breathlessly.

“Yes, he did,” responded the widow. “He loved the sea and everything connected with it.”

“You never mentioned your first husband’s name,” Nancy said, waiting eagerly for the answer.

“Why, I thought I did. His name was Tomlin—John Tomlin.”

“Tomlin!” Nancy could hardly believe her ears. “Then he may be related to Tomlin Smith!” she added, her eyes dancing with excitement.

“Tomlin Smith?” the widow repeated. “Who is he, may I ask?”

“Ellen Smith’s father!”

Save that she made no mention of the treasure map, Nancy revealed everything she knew about the quest of Mr. Smith for his missing twin brother. Then she mentioned the story she had heard from Bill Tomlin’s father.

“My husband had a fine baritone voice,” Mrs. Chatham declared. “He loved songs of the sea and collected them.”

“Everything tallies with the information given me by Bill Tomlin’s father! Without question your first husband was related to their family. Now if only I can prove a relationship to Tomlin Smith!”

Nancy was hopeful that Mrs. Chatham could clear up the uncertainty, but to her disappointment the woman could add little to the information the girl already had gathered.

“My husband never told me much about his early life,” she said regretfully. “He did mention that he was an orphan, however.”

“Did he never speak of his father?” Nancy asked, fingering a large, pink shell.

“No. You see, we were married after a romantic courtship of only two weeks. John settled me in a lovely little cottage, furnished it beautifully, and then set sail never to return.”

“Was his ship lost?” Bess inquired sympathetically.

“My husband was taken ill and died on a voyage to Japan,” Mrs. Chatham explained, her eyes misty.

Pressed by Nancy, the widow revealed a few additional facts of no great value. Her husband had been ten years her senior and frequently had spoken of himself as a “son of the sea.”

“That might be taken to mean that his father had been a captain before him,” Nancy mused. “Tell me, Mrs. Chatham, did your husband leave any papers or letters?”

“Several boxes were brought to me some time after his death. I received a small amount of money and an insurance policy. I’ll confess I read very few of the letters, for they seemed to be old business ones and I was not interested. I was too heartbroken to care. But I saved every one of them.”

“Then you have them now?”

“They should be somewhere in this studio. I asked Mr. Chatham to bring them here.”

“I’ll look right——”

At that instant a fearful shriek cut the air. The group was electrified for an instant, then Nancy made a dash outside.

“Moth—er!” came in terrified tones from somewhere to the right.

“Trixie!”

The Drew girl dashed off, with Mrs. Chatham and Nancy’s chums close on her heels.

“Where are you?” the woman called. “Oh, my darling, where are you?”

There was no answer!

Frantically the group ran to left and to right, shouting Trixie’s name. Suddenly a muffled sound reached Nancy’s ears. She stopped short to listen. A child was crying and saying:

“I want to get out! I want to get out!”

Almost in front of her the Drew girl spied a yawning hole in the ground. She peered down. Indistinctly she could see a figure.

“Trixie!”

“Where’s my m-mother?” came a sobbing voice from below. “Please h-help me out!”

Assuming the child had fallen into an abandoned wellhole, Nancy asked if Trixie were standing in water.

“No, there’s no water here. But there’s another big hole. And it’s cold.”

Nancy lay down on the ground and stretched one arm down into the chasm. She could not reach the child. “I’ll get a ladder,” she said reassuringly. “Don’t be frightened.”

By this time the others had come up. Mrs. Chatham, finding her daughter unharmed, alternately laughed and cried. In a few minutes the girls had located the gardener who brought a long ladder.

“I want Nancy Drew to come down,” called Trixie, as the man started to descend.

“Let her have her way, my poor pet,” insisted Mrs. Chatham. “Hoskins, how do you account for this uncovered hole? You are supposed to have charge of the grounds.”

“Mrs. Chatham, I have no idea. I am sure there was no hole there before. Probably it was grown over before——”

Nancy could hear no more for she had reached the bottom rung. Trixie, apparently unharmed, impulsively hugged her rescuer. Together they scrambled up the ladder. Trixie was glad to be out, but Nancy went below again to look around a bit.

As the child had said, there was another hole. This one, which was at right angles to the other, apparently was a tunnel. Where did it lead to, and why?

“Bess, George, will you get my flashlight out of the car?” she called up. “And one of you please come down here.”

In a few minutes George descended, excited over this latest development. Nancy turned the beam into the cavern. It was fairly wide and about six feet high. The girls walked into it for some distance to a point where it turned abruptly. A little farther on was a large dugout. In it stood a strange looking contraption. Nancy's light picked out a sign attached to it.

This is a deadly machine. Do not touch. Letter of Instructions in box at door.

CHAPTER XI

Valuable Property

Nancy and George, knowing they had uncovered something important, stood in silence a few moments. Then the latter spoke up.

“We’d better get out of here. This settles it. Rocky Edge *is* a dangerous place. You can’t tell me Mrs. Chatham doesn’t know about this—this hide-out! I’ll bet she’s in with some _____”

“Why, George,” protested Nancy, breaking into her chum’s exasperated statements, “you don’t really believe that, do you? I’m sure Mrs. Chatham didn’t know about the hole.” Then, seeing the hurt look on the face of her chum, who felt she had hit upon an excellent solution, she added quickly, “But you may be right. Let’s find that note of instructions. Maybe it will reveal what you suspect.”

The tunnel ended abruptly, about a hundred feet farther on, at an iron door.

“This probably enters the cellar of the main house,” said Nancy, pulling the heavy handle. “Ooh, it won’t budge. I guess it’s locked.”

“There’s no key, so I guess we go back the way we came,” added George.

Her chum was searching for a ledge or niche where a letter might have been laid. None came to light.

“Probably that awful man in the studio removed it,” suggested George. “Or else there never was one.”

Nancy would not give up, for she felt no one had been in the tunnel for a long time. There were no footprints except those just made by the two girls. In a moment Nancy’s efforts were rewarded.

“Look, George, here’s a little section of the door that sticks out. There’s a ring on it.”

Quickly she pulled on the tiny handle. After a second tug the metal piece came away. Out fell two envelopes. Each was marked “To Whom It May Concern.”

“Open them!” commanded George excitedly.

As she held the light, Nancy obeyed, reading aloud the contents of the first one.

“I am getting to be an old man now and I feel that I may die suddenly. I may not be able to finish my greatest invention. I have kept it a secret which may die with me. I do not care and in this spot it has harmed no one yet. Two years after my death the wires will not work and the machine will not be dangerous then.

“The War Department would be glad to have this and might finish work on it. If someone locates my invention, this is the thing to do with it.

Silas Norse.’”

“Oh, how thrilling!” exclaimed George. “Nancy, you’ll become famous, having found a great invention.”

The Drew girl laughed lightly. “All the credit goes to Mr. Norse,” she insisted.

“This letter is well over two years old, so the machine is harmless. I’ll urge Mrs. Chatham to notify the War Department right away. Well, let’s read the other letter.”

This second one proved to be of great value. It was headed, "List of Inventions in House and Grounds of Rocky Edge." About ten were mentioned, revealing all kinds of strange gadgets secreted on the place.

"At last this estate can be made safe," said George in a practical tone. "All the gadgets can be removed and poor little Trixie needn't ever be scared again."

"I doubt that everything Mr. Norse made is here," replied Nancy. "You notice it doesn't mention the secret panel in the studio or the piano."

"That's right. Maybe he didn't do those."

"I believe he did, George. This list seems to be in groups. Some are in ink, some in pencil. I think Mr. Norse wrote on this paper whenever he had a chance and put down the things he could recall at the time."

"What do you think ought to be done about it?" asked the Fayne girl as the two started toward the ladder.

"I shall talk things over with Mrs. Chatham. After all, this is her property. One thing I *am* sure of. I shall advise her to take Trixie away from here until the place has had a thorough going over."

"What will happen to Ellen? She won't be able to give the little girl piano lessons," George reminded her chum.

"It might work out better if Ellen could be with both the Chathams in some other spot."

The two girls did not realize how long they had been gone. The group aboveground was becoming anxious about them, so it was with relief that Nancy and George were greeted.

"You must have found a gold mine," said Bess. "What in the world kept you?"

"Come back to the studio and we'll tell you," replied Nancy. "Mrs. Chatham, I think if your gardener will put a stout cover of heavy planks over the hole, it will avoid further trouble."

The woman gave directions, then she and the girls moved toward the Ship Cottage. Trixie had gone to the main house, so Nancy felt free to discuss her findings. She unfolded her information cautiously. Soon discovering that Mrs. Chatham showed only genuine surprise and alarm, the girl told the complete story, showing the letters.

"I never dreamed such things were here," the woman exclaimed at last. "If I had, I probably never would have stayed," she laughed shakily.

This was Nancy's chance. "I have a very good idea that Trixie has seen and heard a great deal she hasn't mentioned to you. Until this estate can have a thorough going over, don't you think it might be wise to take her away from it for a long vacation?"

She pointed out that the child very probably had been frightened by the same man who had escaped through the hidden door and fled from George.

"I am sure a trip would do you both good. By the time you return the police may have captured the troublemaker."

"I think you're right. I wish we could go somewhere far away," Mrs. Chatham replied. "But I detest travel by automobile. And trains—well, I wish we could go on a boat. But I'd like to be with people I know, not with strangers."

Nancy had not intended to tell the widow about the treasure map in Tomlin Smith's possession until it might be proved that the woman's first husband was the man's twin. Suddenly it occurred to her that should this turn out to be the case, Mrs. Chatham was the very person who could finance an expedition to the spot.

"Would you enjoy a trip to a treasure island?" she inquired with a smile.

“Are you joking?” the woman asked.

Having aroused Mrs. Chatham’s curiosity, Nancy proceeded to disclose the story of the Tomlin twins. The widow listened with increasing interest.

“How exciting it would be to go on a treasure hunt!” she declared with enthusiasm. “If the missing half of the map could be found, I’d finance the trip. And all of you must come with me. I’d like nothing better. It would be a wonderful vacation, and would do so much for Trixie, I know.”

“Finding the map will be the problem,” Nancy said ruefully. “Mr. Tomlin never mentioned such a paper to you?”

“No, but frequently he said that some day we would go treasure hunting together. At the time I thought he was joking.”

“If he were Tomlin Smith’s twin he must have had the missing portion of the map,” Nancy declared. “But what became of it?”

“It’s barely possible we might find it among the old papers and letters I never looked at carefully. The box was put somewhere in this studio.”

A search was made but the box was not found.

“I can’t understand it,” said Mrs. Chatham. “What do you think, Nancy?”

“I believe that the man we caught in the secret room is mixed up in the affair,” the girl suggested. “If Mr. Chatham never mentioned the place behind the panel, then I doubt he knew about it. The prowler learned of it, maybe by accident, and has been putting stolen things into it.”

“You think he may have put Mr. Tomlin’s box there?” interrupted Bess. “But why?”

“Because he knows the story of the treasure map!”

Nancy’s announcement came like a bombshell to her listeners.

“I suppose you can tell us the man’s name, too,” ventured George. “Oh, Nancy, we just can’t keep up with you.”

Her chum laughed. Then with a twinkle in her eye she replied, “I might make a guess. I’ll bet he’s Spike Doty!”

Nancy went on to explain about the old newspaper account of how one Spike Doty, burglar at Inventor Norse’s mansion, had sued the man who owned Rocky Edge at that time. Next she mentioned that the police had guessed from her drawing and description that the thief at Ellen’s home was Spike Doty.

“Isn’t it reasonable to assume the fellow has found out that your first husband was Mr. Tomlin Smith’s brother and traced Captain John Tomlin’s property here?”

Mrs. Chatham was wide-eyed with admiration at Nancy’s clear thinking.

“It almost proves the relationship of the two Tomlins, doesn’t it?” she said excitedly. “I must drive over at the first opportunity to see Ellen’s father.”

“On my way home I’ll stop at police headquarters to see what I can find out about this Spike Doty,” offered Nancy. “I must leave now. May I come tomorrow and help hunt for the missing box?”

“Yes, indeed,” replied Mrs. Chatham eagerly. “Oh, my, I feel ten years younger with all this excitement!”

Saying good-bye to the woman, the girls hastened to their cars. Bess rode with Nancy while George followed close behind in the Fayne automobile.

“Mrs. Chatham seemed so different today,” Bess commented as they drove along. “Do you think she really may take us all on a cruise?”

"I don't know, but it would be wonderful. I like her much better now," Nancy returned. "In fact, I've made up my mind to advise Ellen to say 'yes' to her."

"Oh, I'm glad of that. Now that you've softened Mrs. Chatham a bit, I'm sure she'll have no serious trouble. Of course Trixie will be a problem."

"Oh, the child needs friends, that's all," Nancy responded, stopping the car in front of the Marvin home. "Just now we must concentrate all our efforts on finding the missing half of the map."

After leaving Bess, she drove to the police station. There a surprise awaited her, confirming her suspicions. The footprint made by the intruder at the Rocky Edge studio matched that of Spike Doty!

Upon further inquiry Nancy was told that the fellow first appeared locally as a seaman on a river steamer. After his capture and release as a burglar he had gone to New York to ship on an ocean-going freighter.

"But I guess he's back here making trouble again," said the sergeant. "I'll let you know when we catch him, Miss Drew."

When she arrived home, Nancy found a letter for which she had been waiting. It was from Bill Tomlin's father and contained a rather faded photograph of a man of about thirty dressed in a sea captain's uniform.

"I must show this to Mr. Smith and Mrs. Chatham," she said excitedly to Mr. Drew.

"But you must get a good night's sleep first," her parent insisted. "You've had a pretty fatiguing twenty-four hours and you need rest."

Before retiring, Nancy got in touch with Ellen by phone. Not only did she assure her that it would be all right to accept a position with Mrs. Chatham, but she hinted that an ocean cruise might possibly be in the offing.

"How wonderful!" Ellen exclaimed in a thrilled voice. "I'd love to go on an ocean voyage. If we're able to go I shan't mind anything disagreeable—not even Trixie!"

"You mustn't build up your hopes too high," warned Nancy. "Everything depends upon my luck when I search the studio storeroom."

Early the next morning she was on the road to Wayland. The Smiths greeted her cordially, eager to hear the latest developments. The girl told them everything, finally taking the photograph from her purse.

"Do you recognize this picture?" she asked, hoping against hope for good news.

Mr. Smith studied the face for several minutes before speaking. "No, I'm afraid I could not identify my brother from such a late photograph. You remember he was only fourteen when last I saw him. This person doesn't resemble my mother or father, or myself. I see something about the expression which reminds me of my Grandmother Stafford but that's all I can say. It's too bad."

"I shall ask Mrs. Chatham if she has any pictures of Captain John Tomlin—some at a younger age," said Nancy, disappointed that her recent clue had failed.

That afternoon she drove to the Chatham mansion alone, for Bess and George had another engagement. Mrs. Chatham already had done a certain amount of investigation in the hidden room.

"So far I haven't discovered the missing box of papers," she remarked as they walked to the little studio in the woods. "I certainly hope it hasn't been stolen."

The place was topsy-turvy and it took some time to move things around. Underneath a chest Nancy discovered a mass of letters and papers. Mrs. Chatham identified them as

belonging to her first husband. Without a moment's loss of time she set about examining them, but it was tedious and disappointing work. After scanning perhaps fifty communications, she acknowledged that she had not found a single clue.

"I fear we are only wasting our time," Mrs. Chatham sighed wearily. "My husband may never have had the torn map in his possession."

Nancy was unwilling to give up. She wandered about the cluttered storeroom, finally stooping to move a pile of small, valuable, oriental rugs in a corner.

"Why, what is this?" she asked in astonishment.

Against the wall where the carpets had lain there was disclosed a rectangle of wood which did not exactly match the other paneling of the room. As Nancy pushed against it the section hinged inward, revealing a small, dark recess.

"Another secret hiding place!" she called to Mrs. Chatham who came quickly to her side.

With excitement mounting steadily, Nancy thrust her arm into the opening.

"I've found something!" she cried, and a moment later brought to light a tin box.

"I declare, I never saw such a clever girl!" laughed Mrs. Chatham, kneeling beside her. "Oh, that's the missing box!"

As she unfastened the lid, Nancy hoped fervently that the missing half of the treasure map would be revealed. Instead, the metal container held only two objects—a bank book and a tiny safety deposit box key.

"There were other things in here once," Mrs. Chatham said. "Captain Tomlin's name is written here," she added, opening the booklet. "This seems to be an account he had in a New York City bank. Can you see what it says, Nancy?"

"There is a sum of twelve thousand dollars on deposit!" said Nancy.

"You mean it's still there?"

"It must be. No doubt this key unlocks his safety deposit box in the same bank."

"How careless I was not to have gone over his letters thoroughly," Mrs. Chatham declared.

"Probably it will be necessary for you to go to New York in order to obtain the money," suggested Nancy.

"I could fly there within a day or so," Mrs. Chatham responded, thinking aloud. "But how can I prove my identity? The bank officials may refuse to allow me to open the safety deposit box."

