

❖ **Cassie Kingston Mysteries** ❖

The Candlewick Inn Mystery



J.H. Sweet

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A little mystery is good for the soul.

Cassie Kingston Mysteries



The Message in the Transom
The Candlewick Inn Mystery
The Statue in Glen Park
The Painting of Swan Cove Island



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Chapter One

Two Weeks at the Inn

“Are you sure no one else can help Cousin Bea?”

Early morning on a Wednesday, ten-year-old Cassie Kingston was packing for a summer trip, and she looked plaintively at her mother as she asked the question. Cassie’s father had already left for work, and Cassie’s mother was helping with the packing.

Mrs. Kingston, sitting on the corner of Cassie’s bed, shook her head as she answered. “Beatrice needs help to keep the inn going. Summer is their busiest season, and she can’t hire anyone until the details of Great-Aunt Sybil’s will are ironed out.” Folding a pair of shorts and placing them into her daughter’s

suitcase, she added, “This trip has been planned for nearly two months. You agreed to go, and Beatrice is counting on you.”

Cassie knew this was true, so had to agree with her mother. Great-Aunt Sybil, who had passed away three months before, was actually Cassie’s mother’s great-aunt. Cassie’s cousin was now running the Candlewick Inn, located upstate in a town called Sperry Crossing, which was about two hundred miles from Cassie’s home of West Bend.

Although Cassie liked her cousin, she was reluctant to leave at this time because she was having such an exciting summer at home. In addition to having made two new friends the previous week, Cassie had also helped to solve a pretty important mystery involving an old house, a stained glass transom, and a valuable antique doll.

Fortunately, Cassie’s best friend, Enilsa Santos, was going with her on the trip. Over the years, the two had spent many of their summers together, so they often made joint plans that sometimes included family trips. However, both girls were having trouble getting excited about going to help make beds at an inn for two weeks

because they could think of plenty of other things they'd rather be doing on their summer vacation.

Enilsa only lived a couple of blocks from Cassie, and she usually walked to her friend's house; but since her suitcase was rather heavy, her mother dropped her off this morning.

"You have your ticket?" Mrs. Santos asked.

After hoisting her suitcase out of the trunk of the car, Enilsa replied, "Yes." She hugged her mother goodbye as she added, "And the train schedule, and my toothbrush, and my swimsuit, and everything else on the list."

Mrs. Santos laughed as she got back into the car. "Okay then," she said. "Be sweet, and I'll see you in two weeks."

Cassie was still slightly complaining to her mother as she let Enilsa in the front door. "There's not even a computer at the inn, so we can't even check email."

"We've been over that too," said Mrs. Kingston, shaking her head. "There's a library in town, and the inn has bicycles for the guests to use. You can bike to the library to check your email." As she handed Cassie her train ticket, she added, "But I hope you'll have plenty of

other things to do so you can stay off the computer for awhile. Summer is supposed to be a time of getting outdoors for sunshine and exercise.”

“And playing games, and reading,” said Enilsa, reciting something her mother had recently said that sounded a lot like the point Cassie’s mom was trying to make.

“The inn also has a pool and horses,” said Mrs. Kingston, “so I’m sure you girls will enjoy yourselves in your spare time.”

Next, anxious to get going, the travelers hustled the luggage to the driveway and piled into the car to head to the train station.

Both Cassie and Enilsa had ridden the train before, so they weren’t nervous. However, both girls listened carefully to Mrs. Kingston’s instructions. “Sit near the front, stay together, and don’t be overly friendly with strangers. And if anyone bothers you, find the security guard or walk up to the engine room.” The girls nodded. They both knew how to stay safe when traveling.

They were also relatively safe from people who liked to steal from travelers because neither girl ever carried a purse, opting instead for small

wallets that fit in their pockets. They sometimes carried other small objects in their pockets too such as lip balm and keys, but since neither of them really felt like they needed to carry larger items like hairbrushes, they liked not having to lug around a purse, even though a lot of their friends chose to.

After helping to check the luggage, Mrs. Kingston gave both girls a hug and sent them up the steps to the first passenger car to have their tickets checked. Then she watched them get settled in empty seats around the middle of the front car before giving a final wave and heading back to the parking area.

The train departed a few minutes later, and soon left West Bend far behind. As the trip progressed, the girls ate lunch when a train employee came by selling sandwiches and apples from a basket. They also bought crème sodas and shared a brownie.

Many of the passengers were friendly, but not overly friendly, so Cassie and Enilsa felt comfortable on their trip, as they watched the colorful scenery go by. They also had fun watching two smaller children play the *I Spy* game with their father.

Due to several stops, the train trip took right around five hours. As previously arranged, Cassie and Enilsa were met at the Sperry Crossing Train Station by the gardener of the Candlewick Inn, a man named Mr. Millar. He helped them claim their bags; then they loaded up and were on their way.

They traveled through the center of Sperry Crossing on their way to the inn, and Mr. Millar pointed out several sights and buildings of interest including the courthouse, post office, and library.

The inn, located in a country setting, was about a ten-minute drive from the town. In addition to an extensive garden, the grounds included a stable with six horses, a three-mile walking trail around the property, and a small pool.

When they arrived, Mr. Millar pointed out a maze hedge on the side lawns that he had been constructing for several years. The lush green bushes were over six feet high, and with painstaking pruning, the maze was turning into a beautiful sculpture. However, it didn't really appear large enough for anyone to get lost or

confused in. “I’m planning to add onto it,” said Mr. Millar, as if reading their thoughts.

One of the first things Enilsa and Cassie noticed was a huge wooden sign spanning several rails of the front porch of the inn. Amidst the carved words, *The Candlewick Inn*, the wood was inlaid with a scrolled pattern of many colorful stones and seashells. Enilsa had brought her camera and made a mental note to remember to take a picture of the sign later because it really was a beautiful work of art.

Cousin Bea was busy when the girls arrived, so Mr. Millar showed them to their room, which was on the first floor in what seemed to be a newly-built part of the inn. Mr. Millar confirmed this as he gave them the room key. “They built this first-floor wing only about five years ago,” he said, “for the live-in employees. The inn went from twelve to nineteen rooms-for-let when they did that, so it’s much more profitable now than it once was. That’ll be better for Bea in the long run, if she gets to keep the inn. Of course, we’re all assuming Sybil left the inn to Bea because she said she would; but we won’t know for sure until they read the will next week.”

As Mr. Millar left, Cassie quickly called home, using the phone by the bed, to let her mother know they had arrived safely. Before hanging up, Mrs. Kingston said she would phone Enilsa's mother to let her know the girls made it safely to the inn.

After unpacking, and spreading their things out on the twin beds, they were right away needed to help out in kitchen to prepare for the dinner rush. Mrs. Halston was in charge in the kitchen and had evidently been cooking at the inn for the last forty-three years. She chatted with the girls while they cut up carrots and rolled out biscuit dough.

"Some of our guests rent long term," she said, "like they would an apartment. Right now, that includes Mr. Libby and Ms. Walker on the first floor, and the Peabodys on the third. The rest of the guests are mostly vacationers and people visiting family in Sperry Crossing. I guess some people end up here on business once in awhile, but this is mostly a resort area."

Cassie and Enilsa nodded politely as Mrs. Halston went on. "We're about twenty-two miles from the national park, and about fifteen

from the lake resort, so we get their overflow sometimes, especially in the summer.

“We’re full right now, and we can’t afford to turn anyone away because we need the business,” Mrs. Halston added, “so we’re really happy you’ve come to help. I know Bea is thrilled that you’re here. Two people quit last month. Well, they moved actually, but that put us really short for the busy season.”

Chopping onions and trying not to sniffle, Enilsa and Cassie looked at one another, feeling somewhat guilty that they had felt resentful about coming to help, especially since it was really only for two weeks of their summer.

“And she can’t hire anyone,” Mrs. Halston continued, “until Sybil’s estate is settled. They’re reading the will next Friday.” Pulling a gigantic ham out of the oven, she added, “It’s too bad they never found the hidden treasure.”

Right away, of course, the girls’ ears perked up. “What hidden treasure?” asked Cassie.

“Bea never told you?” said Mrs. Halston. “I don’t know when that rumor started but, supposedly, some sort of great treasure is hidden here at the inn. Of course, a lot of people speculate, but we don’t know much. Sybil knew

about it, but she would never tell anyone the details. So no one knows what it is or where it's hidden.

“A couple of years ago,” Mrs. Halston went on, “Bea brought in an expert because she thought one of the paintings might be valuable. Sybil just about had a laughing fit. It's that seascape in the dining room, and it is worth about five hundred dollars. But it's not a treasure. Bea was disappointed because she thought she had the mystery figured out.”

“Are there any clues at all as to what the treasure might be?” asked Enilsa.

“No,” stated Mrs. Halston. “It just started as a rumor awhile back, probably about five or six years ago now.”

The girls had their dinner with Mrs. Halston, Mr. Millar, and four other inn employees at a large table in the kitchen. After helping with the after-dinner clean up, they finally got a chance to see Bea who was in her office behind the reception area of the inn.

Cassie hadn't seen her cousin for nearly three years. Though Bea was in her late thirties, she was very bubbly and talkative, and seemed much younger.

After a hug, and introducing Enilsa, they sat together to talk.

“I made up a schedule for you,” said Bea, indicating a paper on her desk, “which I hope includes enough free time so you can have some fun too.”

“I’m sure it will be fine,” said Cassie.

“Thank you both so much for coming,” said Bea, handing Cassie the schedule. “This is such a relief.”

“We’re glad to help,” said Enilsa, immediately taking the paper from Cassie to study it. Cassie gladly relinquished it to her friend. Enilsa lived by schedules and was definitely the proper person to take charge of it.

After visiting for awhile, Bea needed to be getting back to her paperwork, so the girls made their way to the inn common room. Sipping glasses of ice water, they talked about what Mrs. Halston had told them.

“I think the treasure is just a tall tale,” said Enilsa.

“Even though we just found a treasure last week?” said Cassie.

“Yes,” answered Enilsa, “because it’s just the sort of thing someone would make up to drum

up business at an inn that needs more business. They could have said it was haunted and accomplished the same thing.” (Enilsa was always skeptical about these sorts of things.)

Cassie smiled as she agreed with her friend. “You’re probably right,” she said. “I guess I just have treasure on the brain right now.”

They stopped talking when a boy of about their age entered the room and approached them.

“I’m Brian Thayer,” he said, sitting down across from them.

After Enilsa and Cassie introduced themselves, he added, “I’m here with my parents.” Pointing to a couple sitting on a couch across the room, he told them, “We’re from Merricksville. We’ve been here a week, just on vacation.”

“We just got here,” said Cassie, “and we’re working at the inn for a couple of weeks.”

“I know,” said Brian. “Your cousin told me you were coming and said I should look out for you.” As Cassie and Enilsa smiled politely, he added, “She also told me about the excitement you guys had last week at home, when you found that valuable doll that saved a house from being torn down.”

“Yes,” said Cassie, though she thought it was a little strange that Bea would tell someone this. “Now they can use the house for the Town History Museum, which is what the owner of the house wanted.”

Brian’s parents left the room a short while later, and after chatting for few more minutes, he rose to follow them. As he was leaving, he told the girls, “I’m in *Number Fourteen*. Maybe we could hit the pool together when you guys have time off from work.”

Cassie and Enilsa smiled and nodded as they said goodnight.

Chapter Two

Mr. Vicks and Mr. Hammon

On Thursday morning, the girls had breakfast downstairs early. Breakfasts at the inn were held in the common room with the food spread out on a large, antique buffet cabinet.

Cassie and Enilsa took places at a table across from a man who introduced himself as Mr. Vicks when they said hello. He was evidently in town on business for a month.

Though he was polite, Mr. Vicks didn't smile, and after a few short pleasantries, he picked up the newspaper beside his plate and began to read.

In order not to disturb him, the girls finished eating in silence. However, they did think Mr. Vicks was a strange contrast to the other patrons

of the inn who all seemed anxious to visit with the other guests and inn staff at every opportunity.

When another gentleman arrived in the common room, Mr. Vicks quickly got up from the table and departed. After a brief greeting of, “Good morning,” to the other man, Mr. Vicks hastily went upstairs.

The new arrival was a robust and jovial gentleman with red cheeks and round spectacles. “Good morning,” he said brightly to Cassie and Enilsa. “Don’t mind him,” he added, nodding toward the stairs to indicate Mr. Vicks. “He never wants to be bothered much, just spends all of his time reading. I’m Charles Hammon, by the way.”

As the girls introduced themselves, Mr. Hammon said, “I thought you might be Cassie and Enilsa. Bea told me you were coming.”

Again, Cassie was surprised that Bea seemed to be advertising their visit to the guests of the inn. Mr. Hammon, noticing her expression, said, “Oh, she just told me because I’m a distant cousin. I only found out about Sybil’s passing last month, and I came to pay my respects, rather late, I’m afraid.

“But since I was here,” Mr. Hammon added, “I thought I might as well stay for the reading of the will. I hope she left me her old sewing box, or her gardening hat.” When Cassie and Enilsa smiled, he laughed and told them, “Just kidding. I doubt I’ll be mentioned at all because I hadn’t seen Sybil since I was a boy. I more wanted to stay to get to know Bea a bit. I’d never met her before. And I’d like the chance to meet Helen. She’s a cousin too, due to arrive next week. Families get spread so far apart these days, it’s hard to get to know relatives anymore.”

Cassie had to agree, since she had never heard anything about either Helen or Mr. Hammon until now.

Mr. Hammon was evidently only having coffee for breakfast. When he finished his cup, he invited them to walk through the maze with him.

“Oh, I’m sorry, we can’t,” responded Enilsa.

Cassie was nodding. “We’re supposed to wait here for Cousin Bea. We’re helping out, and she’s meeting us here to get us started this morning.”

Mr. Hammon smiled as he said, “Well, maybe some other time.”

As he was rising to leave, Mr. Hammon leaned forward and performed a short magic trick to pull a dime out of Enilsa's ear.

Enilsa giggled as he handed her the dime. Cassie laughed too, but mainly because it was funny to hear Enilsa, who was usually such a serious person, giggle.

Bea entered the common room just as Mr. Hammon was exiting the doors leading to the patio and pool. "Morning, Bea!" he called as he was shutting the door.

She fluttered her hand at him before greeting Cassie and Enilsa.

As she was leading them upstairs, Bea told them, "I had never heard of Charles Hammon before last month. Great-Aunt Sybil never mentioned him. He is definitely part of the family; we checked it out. But it's funny how he seems to have just come out of the woodwork."

On the third floor, Bea introduced them to Marta, who was going to show them what to do.

Marta was very efficient and quickly demonstrated the steps to make up a room and clean the bathroom. "And there's a checklist," she told them after the demonstration.

Enilsa was thrilled. Immediately taking charge of the list, she exclaimed, “Now this is the way to do things!”

Cassie and Enilsa worked together, because working as a pair was the easiest way to make up beds. Plus, it was fun to be able to visit while they worked.

As busy as they were, the morning went by very quickly. They made up every room on the third floor, except the Peabodys who were sleeping very late. Then they did two rooms on the second floor.

Marta met up with them just before lunch. She had checked several of the rooms they had done, and she praised their work. Then, pointing down the hall, she told them, “Just make sure you don’t go into *Number Eleven*. That’s Mr. Vicks’ room. He makes his own bed and specially requested that we only wash his sheets and clean the bathroom once a week while he’s here. He doesn’t like to be disturbed. I’ll be doing his room, so you two just stay clear.” The girls nodded their understanding as Marta added, “Bea tries to be very considerate of guests with peculiar requests, so we don’t get complaints.”

Enilsa and Cassie agreed that the request was somewhat odd, but they understood that people sometimes didn't want to be disturbed. As they headed downstairs for lunch, they both carefully committed to memory to avoid *Number Eleven*.

They met Brian in the dining room. He told them he was going swimming later in the afternoon and asked them to join him. Since they had a clear schedule after two o'clock, the girls agreed.

After helping Mrs. Halston and Harold, the part-time dishwasher, clean up after lunch, the girls strolled around the garden until it was time to change into their swimsuits and meet Brian at the pool.

No one else was swimming in the afternoon, so they had the pool all to themselves. After two hours of swimming and lounging on the patio, they went back inside to shower and change for dinner.

After dinner, they watched TV and played board games in the common room until it was time for bed.

Chapter Three

The Bedpost Clue

They saw Brian again briefly the next morning at breakfast; however, he only had time for a quick hello because he and his parents were leaving to go boating for the day.

Mr. Vicks was also leaving the common room as Cassie and Enilsa began filling their breakfast plates. He nodded to them but didn't speak as he headed up the stairs with his morning paper.

As the girls were eating, Mr. Hammon came downstairs for his morning cup of coffee. After performing a magic trick to make a bright blue handkerchief disappear, then reappear, he sat down to chat with them.

Indicating an old photo on the wall above the buffet, Mr. Hammon told them, “This was just a house before it was an inn, and that’s a picture of the original owners.” Cassie and Enilsa both got up to have a closer look at a man and woman standing in front of the house that became the inn.

“He was a candle maker,” continued Mr. Hammon. “That’s his wife with him, Mr. and Mrs. Carroll. He made candles in a workshop in the basement, and while he was growing his business, they let out rooms. Then they realized this was a great location for an inn, near the highway and the lake, so they pretty much stopped the candle-making.”

Mr. Hammon finished with, “Sybil’s father bought the inn from the Carrolls.”

As they sat back down to finish eating, Enilsa asked, “What’s in the basement now?”

“I don’t know,” answered Mr. Hammon. “I never thought to ask. But that would be a good place to do some exploring while you are here.” With this, Mr. Hammon winked at them as he rose to place his coffee cup in a bus tub on a corner table. He then said goodbye and left the inn by the doors leading to the pool.

After a short visit with Bea, who told them the basement right now was mainly used for storage, the girls sped upstairs to begin making up rooms and cleaning bathrooms. They were actually having fun doing this, especially because they were able to get a lot done very quickly working as a team.

As they were changing the sheets in *Number Sixteen*, Cassie and Enilsa made an interesting discovery. The top of one of the wooden bedposts at the foot of the bed was loose. The posts of this particular bed had large, decorative knobs that screwed on, similar to the way lids screwed onto jars. However, these knobs, which were cut into the shapes of octagons, were much heavier than lids, of course.

“Hmmm...” said Enilsa, turning the large knob back and forth with both hands. Intent on tightening the top of the post, Enilsa climbed on her knees onto the bed to get a better grip.

“Hang on,” said Cassie. A thought had just occurred to her. She too climbed up onto the bed, but not to tighten the bedpost. Instead, as Enilsa sat back, Cassie took hold of the knob and began unscrewing.

Enilsa, understanding what her friend was doing, soon became very curious as to what the bedpost might contain. “Maybe we’ll find the treasure,” she whispered.

When Cassie finished working the knob loose, and set it aside, both girls nearly bumped heads as they tried to look into the hollow opening at the top at the same time. Although the post did not contain a treasure, they were not entirely disappointed. Smiling broadly, Cassie let Enilsa fish out the object they had found, which was a very old, thick piece of stationery.

Two sentences in spidery, old-fashioned handwriting were written on the cream-colored paper. The words were slightly faded, but they were legible. Enilsa read them aloud.

“What lies hidden is bluer than blue, and worth more than the entire inn. However, no amount of fortune can make up for such a loss.”

“A possible treasure!” said Cassie, excitedly. “Maybe the rumor is more than just a rumor.”

Enilsa nodded, and at this point, her skeptic-sensor didn’t even kick on because she was just

as thrilled as Cassie to have discovered what might be a clue to finding something valuable hidden at the inn.