"Why not get proper identification and papers before going there? I am certain Dad would be glad to help you."

"I'll try to see him this very day," Mrs. Chatham promised. "Nancy, you must come with me to New York. I just couldn't go alone. We'll have a wonderful time, and who knows, we may find that missing map!"

Before the girl could reply, Trixie came to the doorway of the studio.

"Mother!" she called shrilly. "You're wanted at the house!"

"Who wants me, darling?" Mrs. Chatham asked, peering through the open panel.

"I don't know their names. A man and a woman. I didn't like them so I made faces at them," the child giggled.

"Oh, Trixie, when will you learn manners?" Mrs. Chatham sighed.

Excusing herself to Nancy, the woman went quickly toward the house. Her daughter showed no inclination to follow. Entering the storeroom, she made herself a general nuisance by asking questions and disarranging the pile of letters which had been sorted so carefully.

“How would you like to play a magic piano?” Nancy asked to divert the little girl from mischief.

“A magic piano?” Trixie repeated, her eyes opening wide. “Where is it?”

“Here in the studio. You run out there and start playing. I’ll show you.”

After Trixie had seated herself at the piano and played a few notes, Nancy turned the control switch. At once the instrument was silenced.

“How do you do it?” the child laughed. “Show me, please!”

Nancy smiled at the word “please,” so different from Trixie’s usual manner. She showed her how to operate the switch, and from that moment on was not bothered. In less than twenty minutes Mrs. Chatham appeared, somewhat excited.

“Nancy,” she requested, “will you come to the house with me? I want you to meet my callers, Mr. and Mrs. Brown. Their story will interest you, and it may shed light on the matter of the missing map.”

“Then I certainly shall come,” the girl said excitedly.

With Mrs. Chatham she walked swiftly up the winding path to the house. A car Nancy had never seen before stood in the driveway.

“There they are now,” Mrs. Chatham indicated, pointing to a man and a woman who were sitting on the porch.

The couple stared at Nancy. The man said something to his companion, then both arose and hurried to their automobile. As Mrs. Chatham watched in amazement they drove away.

“Well, what do you think of that!” she exclaimed indignantly.

“I not only saw, but I know why they fled,” Nancy responded. “Your guests were the same couple who kidnaped me from Emerson College!”

CHAPTER XII

Trixie's Disappearance

So swiftly did the automobile drive away that Nancy barely had time to jot down the license number.

"They did seem to be afraid to meet you," Mrs. Chatham admitted. "Do you think we should notify the police?"

Nancy already was starting toward the house to seek a telephone. For a moment she had been tempted to pursue the fleeing couple in her own car, but she realized that such a course might prove to be dangerous. The police, in a fast cruiser, would have a much better chance to capture the kidnapers.

With Mrs. Chatham hovering at her side, Nancy made a terse report to the central station, asking that the couple be held for questioning. The task accomplished, she then asked the widow to tell her everything she had learned about the Browns.

"They seemed to be nice," Mrs. Chatham responded. "They introduced themselves as Mr. and Mrs. Fred Brown, arousing my interest by saying they were trying to find the widow of a certain Captain Tomlin. They claimed to have known him well before his death."

"I don't wonder you were taken in by such a clever approach. Did they question you about the treasure map?"

"Only in an indirect way. They hinted they knew about it by saying Captain Tomlin had told them a great secret before his death. They warned me to be on my guard if I were his widow."

"On guard?"

"They explained that a certain man—they would not give his name—was determined to gain possession of a valuable paper belonging to Captain Tomlin."

"Of course they referred to the map!"

"I thought so, although I pretended to have no idea as to what they meant. They advised me to leave Rocky Edge for a time lest the man threaten or harm me."

"What reply did you make, Mrs. Chatham?"

"I told them that I wanted you to hear the story before I made any decision."

"You told them my name?"

"No, I merely said you were a friend."

"Then that explains why they were so startled to see me come up the path," Nancy said with a broad smile. "My sudden appearance must have given them a great shock."

"I wonder how much they really know about the lost map and the treasure?" speculated Mrs. Chatham.

"Probably not as much as we do. They may believe you have it in your possession. Either they're working with that man who hid in the studio or else they're hoping to get ahead of him in stealing it."

Mrs. Chatham walked nervously to the French window, gazing into the garden.

"I don't know what to do. I've been very uneasy since that dreadful man was hiding in the studio. But I don't want to follow the Browns' advice either."

"If I were in your place, I would hire guards," Nancy said emphatically. "Why, if the place is left alone for any length of time the Browns may gain possession of the map. For all we

know, it may be hidden somewhere on the premises.”

The suggestion appealed to Mrs. Chatham who promised to attend to the matter directly.

“Do you feel we should give up the proposed trip to New York City?” Mrs. Chatham asked as she walked with Nancy to the Drew car.

“Quite the contrary,” the girl responded quickly. “Considering what has happened, it’s all the more important to learn the contents of your husband’s safety deposit box.”

“Then I’ll see your father tomorrow,” Mrs. Chatham promised. “By taking a plane it should be possible to make the trip in a day if necessary.”

Nancy drove home in a haze of excitement. The moment her father arrived from the office she began to pour forth the story of her day’s adventures, ending by teasing him to allow her to accompany the widow to New York.

“Why, Nancy,” he said in surprise. “Only a day or so ago you told me that she was a rather unpleasant person!”

“I still don’t approve of her manner toward Trixie, but I like her much better now than I did. Oh, please let me go, Dad!”

“I’ll decide after I’ve talked with her,” the lawyer smiled.

All that evening Nancy mulled over the strange developments which had followed her entry into the case of the missing map. Was the man who had broken into the Tomlin Smith house Spike Doty? Could he be the person who had been surprised in the studio?

“And where do the Browns and Mr. Bellows fit into the picture?” she pondered. “I wish I knew if they are working together or separately.”

When Nancy finally went to bed it was to dream that a heavy-set man with wicked-looking eyes peered at her from behind various objects. In this fantasy she seemed to be standing on a high revolving platform. Regardless of which direction it turned, she kept seeing the same terrifying man in different costumes. Nancy awoke to find herself clawing the bed covers wildly.

“My, what a nightmare!” she shivered, sitting up in bed. “I can see that face yet!”

Now that she was awake, the girl realized her subconscious mind had played a trick upon her. The face she had seen in her dreams was that of the man on the ladder at the Smith home. The eyes were those above the brass button “apparition” which had haunted the Ship Cottage at Rocky Edge.

“Why, that’s a clue!” she thought suddenly. “Why didn’t I think of using Trixie before?”

Leaping from her bed, Nancy ran to her desk and switched on a reading light. Inspired, she seized a crayon and made a color sketch of the leering face as it had appeared to her.

“Tomorrow I’ll show it to Trixie,” she decided. “I wonder if the picture will seem familiar to her?”

The opportunity which she sought came the next morning. Mrs. Chatham called upon Carson Drew at his office, bringing along her young daughter. At the moment of Nancy’s arrival Trixie had just upset an ink bottle and Mr. Drew’s secretary was nearly in hysterics.

“This young imp is driving me crazy!” she confided to Nancy in a whisper.

“Let me look after her,” the Drew girl offered willingly.

She led Trixie to an anteroom, there entertaining her by relating fairy stories to her. The child listened enthralled, scarcely moving as she sat and drank in every word.

“Oh, I have a picture to show you!” Nancy said finally. “It’s a drawing I made last night.”

She took the crayon sketch from her purse and laid it before Trixie. The child gazed at it, then gave a muffled shriek.

“It’s that same ghost!” she cried.

“Does this really look like the face you saw at the Ship Cottage?” Nancy inquired, well pleased at the result of her experiment.

“Yes, it’s the same one,” the child answered nervously. “Take it away, please! Even the picture makes me feel funny.”

Nancy smiled while comforting the little girl and returned the drawing to her pocketbook. Just then Mrs. Chatham and her father came from the inner office.

“Everything is arranged,” the widow declared triumphantly. “Your father prepared the papers I’ll need in New York. And he says you may go with me.”

“Oh, that’s splendid!” Nancy exclaimed, flashing her parent a grateful glance. “When do we leave?”

“In two hours, if you can be ready in such a short time,” Mrs. Chatham replied.

“I can be ready in fifteen minutes,” Nancy laughed. “How about plane reservations?”

“Your father made them for us by telephone.”

“Then everything seems to be settled,” Nancy said, starting to gather up her purse and gloves.

“Did you hire the guards to watch your home?”

“Yes, two men are there.”

Nancy started toward the door, saying, “I’ll dash home and toss a few things into a bag.”

“I want to go with you!” Trixie announced petulantly.

“You can’t, dear, and that’s all there is to it!” Mrs. Chatham replied in a firm voice. “Now don’t tease,” she added, starting off. “Nancy, I’ll pick you up later,” she called.

After the two had gone, the lawyer turned to his daughter. “Have you told anyone that you are intending to leave for New York?” he asked.

“I discussed it with Hannah Gruen.”

“No one else?”

“Well, George and Bess know I want to go there.”

“I’ve advised Mrs. Chatham to keep the reason for her trip a secret,” Carson Drew resumed. “Of course, those taking care of Trixie will have to know where her mother can be reached. I believe you’ll have no trouble, but it’s just as well to be cautious.”

“You think someone may follow us to the bank?”

“The Browns have demonstrated that they will go to any length to gain possession of the treasure map, Nancy. That’s why I want you to be careful.”

“I will, Dad,” the girl promised. “And now I have something for you.”

She gave him the crayon sketch of the man in the studio and told him of Trixie’s positive identification.

“I’ll tell the police,” he offered, studying the face. “This is an important step forward. I hope the little girl was sure of her identification and not just frightened by the sinister-looking face.”

“Trixie is very bright,” replied Nancy. “I believe we can depend upon her reaction as being accurate. Well, I must run or I’ll never catch the plane!”

Aided by the faithful housekeeper, she packed an overnight bag and changed into traveling clothes. By the time the widow stopped for her, Nancy was waiting.

“We may be a little early,” Mrs. Chatham remarked, glancing at her watch. “Our plane doesn’t leave until eleven.”

When she and Nancy arrived at the airport, they at once checked in at the ticket office.

“You are Mrs. Chatham?” the man at the desk inquired. “If so, you are to telephone your home at once. The call came about five minutes ago.”

“Oh, dear, I hope nothing is wrong,” the woman said anxiously as she hurried to a telephone.

In a few minutes she joined Nancy, her face tense and pale.

“Trixie has disappeared!” she announced dramatically.

“Oh, how dreadful! Did she carry out her threat to run away?”

“The servants were too excited to give me any real information. I’m afraid the poor darling has been kidnaped.”

Dismissing from their minds all thought of the New York trip, Mrs. Chatham and Nancy ran outside and took a taxi. As fast as the speed laws would permit they raced to the mansion.

“I am afraid Trixie has been kidnaped by that dreadful man who hid in the storeroom!” Mrs. Chatham said apprehensively. “If only those two guards I hired had paid strict attention to their duties!”

Arriving at the mansion, they learned that a search for the missing child already was under way. Observing that things were moving haphazardly, Nancy organized the servants into units so that every inch of the grounds could be covered.

“It’s no use,” Mrs. Chatham said brokenly. “We’ll never find her. She’s been kidnaped, I know.”

“Now don’t give up hope,” Nancy comforted the mother. “I’m going to search the studio.”

As she started away she chanced to pass the Chatham automobile parked on the circular driveway. The girl stopped short, staring because the lid to the rear-compartment trunk had been left open.

Nancy’s quick eye next noted a slight movement among the bushes only a few feet from the driveway. Darting toward them, she pulled aside the thick branches, revealing the cowering Trixie.

“I’ve found her!” she called to Mrs. Chatham.

As the widow started down the driveway, Nancy whispered something in Trixie’s ear. The child hugged her tightly and said in a frightened voice:

“I won’t do it again, honest I won’t! I’ll be good.”

The widow embraced her daughter in relief, then began to scold her.

“Trixie, you bad child, you’ve made me miss my plane! You keep me in a constant state of agitation!”

Nancy drew the woman aside. “Mrs. Chatham, may I offer a suggestion? Apparently the people here aren’t giving your daughter the proper attention. Don’t you think it would be a good idea for Ellen Smith to come over while you’re gone?”

The woman was pleased with the suggestion. Fortunately Nancy was able to reach the girl by phone. After hearing the story, Ellen promised to start at once and stay constantly with Trixie.

“But I’ll have to leave tomorrow afternoon,” she said.

“Probably we’ll be back by that time,” replied Nancy, then hung up. “Mrs. Chatham, it’s all arranged. And I think if we hurry we may be able to catch the plane. We certainly shall if it happens to be late.”

“Let’s try,” Mrs. Chatham proposed.

Quickly she told the servants of Ellen Smith’s coming while Nancy summoned the chauffeur. He drove as fast as he could toward the airport.

“It will be a close race,” said Nancy. Rolling down the car window she began to watch the sky for the incoming plane.

“Oh, there it is,” she groaned a moment later.

“Then we may as well turn back. We’ll never make it now,” cried Mrs. Chatham.

“We may,” Nancy insisted. “It remains here ten minutes before the take-off.”

At the airport, unknown to the two women, a Mr. Bellows was making a polite inquiry at the ticket desk.

“Has Mrs. Chatham arrived yet?”

“Twenty minutes ago,” was the brief answer.

Mr. Bellows glanced about the waiting room to make sure that the widow was not there. Assuming that she had boarded the plane, he bought his own ticket.

“She’ll not elude me this time!” he chuckled as he walked outside. “I’ll get what I want before her return from New York!”

At the very moment that the Chatham car drove up before the airport, he boarded the transport.

“Take any seat you wish, sir,” the stewardess greeted him pleasantly.

Before he realized that Nancy and Mrs. Chatham were not aboard, the young woman had slammed the door and the plane taxied away.

CHAPTER XIII

Flying to New York

"We've missed it!" Mrs. Chatham exclaimed as they watched the plane rise into the air. "How disappointing!"

"If we'd had only one more minute we could have made it," Nancy agreed, opening the car door to alight. "I'll find out what time the next plane is due."

"Please do," the widow requested. "Oh, dear, everything has gone wrong today."

At the desk Nancy learned to her disappointment that there would not be another plane until four o'clock in the afternoon.

"Too bad you missed it," the man remarked sympathetically. "One of Mrs. Chatham's friends was aboard. Inquired especially for her."

Nancy became alert, wondering if the woman had revealed her destination despite her father's warning. "A lady?" she asked in an offhand tone.

"No, a gentleman. I have his name here on the book. Let me see—Bellows, that's it."

"Oh! And you say he boarded the plane?"

"Yes, he barely made it."

Nancy felt far from despondent. As she returned to make her report to Mrs. Chatham, she found the woman had followed her into the room.

"It turns out that we were lucky to miss that plane," the Drew girl declared cheerfully.

"Lucky?" the widow echoed.

"Mr. Bellows was aboard!"

"The man who tried to buy Tomlin Smith's half of the treasure map?"

"Yes, and before getting a ticket he inquired for you."

"For me? Why, I never met the man in my life."

"In some manner he learned that you were going to New York. And for some reason he wanted to follow you there."

"Oh, it's all too much for me. Well, we may as well go home again and find out if he has been seen at Rocky Edge. Furthermore, I mean to punish Trixie for running away as she did."

"Oh, please don't," Nancy pleaded. "She meant no harm. She merely wanted to come with us."

"What do you mean?"

"She didn't want to stay with the servants, so she hid in the trunk compartment of your car."

"Then we had her with us all the time!"

"Yes, she rode to the airport and even had a little bag packed. But she couldn't get the door open in time, so she was carried back home. Then she hid in the bushes where I found her. Actually, though, she did us a favor by making us miss the plane."

"I guess you are right at that," Mrs. Chatham admitted slowly. "I'll try to be lenient with her this time."

While she and Nancy walked to the automobile, a taxicab drew up near by. A well-dressed man of middle age alighted. Immediately the girl recognized him as Mr. Holgate, one of her father's prosperous clients. His home was in New York, but he controlled a large firm in River Heights and commuted by private plane from one place to the other.

As he came to the car, Nancy presented him to Mrs. Chatham. Then she mentioned how they had missed their transport.

“Why, that’s fine!” he chuckled. “You can ride with me.”

“You’re on your way to New York now?” Nancy asked, scarcely believing her good fortune.

“The plane’s all tuned up ready to start. I was wishing for a passenger or two. Will you come?”

Nancy and Mrs. Chatham gratefully accepted the generous offer. A few minutes later they were winging toward New York. The day was a perfect one and their host an excellent pilot. At the end of a speedy but uneventful trip he cordially invited them to spend the night with him and his wife at their penthouse apartment.

The invitation pleased Nancy, for she felt that if she and Mrs. Chatham should register at a hotel they might be traced by Mr. Bellows. She glanced questioningly at Mrs. Chatham, feeling that the decision ought to be made by her.