In addition to the writing, the paper contained a hand-drawn symbol at the top that looked something like a fleur-de-lis, but was slanted to resemble a cluster of falling teardrops, or perhaps paisleys. Lacy flowers, vines, and sunbursts drawn inside the teardrop shapes definitely reminded them of a paisley pattern. The drawing was very pretty, and the girls thought it was probably just decorative; however, since neither of them had ever seen anything like it before, they were very curious.

“When we’re finished,” suggested Cassie, “let’s ask Bea or Mrs. Halston if they know anything about this.”

“Good idea,” said Enilsa.

After screwing the bedpost knob back on tightly, the girls rushed to finish the last four rooms. But they still worked carefully to make sure they did a good job. Then they hurried downstairs.

Bea was at the reception desk. She was having a discussion with a man holding a brief

case. The discussion shortly ended, and the man tipped his hat to the girls as he left the inn.

“So, how’s your morning so far?” asked Bea.

“Terrific!” exclaimed Cassie.

“We finished the rooms,” said Enilsa, making sure Bea knew they were keeping up with their schedule.

“But we found something really interesting in *Number Sixteen*,” said Cassie, as she proceeded to show her cousin the sheet of stationery.

“Hmmm...” mused Bea. After examining the paper closely, and raising her eyebrows, she stated, “That definitely looks like Great-Aunt Sybil’s handwriting. But I don’t know what to make of ‘blue’ and a ‘loss’ of some sort.” Smiling and shaking her head slightly, she added, “And I would take anything about a treasure with a grain of salt. That story has been circulating for several years, and no one has ever found anything overly valuable at the inn.”

Enilsa and Cassie were a little deflated by this, but they weren’t ready to give up on the clue yet. “What does the symbol at the top mean?” asked Enilsa.

Scrunching up her face, Bea shook her head and said, “I’ve never seen it before. I couldn’t

say for sure, but it reminds me of a textile pattern from an old wooden block, like the ones they used to stamp material with, to make clothing or sheets. I guess they still stamp patterns onto cloth,” added Bea, “but newer machine-made stamps aren’t quite as artistic and free-form as the old hand-carved wooden ones. But I don’t know for sure; that’s just what this reminds me of.

“I guess you’ve been talking to Mrs. Halston,” Bea continued, with a sly look on her face. With a short laugh, she added, “She still thinks there’s a treasure here somewhere. But I learned my lesson with that painting. I think Great-Aunt Sybil made up the treasure story, just to get people like me to fall for the bait. We’ve searched every nook and cranny of this place and have never found anything. The antique furniture, collectively, is worth a fair sum. But it’s not on the scale of a treasure, especially because it’s so well-used, not at all in pristine shape.”

Despite Bea’s words, Cassie carefully pocketed the cream-colored paper, intent on hanging onto the clue for awhile, to see what else they might be able to make of it.

As they were just about to head to the kitchen to help with lunch preparations, Bea told them, “The man that was here, Mr. Arthur, is a lawyer. He was confirming the appointment for ten o’clock next Friday to read the will. He’s not the one who made Great-Aunt Sybil’s will. She had the newest one done when she went out of town about three years ago for her sister’s funeral. But when she came back, she made an appointment with Mr. Arthur to give him the key to her safe deposit box, where the will was kept, along with instructions of what to do when she passed.” Bea laughed at this point. “Great-Aunt Sybil was always a great planner. She even picked out her own headstone a couple of years back.

“I was hoping for some kind of hint from Mr. Arthur,” Bea added. Shaking her head, she said, “No such luck. He got the will from the safe deposit box, but he hasn’t had time to review it because he’s involved in a big court case right now.

“We needed to wait to read the will,” continued Bea, “because Cousin Helen was in Norway for two months. She’s listed in Great-Aunt Sybil’s instructions as an ‘interested party’

so she evidently needs to be here. We had a tough time tracking her down. When we finally found her, she was on her way back. But her mother had surgery last week, and Helen needed to look after her during the recovery period. She'll be here early next Friday. I doubt you've ever met her," added Bea. "I've only ever spoken with her on the phone. But evidently, when Helen was a little girl, she spent summers here; so she was very close to Great-Aunt Sybil."

While they were in the kitchen getting lunch ready, Mrs. Halston told them, "Bea said you were asking about the basement. There's still some of Mr. Carroll's old candle-making equipment down there. Maybe you should have a look-see. Perhaps you'll find the treasure while you're down there," she added, with a sly sideways smile.

If it hadn't been for the clue they had just found, the girls might have thought that Mrs. Halston was pulling their legs in talking up the treasure. Cassie was somewhat of a gullible person and was often very easy for people to read and kid around with. Enilsa, on the other hand, was usually able to see through these types

of things fairly easily, and was forever telling Cassie that people were only joking.

Since it was slightly possible that they were just being led on, Cassie and Enilsa decided not to mention the clue they had found to Mrs. Halston at this time. However, the girls agreed that exploring the basement might be a lot of fun, so they spent their entire free afternoon downstairs. Rooting through boxes and the drawers of old furniture, they found many interesting items such as candle molds and vintage clothing. However, they never found a treasure, or anything that could be described as “bluer than blue.”

After dinner, and calling home to check in, the girls spent the evening hours playing *Monopoly* and *Scrabble* with Brian and Mr. Hammon. Since they were busy and having fun, they didn't think much about the treasure or the clue.

Chapter Four

Ceiling Tiles and Drapes

Saturday morning was as busy for Enilsa and Cassie as the previous two mornings had been. However, five guests checked out Saturday afternoon, with no others taking their places. This meant a free schedule for the girls on Sunday morning.

At Brian's urging, they decided to go horseback riding. In addition to riding around the inn property, they took a country road leading to an antique store housing a sandwich and tea shop, in front of which they tied their reins to old hitching posts so they could go in and have lunch.

Upon returning to the inn, they helped the stablemaster water, feed, and currycomb the horses.

Even though Brian was on vacation, he wanted to spend more time with Cassie and Enilsa, so he accompanied them to the gardens for the afternoon where they all helped Mr. Millar with the weekly weeding and hoeing.

After what seemed like about a year of pulling and hacking weeds, which was really about two hours, the helpers stowed the gloves and hoes in the garden shed. Plopping down on a wooden bench to lie on his back and stretch out, Brian grunted, “I’m already sore. My aunt has a big garden too, and I hate pulling weeds.”

Enilsa took a seat in an old lawn chair, and stated, “I have to help with my mom’s garden. I don’t like it much either.”

Except for the times when she helped Enilsa, Cassie didn’t get to spend much time in gardens, so she had thoroughly enjoyed herself. However, she too felt sore. As she stretched her shoulders and neck, she looked up at the ceiling of the garden shed, which was made of square tin tiles pressed with ornate patterns. In mid-

stretch position, with her arms spread wide, she breathed deeply and admired the designs.

Enilsa thought Cassie might be trying to imitate a bird, with her arms out and her head tilted back over one shoulder, and she was just about to laugh at her friend when Cassie suddenly gasped and lost her balance. She didn't fall, but she stumbled backwards a few steps. Upon regaining her footing, Cassie looked up at the ceiling once more and pointed to the tile that she had been straining to see.

As Brian sat up and turned around to see what Cassie was pointing at, Enilsa rose from the lawn chair and moved to stand with her friend directly beneath the tile, where she immediately understood what had drawn Cassie's attention. The tile in question was stamped with the same pattern as the stationery they had found in the bedpost. However, it was the only tile of the entire ceiling with that particular pattern. Looking closely, they identified five other tile patterns that repeated to make up the rest of the ceiling. The other five tile designs included an oval of stars, a flower cluster, a four-heart pattern, a circle of diamond shapes, and a scattered leaf motif.

However, the lone tile with the different pattern wasn't particularly noticeable unless someone was looking for it because all of the tiles were painted white and were somewhat similar in the style of their designs.

"It's the only one that doesn't match," breathed Enilsa.

Brian nodded. However, he didn't particularly understand what the girls found so interesting about the tile, and he said, "They probably had to replace a damaged one, and they couldn't get one to match the others." His explanation would have been entirely acceptable had it not been for the bedpost clue. Pulling the paper from her pocket, Cassie briefly explained about the possible hidden treasure and the note they had found.

"Wow!" said Brian, examining the paper. "So you're becoming a real treasure hunter? Or else, treasure is hunting you down."

In comparing the tile to the paper, the slanted teardrop paisley cluster matched perfectly.

"If the paper is a clue," offered Enilsa, "the ceiling tile probably is too."

Looking around, Brian said, "There's a ladder." Retrieving the ladder from the corner

of the shed, he set it up directly under the tile and held it steady as Cassie climbed up to the third rung to reach the ceiling.

The tiles were spaced far enough apart so that she was able to work her fingers into the niches along the sides. She then gently pulled downwards. When the tile didn't move, she gradually pulled harder until one corner loosed itself from the ceiling. "I'm not sure I should rip the whole thing off," she said, looking down worriedly at Enilsa and Brian.

"We should be able to put it back up," said Brian. "The tiles are probably just glued on. I don't see any nails. Don't worry," he assured her, "we can figure out how to glue it back."

Since there really was no other way to look under the tile, Cassie agreed. Taking a deep breath, she gave it a terrific yank, which caused two of the other corners to break loose from the ceiling.

"So we are looking for something 'bluer than blue,'" Cassie mused, as she stepped up to the fourth rung of the ladder to get a better look at the bare ceiling and the underside of the tile.

"Bingo!" she exclaimed. A scrap of fabric was attached to the underside of the tile with an

old piece of tape. “But it’s not blue,” Cassie added, as she pulled the tape and fabric loose.

Climbing down from the ladder, she handed the find to Enilsa who scrunched up her face as she examined the material, which was about eight inches square. The fabric was printed with a design that showed two seashells and a piece of rope tied into a knot.

“Is it from an old set of sheets?” asked Brian.

Shaking her head, Enilsa said, “I don’t know.”

Taking the fabric from her friend, Cassie said, “It feels a little too thick for a sheet.”

“We better tell Mr. Millar about the tile,” said Brian, “and let him know that we plan to fix it.” The others agreed.

They found the gardener pruning part of the maze hedge. After briefly explaining about the clues, the three sleuths hurriedly assured Mr. Millar that they would fix the tile. He seemed amused by their treasure hunt and told them, “Don’t worry about it. I have some roof adhesive that will work, and it won’t take long to set one tile. But that looks familiar,” he added, indicating the fabric scrap. “You should ask

Mrs. Halston about it. She might know where it came from.”

“I think it looks familiar too,” said Enilsa, as they hurried inside to the kitchen to find the cook readying dinner.

“Oh, that’s a piece of the old drapes of the inn,” Mrs. Halston said at once. “There’s a few of them left, stored somewhere. Let me think...if they’re not in the basement, look in the attic.”

“That’s where I saw them!” said Enilsa. “In the basement!”

The door to the basement was located just outside the kitchen door. Brian and Cassie followed Enilsa, who fairly flew down the stairs. Flinging open the doors of an old linen cabinet, she rifled through a stack of ancient blankets to find two sets of faded drapes matching the fabric scrap.

In the dim light of the basement bulb, they spread the drapes out on a tattered sofa to examine them. In keeping with the scrap, the full curtains contained a nautical theme that include more seashells and sailors’ knots, along with lighthouses, sand dunes, starfish, sailing ships, and open oysters containing pearls.

“But what does it mean?” asked Cassie.

“I don’t know what to look for either,” said Enilsa, running her fingers along the lengths of the hems to see if anything was concealed in the folds.

“Maybe the treasure is a pearl,” guessed Brian.

Though it was a good guess, Cassie asked, “But can a pearl be blue, and how are the drapes going to lead us to this pearl, if that’s what we’re supposed to look for?”

Neither Enilsa nor Brian had an answer for her.

They carefully carried the drapes up to the kitchen, thinking that better lighting might help them discover more clues.

Mrs. Halston was taking a short coffee break. As they spread one of the curtains out on the open table, she said, “That’s them—the old nautical drapes. They were taken down because the sea is not anywhere near here, and people kept remarking about the out-of-place drapes. So Sybil went for the floral theme instead.”

“But there is still a nautical theme at the inn,” remarked Brian.

“You’re right,” said Enilsa. “There are shells on the sign of the inn and pieces of coral in several of the bathrooms.”

“And there’s a sailor’s valentine hung in the dining room,” Cassie added.

Mrs. Halston was nodding. “That’s because an old sailor used to live here,” she said. “He lived here seven years before he passed away. Each year, he made one of those ship models on the mantle in the common room—the ships in bottles. I think he paid part of his rent with them. Sybil always loved anything to do with the sea.”

Brian, especially, had noticed the row of six ships on the fireplace mantle because he built models. Though he had never built a ship in a bottle, he had spent a lot of time admiring the ones in the common room, which were very well made.

Even after examining the drapes in the good light of the kitchen, they weren’t able to discover any additional clues to finding a treasure, or anything that might give them a direction to follow to look for another clue.

Mrs. Halston didn’t have any ideas either as to what the drapes might mean in connection

with tracking down a hidden treasure. However, she joined them in the common room after dinner when they were looking closely at the ship models. “His name was Mr. Mayweather,” she said, “and he was painstaking with these models. They took him months and months to make. I remember he used resin to make the water in the bottom, and he mixed some kind of dye or ink with it to make it blue. I guess it’s faded somewhat,” she added, peering closely at the model directly in front of her.

Next, they all sat down together to talk and enjoy bottles of ginger beer. Cassie, Enilsa, and Brian had never had ginger beer before coming to the inn, and they decided they liked it even better than root beer. “Well, it’s made with ginger,” said Mrs. Halston, “instead of sassafras, like root beer. I like it a lot myself,” she added. Then she told them, “You know, I’m a distant cousin of your Great-Aunt Sybil.”

“No, I didn’t know that,” said Cassie.

Mrs. Halston was nodding. “Yes, Sybil’s mother and my mother were cousins. I’m pretty familiar with the family tree. That’s why it’s so strange that I never heard about Mr. Hammon before now. But he is evidently Sybil’s sister’s

stepson. Bea checked on it. He seems nice enough, but it's a funny coincidence how he showed up just to hear the contents of her will.

“However,” Mrs. Halston went on, “Sybil was very secretive about her will.” After a pause and a sip of ginger beer, she added, “And she did change it several times over the years. So maybe Mr. Hammon is mentioned. We'll just have to wait and see. Sybil kept a lot of secrets, which is why I believe the story about the treasure.”

Cassie, Enilsa, and Brian were starting to believe it too, even though they couldn't figure out what the drapes might mean or what steps to take next.

Chapter Five

The Man at the Market

Monday morning was fairly quiet and routine for the girls. However, since several new guests checked in, Cassie and Enilsa helped with both lunch and dinner. This gave a couple of the inn staff time off. The girls did manage to squeeze in a swim in the afternoon. Brian was off sightseeing with his parents, so he wasn't able to join them.

In the evening, Enilsa and Cassie spent some time examining many of the windows in the common areas of the inn, because they thought the clue of the drapes might mean that there was something special about one or more of the windows. However, for all of their opening, closing, and studying of the sills, glass, and

floral drapes, they never found anything remarkable.

After the window project, they watched television for awhile, but ended up going to their room early to read before getting ready for bed.

On Tuesday, after making up the rooms and helping with the lunch rush, the girls and Brian used three of the inn's bicycles to ride into town to go to the market. Cassie had decided that she wanted to look for some new socks, and Bea had asked her to pick up some shampoo and deodorant.

After a brief discussion, they decided not to go to the library to check email because they didn't think anything was so important that it couldn't wait until they got home. Plus, they mainly just wanted to go shopping.

The Sperry Crossing Market was really the town grocery store, which, due to demand, carried a lot of items such as car parts, clothing, and books, in addition to groceries.

They parked their bikes at a bike rack in front of a small building next to the market. A sign on the sidewalk indicated that a dental office and law office were located inside.

Mr. Arthur was just leaving the building as they were parking their bikes. He remembered Cassie and Enilsa from the inn, and after his initial hello, he tipped his hat and said, “See you Friday.”

Inside the market, after picking up a tube of toothpaste for his mother, Brian looked at books and magazines while the girls shopped. As he was flipping through a car magazine, he happened to notice a man very strangely dressed for the middle of the summer. In addition to a long coat over a long-sleeved shirt with a high collar, the man was wearing heavy trousers and boots. He also sported a bushy beard, and wore sunglasses and a hat pulled low over his brow. After hurrying down the *Bread, Pickles, Jam* aisle, the bundled-up man bought a pack of gum and left the store.

Since it looked like the girls were still going to be awhile, Brian paid for the toothpaste and wandered outside to get some air and do some people watching. Enilsa’s bike had a basket on the front, so he dropped his toothpaste into it before taking a seat on the corner decking of the front porch of the office building.

Inside the market, Enilsa eventually managed to pick out a headband and a book; and Cassie finally found some socks she liked. After hurrying to get Bea's shampoo and deodorant, the girls checked out and met Brian by the bike rack.

They stowed their purchases in Enilsa's basket but decided to get shaved ice from the Sno-Cone-Shac across the street before heading back to the inn. They had a slight tussle when Brian insisted, rather forcefully, on paying for all of their treats. Finally, the girls had to let him pay because it was evidently very important to him. So Cassie and Enilsa simply thanked him, and he seemed pleased.

While they were sitting at the umbrella-covered table in front of the Sno-Cone-Shac, Brian told them about the man in the market. Cassie and Enilsa hadn't noticed him.

"Well, I wouldn't have thought about him again," said Brian, "except that he went into the office building next to the market and never came out." When the girls looked at him questioningly, Brian pointed across the street and explained, "I was sitting on the corner of the porch, but I got up to look at a flier in that left

window. After the man went inside the building, I saw Mr. Arthur's assistant locking up their office. She said hi to me as she left. And the dental office is closed on Tuesdays; there's a sign on their door. The man in the long coat never came back out of the building. I think he's still in there, but both offices are closed."

"Maybe he had a dental emergency," suggested Enilsa, "and they took him on their day off."

"The dental office looks closed," said Brian. "The lights are off."

"Maybe there's a back way out of the building," said Cassie.

After finishing their shaved-ice treats, the three walked back across the street. The front door of the building was unlocked and led to a small entry hall containing a bench, a potted plant, and two doors leading to the law and dental offices. Brian had been right; both offices were locked and dark. And there was no way, other than the front door, to exit the building from the entry hall.

"They must leave this main door open when they are planning to come back," said Enilsa.

“Either Mr. Arthur or his assistant are probably coming back today.”

Very quietly, Brian said, “The man must still be in here. I’m positive he never came out.”

“Should we call somebody to check it out?” asked Enilsa, equally quietly. “Maybe the police?”

The three thought for some time, but decided it would be very embarrassing, and probably a waste of time, for anyone official to investigate. Plus, there might have been some reason for the man to be inside the building. Or perhaps he had already left by a back or side door from one of the offices.

Going back outside, they mounted their bicycles and were on their way.

When they were about halfway back to the inn, Brian said, “Maybe he lives in the back and has a key to one of the offices to get through.”

The others agreed this was possible.

“Or maybe he’s the dentist,” Enilsa suggested.

Since, this was also possible, they suddenly felt very silly that they had actually thought about calling the police.

However, they all still felt there was something strange about an overdressed man disappearing into a building whose offices were closed and locked.

Chapter Six

Solitaire

Wednesday dawned bright and sunny at the inn. At breakfast, Cassie remarked, “Time has gone by so fast. I can’t believe we’ve been here a whole week.” Enilsa agreed. Brian was off with his parents for the day, but the three were planning to swim together in the afternoon, if he got back in time.