“We’ll be happy to come,” the widow accepted promptly. “First, though, we must go to one of the banks to attend to an urgent business matter, so we’ll arrive late this afternoon.”

No sooner had she entered the bank than Mrs. Chatham began to display signs of nervousness. While she and Nancy waited to see the president, Mr. Dowell, whom Mr. Drew knew, she fingered the legal papers the lawyer had given her.

“Now what was it your father told me to say?” she asked in panic. “Oh, dear, I am rather flustered. The bank president may think I am trying to obtain valuables under false pretenses. Won’t you do the talking, Nancy?”

“I’ll be glad to if you wish, Mrs. Chatham. What worries me is that we may find the safety deposit box empty.”

“Or the bank may have sold its contents.”

“I doubt that that could be done without a court order. At any rate, we’ll soon know.”

Nancy barely had time to glance over the legal papers before she and Mrs. Chatham were ushered into the private office of Mr. Dowell, the president.

“May I assist you?” he inquired, offering them chairs near his desk.

Nancy made a simple presentation of the case. She offered proof of Mrs. Chatham’s identity, and gave the man a letter from her father requesting the opening of Captain John Tomlin’s safety deposit box.

“You do have such a box here?” she inquired as the banker remained silent.

“Yes,” he acknowledged. “For over a year we have tried without success to locate Captain Tomlin or his heirs. Rentals on the box have accumulated over a long period.”

“I’ll be glad to pay whatever amount is due the bank,” Mrs. Chatham offered at once. “May we look at the contents today!”

“I fear that will be impossible.”

“When can we do so?” the widow asked a trifle impatiently. “Miss Drew and I had not planned to remain in New York longer than a day.”

“I’ll see what we can do,” the banker promised. “If we find your papers in good order, it’s possible the box can be opened tomorrow.”

After making an appointment for nine o’clock the following day, Nancy and Mrs. Chatham taxied to the Holgate apartment. The woman did not feel very optimistic in regard to swift action on the part of the bank.

“Mr. Dowell seemed impressed when he looked at your papers,” Nancy remarked thoughtfully.

Despite their disappointment, Nancy and Mrs. Chatham thoroughly enjoyed their evening with Mr. and Mrs. Holgate. An excellent dinner was served. Later the host displayed his collection of miniature trains, ships and furniture.

“Some of these pieces are very rare,” he remarked, showing Nancy a tiny desk. “This was imported from the Orient. I wonder if you can discover its secret?”

Nancy examined the desk carefully but was unable to guess what Mr. Holgate meant.

“I’ll show you,” he chuckled. He pushed with a thumbnail at exactly the right spot and a hidden drawer popped open. “Most antique desks have secret compartments, but this is the only one I ever saw in a little model.”

“How very clever!” Nancy laughed. “I guess I’m slipping as a detective!”

At this moment she was summoned to the telephone. Mrs. Chatham, who had been calling her home, said Ellen Smith wished to speak to her.

“Oh, Nancy,” came the young singer’s voice over the wire, “don’t stay down there any longer than you have to. I didn’t want to frighten Mrs. Chatham but this place is desperately spooky—tappings on the wall and creeping shadows in the garden. Twice I’ve called to the guards but no one answered. I don’t believe they’re even on duty.”

Nancy was frightened. Almost anything might happen before Mrs. Chatham’s return. Knowing there was no chance of the woman getting back in a hurry, she tried to think of some way whereby she might help. Suddenly an idea came to her.

“Ellen,” she said, “why don’t you call up Hannah Gruen and get her to come out? Dad has to be away tonight and tomorrow, I know, so she is alone. Please do that.”

The girl promised, relief in her voice. Nancy went to bed but found it hard to get to sleep and was awake early. She hoped Mrs. Chatham’s business could be attended to at once and an early return made to River Heights. When she and the widow presented themselves at the bank, Mr. Dowell greeted them so cordially they knew at once everything had been arranged to their satisfaction.

“The box will be opened without further delay,” he assured them. “I’ve arranged for a government man to be here this morning.”

“A government man?” Mrs. Chatham asked uneasily. “Why is that?”

“Merely to list the contents for tax purposes,” the bank president smiled. “We may as well go to the vault now.”

He personally conducted Nancy and Mrs. Chatham to a basement room where the official was waiting. Without formality Captain Tomlin’s locked box was removed from the safety vault and carried to a private booth.

“I’m almost afraid to open it,” Mrs. Chatham said shakily to Nancy. “Will you please do it for me? Here’s the key.”

Thus requested, the girl unlocked the metal box. As she raised the lid she saw that it was filled with bulky papers. Her heart leaped, for on the very top lay a yellow envelope which bore in a bold scrawl the thrilling words:

Clue to a Treasure.

CHAPTER XIV

Clue to a Treasure

“This must be it!” Nancy said with control, picking the thin envelope from the box. “I do hope our long search is at an end.”

Neither she nor Mrs. Chatham wished to examine the contents of the envelope in the presence of government or bank officials, but the men opened it without ceremony. They merely glanced at the sheet inside, put it back, and went on to the next pile of papers. There was nothing to do but wait until a listing had been made of the box’s contents. It disclosed that they were free from tax. At length Nancy and the widow were left alone.

“Thank goodness!” murmured Mrs. Chatham in relief. “Now we can look in that envelope. Surely it must contain half the treasure map.”

With trembling fingers she took out the contents. There was only a double sheet of paper which obviously was not a map.

“It’s a letter,” the woman said, unable to hide her disappointment.

“Perhaps it tells what became of the missing section of the map,” Nancy declared hopefully. “Is it signed by Captain Tomlin?”

“Yes, this is his handwriting.”

Her voice vibrant with emotion, Mrs. Chatham read the entire note aloud. In it her former husband revealed details of his early life never before disclosed to her. They offered sufficient facts to make it certain that he and Tomlin Smith were twin brothers.

“So that part of the mystery is solved!” said Nancy. “I can report that much of my assignment accomplished. Only Ellen’s father will be sorry never to see his relative again.”

The letter concerned itself mainly with the treasure originally secreted by Captain Tomlin’s seafaring grandfather.

“Listen to this!” Mrs. Chatham exclaimed as she came to a particularly significant paragraph.

“All these years I have kept the torn section of a treasure map given me by my father. Fearing theft I made a copy of it. Only a month ago this very copy was stolen from my cabin, unquestionably by a member of my crew.”

“When was the letter dated?” Nancy asked as the widow paused to catch her breath.

“Only a week before my husband’s death. He continues:

“I have taken the original copy from my cabin and hidden it on the *Warwick*. It is my firm belief that this map, if combined with the section possessed by my missing twin brother, will lead to the discovery of my grandfather’s great treasure.”

“Those statements don’t go together!” Nancy exclaimed. “Particularly the one about the *Warwick*. I thought that was the name of the vessel your husband sailed.”

“You’re right, Nancy, it was.”

“Then how could he remove the parchment map from his own ship and still hide it there? It doesn’t make sense!”

“Perhaps he meant he hid it somewhere in another part of the vessel—away from his cabin,” Mrs. Chatham ventured.

“That doesn’t seem likely,” Nancy said, shaking her head. “No, I am sure Captain Tomlin never would risk having the map found by members of his crew. Especially after the copy had

been stolen.”

“Then what could he have meant?”

“I don’t know,” Nancy admitted. “It strikes me that your husband deliberately tried to make the statement mysterious. Apparently he thought you would understand where the map was hidden.”

“I haven’t the slightest idea!”

Nancy was silent for several moments as she re-read the letter. Then suddenly her face brightened.

“I think I have it!” she exclaimed. “Captain Tomlin owned the ship models you have at the studio at Rocky Edge, didn’t he?”

“Yes. He had many of them built to his special order.”

“And they were sent to you from his ship after his death?”

“Yes.”

“Tell me, among the collection was there a replica of the *Warwick*?”

“Oh, dear, I can’t remember,” Mrs. Chatham said regretfully. “There were so many of the little boats. I sold a few of them.”

“Then you may have lost the map forever,” Nancy declared in consternation.

“I don’t understand.”

“It is my theory that your husband hid his half of the map in a model of his sailing vessel, the *Warwick*. Perhaps there is a secret compartment in it, like the one in the tiny desk Mr. Holgate has. Doesn’t that seem reasonable?”

“Oh, it does!” the widow cried. “And to think I may have disposed of it unwittingly!”

“Let’s hope the boat is still among the collection.”

“We’ll take the first plane home,” Mrs. Chatham decided instantly. “Oh, dear, I’ll have no peace of mind if I’ve sold that little ship.”

Bidding farewell to the Holgates, Nancy and Mrs. Chatham soon were en route to River Heights. Aided by a strong tail wind, their plane arrived ahead of schedule. Although the widow had telegraphed that she was coming, her chauffeur was not at the airport.

“Evidently he didn’t expect our plane to get here so soon,” Mrs. Chatham declared, gazing about the parking space. “We’ll not wait for him.”

Hailing a taxi, they drove without delay to Rocky Edge. As the cab rolled through the open gate Nancy observed that no guards were on duty.

“You hired some special detectives to watch your place, didn’t you?” she inquired. “I don’t see any about.”

“They aren’t detectives,” the woman replied. “My gardener knew two strong men who were out of work, so we gave them the job. I’m sure they’re around somewhere.”

But Mrs. Chatham was wrong, and she found a sad state of affairs at her home.

Trixie was missing!

“Oh, dear! Oh, dear!” exclaimed the child’s mother, wringing her hands. “I knew I never should have gone to New York!”

The only servant who seemed to be upset over the matter was the chauffeur. At once Nancy inquired of him when Ellen Smith and Hannah Gruen had left.

“They both went away right after lunch,” he replied. “The young lady had a singing lesson, she said. Your housekeeper couldn’t stand it here. The cook and the waitress resented her comin’ so sudden and wouldn’t give her anything to eat! But I’m glad she was here, for Miss Trixie was fine with her and Miss Smith.”

“Where are the guards?” the Drew girl inquired.

“Oh, they got better jobs, so they left,” the chauffeur replied.

“How long has Trixie been missing?” Nancy next asked the man.

“An hour or two.”

At this moment Mrs. Chatham came up, sobbing. “Have you searched everywhere, Thomas?” she asked. As he nodded, she added, “O-ver the edge of the cliff and—and down by the river?”

“Yes, Madam, everywhere.”

The widow acted relieved at this statement. “Then Trixie has run away, the little scamp!” she laughed through her tears.

“Mrs. Chatham, I don’t wish to alarm you,” said Nancy, “but I am afraid this may be serious. Before we left for New York, Trixie promised me she never would run away again.”

“Surely you don’t think Trixie has been kidnaped?” the widow gasped.

“I’m afraid something of the sort has happened.”

“Then we must call the police at once! I’ll do it now!”

Mrs. Chatham started toward the house, Nancy following her. As they entered the hall both noticed a sheet of paper lying near the telephone.

“What is this?” the woman asked, picking it up.

At a glance she saw that it was a ransom note. In a bold scrawl had been written the alarming message:

“If you want to see your kid again have a thousand dollars waiting when our messenger arrives. Do not notify the police or you will be sorry.”

“Oh, Nancy, Trixie has been kidnaped!” groaned Mrs. Chatham.

For a moment Nancy thought the woman was going to faint, but with an effort the child’s mother steadied herself and sat down.

“Oh, Nancy, what shall I do? I never should have trusted my child to the care of servants.”

“If I were you I never would consider paying the money, Mrs. Chatham.”

“Trixie may be harmed if I refuse.”

“I think you need not worry about that—at least not yet,” Nancy said, studying the ransom note again. “The kidnaping could be an inside affair.”

“I don’t agree with you,” Mrs. Chatham returned with conviction. “While my servants may be careless they are all dependable.”

Nancy tactfully made no reply, but actually she held a poor opinion of the widow’s ability to select employees.

“I think I should call the police,” Mrs. Chatham resumed nervously. “What do you advise?”

“Please wait until we’ve had an opportunity to search the grounds thoroughly.”

“Surely you don’t believe Trixie will be found? Why, this note indicates she has been kidnaped! You said so yourself——”

“I have an idea,” Nancy said slowly. “It may amount to nothing but it won’t take long to find out. Please wait here until I return.”

Without explaining what she had in mind, the girl hurried from the house, walking rapidly to the Ship Cottage. She did not blame Mrs. Chatham for being puzzled by her action. She had acted upon a sudden “hunch,” a feeling that Trixie was being held a prisoner somewhere on the estate. What better place could a kidnaper choose than the little cottage with its secret

rooms, sliding panels and trap doors? Furthermore, should his plans go wrong, he would not be caught with the child on his hands.

Cautiously Nancy opened the door of the music studio and peered inside. The room was vacant, but on a chair lay Trixie's straw hat. She thought too that she heard a slight sound from behind the wall.

"I'll look there, anyway," she decided courageously, moving to the secret panel.

Nancy groped for the peg which opened it. As the panel slid back slowly she was almost certain she heard a movement in the dark storeroom.

"Trix—" she started to call.

At the same moment a hard object struck Nancy and she knew no more.

CHAPTER XV

A Ransom Demand

When Nancy Drew opened her eyes it was to see Trixie standing above her, a gag in her mouth. For a moment the girl remained in a semi-daze, unable to think where she was or what had happened to her. Then, as she remembered that she had been struck by a hard object, she looked about the room for her assailant. There was no one but the child, and a light was on.

"Something struck me," she murmured aloud. "What was it, Trixie?"

The little girl made no reply.

"Why, you're gagged, of course, and bound!" she exclaimed. "I'll have you free in a jiffy."

Nancy jerked off the handkerchief tied across the prisoner's mouth, and set about unknitting the cords which held her wrists and ankles.

"Oh, Nancy, I'm so glad you've come," the child sobbed in relief, hugging the older girl. "I didn't mean to hit you."

"How did you ever do it with your hands tied?"

"I thought you were that awful man coming back. So when you opened the panel I bumped into you as hard as I could. It hurt me too. The light went on when you fell down."

"Trixie, who was it that put you here? Tell me quickly."

"He had big ugly eyes," the child answered, trembling at the recollection.

"A large man?"

"I—I guess so. All I could think of was that he looked just like the ghost!"

"And he brought you here?"

"No, I came to the cottage myself," Trixie admitted. "I didn't think the ghost would bother me—not when the guards were here."

"How did you get in?"

"With the key. I saw where my mother put it after she locked up the place."

"You entered the cottage. Then what happened, Trixie?"

"I was playing the piano when that bad man grabbed me. I couldn't yell 'cause he put his hand over my mouth. He tied me up and carried me in here."

"You're not hurt?" Nancy asked anxiously. "Did he strike you?"

"No, I'm all right," Trixie replied, "only I'm hungry. Where's my mother?" she asked with a little sob. "I want my mother."

"Of course you do," Nancy comforted her. "I'll take you straight to her, and you shall have a wonderful dinner."

"With ice cream?"

"As much as you can eat!" the Drew girl laughed.

From the child's description of her captor, Nancy felt certain that she had been imprisoned by the same man who previously had "haunted" the studio. How unfortunate that Mrs. Chatham had not thought of employing more efficient guards.

As Nancy and Trixie approached the house, the child's mother hastened to meet them. She clasped her child in her arms, laughing and crying at the same time.

"I was afraid the kidnaper wouldn't keep his promise!" she exclaimed. "He did send you back unharmed!"

"Nancy found me," Trixie corrected her mother. "She says I can have some ice cream and I want it right now."

"*You* found her?" Mrs. Chatham asked, staring at Nancy.

"Why yes, your daughter was locked in the studio storeroom. Did you say something about a kidnaper failing to keep his promise?"

Mrs. Chatham sagged weakly into a bamboo garden chair. "I've lost a thousand dollars, Nancy! Oh, I should have taken your advice, but I didn't."

"How did you lose such a sum of money?" the girl asked, puzzled.

"It was this way. Right after you left, a messenger boy pedaled up on a bicycle."

"Sent by the kidnaper!"

"Yes, he brought a note. It said that for a thousand dollars, if paid immediately, Trixie would be returned safely at once. I did have that amount in a safe in my bedroom. I was so excited I got it and gave it to the boy."

"How long ago was that?"

"Perhaps fifteen minutes."

"Then probably he has made contact with the kidnaper before this!" Nancy exclaimed.

"There's a chance we may be able to overtake the messenger boy," the Drew girl continued quickly. "Which direction did he take?"

"He went toward town."

While Mrs. Chatham remained at home with Trixie, Nancy and the chauffeur sped along the road. They kept a sharp look-out for a fellow on a bicycle. They traveled all the way into River Heights without seeing him.

"I imagine he abandoned the bicycle shortly after he left the estate," Nancy remarked gloomily. "Like as not he had a car hidden somewhere along the road."

"We'll never catch him now," the chauffeur agreed. "Where to, Miss? Rocky Edge?"

"No, please stop at the Weldon Bicycle Rental Shop," Nancy said impulsively. "Didn't we pass the place on our way?"

"I think we did, Miss."