Mr. Vicks made his customary exit from the common room shortly after the girls arrived and were filling their plates. When Mr. Hammon made his way downstairs, he performed an “Abracadabra!” magic trick to make an egg disappear. Then he ate a big breakfast with them, instead of just having coffee as he usually did.

After making up rooms, Cassie and Enilsa wandered downstairs to the reception area where a new guest was just checking in. The girls particularly noticed the woman because she was draped in colorful scarves and wore a lot of jewelry including dangling earrings, stacks of bangle bracelets, and several necklaces strung with stone beads and crystals.

When the woman had made her way upstairs, Bea said excitedly, “She’s a psychic! You know...like a fortune teller. I think I might ask her to read my palm later.” With this, Bea winked at the girls and floated back to her office while humming.

Since they had the afternoon free, Cassie and Enilsa thought about going horseback riding; however, they discovered they couldn’t because the horses had been reserved for the day by several of the inn’s guests.

After reading for awhile, they went down to the common room to watch TV and wait for Brian to get back with his parents. The common room was deserted except for the woman who had checked in earlier. She was playing a card game and introduced herself as Ms. Parker.

“I just gave your cousin a palm reading,” said Ms. Parker. “She’s about to come into an inheritance,” the psychic added.

Cassie and Enilsa smiled. Since it was common knowledge in-and-around Sperry Crossing that Bea was about to inherit the inn from her Great-Aunt Sybil, they thought it was unlikely that the palm reader had gotten her information through psychic powers.

“Would either of you like a reading?” asked Ms. Parker.

The girls declined. However, Enilsa was very interested in the card game the psychic was playing, which was a circular version of solitaire. Since she liked to play solitaire, but had never seen anyone play this way, Enilsa asked, “Would you mind telling me how you play this?”

“Of course not,” said Ms. Parker. “Have a seat.”

Cassie had never seen this particular game played either, so she sat with Enilsa across from the fortune teller who gathered, shuffled, and dealt the cards to begin demonstrating the rules.

As they were getting settled, Mr. Hammon entered the common room. He winked at them

as he took up a magazine and plopped down on the couch to read.

The rules of circular solitaire were nearly the same as regular solitaire, so it was an easy game to learn. And Ms. Parker was a very good teacher. The girls almost forgot she was a psychic. However, a short while later, when Cassie was shuffling the cards, Ms. Parker suddenly sat bolt upright in her chair, to a point that she looked, literally, stiff as a board. Her eyes wide as moons, the psychic said in a breathy voice, "I have a message for you."

After a moment's surprise, Enilsa nearly laughed, but managed to catch herself. Cassie sat perfectly still as Ms. Parker added, almost in a whisper, "What you are looking for is nearly in your possession. It is very close by, but you need something to help you find it."

Next, almost as though in a trance, the psychic leaned forward and took the deck of cards from Cassie's hands. While looking straight ahead, Ms. Parker dealt out five cards face up. Then she closed her eyes as her left hand hovered over the dealt cards. After hovering for several seconds, the tips of her

fingers bent down to lightly touch one of the cards, which was the seven of spades.

Suddenly coming out of her trance, Ms. Parker expelled a long breath and smiled. “There!” she said with satisfaction. “That is the last part of the message—the seven of spades. You will need that information to find what you are looking for.”

Evidently, very keenly aware that Enilsa was a doubter, Ms. Parker addressed her. “I know that you are skeptical, my dear, but I really do have the gift. The seven of spades is very important.”

Across the room, Mr. Hammon coughed, and the cough sounded as though he was trying to cover a laugh. Ms. Parker shot him a glare, but only briefly. A moment later, smiling again, the psychic excused herself and went up to her room.

Enilsa and Cassie didn’t have time to discuss what had just happened because Brian and his parents entered the common room exactly as Ms. Parker was leaving. Brian had brought each of the girls a small box of homemade fudge from a gift shop he had visited in his travels.

Since it was getting somewhat late in the afternoon, the three quickly ran to change so they would have time for a swim before dinner. While they were swimming, the girls told Brian about the message from the psychic. He was just as skeptical as Enilsa and cautioned them against believing that the message was a clue to finding the treasure. “If you focus on that, you might miss a real clue,” he said.

“He’s right,” said Enilsa, splashing Cassie. “We could very easily get sidetracked.”

However, despite her friends’ caution, Cassie couldn’t stop thinking about the seven of spades and about the part of the message indicating that what they were seeking was very close at hand.

She continued to think about the message and the other clues throughout dinner, and afterwards in the common room. And these things still plagued her even after she went to bed. In fact, she couldn’t sleep for puzzling over sailing ships, drapes, playing cards, and ceiling tiles. *What did it all mean?*

Enilsa was evidently sleeping just fine. Since Cassie didn’t want to disturb her friend with her tossing and turning, she got up and quietly left their room.

Since it was after midnight, the inn was very quiet and a little spooky. Shell nightlights in the halls, and a lamp at reception, lit the inn well enough to see to walk around. As she strolled about, Cassie tried to recall if she had seen anything relating to spades or playing cards since arriving at the inn; but nothing came to mind.

After wandering around the common room, Cassie headed to the kitchen to get an apple. While she was sitting at the kitchen table, munching her snack, she suddenly thought, *We looked in the basement, but we haven't yet searched the attic!*

Finishing the last two bites of her apple, Cassie deposited the core in the waste bin that held things like egg shells and coffee grinds because Mr. Millar liked to compost those items. Then she fished a flashlight out of one of the kitchen drawers and made her way to the small staircase behind the reception area.

Taking a deep breath, she switched on the flashlight and headed up the winding, creaking stairs. When she reached the top landing, the door of the attic also creaked, and Cassie hoped she wouldn't wake anyone with her exploring.

The attic, like the basement, was used for storage, but was even more cluttered.

In order not to get distracted by Ms. Parker's message, in case it wasn't related to the treasure at the inn, Cassie kept the other clues in mind as she searched.

First, she looked inside a few stacked boxes, but found nothing more interesting than old dishes and a pair of roller skates.

Next, she moved on to search an old roll-top desk. The drawers were empty, and the top could only be raised halfway before it stuck. However, bending down, Cassie could see that the compartments under the roll-top were also empty.

Moving to another corner of the attic, Cassie was elated to find a sea chest hidden behind a tall floor mirror. Kneeling down, she was just about to open the chest when she heard footsteps on the creaking stairs outside the attic door.

Thinking quickly, she switched off the flashlight and dashed across the room to hide behind an old dresser. She was barely settled, and catching her breath, when the door of the attic opened.

Peeking around the corner of the dresser, Cassie was shocked to see Mr. Hammon in his pajamas and robe. He had a flashlight, which he swung back and forth over the contents of the attic. Cassie ducked completely behind the dresser, so he wouldn't see her. *Maybe he heard me*, she thought. However, although Mr. Hammon seemed to be searching for something, since he was sliding boxes around and opening various cabinets to rifle through their contents, Cassie doubted he was looking for a person.

Keeping out of sight of the beam of the flashlight, Cassie snuck peeks at Mr. Hammon. It didn't take him long to find what he was looking for, which turned out to be the sea chest behind the floor mirror.

“Yes!” he exclaimed as he flung the lid open.

He then proceeded to root through the contents, depositing about half of the items on the floor. Evidently, he didn't find what he was looking for because he soon began muttering angrily as he threw the contents back into the chest. Cassie cringed as Mr. Hammon added a few cuss words to his mutterings and slammed the lid of the chest shut.

Since he was so angry, and seemed nothing like the jovial magic-performing Mr. Hammon that she and Enilsa had been breakfasting and visiting with, Cassie was starting to feel frightened. Trembling, she thought, *What if he finds me?*

Fortunately, relief from worry came only a few seconds later when Mr. Hammon headed for the stairs. Evidently, he only intended to search the sea chest. However, Cassie was very surprised when she heard him lock the attic door.

After listening to his fading footsteps descending the creaking stairs, Cassie switched on her flashlight and made her way to the door. Unfortunately, the lock was an old-fashioned one, which would require a key to unlock. *I wonder how Mr. Hammon got a key to the attic,* thought Cassie.

Taking a deep breath, Cassie tried to calm her nerves and think. She was afraid to call out for help. For one thing, Mr. Hammon might end up being the one to hear her calls. And even if someone other than Mr. Hammon came to help her, she would then have to explain why she was snooping around the attic in the middle of the

night. Cassie really didn't want to wake anyone, and she was now very much wishing she had waited until morning to explore, so Enilsa could have come with her. They could have searched the attic, probably with Bea's blessing, right after they made up the rooms.

While she was thinking of this, the answer finally dawned on her. *The laundry chute!*

She and Enilsa had been using the chute to send sheets and towels down to the laundry room on the first floor.

The far corner of the attic contained a door to the chute, which was basically a steep slide with curved sides. Opening the door, Cassie shone the beam of her flashlight down into the chute. Though the metal slide was fairly old, Cassie felt it was probably strong enough to support her weight. There was only one drawback to her plan. Since no one ever sent laundry down from the attic, the first section of the chute was incredibly dusty and filled with cobwebs. However, since she couldn't think of any other way to get downstairs without waking someone, she decided she would have to brave the dust and dirt.

She also decided that going down feet first would be safest. And as narrow as the slide was, she would need to lie very flat for the trip down. Cassie took a deep breath as she swung her legs over the ledge of the door. Firmly grasping the frame of the door, as her feet met the chute and began to slip, Cassie said a little prayer for her safety. When she was in position, she held her breath and quickly let go, gripping the flashlight tightly and crossing her arms over her chest so they wouldn't get caught on anything.

Cassie very quickly passed through the dusty, webby part of the chute and was soon sliding on smooth, polished, and clean metal.