The Drew girl watched the shops closely and soon espied the little store. While the chauffeur waited for her she went inside to talk to the proprietor. He was an elderly man with snow-white hair and crinkly wrinkles about his eyes.

"Would you like to rent a bicycle?" he beamed. "I can fit you out very nicely."

"Oh, I don't want one just now," Nancy said, shattering his hopes. "I merely would like to know something. Have you rented a bicycle during the past hour?"

"Only one," the man answered, surprised by her question. "It was to a young fellow who said he was a messenger boy."

"Can you describe him?"

"Let me think," the shop owner mused. "He looked pretty old to be a messenger boy. I should say he was about your height. His eyes were blue and his hair was sandy."

Nancy asked a few more questions and then left the shop. From the proprietor's description she knew that the messenger boy was a complete stranger to her. There was nothing to identify him as an associate of Mr. Bellows, Spike Doty, or Fred Brown, but it seemed likely he might be a hired agent of one of the trio.

"Please drive to Mack's Costume Store," the girl directed upon returning to the car.

At this shop she again had luck. A fellow fitting the same description had hired a messenger's uniform that very afternoon!

“So the man was an impostor,” decided Nancy. “I must inform the police.”

Nancy made a complete report of the kidnaping to city detectives, asking that a search be made for the thief. However, upon returning to the estate she was compelled to inform Mrs. Chatham that the chance of recovering the thousand dollars was a slim one.

“Trixie is safe, and that’s the most important thing,” the widow replied. “Thank goodness I didn’t pay a larger sum.”

Now that the excitement over the child’s disappearance had subsided, Nancy said she must go home, but in the morning she would like to resume the search for Captain Tomlin’s map.

“By all means let’s look for the ship model *Warwick*,” the widow agreed. “After my loss of so much money today I shouldn’t mind finding a treasure!”

Early the next day she and Nancy examined the various little boats which had been stored in the studio. Each bore a small brass plate with the name of the vessel engraved on it, but the *Warwick* could not be found. Moreover, a thorough examination of the others did not reveal a single secret hiding place.

“Mrs. Chatham, in all, how many models did you sell?” Nancy asked at length as they were forced to admit defeat.

“At least ten or twelve,” the widow admitted. “I listed the persons to whom the little ships were sold.”

“You did?” the girl cried, her spirits reviving. “And the names of each?”

“I don’t remember about that. I’ll see if I can find the record book.”

Mrs. Chatham returned to the main house. Soon she came back with a small black leather book in her hand.

“I’ve found the list,” she told Nancy jubilantly. “There were eleven sold at different prices.”

“Is the *Warwick* listed?” Nancy asked, eagerly scanning a page which the widow showed her.

“Apparently I didn’t write down the names of the ship models. Only the prices paid and the purchasers.”

Nancy drew a deep sigh, thinking of the work which lay ahead.

“It was stupid of me not to keep the names,” Mrs. Chatham apologized contritely. “Perhaps we should give up the search.”

“Give it up?” Nancy echoed in astonishment. “Oh, no! A little work doesn’t daunt me. I mean to find that map if it takes years!”

CHAPTER XVI

Stopped by an Elephant

Nancy scarcely knew where to begin the search for the model of the *Warwick*. For half an hour she and Mrs. Chatham studied the record book, listing the names of various purchasers of the miniature boats.

“Was Captain Tomlin’s vessel very well known?” Nancy asked thoughtfully.

“No,” the widow replied. “It was a small ship and rather old.”

“Then a model of it would not be so likely to command a high price. I’m tempted to start my investigation with the purchasers who bought the least expensive ones.”

“That seems wise to me, Nancy. It would take weeks to question everyone on our list.”

Consulting the ledger, they noted that a man named J. K. Clover had paid the lowest sum. His address was given as Hope, a small city nearly eighty miles away.

“I wonder if I can reach Mr. Clover by telephone,” Nancy remarked.

To her disappointment the name was not listed in any directory. Mrs. Chatham suggested rather sympathetically that it would be easier to start the search in River Heights.

“Easier perhaps,” Nancy admitted, “but I want to carry my plan through. I think I’ll drive to Hope and try to find Mr. Clover. I’ll ask Bess and George to go with me.”

Informed of the proposed trip, the chums were eager to accompany Nancy. They packed a picnic lunch and were waiting when Nancy drove to the Marvin home.

“Just a minute!” Bess called from the front porch. “I have to turn off the lawn sprinkler for Mother.”

As she started around the house a police puppy trailed after her, padding through a muddy flower bed.

“Good-bye, Rudy,” Bess said, turning off the hose. “Be a good doggie while I’m gone.”

The little animal responded with a friendly bark. Raising up on his hind legs, he pawed the girl affectionately.

“Oh, see what you’ve done!” Bess cried in dismay. “You’ve muddied my white dress!”

While Nancy and George waited impatiently in the car she went into the house to change. That was not to be the only delay, however.

“Sorry to keep you waiting so long,” she apologized as she returned. “I guess we’re ready to start at last.”

Nancy shifted gears, but before she could pull away from the curb, Mrs. Marvin called to her, saying she was wanted on the telephone.

The message was from Hannah Gruen. She reported that Mrs. Chatham wished Nancy to meet her at the police station immediately.

“Did she say why she wanted me?” the girl asked in perplexity.

“She mentioned something about a messenger boy being captured.”

“Oh, that’s splendid news!” Nancy exclaimed.

Upon arriving at police headquarters a few minutes later she learned that the young man who had been caught was booked under the name of Tim Dapp. Mrs. Chatham already had made a positive identification of him as the person who had received the thousand dollars from her.

“We didn’t find any money on his person,” an officer told Nancy. “Even so, there’s not much question about his guilt. He acted as the go-between for higher-ups.”

“Has he had anything to say?”

“So far we haven’t been able to get much out of him. He won’t tell what became of the money or who hired him.”

Nancy was permitted to see young Dapp in his cell, but the sullen youth refused to answer any of her questions.

“I don’t know,” was his response to everything she asked. “I won’t talk without a lawyer.”

In the end the girl decided that for the present it was futile to try to get any information from the prisoner. Having lost an hour’s time already she decided to start for Hope without further delay. As she left the car, a few drops of rain splashed on the sidewalk.

“See that!” Bess cried, gazing up at the black clouds. “It’s going to rain.”

“It is raining, you mean,” corrected George as the drops came down faster and faster. “Who minds a little moisture?” she laughed gaily. “Full steam ahead!”

For an hour it rained steadily and they dared not travel fast over the slippery road.

“I propose we eat,” said Nancy, pulling over to the side of the road. “Maybe by that time the storm will have let up.”

Her hope was realized as they went on later, but unfortunately the weather did not clear. Instead, it grew more and more misty as they proceeded.

“This is positively dangerous,” said Bess fearfully as they rounded a corner. “I hope—Oh!” she screamed.

Nancy jammed on the brakes just in time. Directly ahead there loomed a huge gray mass which completely blocked the narrow road.

“It’s—it’s an elephant!” cried George. “Of all things!”

“Why, it really is an elephant!” Nancy gasped as the huge animal lumbered toward them. “He must have escaped from a circus.”

“Bess, jump out and chase him off the road,” George said mischievously.

“You think this is funny, but I don’t!” Bess chided her cousin. “He may decide to upset the car!”

Nancy tooted the auto horn several times, but to no avail. The elephant remained squarely in the middle of the road, swinging his trunk in what Bess called a menacing way.

“Elephants like peanuts,” suggested George. “Throw him one of those left-over peanut butter sandwiches.”

“Don’t bring out the food, whatever you do,” Bess cautioned nervously. “It might attract him. Oh, dear, I wish we never had started on this trip. Everything has gone wrong and now this!”

“I’m not afraid of an elephant,” Nancy declared, starting to open the car door. “I’ll get out and try to coax him away.”

“Don’t you dare!” Bess cried, pulling her chum back. “Why, elephants kill folks sometimes and this one looks wild to me!”

Nancy did not insist upon testing her courage, for just then a man in a blue uniform, obviously a circus employee, ambled down the road.

“Oh, here’s my elephant,” he said with grim humor. “Old Tom has a bad habit of pulling up his stake and walking off whenever he’s around here,” the trainer explained. “Our traveling show is camped over in the woods there.”

“Why did you say ‘when he’s around here’?” asked Nancy, interested.

“Well, Miss,” replied the old circus man, “you know an elephant never forgets. When this one was bein’ brought to this country—he was only a baby, mind you—one of the sailors hurt him. Later, when we had a show up in these parts, if this fellow don’t turn up. I’m telling you Tom here nearly killed him.”

“Oh!” cried Bess, eyeing the great gray mass askance.

“Tom wouldn’t hurt a soul—except his old enemy,” said the elephant’s keeper. “But if he ever catches up with this Spike Doty, I’d hate to figure what would happen.”

“Did you say Spike Doty!” asked Nancy, astounded. “Is he around here?”

It was the circus man’s turn to look surprised, so the girl explained that the police were looking for a Spike Doty, but she did not tell why.

“I don’t know whether he’s around this territory or not,” replied the keeper. “But old Tom seems to think he might be,” the man grinned.

He struck the beast sharply on the trunk and the elephant lumbered off.

“That was a strange story,” said Nancy as the girls got on their way again. “Do you suppose it could be the same Spike Doty?”

“It’s an unusual name,” replied George.

The mist finally was blown away and when the girls reached Hope the sun was shining brightly. Without difficulty they located the address they sought. To their delight they saw a ship model in the front window.

“This is the place!” Nancy declared triumphantly. “Oh, I hope that little boat is the *Warwick!*”

In response to her knock, a bent old man with scanty white hair came to the door.

“How do you do?” said Nancy, bowing. “May I ask if you are Mr. Clover?”

Unknown to her, this person was very deaf, but he guessed what she had said.

“I am Mr. Clover,” he answered. “What is it you want? Speak up!”

“Did you at one time buy a ship model from a Mrs. Chatham?” she asked eagerly.

“A little shirt?” the old man demanded. “Did I buy a little shirt? Of all the stupid questions!”

“No, you misunderstood me, Mr. Clover. I asked if you bought a little ship—a model.”

“Bother?” the old man muttered, shaking his head. “I can’t seem to understand what you mean. I’m a bit hard of hearing, you know.”

“The *Warwick!*” Nancy fairly shouted. “Did you buy the *Warwick?*”

“War bickering,” the old fellow puzzled. “Yes, there’s plenty of it these days. What the world’s a-coming to I don’t know.”

Nearly at her wits’ end, Nancy pointed to the little ship in the front window.

“The *Warwick!*” she repeated again. “Did you buy it from Mrs. Chatham?”

“Oh, you mean that little ship!” Light broke over Mr. Clover’s face. “Why didn’t you say so at first? A right pretty thing, ain’t she?”

“Is it named the *Warwick?*” Nancy shouted in his ear.

“Come in, come in,” the old man invited. “I’ll show it to you.”

Breathing sighs of relief, the girls entered the cottage. It was none too clean, being cluttered with books, papers and furniture, but the girls had eyes only for the miniature boat. Walking to the front window, Nancy lifted it from the table. On its base was a small brass plate which bore the name *Storm King*.

“Oh, it isn’t the one we’re searching for,” she murmured in disappointment. “But I’ll look it over.”

As she examined it, seeking a hidden compartment, Bess asked the old man if she might have a drink of water.

“Sure thing,” he said agreeably. “I’ll get you one fresh from the well.”

As soon as he had gone, Bess and George crossed the room to Nancy’s side.

“Isn’t it the *Warwick*?” the latter asked, peering at the ship.

“I’m afraid not,” Nancy answered gloomily. “This model is called the *Storm King*.”

She offered the vessel to her chums. As George took it from her there was a flash of metal in the sunlight.

“Wait, let me have it again!” Nancy exclaimed.

Her voice was excited, for she had observed something which gave her new hope.

CHAPTER XVII

The Spies

“What is it you see!” George asked as Nancy reclaimed the *Storm King*.

“There’s something printed on the funnel of the ship!” Nancy answered, indicating what appeared to be some decoration.

“Why, so there is!” Bess exclaimed in awe. “How cleverly it’s done. One never would notice it except after careful study.”

Nancy turned toward the light so that she could read the tiny letters.

“Girls, our search is at an end!” she proclaimed. “It says, ‘Renamed the *Warwick*.’”

“Does the model have a secret compartment?” Bess asked eagerly. “Perhaps the map is hidden in the base!”

Before the girls could investigate further Mr. Clover returned with a pitcher of drinking water. Nancy immediately began to bargain with him, asking how much he would take for the *Storm King*.

“Oh, I don’t want to sell my little boat,” Mr. Clover said. “I figure on giving it to my young nephew at Christmas time.”

Nancy explained that she was trying to recover the model for Mrs. Chatham, whose first husband had sailed on the real vessel bearing that name.

“Captain Tomlin is dead, you know,” she said, hoping to play upon his sympathy. “His widow believes this to be a model of the very ship he sailed and would like very much to have it.”

“I’m willing to sell,” the old man admitted. “But it’s got to be at my own price.”

Nancy had made up her mind that she must have the *Storm King* at any cost. Accordingly she gave the man the amount he asked, delighted that actually it was not high.

With the precious little boat in their possession, the girls gleefully returned to the car. As they rode along George spoke about the name of the vessel having been changed. “I wonder when it was done and why?”

“Certainly a long time ago,” replied Nancy. “Probably during some year when it was sold to another company. A new owner often changes the name to correspond with others in his fleet.”

When she was a few blocks from the Clover cottage, Nancy stopped at the curb.

“Now to find the map!” she declared gaily.

“I wonder where the parchment can be hidden,” said George.

The girls examined every inch of the little ship without finding a secret compartment. Nancy even bought a tool at a hardware store and pried off several of the deck boards. Nothing had been secreted in the cavity beneath.

“The map isn’t here,” she admitted at last.

“But what could have become of it? I say, this is just too mean!” Bess’s face was very long, for she had counted heavily on being invited to the treasure hunt.

“It’s barely possible there was more than one model of the *Warwick*,” Nancy said thoughtfully. “That doesn’t seem very likely, though.”

“At any rate, it’s our only hope,” George declared, trying to cheer her companions. “Why not telephone the various purchasers and ask each person the name of the boat he bought?”

“That’s all we can do now,” Nancy nodded, searching through her purse for the list she and Mrs. Chatham had copied.

In checking over the names the girls found that not one of the purchasers lived near the town of Hope.

“I guess we had better go home and start out tomorrow,” suggested Bess.

Back at River Heights Nancy made several telephone calls and was delighted to talk with a Mr. Trumbull, who assured her that he owned the *Warwick*. She made an appointment to see him the following day.

The girls went to his home the next morning where Nancy saw that the boat in question bore the correct name. At her offer to purchase it, the man regarded her somewhat suspiciously.

“There seems to be a great demand for this particular model,” he said, watching her closely. “A few days ago I saw an advertisement in the paper saying a good price would be paid for the *Warwick*.”

Here was news indeed! Nancy had not guessed that anyone except Mrs. Chatham and her chums was aware of the map’s supposed hiding place. Was the advertiser merely a person who collected models as a hobby, or was he trying to buy the model for the same reason that she was but with the intention of using the information for a dishonest purpose?

“Mr. Trumbull, have you that paper still?” she asked quickly.

“No, it was thrown away days ago.”

“Do you recall if there was a name signed to it?”

“Only a box number. But tell me, why do you want my ship?”

Nancy told the same story she had related to Mr. Clover.

“I’d like to oblige you,” Mr. Trumbull said at last, “but I don’t want to sell the *Warwick*.”

Nancy was nonplussed. She must have the boat. Would it increase the man’s suspicions were she to ask if she might borrow the ship model?

“I’ll tell you why I want the ship, Mr. Trumbull,” she said earnestly. “We believe that it contains a certain clue which may help solve a mystery for Mrs. Chatham. She’ll bring back the model in a short time.”

“What sort of clue?” the man asked, his interest aroused.

“I can’t tell you, for I don’t absolutely know.”

Mr. Trumbull remained silent a moment, studying the girls. Then, to their relief, he smiled broadly.

“You’ve played fair with me, so I’ll play fair with you. I thought you just wanted to sell it at a profit. You may have the ship. I’ll give it to you for exactly what I paid for it.”

Nancy gratefully gave him the sum. With her two chums she delightedly bore the boat to the waiting car.

“We’ll drive into the country a distance and then examine the model,” she proposed gleefully as she started off.

Unnoticed by the girls, another car which had been parked across the street followed only a short distance behind. The occupants were Fred and Irene Brown! They had observed the three leave the Trumbull house with the *Warwick*.

“Never would Nancy Drew buy a ship model unless it has something to do with the parchment map!” the woman was saying to her husband. “If only we can get our hands on it! Do you suppose it’s the *Warwick*?”

“Trust me to find out,” the man said grimly. “Wasn’t it luck we hit her trail again, especially after we had no luck advertising for the boat.”

“We’ll have to be careful, Fred. She preferred a charge of kidnaping against us and I don’t fancy spending the rest of my days in prison.”

“Oh, you worry too much,” the man retorted, speeding up to keep Nancy’s car in sight. “We’ll not be outwitted this time, I promise you.”

With no suspicion that they were being followed, the three girls drove on until they came to a shady country lane. There Nancy stopped the car. While Bess set out the picnic lunch they had brought, she and George examined the *Warwick*.

“If we don’t find the map I’ll be terribly disappointed,” Nancy declared, her fingers exploring the ship’s hull. “It must be here unless Captain Tomlin’s letter meant something totally different.”

“In any case we have the little ship,” Bess said kindly.

“But where is the map?” George demanded with growing impatience. “Can’t you find it, Nancy?”

While the search was in progress, Fred Brown had parked his car some distance away. Noiselessly he stole through the trees until he was directly behind the Drew machine. He could not see the three chums but he could hear their excited conversation.

“Girls, look at this!” he heard Nancy exclaim. “A tiny door in the bottom of the ship!”

“Try it!” George urged. “The map may be there.”

“I can’t seem to get it open,” was Nancy’s answer. There was a little pause, then she cried: “It’s coming now! I feel something inside!”

“Is it the map?” Bess asked tremulously. “Is it, Nancy?”

“I’m not sure yet. Yes, it is! Or a copy of it. We’ve found the missing directions!”

Fred Brown, listening from behind the automobile, smiled with pleasure. He nodded with even deeper satisfaction as he heard Bess suggest to Nancy that she replace the half-map in the ship while they ate their picnic lunch. They could examine it later.

“Let’s carry the hamper over to that lovely spot in the woods,” George added. “It’s too sunny here.”

After a moment of debate the girls gathered up the baskets and disappeared with them deeper in the woods. This was the chance for which Fred Brown had been waiting.

Sly as a cat, he crept around the car and snatched the ship model from the automobile seat.

“This time I’ll make certain the clever Nancy Drew doesn’t give me any trouble,” he muttered. “I’ll fix her so she can’t follow me.” Deftly he siphoned the gasoline from the fuel tank of her car. With the stolen ship tucked beneath his arm, he carefully made his way to his own vehicle.

CHAPTER XVIII

Exciting Plans

In the meanwhile Nancy and her chums were enjoying the picnic lunch under the trees, unaware that Mr. Brown and his wife had been in the vicinity.

"Isn't it wonderful!" Bess declared, reaching for a second helping of potato salad. "We've found the map and it may lead to a buried treasure!"

"Providing Mrs. Chatham doesn't change her mind about financing the trip," George reminded her. "She might do it at the last minute. What do you think, Nancy?"

"Oh, Mrs. Chatham is very enthusiastic. She expects to ask both of you, also Ned, Ellen, Bill Tomlin and perhaps a few other young people to go along, if we succeed in getting the map together."

"Isn't that wonderful!" cried Bess.

"I notice Ned comes first on the list!" George said teasingly. "But we'd have a grand time. Even with Trixie along as general nuisance!"

It was growing late, so after Bess had consumed the last sandwich the girls gathered up the picnic papers and gaily returned to the car.

"Let's look at the map again!" George suggested. "When first we discovered it I was so excited I barely saw what it was like."

Bess, who was a few steps ahead of her chums, swung open the car door.

"Why, where is our little ship?" she asked, regarding the empty seat in blank astonishment. "I thought you left it right here, Nancy."

"I did, Bess. Don't tell me it's gone!"

"But it is," Bess wailed, moving aside so that her chum could see for herself. "Someone must have stolen it while we were away!"

"This is the worst luck ever," moaned George in anguish. "Think of the hours we spent trying to find that map. Who could have taken it?"

Nancy gazed carefully about the clearing but could see no one.

"I was afraid something like this would happen," she said in a tranquil voice. "Fortunately it's not too serious."

"Not serious!" Bess exclaimed indignantly. "We lose the treasure and our wonderful vacation trip. Then you say it's not serious!"

Smiling, Nancy opened her purse and displayed the missing section of parchment map.

"I took it with me when we left the car," she explained to her chums. "As for the little ship, it's no great loss. In workmanship it is far inferior to the *Storm King*."

"Nancy, you're a darling!" Bess laughed, giving the girl an affectionate hug.

"There's only one thing that bothers me," Nancy acknowledged as she placed the map in her pocketbook. "I can't recall the exact wording which appeared on the bottom of the *Warwick*."

"Wording?" George demanded in surprise. "I didn't notice any."

"Neither did I," declared Bess. "What was it, Nancy?"

"I can remember only one word—'Little.' No doubt it will come to me when I study the two pieces of map at home."

The girls had made only a casual inspection of the parchment, for even in a strong light the writing was difficult to distinguish. Nancy was eager to return home so that she could study it under a magnifying glass.

“Shall we start for River Heights?” she proposed to her chums. “We have a long drive ahead of us.”

“And make no attempt to trace the one who stole the ship?” George inquired somewhat reluctantly.

“It would do no good, for we haven’t a single clue,” Nancy responded. “Let’s get home as quickly as we can. I want to combine this section of map with Mr. Smith’s and see how the two fit together.”

Loading the picnic basket into the car, the three girls crowded into the front seat. Nancy tried without success to start the motor. It sputtered a few times, then died completely.

“Now what’s wrong?” she asked in bewilderment. “It never acted this way before.”

“Maybe you’re out of gasoline,” suggested George.

“How could I be? I bought five gallons less than an hour ago.”

Nancy’s gaze swept the instrument panel to confirm her words. Scarcely could she believe her own eyes for the gauge registered empty!

“The tank has been drained!” she exclaimed. “We’re stranded here!”

For the first time the girl lost her usual calm. The nearest gasoline station was a full mile away.

“What are we to do?” Bess asked despairingly.

“Oh, a little hike should help you reduce,” George said, trying to make a joke of it. “Shall we start?”

“Let’s try to signal a car,” Nancy offered as an alternative. “Some kind motorist may give us a ride to the station.”

Fortune smiled upon the girls. In less than five minutes a truck came along. Learning of their difficulty, the driver produced an extra can of gasoline which he always carried for emergencies.

“I’d like to stop at the Smith home and tell Ellen’s parents the good news about the map,” said Nancy, turning in the direction of Wayland.

The man was sad to learn definitely that his twin brother no longer lived, but he expressed great pleasure over the recovery of the long-lost section of treasure map.

“This is my brother’s torn piece,” he declared positively as the parchment was spread before him. “Now I wish I had my own half!”

“Just as soon as I get home I’ll compare this part with the copy I made of yours,” Nancy promised. “One can’t tell much from this, but when the two are put together I’m sure the name of the island and the location of the buried fortune will be clear.”

“Has Mrs. Chatham actually promised to pay for the expedition?” Mrs. Smith inquired dubiously. “I shouldn’t like to encourage her to attempt something which easily could end in failure.”

“If the treasure isn’t found, she’ll not mind,” Nancy rejoined lightly. “She considers the entire affair as a lark.”

“That’s fine, then,” said Mr. Smith with a satisfied sigh.

Before leaving the house, the girls learned that the police had made no progress in catching the thief who had broken into the Smith home several nights ago. Although Nancy did not need the stolen parchment, since she had an accurate copy, she nevertheless feared that

those who had taken it might get to the buried treasure first. That night her father voiced a similar opinion.

“After what happened to the model of the *Warwick* you must be more on your guard than ever,” he warned her anxiously. “The Browns and the other thieves have demonstrated they’ll never give up until they have the fortune.”

Far into the night Nancy and her father studied the two sections of map, fitting them together and trying to decipher Grandfather Tomlin’s writing. Directions for reaching the southern island were fairly clear, but one vital section of a word was missing.

“It would be part of the island’s name,” Nancy commented ruefully. “Plainly it says, ‘Little—lm Island,’ but it’s easy to see more letters appeared on the original.”

“Little Island means nothing,” Carson Drew said, glancing up from an atlas he was inspecting. “Now here’s one called ‘Little Crab.’ ”

“Mr. Smith said the island was uncharted,” Nancy reminded her father.

“That was a long time ago,” replied the lawyer. “No doubt it is on the big maps today. Anyway, I’ll look a little further. Here’s one. Little Palm——”

“That’s it!” cried Nancy suddenly. “Little Palm Island!”

“How do you know? In this expedition a wrong guess will prove to be mighty expensive.”

“I’m not guessing, Dad. The name was carved on the bottom of the ship model which was stolen from my car today.”

“Then everything seems to be cleared up,” Mr. Drew declared in satisfaction. “If Mrs. Chatham gives her approval, we can start looking for a suitable boat to take the party there. It may be a real problem to find one.”

Upon learning that the lost parchment had been recovered, Mrs. Chatham was even more enthusiastic over the expedition than Nancy had dared hope.

“By all means have your father engage a captain,” she instructed. “And do invite the Smith family and any friends you wish. We’ll have a very gay voyage.”

Nancy lost no time in dispatching invitations to Bill Tomlin, Ned, and two young men who were showing George and Bess marked attention. By return mail she received acceptances, and in a whirl of excitement began to plan her own ocean-going wardrobe. Then fell the blow.

“There’s not an ocean-going ship to be had,” her father announced at the dinner table. “I’ve telegraphed and telephoned all day long. It seems as if every boat afloat in the Atlantic has been pressed into special service.”

“Oh, Dad!” Nancy wailed. “Can’t you find one anywhere? Our enemies may get to the treasure ahead of us. Ellen and her parents need it so badly, and half of it rightly belongs to them. We must find it somehow!”

CHAPTER XIX

A Problem Solved

In the days which followed, Carson Drew made several unsuccessful attempts to find a boat suitable for the expedition to Little Palm Island. The few vessels offered him were leaky, unseaworthy affairs, either too large, or much too small.

"I didn't suppose a yacht would be so hard to procure," Nancy sighed. "Dear me, some person may get there ahead of us if we delay."

"They haven't Captain Tomlin's section of the map," her father said encouragingly.

"But don't forget that a copy of it was stolen by a member of the crew," his daughter reminded him, recalling the letter found in the New York bank.

Nancy made frequent trips to Rocky Edge to discuss the situation with Mrs. Chatham. Trixie, much better behaved since Ellen had finished school for the year and come to the estate, listened attentively to the conversation. One afternoon, however, the child was not in sight when Nancy arrived at the grounds. Ellen ran down the walk to meet her and the Drew girl knew at once that something was wrong.

"It has happened again!" the young singer cried. "Trixie has disappeared!"

"Kidnaped?" Nancy asked, dumbfounded.

"I think she has wandered away, but I'm not sure. Mrs. Chatham isn't here and I'm dreadfully worried."

"Did Trixie talk about going anywhere today?" Nancy inquired thoughtfully.

"Why, yes, now that you remind me, she did! She spoke of going to see you."

"Gracious!" Nancy exclaimed. "You don't suppose the child tried to walk all the distance to my home? She'd certainly get lost!"

"What ought we to do?"

"We'll drive to my place at once," Nancy said, starting toward her car. "Let's hope she's there."

The girls had little thought that they would find the child without hours of search. For that reason it came as a happy surprise when a few minutes later they saw her walking along the road in the company of a man of middle age.

"That's not Spike Doty!" Ellen exclaimed nervously.

"There's no resemblance to him," Nancy replied, easing on the brake. "I can't imagine who he is. He walks like a sailor; yes, he is one."

Trixie's companion was such a pleasant appearing man that the girls decided he could not possibly be a kidnaper. The child herself explained the situation as she introduced her new friend, Captain Stryver. She had seen the man walking past the estate. Since his uniform looked like those she had seen worn in pictures of men on shipboard, she had followed him to talk with him.

"I didn't mean to take the child away from her home," the man apologized, his weather-beaten face creasing into kindly wrinkles. "We were just gabbing a bit about boats."

"He has one called the *Primrose*!" Trixie exclaimed, seizing Nancy's hand. "Oh, why can't we rent it and go on our treasure hunt after all?"

"I don't own the ship," the captain hastened to correct. "Mr. Heppel, my former employer, is her master."

“The boat isn’t for rent?” Nancy inquired, assuming that the idea was Trixie’s own.

“Mr. Heppel has had more than his share of bad luck the past year,” the captain replied, knocking ashes from his pipe. “Aye, I reckon he’ll be glad to rent the boat if he can. The *Primrose* is eating up a good sum in storage rates.”

“What type is it?” Nancy asked, her interest increasing. “And where is it?”

“A yacht. There’s not a prettier vessel afloat. She’s tied up in New York. I’m visiting my daughter here in River Heights.”

Nancy asked many additional questions, soon convincing herself that the *Primrose* was well worth an investigation. She liked Captain Stryver too, and tactfully inquired if his services could be obtained should a voyage be made to a southern island.

“Nothing would suit me better than a cruise in those waters,” he assured her heartily. “I know that locality like a book.”

Nancy made up her mind that if plans should develop as she hoped, Captain Stryver would be placed in command of the *Primrose* and her crew. After talking with him for nearly a half-hour, she learned that Mr. Heppel was coming to River Heights the following day to talk to the captain, so she made an appointment to meet him. Her spirits were high, for she believed that the intensive search for a suitable boat might be nearing an end.

Considering that Trixie had been responsible for calling the *Primrose* to their attention, neither Ellen nor Nancy could chide her. They explained carefully why she could be punished for leaving home. When they saw how sincerely she had meant to help, they stopped at a drug store and treated the child to ice cream.

Carson Drew was highly pleased to learn of the *Primrose*, and with Nancy called upon Mr. Heppel the next day. They found the man to be very reasonable, willing to rent his yacht for a fair sum.

“If you need a captain may I strongly urge that you take Mr. Stryver,” the owner said as the deal was concluded. “He’s an honest, dependable man and has followed the sea his entire life.”

Nancy and her father were only too glad to accept the suggestion. Captain Stryver promptly was engaged and assigned the task of selecting a crew for the *Primrose*. Happily he left for New York at once.

Preparations for the voyage were at their height when Nancy received an unexpected summons to the local police station. She was told that Tim Dapp, the prisoner, had requested to see her.

“We think maybe he’s decided to talk,” an officer said as he escorted the girl to the prisoner’s cell. “See what you can get out of him.”

The steel door clicked shut and Nancy was left alone with the young man. Instantly she noted a great change in him; he had lost much of his defiance.

“You sent for me?” she asked as he did not speak.

“Yeah. What will you give me to spill the whole works to you?”

“I’m not prepared to pay you any money, if that’s what you mean,” Nancy returned, watching him closely. “What is it you want of me?”

“Will you promise to get me out of here if I tell you everything?”

“I’ll do what I can for you, providing your case seems to merit it. Why not tell your story to the police?”

“They’d never believe me,” the young man said bitterly. “I hate cops! They railroaded me once before for something I didn’t do.”

“You were caught accepting money from Mrs. Chatham for kidnaping,” Nancy reminded the fellow severely. “The charge against you is a very serious one.”

“I know,” the young man agreed, beginning to pace the cell. “I can’t sleep nights for thinking what they may do to me.”

“Suppose you tell me all about it.”

“Okay, I will,” Dapp agreed suddenly. “It was Spike Doty who arranged the job. He’s been working for a sailor who knew a Captain Tomson or something like that.”

“Tomlin?” Nancy supplied.

“Yeah, that was it. Well, this sailor once overheard the Captain tell about a torn map that was supposed to lead to a buried treasure. This may sound pretty queer to you, but it’s the truth.”

“Go on,” Nancy encouraged, without revealing that she had heard the story before.

“Right away Spike got interested in that map and decided to trace it.”

“And did he succeed in gaining possession of it?”

“I can’t tell you that. I know he thought the captain’s widow was worth watching. One day he saw a good chance to hide Trixie in the studio and get some easy money—he said it wasn’t really kidnaping. He meant to let her go.”

“That scarcely lessens his guilt,” commented Nancy, “or yours either.”

“I didn’t want to collect the money but Spike made me do it. He had something on me. Anyway, he didn’t tell me the whole story until after I had collected the money.”

“Did he pay you for your work?”

“Not a penny. I got nothing out of it and now I’m taking the rap.”

“Perhaps you won’t,” Nancy said to cheer him. “I promise I’ll do what I can for you. In the meanwhile you’ll be much safer here in jail than in Spike Doty’s clutches.”

“Guess you’re right at that,” the young man admitted. “If he learns I’ve spilled the story, this town won’t be big enough to hold us both.”

Tim Dapp had told a straightforward story which Nancy was inclined to believe. However, there were many things which puzzled her. She felt certain Spike Doty could not have known that a copy of Captain Tomlin’s half of the parchment had been stolen. Otherwise he would not have looked for the original at Rocky Edge. But maybe he was there for some other reason. And what was his connection with Fred and Irene Brown? How many were involved in the scheme to find the treasure?

“The very worst would be that Doty or his agents already are on their way to Little Palm Island!” she thought. “We must sail as soon as Captain Stryver can outfit the *Primrose*.”