Oh, I hope I don't get stuck!, she desperately thought as she picked up speed. But she really had no time to worry because she landed in the bottom of the sheet bin less than a second later with a loud *thud*. Though currently empty, the rolling sheet cart was soft enough to break her fall, so she was, thankfully, only jarred and not seriously bruised.

Picking herself up, Cassie quickly made her way to the kitchen to return the flashlight before heading to her bedroom, where she quietly

brushed the dust and cobwebs from her pajamas,
washed her face, and tumbled wearily into bed.

Chapter Seven

Splintered Wood and Broken Glass

Thursday morning began with a flurry of activity that included a visit from the police. Mr. Millar, very upset by an early morning discovery, was outside with the police discussing the situation. The beautiful wooden sign of the inn had been vandalized during the night. Ripped from the porch rails, the sign had been cracked down the middle. The two halves were then beaten up and chiseled, with a few other pieces broken from them. Many of the stones, sea glass, and shells set into the wood had been dug out and were scattered over the ground. One corner of the sign, smashed and splintered to bits, lay about twenty feet from the front porch, under a tree.

Enilsa was nearly as upset as Mr. Millar. She hadn't yet taken a picture of the sign, and now it was too late.

As the police left, Mr. Millar shook his head and told the girls, "It's too far gone to be restored."

Feeling very downcast, Cassie and Enilsa went inside to breakfast. The common room was completely empty. Cassie had hoped to visit with the psychic again this morning; however, when Bea came in to get a cinnamon roll, she told them, "Ms. Parker is already gone. She checked herself out early, before dawn, using the key dropbox."

Bea didn't seem to want to talk about what had happened to the inn sign, but she was obviously very troubled by it. She was very pale, and her hands shook as she poured a cup of coffee and left to attend to the reception area.

Brian joined the girls for breakfast a few minutes after Bea departed. He had already heard about the vandalism. None of them could imagine why anyone would want to do something like that. However, they didn't talk about it for long because Cassie wanted to tell her friends about her late-night exploring, and

this was a perfect time to do it because Mr. Hammon had not yet arrived for breakfast.

“Oh my gosh!” said Enilsa. “And I slept right through all of that?”

“I wonder what Mr. Hammon was looking for,” said Brian.

Shaking her head, Cassie replied, “I didn’t bother looking in the trunk myself. I wasn’t really thinking about that because I was so worried about how to get out of the attic.”

“Well, you definitely found a way,” said Enilsa. Shaking her head, she added, “Even if I had thought about using the laundry chute, I’m not sure I would have been brave enough to do it.”

“It was pretty scary,” admitted Cassie.

They stopped talking about the attic excursion when Mr. Vicks entered the common room. However, they wouldn’t have been able to continue their discussion anyway because Enilsa and Cassie needed to get started on making up the rooms.

They were also scheduled to help with lunch preparation. While they were working in the kitchen, Cassie thought to ask Mrs. Halston about a key to the attic. However, she didn’t

want to let the cook know that she had been exploring late at night, so instead, she explained, “We thought we might search the attic like we did the basement, but it’s locked,” she added.

“That’s odd,” responded Mrs. Halston. “The keys to the attic and basement are kept in a drawer in the reception area. But those doors aren’t usually locked. I remember we locked them once last year when we had a troop of mischievous boys staying here. Their parents were attending a convention of some sort in town, and they left the boys unsupervised during the day.” Still wearing a puzzled expression, Mrs. Halston shook her head as she added, “Anyway, as far as I know, those doors haven’t been locked since. But I’ll show you which drawer has the keys after lunch.

“Speaking of mischief,” Mrs. Halston continued. “There was plenty of mischief both inside and out last night.”

Cassie froze in her task of washing lettuce because she thought Mrs. Halston might be referring to her late-night roaming and unusual use of the laundry chute. Perhaps someone had heard or seen her. However, the cook was referring to something else. “There was a mess

of broken glass in the hall outside Sybil's room," she said. "Someone broke the glass of a picture and didn't bother to tell anyone."

"Which picture?" asked Enilsa.

"It's the photo of Mr. Mayweather," Mrs. Halston replied.

"The sailor who made the ship models?" said Cassie.

"Yes," said Mrs. Halston. "There's no reason I know of why anyone should be messing around with that photo," she added. "I guess someone knocked it off the wall, but was afraid to tell anyone. Bea's planning to replace the glass next week."

After lunch, Cassie and Enilsa made their way to the hall outside of Great-Aunt Sybil's room. The picture of Mr. Mayweather was easy to spot amongst the other photos because it was the only one without glass.

Turning on the hall light to get a better look, the girls noticed something important about the photo right away.

Cassie gasped as she pointed, and Enilsa nodded as she said, "His tattoo!" Mr. Mayweather had a spade tattoo on one forearm.

“So this is probably related to the message and the playing card,” Cassie said excitedly.

Enilsa agreed and was now less skeptical of Ms. Parker’s abilities.

Cassie carefully took down the picture. Turning it over, she removed the back, which allowed her to slip the photo from its frame. However, upon examining every inch of both the frame and the photograph, they found nothing connected to any of their other clues, or anything they felt was related to a hidden treasure.

Next, the girls hurried to the stables to meet Brian to go riding. As they toured the countryside, they talked about all of their clues and the events that had happened so far. However, the more they puzzled over everything, the more frustrated they became.

“It’s like we’re playing detective,” said Cassie, “but we’re not really getting anywhere.” Her friends had to agree. However, no one had any good ideas as to what to do next.

Back at the inn, as they were passing through the reception area, they discovered Bea in a fretful state. She was shaking her head as she told them, “There must be something in the air

right now that is making people do stupid things.”

“What’s happened now?” asked Brian.

“Mr. Arthur’s office was broken into yesterday afternoon,” said Bea. “Fortunately, nothing seems to have been taken. Someone just rooted through a lot of their files and made a big mess.”

After a moment’s pause, with the events of the previous day coming back to them, Cassie exclaimed, “You were right to be suspicious of that man!”

“What man?” asked Bea.

With occasional input from Enilsa and Cassie, Brian hurriedly explained about the man at the market and about how they had puzzled over his disappearance into the building.

“Well, he’s probably the one who broke in,” said Bea. “But like I said, he didn’t take anything. So who knows what he might have been looking for?”

After leaving the reception area, Brian went to find his parents while Enilsa and Cassie called home to check in before dinner.

Bea had decided to have a movie night at the inn, to try to take everyone’s mind off of the odd

and malicious events that had happened. Brian and Cassie picked two movies, a comedy and an action flick, from the inn's small video library. They also made popcorn and had ginger beer. And Mrs. Halston made a double batch of brownies. The fun seemed to lighten everyone's spirits, and they temporarily forgot about the mischievous goings on.

Chapter Eight

Great-Aunt Sybil's Will

The atmosphere at the inn on Friday morning was somewhat subdued. With everything that had happened the day before, Cassie and Enilsa had completely forgotten that the will was scheduled to be read that morning.

Mr. Millar picked up Cousin Helen from the train station just after breakfast.

Cassie and Enilsa rushed to make up several of the rooms from which guests had already risen and departed. When they finished, they sped downstairs.

Helen was thin and quiet, and she looked slightly older than Bea.

As everyone got settled in the common room, Mrs. Halston brought in trays of tea, coffee, and

cookies. Brian helped her. He was hoping to listen to the reading of the will, and he had asked Bea if this was okay. She didn't mind at all and told him, "Sure, you can stay. As far as I know, there's nothing to hide." Smiling broadly, she added, "Great-Aunt Sybil would have loved the idea of a large audience at the reading of her will."

Mr. Arthur arrived a few minutes later. After pouring himself a cup of tea, he got straight down to business.

"It's pretty simple," he said. "However, it might be surprising to many of the interested parties. I was certainly shocked when I reviewed the contents yesterday afternoon." Clearing his throat, Mr. Arthur went on. "The entire estate, including the inn and all of Sybil's financial holdings, are left to Charles Hammon."

If a pin had been dropped in the room, they certainly would have been able to hear it. Not only that, but a person about a mile away might have been able to hear it too.

However, the occupants of the common room were barely going to have time to stay in shock because Mr. Vicks suddenly arrived on the scene with a police officer and two other men. Mr.

Vicks sat down with one of the men on a bench in the back of the room as Officer Webster stepped forward, roughly pulling the second man along with him by the arm.

Both Bea and Mr. Millar quickly stood up, but sat back down again as the officer addressed them. “This man is a forger, and he has been working with Mr. Hammon. The will in Mr. Arthur’s possession is a fake.”

Mr. Hammon also stood up, very flustered, and began edging toward the door leading to the patio and pool. “There’s no point to that,” stated Officer Webster. “My partner is stationed by the pool, and I have another officer waiting in reception. So sit back down!”

Mr. Hammon complied immediately.

Officer Webster continued a moment later. “Now Mr. Morrow here,” he said, indicating the forger, “is being very cooperative at present, because he realizes it is in his best interest—”

“Why on earth would you want the inn?” Bea suddenly interrupted, addressing Mr. Hammon. “It’s only profitable because we work so hard,” she added, gesturing to Mrs. Halston and Mr. Millar. “It’s not like it’s a gold mine.”

After a short pause, since he had nowhere to go, and since everyone was glaring at him expectantly, Mr. Hammon decided to answer. “I had heard the rumor about the treasure hidden at the inn,” he said. “Sybil was always such a secretive person, so I thought the rumor was probably true.” After a short pause, as he shifted uncomfortably in his seat, he went on. “But I had no idea how long it might take me to find it, and I certainly didn’t want to share it with anyone; so, naturally, I needed to own the inn. I was planning to shut it down so I could tear the place apart.”

“Did you tear the sign apart looking for the treasure?” Mr. Millar asked angrily.

Mr. Hammon didn’t get a chance to answer because Brian suddenly said loudly, “You were the man at the market! You’re just the right height and build!” Nodding rapidly, he added, “So you were the one who broke into Mr. Arthur’s office. If the police search your room, will they find the fake beard, sunglasses, and coat you were wearing? Or did you get rid of them?”