Before leaving the cell, Nancy questioned Dapp at length. While he could offer no additional information about Spike’s plans, he was able to provide the address of a rooming house where he believed the sailor had been staying.

Satisfied that the young man was not really guilty of a crime, Nancy requested police to give him more kindly treatment than in the past. After receiving their promise that they would do what they could to help Dapp, she left the building. As she stood debating what to do, Ned Nickerson drove up in his car.

“Hello, Nancy,” he greeted her. “May I take you home?”

“I wasn’t thinking of going there,” she laughed, taking the seat beside him. “You may not like my destination.”

“I’ll drive you to wherever you say.”

Nancy handed him the address of Spike Doty’s rooming house.

“Say, this is the worst district in town!” the youth protested as he read the street number.

“I know,” admitted Nancy, “but I’m on the trail of Spike Doty. I don’t want to give the information to the police without being sure Dapp didn’t mislead me.”

Ned was glad to be of assistance, so he drove to the rooming house. An untidy landlady answered their knock, telling them in a harsh voice that the man they sought had gone away the day before, taking his belongings with him.

“Can you tell us his new address?” Nancy asked hopefully.

“I cannot,” the landlady answered crossly. “He said he was making an ocean voyage.”

Deeply disappointed, Nancy and Ned returned to the parked car.

“Just our luck to miss him,” the young man commented gloomily.

“I’m afraid Doty may have left for Little Palm Island,” Nancy added, frowning. “Oh, Ned, if we don’t get started on our expedition soon we may lose the treasure!”

Barely had the two driven away than a second car stopped in front of the rooming house. Fred and Irene Brown alighted. Presenting themselves at the door, they likewise inquired for Spike Doty.

“Say, you’re the second ones that have asked about that man,” the landlady said irritably. “I’m getting tired of answering questions. Doty’s gone.”

“Who was it that came here today?” Fred Brown inquired alertly.

“They didn’t give their names. It was a boy and his girl friend, I guess.”

The Browns glanced at each other, then asked a few more questions. They obtained a complete description of Nancy. Having learned what they wished to know, they thanked the landlady with exaggerated politeness and drove away.

“Without question it was Nancy Drew,” Irene told her husband. “This thing is getting too close to us for comfort!”

“Don’t worry, she won’t get ahead of us,” he retorted with a shrug. “I’ll fix her.”

“You said that when you stole the ship model. But what did we get? Nothing!”

“This is different, Irene. I have a dandy scheme. Listen, my dear, just listen—” and he laughed cunningly.

CHAPTER XX

Held Prisoner

Unaware that Mr. and Mrs. Brown had traced her recent movements, Nancy requested Ned to take her directly home. Several hours later she was busily engaged in mending a dress when the postman arrived with several letters.

Glancing through them, she found one addressed to her in pencil. The childlike scrawl suggested that it had been written either by a very young or by an uneducated person.

“Now from whom can this be?” Nancy mused, ripping open the envelope.

A message had been written on a sheet of cheap tablet paper. It read:

“Dear Mis Drew: I tuk yere boat cos I need money but I can’t sell it. You kin hev it back fer five dollars. It says sumthin impotent inside. Don’t tell the perlice and come alone on foot to 47 White Street.”

Nancy read the message a second time, then ran to the kitchen to show it to Hannah.

“This shatters one of my very best theories!” she declared excitedly. “I rather thought the ship model was stolen by Fred and Irene Brown. This note proves I was wrong.”

“It appears to have been written by an urchin,” the housekeeper commented as she read the message. “He signs himself ‘Ted.’”

“Probably he was afraid I might not follow the instructions and turn him over to the police.”

“What will you do, Nancy?”

“I hardly know. I don’t like to take a boy to Juvenile Court without being sure it’s the right thing to do. I wish I could talk with him.”

“You want to get that little ship back,” Mrs. Gruen said dryly.

“I’ll admit my curiosity has been aroused,” Nancy admitted with a laugh. “I never dreamed anything was written inside it. Strange I failed to notice a clue so plain to see.”

“I hope you’re not thinking of giving the boy five dollars!” Mrs. Gruen said with disapproval. “The very idea of paying for one’s own goods!”

“I’ll not give him money if I can get the *Warwick* model any other way,” Nancy responded. “If I hurry I’ll have time to run over to White Street before dinner.”

“You’re not thinking of walking so far?”

“It is a long distance, but this note says to come on foot——”

“I’ll never allow you to walk through such a district as you’d have to to get to White Street,” the housekeeper said flatly.

“Then I’ll take the car,” Nancy decided, skipping away.

Mrs. Gruen did not entirely approve of the mission, but knowing how much it meant to the girl, she refrained from voicing a further protest. Nancy was well on her way to White Street before it occurred to her as odd that the urchin Ted had known her name and address.

“He may have had someone trace our family through the license number of the car,” she thought. “Still, it seems strange he would go to so much trouble.”

Nancy had no intention of walking into a trap and therefore made up her mind she would never enter the house. Instead, she would insist that the ship model be brought to her.

White Street proved to be shabby and old-fashioned with houses set very close. Many of them displayed “For Rent” signs. As she drew up before Number 47, she saw a boy with a

sharp, shrewd face sitting on the porch. Evidently he had been expecting her, for he quickly came to the car.

“Are you Ted?” she asked, trying not to seem unfriendly.

“That’s me,” he agreed in a gruff voice, “but you was supposed to come on foot. You want to see the boat?”

“Yes, I do, Ted. May I ask why you stole it from my car?”

“You kin ask but I ain’t goin’ to answer no questions,” the boy retorted saucily. “You give me the five bucks and you git your boat.”

“I’ll pay you when you bring it to me.”

“Not on your life. Give me the money now.”

“I’m not willing to do that,” Nancy refused, fearing she might never see the *Warwick* if she should act so rashly. “You must bring it to me.”

“Grandma won’t let it go without the money,” the boy said stubbornly. “She’s sick a-bed and we need the cash. If you want to see the ship, you gotta come upstairs.”

Nancy felt that it might be unwise to enter the house, yet the boy seemed straightforward and curiosity overcame her better judgment. Somewhat reluctantly she followed Ted up a flight of worn stairs through a dark hall to a bedroom.

“Grandma, this is the girl,” Ted said by way of introduction. “You kin talk to her.”

He disappeared, closing the door behind him. Nancy was startled by his sudden departure but tried not to show alarm. After all, she attempted to reassure herself, nothing seemed amiss. The *Warwick* was in plain sight on the table beside the bed.

“You pay the five dollars and you can have the boat,” the grandmother said in a squeaky voice. “Only you must promise you won’t make trouble for Ted.”

“Very well,” consented Nancy.

At the moment she desired nothing so much as to get away from the house. Taking a crisp five-dollar bill from her purse she laid it on the table.

“All right, the ship is yours,” the grandmother said, reaching for the money. “Carry it carefully.”

Her final words had a ring of satisfaction which Nancy failed to note. Turning from the bed she lifted the model from the table.

As she was thus occupied, the grandmother suddenly threw off the covers and leaped from bed. Simultaneously, Fred Brown appeared from a hiding place inside a closet and tried to pin Nancy’s arms behind her. As the girl struggled violently the ship crashed to the floor.

Although she fought with all her strength she was no match for the two assailants. In a moment they held her fast.

“The clever Miss Drew wasn’t so clever this time!” the man gloated, taking a gag from his pocket.

“She fell for our little scheme, hook, line, and sinker!” Irene Brown chuckled. “Never once suspected that I had disguised myself as a sick grandma!”

Securely trussed, Nancy was taken through a special exit to the vacant house adjoining the one she had entered. There she was seated at a table and told she must write a letter to Hannah Gruen. She was to request that the piece of map found in the ship model be sent to her at once.

“We’ll hold you here until we get it!” Fred Brown threatened. “And don’t try any funny business in that letter. It won’t get by.”

Despairingly, for she knew the Browns would have no mercy, Nancy slowly composed the message.

“Make it short and snappy,” the man urged impatiently. “Just write that you need the map and want it given to the bearer of the note.”

Nancy knew she could not include anything in the message which would make the housekeeper understand her true situation. There was just one faint hope of outwitting this man. Desperately recalling the words used at the time she and her chums had found the map, she felt she dared to use the word “copy.” Accordingly she wrote:

“Please give bearer the copy of the map found in the ship model. Nancy.”

“Perhaps if I concentrate very hard, I can get a thought wave to Hannah, so she’ll make a copy and not exactly a correct one,” the girl told herself. “It’s my one hope.”

Unknown to Nancy, her father and Ned already were alarmed over her long absence from home. Informed by the worried Hannah Gruen that she had gone sometime before to the White Street address, they set off in the young man’s car to search for her.

“It isn’t like Nancy to stay away so long without any explanation,” the lawyer declared as the automobile stopped at the curb. “I can’t help feeling she may have walked into a trap.”

They rang the doorbell, receiving no response. At last Mr. Drew became impatient. Trying the door and finding it unlocked, he boldly entered.

“Why, this place is deserted,” he observed to Ned as they looked into the lower rooms. “You’re sure we have the right address?”

“Mrs. Gruen wrote it on paper for me. This is the place all right.”

“Then well try upstairs,” the lawyer said, leading the way.

The first door confronting him opened into the bedroom where Nancy had been taken prisoner. Entering ahead of Ned, Mr. Drew saw an overturned chair. Lying beside it was the broken model of the *Warwick*.

“There’s been a struggle here!” he exclaimed, losing his usual calm. “Something has happened to Nancy!”

With increasing anxiety he and Ned searched the entire house. They entered every bedroom but were unable to find any trace of the missing girl. While the older man continued to search for clues, his companion went down the street to ask neighbors if they had observed anything amiss. Ten minutes later Ned returned with a discouraging report.

“I couldn’t arouse anyone, Mr. Drew. Must have rung four or five doorbells, too. The house next to this one is vacant.”

“To the east or on the west side?” the lawyer asked alertly.

“The east. It adjoins this room where the struggle apparently took place.”

Mr. Drew had been fingering a small object which he now showed to Ned. It was an ornamental button from a dress.

“I picked this up from the floor of the closet,” he explained.

“Here in this room?” Ned asked, examining the button with interest.

“Yes. Do you think it came from Nancy’s dress?”

“Gosh, you couldn’t prove it by me!” the young man replied regretfully. “I never notice clothes much.”

“Nor do I. Suppose you telephone to Hannah Gruen and ask her for a description of the dress Nancy wore today.”

“I’ll be glad to,” Ned responded, starting away. “Maybe Nancy has come home since we left.”

Carson Drew held no such hopeful theory. After the youth had gone he centered his investigation on the closet where he had picked up the ornamental button. Knowing Nancy as

he did he was sure that if it were at all possible she would have left a clue to her present whereabouts.

Unexpectedly the lawyer noticed something which previously had escaped his attention. Although cleverly disguised with wallpaper, the back of the closet was made of wood instead of plaster. When he rapped it with his knuckles it gave off a peculiar hollow sound.

"It's a door!" he exclaimed. "The pattern of the paper hides the outline! And here's a keyhole."

Mr. Drew pushed against the door but could not open it. He was still trying to do so when Ned returned to say that Mrs. Gruen positively had identified the ornamental button.

"It was on the dress Nancy wore today," he told the attorney. "She hasn't returned home either."

"For a very good reason, Ned! She has been captured. I feel sure she was taken through this door in the closet."

"It must open into the vacant house next door!"

"Undoubtedly."

"Let's break the door down," said Ned eagerly.

"And notify the kidnapers what we're doing? No, I think we had better proceed quietly. Have you any keys in your pockets?" he asked, pulling out a bunch of his own. "This is an ordinary lock."

"I usually carry an assortment," the young man admitted, bringing forth a case. "But none that will unlock this door, I'm afraid."

One by one Carson Drew tried the keys. The next to the last one fit and to his satisfaction unlocked the door.

"Now be cautious," he advised the boy as he thrust it open. "There's no telling what we may run into."

Never dreaming that her father and Ned were so close, Nancy remained alone in a tiny storeroom ventilated by only one small window. Before leaving her, the Browns had replaced the gag and trussed her securely once more. She was thoroughly uncomfortable.

"What will Hannah Gruen do when she gets my note?" she thought unhappily. "Oh, if something good only would happen!"

At that very moment Irene Brown was ringing the doorbell of the Drew home. Back of the hedge stood her husband, chuckling to himself. No one was home but the housekeeper. Should she become suspicious, she could not summon help, for he had cut the telephone wire to the house.

"Good evening," Irene Brown said pleasantly as Hannah Gruen opened the door. "I have a note for you from Miss Drew. I don't know what it says, but she asked me to wait for an answer."

"Will you come inside?" asked the housekeeper.

CHAPTER XXI

Outwitting a Schemer

After a thorough search of the vacant house, Carson Drew and Ned were ready to give up. They had found no trace of Nancy.

"I am sure she was brought here," the lawyer declared. He and the youth had reached the attic floor which was dark and suffocatingly stuffy. "It may be that she was carried off to another hide-out."

"Listen!" Ned suddenly commanded.

Both had heard a distinct scratching noise, as if someone were clawing against a plaster wall. Tracing the sound, Carson Drew saw in a dingy corner of the room a door which previously had escaped his notice.

"Maybe she's in there!" he exclaimed, pulling at the knob.

Nancy, bound and gagged, lay on the floor. Lifting his daughter to her feet, Mr. Drew jerked off the handkerchief which had given the girl such discomfort.

"Are you hurt, Nancy?" her father asked apprehensively.

"No, I'm all right, Dad," she reassured him, "but I'm afraid the worst has happened."

"What do you mean?" asked Ned.

"The Browns made me write a note to Hannah ordering her to deliver Captain Tomlin's map to them. After all my hard work, we'll lose the treasure!"

"How long ago was that, Nancy?" her father asked quickly.

"I'd guess at least half an hour."

"Then perhaps we can get home in time to catch those rascals!" Carson Drew exclaimed. "We haven't a minute to lose!"

Leaving Ned to search for the girl's car, which had been removed from the street, Carson Drew and his daughter drove home at top speed. Entering the house, they discovered Hannah Gruen down on her knees examining the telephone.

"Nancy, you're safe!" she exclaimed joyfully as she saw the girl. "Oh, I'm so relieved."

"Did someone come here with a note from me?" Nancy asked anxiously.

"Yes, a woman. She left about ten minutes ago."

"That was Irene Brown!"

"I guessed as much, so I tried to call the police, but the telephone wire has been cut."

"You gave her the map?" Nancy inquired.

"Wasn't that what you requested me to do?" the housekeeper responded.

"Yes, it was. I can't blame you. You had no way of knowing that I didn't want you to carry out the instructions."

"All the same, I guessed it from the wording in your note," the housekeeper declared, ending the suspense. "I gave Mrs. Brown a map but it will never do her and her husband any good."

"Oh, Hannah, you're a darling!" Nancy laughed happily. "How did you outwit her?"

"It was very easy. I knew you kept both sections of the map in your desk—Captain Tomlin's original and the copy of Mr. Smith's portion. I quickly traced the original on a piece of old parchment paper I found in the desk, leaving out many details and making a good many changes!"

"Mrs. Brown never once suspected?" Nancy asked, chuckling.

"No, she must have thought what I gave her was genuine, because she thanked me sweetly and went away."

"Mrs. Gruen, you're as clever as any detective of my acquaintance," Mr. Drew said with a mock bow. "I take my hat off to you."

"I'll be grateful to my dying day," added Nancy. "I never was in a worse predicament."

"There's just one thing that worries me," admitted the housekeeper. "I copied the name of the island on the paper."

"We'll not worry about that," said Mr. Drew, "since you left out some of the directions."

While the housekeeper was preparing a belated dinner, Mr. Drew went to a neighboring house and reported to the telephone company that his own instrument was out of service. A repairman was sent at once so that within half an hour the Drews could receive incoming calls. As they finished dinner the telephone bell rang and Nancy arose to answer it. Taking down the receiver she recognized Ned's voice.

"Hello, Nancy," he said, talking hurriedly. "I found your car. It was parked in an alley."

"Oh, that's fine, Ned. Thanks for your trouble."

"I'll bring it around as soon as I can. Right now I'm at the police station, and the Chief wants you to come right away if you can."

"I will," Nancy promised. "Is it anything very important?"

"Rather! Fred and Irene Brown have been captured! The Chief wants you to identify them."

"Nothing will give me greater pleasure," Nancy laughed. "I'll be there right away."

Accompanied by her father, she drove without delay to the police station. To their delight they found Ned to be something of a hero. He had led the police to 47 White Street and aided them in nabbing the Browns when the couple had returned to release Nancy.

"May I talk with the man?" the Drew girl requested the Chief of Police.

"Go ahead," the official consented, "but you'll find him a sullen fellow. We haven't been able to get a word out of him."

Together Nancy and her father talked with both Fred Brown and his wife. As the officer had predicted, they learned nothing from the man, but Irene was less discreet. Nancy played upon the woman's feelings by suggesting that Spike Doty had made damaging revelations which implicated the couple.

"Why, the double-crosser!" the woman cried furiously. "He was the one who first learned about the treasure, and now he tries to throw all the blame on us!"

"Then you've been working with him?" Carson Drew asked quietly.

"Not any more."

"Mr. Bellows, perhaps?" Nancy inquired, watching the woman's face intently.

"I never heard of him," Irene Brown answered, but her eyes wavered—an indication to her questioners that she was not telling the truth.

"What did you do with the map that you obtained from our housekeeper?" Carson Drew next demanded.

From the police he had learned that the paper had not been found in the Browns' possession.

"We sold it," Irene answered briefly.

"To Spike Doty or to Mr. Bellows?" asked the lawyer.

"I'm not saying."

Realizing that she had talked too much, Irene fell into a sullen silence and refused to answer another question. Leaving the cell, Nancy and Mr. Drew again consulted with the Chief of Police. During the conversation they learned that young Tim Dapp had been an ideal prisoner.

“We’ve investigated his case thoroughly,” the officer told Nancy. “Clearly he was an innocent dupe of Spike Doty. We’re releasing him tomorrow but will keep watch of him.”

“Whatever you do, hold the Browns,” Mr. Drew urged. “They’re an unscrupulous couple and should be given long terms.”

Although the man and his wife had been placed behind bars, Nancy was far from easy in her mind. Spike Doty and the mysterious Mr. Bellows both were determined to get the Tomlin treasure, and the girl worried lest in some way they had learned the location of Little Palm Island.

Mrs. Chatham shared the girl’s impatience. She wanted to undertake the voyage as quickly as possible. Accordingly the widow telephoned to Captain Stryver, urging him to speed up preparations so that the *Primrose* could sail from New York no later than the middle of the following week.

“I can have the vessel ready by then and a crew of sorts,” he promised reluctantly. “If I had a little more time, though, I could check better on the men. As it is I’ll have to take on any sailor I can get.”

“We can’t afford to waste another day,” Mrs. Chatham assured him. “Please make arrangements to sail next Wednesday.”

That very night two rough-looking men stood on a dock in New York, pleased grins on their cruel faces.

“You worked that all right, Snorky,” said one. “Everything’s perfect now. You got work on the *Primrose* and—” he laughed softly. “Well, I got to go aboard my boat now.”

“Good-bye, Spike,” said the other. “Meet you at Little Palm.”

“Okay!” the other agreed with emphasis. “You know what you got to do?”

“Keep the *Primrose* from getting there too soon!”

“That’s right, Snorky. Give me a few days’ start and I’ll have that treasure for us before those people have a chance to look for it!”

CHAPTER XXII

Treachery

“Wish I were going along,” Carson Drew said enviously as he bade his daughter farewell at the station on the appointed day. “Have a good time and bring home the treasure!”

“At least I’ll get a good tan,” Nancy laughed, squeezing her father’s hand and kissing him.

The party, consisting of Mrs. Chatham, Trixie, the three Smiths, Bill Tomlin and Nancy’s own group of young friends, had a gay train ride to New York. Wednesday morning they taxied to the dock, there obtaining their first glimpse of the *Primrose*.

“Isn’t she beautiful!” Nancy exclaimed, gazing at the trim yacht. “And there’s Captain Stryver waving to us!”

The *Primrose* proved to be a comfortable, seaworthy craft which plowed through deep waves with scarcely a roll. Even so, Mrs. Chatham, a poor sailor, soon was confined to her cabin with a mild case of seasickness.

Left mostly to themselves, Nancy and her young friends thoroughly enjoyed the daylight hours on deck. That night they danced and held an impromptu entertainment. Tom More, one of Ned’s college friends, proved to be a talented piano player, and was pressed into service to accompany Ellen.

“Sing us something about the sea,” George urged the girl. “Something with plenty of vim and vigor.”

“I might try the Boston Come-All-Ye,” laughed the Smith girl. “That is, if I can remember the words.”

While Tom played chords on the piano she sang the first few verses of a well-known sailors’ song which began:

“ ‘Come, all ye young sailor-men, listen to me,
I’ll sing you a song of the fish of the sea.
Then blow ye winds westerly, westerly blow,
We’re bound to the south’ard, so steady she goes!’ ”

“What is the history of that song?” Tom More inquired when Ellen had responded to several encores.

“It was sung by the men who followed the fishing fleets,” she explained. “The chorus is thought to be of Scottish origin.”

The young people would not allow Ellen to escape until she had obliged them with many other selections. Finally she pleaded off, saying that she was very tired.

“I guess you have good reason to be,” Bess Marvin commented rather bluntly. “You had to chase Trixie all day.”

It was true that the child had caused the young people a great deal of annoyance. Shortly after luncheon she had alarmed Ellen by disappearing. When everyone feared she had been washed overboard, she was discovered hiding in a lifeboat, and said she was only playing a game.

The second day at sea Nancy came on deck to find a dark, evil-faced sailor at the wheel of the *Primrose*. She did not like his appearance and recalled that Captain Stryver had been compelled to hire the burly fellow because another man could not be found quickly.

“Good morning,” she greeted him pleasantly. “Have you seen Captain Stryver?”

“No, Miss, and I ain’t likely to,” he answered, a suggestion of satisfaction in his voice.

“Why, where is he?”

“Sick in his cabin,” said the sailor. He spun the wheel, bringing the boat more to the east. “The mate’s flat on his back, too,” the man added.

“How strange that both of them should be taken ill! Surely they’re not seasick?”

“Guess it’s something they ate—anyway, the cook got a dressin’ down for serving up tainted food.”

Nancy walked aft. Meeting Ned, she mentioned the illness of the two officers.

“It certainly seems odd that of all the persons aboard those two alone should be sick,” she commented thoughtfully. “We all ate the same food last night.”

“There’s something else queer too, if you ask me!” Ned responded soberly. “Have you noticed anything funny about this boat?”

“Why, no,” Nancy returned, surprised by the question. “We seem to have changed our direction a little.”

“A little! Unless I’m mixed in my directions we’re a lot off! I think I’ll talk with Tom More. He’s been charting our course since we left New York.”

The young man was gone perhaps fifteen minutes. When he rejoined Nancy, Tom More was with him.

“I was right,” Ned announced grimly. “Tom thinks we’re off our course. You know, he has run boats all his life, and studied navigation.”

“Let’s talk to that fellow at the wheel,” proposed Tom, leading the way. “I want to ask him a few questions.”

Upon being interviewed, Snorky took the sullen attitude that guiding the *Primrose* was his responsibility and not that of anyone else.

“We may be a mite off our course,” he admitted, “but not enough to do any harm. I’ll swing her back as soon as I can.”

“You’ll swing her back now!” young More ordered sharply. “Unless you do, we’ll talk to the captain.”

Angrily Snorky brought the bow of the *Primrose* more to the south. However, no sooner had the young people moved away than the sailor again altered the course. Tom, who felt the lurch of the vessel as it turned, was sufficiently irritated to do battle.

“Please don’t get into a fight with Snorky,” Nancy pleaded. “We’ll talk with the captain. If he’ll allow us to examine the chart, we’ll be certain we’re making no mistake.”

Without delay the young people went below to see Captain Stryver. Barely able to sit up in bed, the officer nevertheless declared that he would be able to get about within a few hours.

“I’m worried about things,” he confessed before Tom could explain the difficulty. “I’ve got to get up on deck.”

“We’re worried too,” Nancy declared quickly. “The man at the wheel, Snorky, seems to be steering the boat straight east.”

“East!” the captain exclaimed. “Help me out of this bed and we’ll find out about that!”

“No, you mustn’t exert yourself when you’re so weak,” Nancy protested. “If Tom may have the chart, I’m sure he can check up on the matter.”

“The chart is in the desk,” the captain mumbled, sinking back on the pillow. “Ask the mate to come here.”

The young people did not tell the captain that the mate was even sicker than he. Instead they obtained the chart and went on deck.

"I was right!" Tom cried in a few seconds. "We're several points off our course."

"What shall we do?" Nancy asked in despair. "I feel sure Snorky deliberately is trying to delay us. But there's no other sailor who can be spared to take his place."

"I can steer the *Primrose*," Tom declared confidently. "There's nothing to it. Come on, we'll take care of Snorky!"

He and Ned went forward, having a brief argument with the sailor. When the fellow refused to give up the wheel, they bodily removed him and Tom took over.

All went well throughout the day, save that Snorky glowered angrily as he washed down decks. Nancy could not help feeling that the man meant to get revenge for the humiliation which had been forced upon him.

"It wouldn't surprise me if he's the one responsible for the Captain's illness," she confided to Bess. "He may have bribed the cook to put something in his food."

The next morning Tom More suddenly was taken sick while at the wheel of the *Primrose*. His attack was a mild one, and he refused to leave his post, yet it served to convince the girls anew that someone aboard the vessel was resorting to treachery.

Unknown to the others, Nancy Drew and George began to watch the galley. They became well acquainted with the jolly Negro who presided there, winning the man's gratitude by peeling a large pan of potatoes. After they had talked with him for half an hour, the girls decided that he never had connived with Snorky.

Watching their chance, George and Nancy next slipped into the forecabin. There they located Snorky's belongings which they searched without success. Then Nancy ran her hand under the mattress of the sailor's bunk.

"Here's something!" she cried, holding up a small envelope.

Upon investigating, she discovered that it contained an odorless white powder. At once she became certain it was with this that part of the ship's food had been tainted by Snorky.

"I have an idea!" Nancy said suddenly. "Wait here for me."

While George kept watch at the door, she ran to the galley, soon returning with a salt shaker.

"We'll substitute this for the powder!" she chuckled, emptying the innocent seasoning into an envelope, and taking the other to their cabin.

By now Nancy had no doubt but that Snorky had been hired by the enemies who were seeking to gain the treasure. Taking her friends into her confidence, she organized a watch over the galley. On the pretext of helping the overburdened cook, the girls even assisted in serving the meals. Notwithstanding, Ned complained at dinner that his food tasted very salty.

"Snorky is a sly fellow," Nancy observed to George as they discussed the situation. "We must tighten our watch. If we don't, I'm afraid something dreadful may happen before we reach Little Palm."

An unexpected change in the weather temporarily drove all thought of Snorky from the minds of the young people. The barometer began to fall steadily and within a few hours waves were dashing over the decks of the *Primrose*.

Although barely able to walk, Captain Stryver resumed command of the ship, relieving the weary Tom More. As the day wore on the gale became steadily worse so that the young people were driven below. Nancy, however, grew restless. Deciding that Snorky should be

watched, she went to look for him. The sailor could not be found, even after Ned and Tom had joined in the search.

“Say, maybe he was washed overboard!” the latter said uneasily. “I’ll ask the captain if he has seen him.”

Nancy did not believe that the sailor had met an ill fate. Without telling either Ned or Tom where she was going, she went below to the galley. Before she could enter, the door opened and the missing sailor came out, carrying a box in his arms.

“Now what was he doing in there?” the girl thought suspiciously. “He must have poisoned the food, and he’s carrying away good stuff for himself!”

Thoroughly alarmed, Nancy started up the ladder, intending to warn her friends not to eat anything served. She was midway up the rungs when the boat gave an unexpected lurch. There were terrified screams from above, for a huge wave had crushed the *Primrose’s* port railing.

Nancy was thrown off her balance. Unable to save herself, she toppled backwards, falling to the floor. Her head struck hard and everything went black before her eyes.

When next she opened them it was to find herself lying on a couch in Captain Stryver’s cabin. Anxious friends were grouped about her.

“Are you all right now?” Ned asked, pressing a glass of water to the girl’s lips. “You had a nasty fall.”

Nancy sat up, trying to recall what had happened. Her eyes roved from one face to another.

“What is it, Nancy?” Ned asked, sensing that she was trying to tell them something.

“Don’t eat,” she whispered. “Whatever you do, don’t touch anything coming from the galley!”

CHAPTER XXIII

Little Palm Island

Pressed for an explanation, Nancy told how she had seen Snorky stealing away from the galley.

"I believe he's trying to keep us from reaching Little Palm Island," she ended her tale wearily.

While Mrs. Chatham and the girls made Nancy comfortable in bed, Ned and Bill Tomlin sought the captain. The three of them searched the ship. Finding Snorky hiding in the hold, they demanded a reason for his conduct.

"I ain't done nothin'," the fellow whined. "I wasn't within a mile of the galley."

"We'll test the truth of that," said Captain Stryver.

He then ordered a sailor to bring a sample of every dish of food which was to be served for dinner. Commanded to eat, Snorky sullenly obeyed, refusing only to taste a bowl of split pea soup.

"Throw the soup overboard," the captain instructed the cook. "As for this fellow, we'll lock him up until we reach port."

Before being taken away, Snorky was questioned by the captain. The sly sailor would give no reason for his past actions, insisting only that he had put nothing harmful in the food.

"I wanted to steer the *Primrose* myself," he said, but no one believed him.

After Snorky was locked up, a thorough search was made of his belongings. No evidence was found against him other than the sickening white powder. Nancy did not swerve from her original theory, however, that the man was working for someone interested in obtaining the treasure.

During the remainder of the day all went well aboard the *Primrose*. Just at dusk the vessel came within view of Little Palm Island. Through the binoculars it appeared as a tiny crescent-shaped spot of green, its sandy shores lined solidly with gently waving palms.

"Oh, what a lovely place!" Nancy exclaimed enthusiastically. "May we go ashore at once, Captain Stryver?"

"The sea's pretty rough," he answered. "I'll not be able to take the *Primrose* in much closer."

"Can't a small boat be launched?"

"We'll see," the man returned, smiling at the girl's eagerness. "Too soon to tell yet."

The *Primrose* nosed her way cautiously ahead and at length dropped anchor a safe distance from the pounding surf. After considerable debate it was decided that Captain Stryver, Ned, Bill Tomlin, and two sailors should row ashore to make a preliminary investigation. Nancy and her chums were disappointed to be left behind, but they realized that it might be dangerous to adopt any other plan.

Anxiously those aboard the *Primrose* watched the little craft row away. Nancy was busy following its progress through the binoculars when a sailor came hurriedly on deck to report that Snorky had escaped from his prison room.

"He's nowhere in sight, either," the seaman added. "Looks as if he must have jumped overboard and swum to shore."

"In these shark-infested waters!"

"You wouldn't catch me trying it," the sailor replied. "That Snorky's as crazy as they come."

Nancy's uneasiness increased, for she reasoned that the missing sailor undoubtedly had friends waiting for him on Little Palm Island. She feared that Captain Stryver's party might be waylaid. Therefore, it was a great relief to everyone aboard the *Primrose* when less than an hour later the small boat was observed returning.

"What's the report?" Nancy eagerly asked Ned as he climbed on deck.

"This side of the island seems to be deserted. We did find considerable evidence of digging, though."

"Oh, Ned! That means someone has reached the spot ahead of us!"

"Afraid so, Nancy."

"Snorky has escaped, too. That makes our position here even worse. Somehow he got away from his guard and jumped overboard."

A conference was called immediately in Captain Stryver's cabin. It was agreed that action must be taken at once or the treasure might be lost forever.

"There's only one thing to do," the captain said gruffly. "Snorky must be recaptured. I propose that we make up a party and go after him."

Leaving only one sailor behind to guard the *Primrose*, all the men except Mr. Smith set off for the island. Mrs. Chatham, Mrs. Smith, Nancy and the other girls remained on deck, anxiously watching the boat through the spyglass. They saw it make a safe landing. Then the men vanished behind a fringe of palms.

"It will be dark soon," Mrs. Chatham said nervously. "Oh, I do wish they would return!"

"Listen!" cried Nancy suddenly. "I thought I heard someone shout!"

"So did I!" agreed Bess who stood beside her. "Something must have happened!"

In a moment the group saw several men appear on the beach. Seizing the binoculars, Nancy adjusted the powerful glasses to her eyes.

"What do you see?" demanded Ellen who had hastened to the railing.

"They've caught Snorky!" Nancy exclaimed. "Another man, too. I can't see his face clearly."

"That's great!" laughed Bess in relief. "Now it will be safe for us to go ashore."

"Who is the man in the white tropical outfit?" Mrs. Chatham asked, for she had observed another person join the group on the beach.

"He looks slightly familiar, but I can't recall where I've seen him," Nancy returned, focusing the glasses on the man in white. "His big hat is pulled low over his face."

As she watched intently she could tell that the newcomer was arguing with Captain Stryver. She could not be certain, but she thought he might be ordering the *Primrose* party away from the island. Her observation was confirmed a few minutes later when Ned and a sailor rowed back to the yacht.

"That fellow in white—Mr. Heyborn—claims he owns the island," the youth told her. "He says he'll permit no landing and no digging. Captain Stryver is trying to make him listen to reason. So far he's had no luck."

"But there has been considerable digging on the island already," Nancy said in quick protest.

"The fellow claims he knew nothing about it. I came back here to get you and Ellen. We've caught Snorky and another man who may be the one that robbed the Smith home of the treasure map."