Mr. Hammon turned bright red at this, but didn’t say anything. However, Mr. Morrow,

who was hoping for leniency in cooperating as much as possible with the police, told them, “It was him. He was there to replace the real will that he took last week with the fake one that I made. I needed the real one to duplicate the signatures.”

“He’s telling the truth,” said Officer Webster. “Mr. Morrow still had the real will. We found it in his apartment. He was supposed to leave town but hadn’t yet because he hadn’t got all of his money from Mr. Hammon, and he didn’t trust him for the balance.”

Officer Webster then fished in his pocket and handed Mr. Arthur the real will. After summoning the additional policemen, Officer Webster then bid them farewell as he carted off both Mr. Hammon and Mr. Morrow.

Clearing his throat, Mr. Arthur next took the opportunity to read the real will, which left the inn, along with all of its contents, to Bea. Sybil had also left Bea a nice sum of money.

Additionally, two substantial money-market certificates and some stocks were left to Mrs. Halston, who was actually speechless for some time after that part of the will was read. When she was finally able to speak, a good while later,

she said, "I didn't even know Sybil had that much in investments."

Mr. Millar and several other inn staff were also left legacies. The gardener was especially thrilled because he had been left two acres of land on a nearby lake. "I always loved fishing on that lake," he said. "Sybil let me off every year during trout season. Now, I can set up a dock. And I might even get my own boat so I don't have to rent one."

Helen was left a small cottage in a resort town near her home, and she was very happy. "I took a trip there with Great-Aunt Sybil when I was a little girl," she said, "and I always loved that town. Maybe I'll retire there."

Mr. Arthur, thankful that the forgery had been exposed and the real will recovered, was happy that everyone was so pleased. As he was preparing to leave, he told them, "Even if Mr. Hammon decides to contest this will, I doubt you will have anything to worry about. Since he has proven himself so deceitful, and will probably be going to jail, I don't think he stands much of a chance of getting in on any part of the inheritance."

Chapter Nine

The Real Detective and Sybil's Big Secret

After Mr. Arthur left, and while everyone was still reeling somewhat about the incredible events of the morning, Mr. Vicks rose to address the group. They had almost forgotten that he was sitting in the back of the room.

Addressing Cassie, Enilsa, and Brian, Mr. Vicks smiled and said, "I know you three have been playing detective, but that is actually my job. I work for a large agency, and I was hired by this gentleman to look after the interests of this inn and its true owner."

The man who had entered with Mr. Vicks, but who had been sitting quietly on the bench until now, stood up and pulled a chair up to

table. “Hello,” he said. “I’m Robert Mayweather. My father used to live here at the inn.”

“We knew your father well,” Bea told him. Mr. Millar and Mrs. Halston were nodding.

“Quite a few years back,” Mr. Mayweather continued, “after he retired and after my mother died, my father traveled a good deal. He met Sybil on one of his trips. Then he decided to come live at her inn. When my father passed away, I found a copy of a marriage certificate in his things. He and Sybil were married for three years before he died.

“They kept it secret from everyone,” Mr. Mayweather added, smiling at the surprised looks of the others at the table. “My father probably thought that my sister and I wouldn’t approve since we took the loss of our mother so hard. But since Sybil was also a widow, maybe she thought her family wouldn’t approve. Or maybe they just enjoyed keeping the secret,” Mr. Mayweather speculated. “I guess we’ll never really know.”

So that the startling information would have a chance to sink in, and because he had something else important to tell them, Mr. Mayweather

paused briefly before going on. When he continued, everyone in the room leaned forward, hanging on his every word. “Shortly before he died, my father told me and my sister that he owned something very valuable. I believed him because he traveled widely all of his life and collected many valuable things. He also told us that he was planning to give the item to a special person and that he didn’t want either of his kids interfering with this.

“After Trisha and I promised him we wouldn’t interfere, he showed it to us.” Mr. Mayweather paused again, but only very slightly, before adding, “It’s a jewel, a beautiful sapphire, incredibly blue and nearly as large as a quarter, but it’s teardrop in shape. I have a copy of the insurance papers on it; the stone is very valuable. Of course, since we found the marriage certificate, there can be no doubt as to whom the ‘special person’ was and where the sapphire ended up.

“Trisha and I have no interest in the jewel,” Mr. Mayweather added. “It belonged entirely to Sybil since that was what our father wanted. But when we heard Sybil passed away, we didn’t want anyone else trying to steal it from her

rightful heirs. I initially hired Mr. Vicks just to see what the situation was. I wanted to know if you knew that my father and Sybil were married. If you didn't, I was planning to pay you a visit to tell you. I also wanted to tell you about the sapphire, in case you didn't know about that either. But when Mr. Vicks reported Mr. Hammon's arrival, I asked him to stay on to keep an eye on things."

Having been in a slight state of shock for the last few minutes, Bea was finally able to say something. "So the story about the treasure is real...but no one's ever been able to find it."

Chapter Ten

In Plain Sight

“Great-Aunt Sybil did leave some clues,” said Cassie. She then proceeded to explain to everyone about the stationery, ceiling tile, and drapes. And Enilsa added a few details about Ms. Parker’s message and the photograph, since she now thought they were definitely related to the hidden treasure.

Cassie also finally had to tell everyone about her attic adventure and Mr. Hammon’s odd behavior regarding the sea chest. No one scolded her for the late-night prowling; in fact, Bea said, “That’s just the sort of thing I liked to do when I was your age.”

With everyone slightly more relaxed now, the group enjoyed coffee, tea, and cookies while

mulling everything over and trying to piece together the mystery.

However, even with discussing everything thoroughly, several times, and with the extra brains now involved, they still couldn't figure out where the jewel might be hidden.

"If Mr. Hammon didn't find anything in the sea chest," pondered Mrs. Halston, "there's probably not much point in searching it again."

"I doubt Great-Aunt Sybil would have hidden a jewel in a trunk," said Bea. After a few moments of silence, she added, thoughtfully, "So we now know what her 'loss' was."

As she was trying to put everything together, Cassie's brain kept getting stuck on the psychic's message. Without realizing it, she repeated Ms. Parker's words aloud. "What you are looking for is nearly in your possession. It is very close by, but you need something to help you find it."

Enilsa looked keenly at Cassie, trying to figure out what her friend was thinking. When Cassie didn't say anything, Enilsa said, "The spade playing card was supposed to help us find it, but all we found was the photograph with the broken glass."

“Mr. Hammon likely broke that too,” said Brian. “He was probably looking for clues like we were.”

However, very suddenly, a magnificent thought came to Cassie, and she said, “What if the spade isn’t the important part of the clue?” As everyone looked at her, she added, “What if the really important part is the number seven?”

Enilsa was the only one in the room who vaguely had an idea as to what Cassie was referring to, but she couldn’t quite put her finger on why the number seven sounded important.

Staring at the fireplace mantle, Cassie exclaimed, “Seven ship models! He made one every year that he lived at the inn.”

Rising quickly from her seat, Cassie approached the fireplace, adding, “But there are only six here!”

“Oh,” said Bea, “I didn’t realize you were interested in the models. There’s another one in Great-Aunt Sybil’s room.”

“That’s right,” said Mrs. Halston. “But no one’s been in there much since she died. I think it’s only been dusted and swept twice.”

Since there wouldn’t have been room for everyone in the tiny bedroom, Bea motioned

Cassie to accompany her, telling the others, “We’ll be right back.”

The ship in a bottle sat on the nightstand beside Great-Aunt Sybil’s bed, next to her lamp and clock.

Bending down, Cassie and Bea could immediately tell that they had found exactly what they were looking for. Smiling at Cassie, Bea carefully picked up the model, and the two headed swiftly back to the common room.

With shaking hands, Bea placed the bottle on the table, and everyone crowded around.

If they hadn’t known what they were looking for, they probably wouldn’t have spotted it. Though in plain sight, the teardrop-shaped sapphire was cleverly placed amongst the dark blue resin waves surrounding the ship in the bottle. Both the color and shape blended in perfectly with the simulated water.

“Bluer than blue,” breathed Enilsa. Cassie nodded but was currently speechless, as it had just dawned on her that they really had found a treasure.

As they all strained to glimpse the jewel, Bea said, “I wouldn’t want to damage the model trying to get it out.”

“There are some long tweezers in the first-aid kit,” Mr. Millar offered.

“Good idea!” exclaimed Mrs. Halston, as she spun around to head to the kitchen to retrieve them.

While she was gone, the group had a brief discussion, during which, it was decided that Brian would be the best person to try to fish the stone from the bottle, since he built models and was good at detailed work with his hands.

Feeling slightly nervous, he sat down at the table and gingerly pulled the model towards him. When Mrs. Halston handed him the tweezers, he briefly set them aside to carefully remove the cork from the bottle. Then, taking the tweezers in hand, he repositioned the bottle and bent his nose down very close to the glass. Next, very slowly, he began working his way toward the sapphire tucked into the waves, being extremely careful not to catch the tweezers on the ship’s anchor, rigging, or anything else.

He was about an inch from the stone when he very suddenly withdrew the tweezers and sat back with a jerk. “You’re not going to believe this,” he said. “There are two more of them.”

“No way!” said Bea, bending down and squinting as she looked through the glass.

“They’re smaller,” Brian said, “but there’re definitely two more stones.”

“Oh my gosh!” exclaimed Enilsa, peering into the bottle. “I see them too!”

Helen was leaning in close from the other side of the table. “I see three more,” she said quietly. However, her observation was not completely correct because, as the group discovered a short while later, upon obtaining a magnifying glass from the desk in the reception area, there were actually four jewels on that side of the ship model. And there were three extras on Brian’s side. So, all in all, there were eight sapphires inside the bottle, each of a different shape. None of the extra ones was as large as the teardrop-shaped stone, but they were all very brilliant and beautiful.

“My father must have collected them in his travels,” said Mr. Mayweather.

Since it was a large task, Mr. Mayweather and Brian took turns fishing the jewels from the bottle. The project took them nearly two hours, but they managed to do it without damaging the ship model.

Bea wanted Mr. Mayweather to have one of the stones. “And take one for Trisha too,” she added.

But Mr. Mayweather shook his head. “No, we don’t want the treasure,” he said. “We just wanted you to know about it. And I would suggest keeping the collection together.”

Bea agreed that that would be a good idea.

“However...” added Mr. Mayweather, “if you don’t mind...I would love to have one of the models my father made.”

“Of course,” said Bea, “and, please, pick one out for your sister too.”

Mr. Mayweather agreed and was very pleased with the gifts.

After everyone had had a chance to admire the sapphires, Bea gathered them up and placed them into the inn safe. “That should keep them *safe*,” Bea joked.

Mrs. Halston, having about her fifth cup of tea, was nearly giddy over the events of the morning. “I think I’ll plan a fall vacation,” she told everyone. “And I might even make it a sea adventure and go on a cruise, as a tribute to Sybil and her husband.”

Everyone thought this was a splendid idea.

Later, after their work was caught up, and after they had phoned home to share the exciting news, Cassie and Enilsa stopped to visit with Bea and Mr. Millar in the reception area. Mr. Millar had gathered up all of the pieces of the inn sign. He had an old photograph of it and was planning to send it off with the broken pieces to a woodworking shop to have another one made. “They should be able to make one very similar to the original,” he said. “And I am requesting that they recycle some of the shells, sea glass, and stones to be part of the new sign.”

After dinner, the group gathered to visit some more. Mr. Mayweather was staying at the inn for a few days, but Mr. Vicks needed to be getting on to another job. Since Helen was set to catch a train very early in the morning, Mr. Vicks offered to drive her to the station.

Bea was still reeling from the events of the day. “I should have known the treasure was real because Great-Aunt Sybil was such a character. She put those clues in the bedpost and under the ceiling tile, but she probably felt the sapphires should only be found by just the right person and under just the right circumstances, like fate.”

“Sybil always loved a good mystery,” said Mrs. Halston. “And she was a big believer in destiny.”

“You’re right,” agreed Bea. “She would have been first in line for a palm reading. I guess I am a little bit like her in that way. But I’m feeling a little guilty about not being a true believer. I was just so embarrassed by that thing with the painting. Great-Aunt Sybil got such a kick out of that; she practically laughed her head off.”

“But that means that you *are* a true believer,” said Brian.

Enilsa was nodding. “If you went to the trouble of having someone value a painting,” she said, “you are definitely a believer. Great-Aunt Sybil wasn’t laughing at you; I think she was cheering you on.”

“But she didn’t want to just hand the treasure over to you,” said Cassie. “She evidently wanted you to work for it.”

“Since I was never smart enough to figure it out,” Bea said, “it’s a good thing you three were here to do it for me.”

“And that was fate,” said Enilsa.

Cassie looked sharply at her friend. Enilsa was such a concrete person; it was hard to believe that she was the one chalking this series of events up to fate.

Early the next morning, Cassie and Enilsa got a very big surprise. At breakfast, Bea presented each of them with an envelope containing a check. “This is for all of your hard work during your stay,” she told them.

The girls tried to protest, but Bea was firm. “No. I insist,” she said. “You helped me out of a jam. And since the inn is in better shape than I thought, financially, I want to pay for the help. Plus, I really do feel I owe you both for finding the treasure.”

“You would have eventually found it,” insisted Enilsa.

“I’m not sure about that,” said Bea, shaking her head.

Cassie agreed with Enilsa. “After Mr. Mayweather told you what to look for, you would have looked more closely at anything blue.”

“And if you had ever decided to sell or give away any of the ship models,” Enilsa added,

“you probably would have looked at them very carefully before parting with them.”

“I’m definitely keeping the rest of the models,” said Bea.

“I’m really glad we were here to be a part of this,” said Cassie.

Enilsa was nodding. “Lately, it seems like we have been in just the right places at just the right times.”

Cassie was again amazed by her friend’s words.

“Well,” said Bea, getting up from the table, “I’m off to place an ad in the paper for help. I want to start interviewing as soon as possible. I’m also going to buy a computer. Great-Aunt Sybil never saw the point of computers, but I’m all for the extra help it will provide for my business.”

Brian was set to leave very early the next morning. After a swim together in the afternoon, the girls exchanged both regular and email addresses with him so they could all keep in touch.

“But we won’t be home until late in the week,” Cassie told him.

“I’ll probably be busy with chores for at least a week after we get home,” Brian said, “so I won’t be able to get on my computer right away anyway.” Then he gave each of his new friends a hug and went upstairs to pack.

While they were making up beds the next morning, Cassie chatted happily, bubbling with excitement. She was still so keyed up over solving a mystery and finding a treasure that it took her a long time to notice how quiet Enilsa was.

But, eventually, it became obvious that something was on Enilsa’s mind. “What’s wrong?” asked Cassie.

Enilsa shook her head. “Nothing’s wrong. I was just thinking.” After a pause and a sigh, she added, “I was so skeptical about Ms. Parker. But she evidently really does have a gift. I have to admit it. It’s just so surprising.”

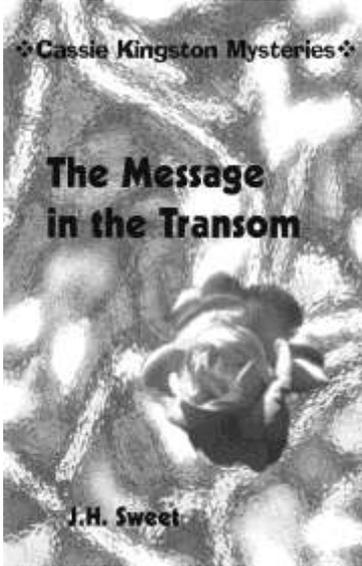
Cassie smiled. She was surprised too, but not about Ms. Parker and her gift. After all of their years of friendship, it was harder to believe that Enilsa could still surprise her.

About the Author

J.H. Sweet is the author of *The Fairy Chronicles*, *Foo and Friends*, *The Time Entity Trilogy*, *Juan Noel's Crystal Airship*, *Cassie Kingston Mysteries*, and *The Heaviest Things*. She lives in South Texas and has a degree in English from Texas State University.

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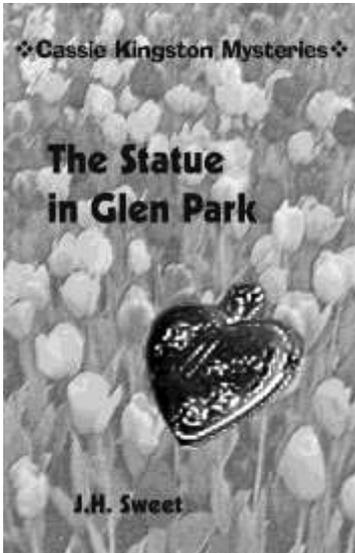
The Message in the Transom



While helping to transplant rosebushes, Cassie and Enilsa, along with two of their friends, begin to uncover secrets involving an old house. Following a series of clues that begins with a strange message in a stained-glass transom, the

friends work to save the house from demolition. With both diligence and ingenuity, the new sleuths end up finding something so valuable, it can only be described as *A Treasure Beyond Measure*.

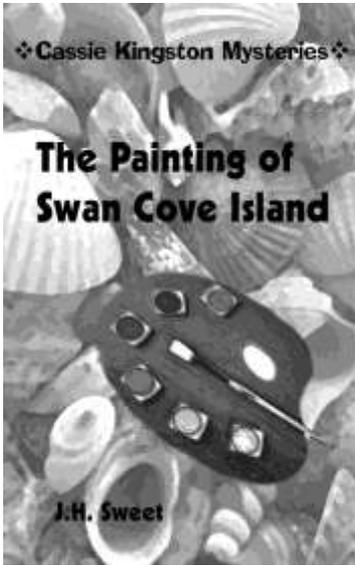
The Statue in Glen Park



Upon returning from Glen Park, and looking at photographs from the outing, Cassie and Enilsa are shocked to discover that a serious crime was apparently committed right under their unsuspecting noses. But could this possibly be a classic case where the camera

lens sees something very different than the human eye? However, as their investigation unfolds, an unexpected turn of events leads the girls to believe that a fanciful bronze statue may hold the real answer to the mystery.

The Painting of Swan Cove Island



During a three-week vacation to visit Enilsa's grandmother on Swan Cove Island, Cassie and Enilsa discover an unusual painting that leads them on a pirate treasure hunt. However, they soon discover that appearances can be very deceiving and that real treasure is often found in the most unlikely places.

Also by J.H. Sweet

Juan Noel's Crystal Airship
The Story of a
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On a magical six-hour Christmas Eve journey aboard the Crystal Airship, managed by Juan Noel, four children and various other passengers hopscotch the countries and continents of the world, making important deliveries to help keep hopes and dreams alive. *For all ages.*



The Heaviest Things

How can we lift something extremely heavy when we can't see or touch the thing? In an effort to help an elderly neighbor, ten-year-old Henry Goodwin sets out to discover how some of the heaviest and most mysterious things on earth have been moved. His research yields surprising results when he meets a real-life Paul Bunyan, has a conversation with the god Atlas, and takes a trip to the North Pole. However, even after traveling far and wide, Henry discovers that the answer to his own problem lies much closer to home. *Ages 8+*



Foo and Friends

What are your lawn and garden ornaments up to when no one is looking? If they hold magical spirits like most gnomes, angels, gargoyles, and foo dogs, you can bet it's something pretty important. Join Foo and his Friends on some of their important adventures as they help keep our neighborhoods safe and in tip-top shape. *For read aloud and early chapter readers ages 6+*



The Wishing Well
The Garage Sale
The Fake Foo
The Porch Swing Ghost