Obtaining Mrs. Chatham's permission, Nancy and Ellen rowed to the island with Ned. The man in white had vanished before their arrival, but one glance satisfied them that Snorky's companion was Spike Doty. His glaring eyes convinced Nancy he was the same person who had "haunted" the music cottage.

"Mr. Heyborn, the owner of the island, has volunteered to look after the prisoners," Captain Stryver remarked dubiously. "Shall we accept his offer?"

"Wouldn't it be wiser to take the men to the *Primrose*?" Nancy asked before anyone else could speak.

"My own thought," nodded the captain. "Somehow I don't entirely trust Mr. Heyborn."

He lowered his voice, for the man in tropical white was returning. By this time darkness was coming on. Although Nancy tried her best, she could not obtain a good view of the newcomer's face. Whenever she drew near him, he would turn away slightly.

"Well, have you made up your mind?" he asked the captain testily. "You're leaving these men with me?"

"No, we've decided to take them aboard the *Primrose*," Captain Stryver answered.

"It will only make you trouble," the island owner replied, evidently displeased. "Why not let me look after the prisoners for you? A supply boat touches here in a few days and they can be put aboard that."

To Nancy's relief Captain Stryver firmly declined the offer. Permission was asked to refill the water casks of the *Primrose* at a spring. To this the unpleasant Mr. Heyborn reluctantly consented.

"I can give you no other privileges here," he warned. "Above all, I'll have no digging. Now please leave."

"You're not acting very fair," Ned could not refrain from saying. "Mrs. Chatham has spent a lot of money getting to this island. We'll do no damage."

"Please let us search," Ellen pleaded. "It means so much to Mrs. Chatham and my family."

"I'll have no digging," the man repeated irritably.

Ned and Ellen would have pressed the matter further had not Nancy given them a warning glance.

"I can see your viewpoint," she said to the owner. "Well leave at once."

Her friends stared at her aghast. A few minutes later, on their way to the yacht, they demanded an explanation.

"I'll tell you why I agreed with him," Nancy returned evenly. "It was to throw him off the track. Not for a minute do I believe that Mr. Heyborn is the owner of Little Palm Island!"

"You think he's an impostor?" Ned asked in amazement.

"I certainly do. He must be a pal of Snorky and Spike."

"Then he means to get the treasure for himself!" Ellen gasped, thoroughly alarmed. "We must do something to stop him. But what?"

"I have a little plan," Nancy said with assurance. "As soon as we reach the *Primrose* I'll tell you all about it."

CHAPTER XXIV

Adventure by Night

Nancy's plan was a simple one. She proposed to wait until after dark, then steal to the island to make an investigation.

"Where does Mr. Heyborn live?" she asked Ned. "He must have a house somewhere in the woods."

"It's a large place," the other replied. "We saw it from a distance while we were chasing Spike and Snorky."

"Then why not go there and see what we can learn?" Nancy urged. "We might take Bill Tomlin with us."

Ellen, who was somewhat timid, did not care to be included in such an adventure. Bill, however, was enthusiastic, so it was decided the three of them would leave the *Primrose* shortly.

After those aboard had seated themselves to wait, Nancy, Ned and Bill quietly launched a boat. With muffled oars they rowed to the beach. The night was an ideal one for their purpose, dark and still. Thick clouds scudded overhead, obscuring the moon.

"No sign of anyone around," Ned whispered as the boat grated on the beach. "All the same, it will pay us to be on our guard."

After hiding their craft, the young people moved stealthily through the tropical woods. Presently they came to a worn path which led them to a large one-story house made of palmetto logs.

"That's the place," Ned told his companions. "Now what is our move?"

Before Nancy could answer, the moon came out from behind a cloud. Quickly she and her companions ducked behind a bush, remaining there until darkness shrouded them once more.

"Somehow we must peer inside that house," Nancy whispered to the two young men. "I suspect that the real owner may have been overpowered by this rascal who calls himself Mr. Heyborn."

"We're in a rather risky business," Ned warned her as they crept forward. "Think I dare flash a light?"

"Better keep it off until we see what we're running into," Bill advised in an undertone.

Moving to the rear of the house, the three paused beside a window. Nancy pressed her face against the screen, trying to see what was inside.

"Let me have your flashlight, Ned," she whispered. "I think someone is lying on the bed."

"Have a care," the youth warned as he gave her the light. "It may be Heyborn."

Nancy flashed the beam, drawing in her breath at the sight revealed within. A sleeping woman lay on a bed, her ankle chained to one of the posts!

Horrified, Nancy raised the screen and called softly. At first the figure did not stir. When the woman did lift her head from the pillow it was to whimper with fear.

"Don't be afraid!" the girl called in a soothing voice. "We're here to help you."

"Set me free!" the woman pleaded pitifully. "My husband and my son are prisoners too!"

Ned hoisted Nancy through the window so that she could talk with less fear of discovery. He and Bill waited outside, keeping an alert watch.

"Are you Mrs. Heyborn?" Nancy asked as she reached the bedside.

“Yes,” the woman murmured. “Two cruel men landed here three days ago in a boat. They accepted our hospitality and then made us prisoners. My husband and son are chained in other rooms.”

“What became of the boat? We saw nothing of it when we landed.”

“It sailed away,” Mrs. Heyborn revealed. “I heard one of the men—he calls himself Spike—say it would be back in a day or two. Oh, please set me free! I’m so wretchedly uncomfortable.”

Examining the woman’s fetters, Nancy saw that she could not hope to release her without the key to the padlock.

“Have courage,” she comforted the woman. “I can’t set you free now, but I’ll be back.”

Tiptoeing to the window, she rejoined Bill and Ned, telling them everything she had learned.

“Someone came here with Spike Doty impersonating the real owner of the island,” she concluded her story. “We must capture that man and see if he has the key to Mrs. Heyborn’s locked chain.”

“Wonder where we’ll find him?” Bill asked, gazing at the darkened house. “He must be sleeping here somewhere.”

At the rear of the building was a screened porch which the young people had barely noticed. As they walked around the house they saw that a cot had been set up in the enclosure. A man was stretched out there.

“Say, that must be the fellow!” Ned whispered to his companions. “If we’re quiet we can take him without a struggle!”

Making no sound, the three opened the door of the porch and slipped inside. Ned took a rope from his pocket and bound the man. The startled prisoner, awakening, struggled to a sitting position. Nancy made a surprising observation.

“Mr. Bellows!” she exclaimed. “I thought I had seen you before, but your hat hid your face on the beach so I couldn’t be sure.”

The man tried to break free but Ned and Bill held him securely. Searching his pockets, they turned over various keys to Nancy. The girl sped to set Mrs. Heyborn and her family free.

Her husband proved to be a decided contrast to Bullseye Bellows, the pretended owner of the island. Mr. Heyborn could not thank Nancy and her friends enough for setting them free. When the entire story was told, he assured them that he would not withhold the Tomlin treasure hunt.

“Dig to your hearts’ content,” he urged the group generously. “My wife and I came here to enjoy a peaceful existence. I am a naturalist, connected with the American Museum, and have been studying the flora of the island. All I ask is the privilege of continuing my work.”

With Spike Doty, Snorky and Bellows in captivity, Nancy believed that there would be no further trouble. A wireless message would be sent to government officials, requesting that a boat be dispatched to take charge of the three men, inasmuch as the latest prisoner was being taken to the *Primrose*.

Nancy decided to return to the yacht so that she might question the man. On the way Bellows admitted that he had learned of the treasure from the first mate of the *Warwick*. The ship’s officer had stolen Captain John Tomlin’s copy of the half-section of the parchment, only to lose it. When dying, he had told the tale to Bellows. The only word he could remember on the paper was “Palm.” He also said he had just learned the whereabouts of one of the twins,

now known as Tomlin Smith. Accordingly Bellows had called upon Ellen's father, offering him money to part with his section of the map.

At this point in the man's account the *Primrose* was reached. It was decided that the rest of the explanation must wait, for dawn was showing in the sky and the adventurers needed sleep. The coming day was to be an eventful one for Nancy and her friends!

The girl fell into heavy slumber from which she did not awaken when others on the yacht began to stir about. As usual, Trixie was the first one up, begging both Ellen and her mother to dress and go ashore.

"I want to dig for the treasure," the little girl said. She reached under her bunk and drew forth a small pail and shovel. She kept looking into the former and smiling. "I got a map. I want to dig," she cried.

So insistent did Trixie become, that as soon as she had eaten her breakfast Mrs. Chatham suggested the first boatloads of diggers go to the island.

"But you won't start work without Nancy!" exclaimed Ellen.

"Oh, no," replied the widow. "Just enough to satisfy Trixie. But I hope Nancy won't sleep too long!"

It was decided that Mr. Smith should go. The sea air had improved his condition so much that he now was able to get about on crutches. When the group reached Little Palm the child said proudly to him:

"Did you bring your map? I brought mine."

Thereupon she showed everyone a paper in her pail, saying she had got it out of a drawer in the Drew girl's cabin. The child was scolded for her act by her mother, and when she began to cry Mr. Smith tried to comfort her by showing his copy of half the old map which he had in a pocket.

"Let's dig," insisted Trixie. "You find the place and I'll use my shovel."

More to please the child than for any other reason, Tomlin Smith had Tom More pace off the distances from his directions. At the appointed spot Trixie drove her tiny shovel into the earth. At once it bent double and the little girl began to wail.

"I'll help you," offered good-natured Tom, getting a spade. After a moment's digging he exclaimed, "I've struck something! Can it be the treasure?"

CHAPTER XXV

The End of the Quest

Bright sunlight streamed through the porthole of Nancy's cabin as she opened her eyes. The room was uncomfortably warm, and she immediately knew that it was very late. Jumping up from bed, she awakened Bess and George, who shared the other bunks.

"Get up!" she urged. "It must be at least nine o'clock. I don't know how we overslept."

"How still it is," Bess remarked, sitting up in bed. "Not a sound except the slapping of the waves against the boat."

"And for good reason!" exclaimed George. "Just read this!"

She had picked up a note lying on the dresser. Ellen's name was signed to the bottom and it read:

"We've all gone to the island. Trixie talked Mrs. Chatham into the idea of getting started early. Join us as soon as you awaken."

"Now isn't that nice?" George demanded indignantly. "They've gone off and left us. By this time they may have found the treasure."

Quickly dressing, the girls had one of the sailors row them to the beach.

"I don't see our crowd anywhere," Nancy declared, gazing about in perplexity. "They should be close to the water's edge."

Only after a long search did the three chums find their friends in a barren, rocky section of the island.

A huge pile of dirt had been thrown up by the men of the party, who had taken turns digging. At the moment of the girls' arrival, Tom More and Bill Tomlin had collapsed beneath a tree.

"Oh, Nancy, we're so discouraged," Mrs. Chatham greeted her. "We've worked for over two hours and haven't found anything."

"We followed instructions exactly, too," added Ellen gloomily. "We thought Tom had found the buried fortune right away, but when he didn't we thought we might as well go on working and save you the disappointments. But it's no use. The story must be a hoax."

"Which maps did you use?" Nancy asked, her eyes troubled.

"Why, Captain John Tomlin's parchment and your copy of Father's lost section," Ellen replied, offering the two pieces for inspection.

"But this is the second copy I made," Nancy said excitedly. "Don't tell me you used this. Where did you get it?"

"Trixie found it. Isn't it an accurate map?"

"Accurate, yes, but I'm not surprised it misled you."

"I wish you would explain," Ned said wearily. "Haven't we been digging in the right place?"

"Not within forty yards. You see, this is the copy of the copy I made, if you gather my meaning. When Irene and Fred Brown followed me that day and I was afraid they might steal the precious paper, I mailed it to Dad at his office. Just before that I made a sketch of it, but I deliberately made all the instructions appear backward."

"Then we've done all this digging to no purpose!" Bill Tomlin groaned. "Guess it served us right for going off without you girls this morning."

Nancy adjusted the map to the bright sunlight. Thus viewed, with the directions showing through it, the diagram appeared in its true order.

"Come on, fellows," Ned cried, seizing a spade. "This time we work in earnest."

With Nancy directing operations, the ground was paced off according to instructions. The actual site proved to be beneath a huge palm, on a beautiful knoll overlooking the rolling sea.

"Dig here!" Nancy said, chalking off a large rectangle on the ground. "If I've made no mistake we should find the treasure."

For half an hour the young men toiled faithfully, turning up mounds upon mounds of sand and dirt. As the sun rose higher, they became hot and discouraged.

"If the chest is here, it's sure buried deep," Bill Tomlin complained.

"Maybe the treasure was removed years ago," murmured Mr. Smith, who watched the work from the shade. "I've always been afraid it would be gone."

"Don't give up yet," said Nancy quietly. "The hole isn't very deep."

The digging was resumed. After perhaps fifteen minutes Ned's spade struck a hard substance.

"Probably just a rock," he said without much hope.

Turning up another spadeful of dirt he bent to examine the object.

"This is no rock!" he cried jubilantly. "I think we've found the treasure!"

The others began to dig with renewed energy. Presently the top of a rusty iron chest was uncovered. Another five minutes, and the men were able to lift it from the hole.

"It seems too good to be true," Ellen murmured, tears of happiness in her eyes. "The treasure is ours at last."

"Nancy must have the honor of lifting the lid," Mrs. Chatham declared, fairly beside herself with excitement. "Had it not been for her, none of us would be here at this moment."

"I shall pass my honor on to Ned," Nancy laughed. "The chest must be opened with a crowbar, and I never was handy with tools!"

The young men fell to work again and soon succeeded in prying off the lid. As they lifted it there was a moment of stunned silence. Inside lay heap upon heap of gold and silver coins, jewelry and rich ornaments from all over the world. That the wealth had been collected by Grandfather Captain Tomlin they could not doubt, for a stained letter addressed to his descendants bore his signature.

"Father! This means we'll never again have to worry about money!" Ellen exclaimed, tears of happiness glistening in her eyes. "We owe Nancy for this wonderful hour!"

"It's been a glorious adventure," declared Mrs. Chatham. "The money doesn't mean so much to me, but this trip has given me a new lease on life. It has brought Trixie and me closer together."

A great deal of labor was required to transport the contents of the treasure chest to the *Primrose*, but at last it was accomplished. Mrs. Chatham, Bill Tomlin and the Smiths consulted together, with the result that they bestowed a generous gift upon the Heyborns, and similar tokens for every member of the expedition. As her share, Nancy received a beautiful jeweled bracelet, by far the finest piece in the collection.

With such a precious cargo aboard, Captain Stryver was somewhat worried lest the prisoners make trouble. He tried to keep the news from them, but they overheard the excited conversations of those aboard. The three were furious, each blaming the other for their failure to obtain the money.

“How did the men get together in the first place!” asked the young people of Nancy, who had heard the prisoners’ confessions.

“When Bellows failed to buy Mr. Smith’s half of the map, he got in touch with his old partner Spike,” she explained. “To his surprise he found his friend already had heard the story from the *Warwick’s* first mate, and was working on it from the Captain John Tomlin angle.”

As Nancy paused, George spoke up. “When Spike traced Mrs. Chatham, it was easy for him to work at Rocky Edge. He was familiar with the place for years before he had robbed it.”

“He hid in the house and in the studio,” added Bess. “He overheard many things, and found out Mrs. Chatham had a lot of money in the safe. When he needed some cash, he took the opportunity of capturing Trixie.”

“Spike used the secret room in the studio to examine all the papers he could lay his hands on,” went on Nancy. “When Trixie and I bothered him, he tried to scare us.”

“Was he the one who stole my half map?” asked Ellen’s father.

“Yes. Bellows got him to do that.”

“Where do the Browns fit in?” inquired Bill Tomlin.

“They were part of the ring, but didn’t get along very well with the others,” explained Nancy. “They thought they were better than Bullseye and Spike. But Spike managed to get the wanted piece of map from them—at least the one Hannah made. She copied the word ‘Little,’ thus giving Spike the third word in the name of the island, but she misled him completely in the directions to the treasure.

“Blessed Hannah Gruen really saved this treasure, do you know it? If she had given away the right piece, the buried box might have been gone by the time we reached here!”

“Three cheers for her!” cried Ellen.

“And three cheers for Nancy Drew!” said Mr. Smith warmly. “She solved the mystery of my missing brother.”

“She succeeded in her quest for the lost half of the map,” added Ned warmly.

“And caught the villains!” put in Bill Tomlin. “She even——”

“Oh, stop it!” cried Nancy, blushing to the roots of her hair. “I couldn’t have done a thing without the help of every one of you.”

That was like the girl—to remain generous and unspoiled no matter how much praise was heaped upon her. This was to remain true as she solved her next mystery, “The Clue in the Jewel Box.”

“Come on, let’s sing,” Nancy urged.

She started a familiar tune which the crowd took up. Their voices carried far across the water as the *Primrose* started for its home port. The adventure was at an end.

THE END

[The end of *The Quest of the Missing Map* by Mildred Benson (as Carolyn Keene)]