

The Three Investigators

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The Curse of the Mysterious Traveler



Mark Zahn

*The Three Investigators in
The Curse of the
Mysterious
Traveler*

by Mark Zahn

Based on characters created by Robert Arthur

Illustrations by Martha Schwartz

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Dedicated to Mary Virginia Carey (1925-1994)

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Introduction by John Crowe

Greetings, lovers of mystery and the macabre!

Once again I invite you to join me on another journey into the realm of the strange and the terrifying. I hope you will enjoy the trip – that it will thrill you a little and chill you a little!

If you are not the nervous type, then you will find great satisfaction as The Three Investigators tangle with a mysterious stranger with a sinister secret, and a curse that just may spell... but I am getting ahead of myself! If this is your first encounter with my three young friends, then I truly envy you – for what can be more pleasurable than one's first meeting with this cunning trio?

The Three Investigators are led by an astounding young lad named Jupiter Jones. Somewhat plump in appearance, Jupe has never let his weight interfere with matters of the mind. He seldom forgets what he sees, reads, or hears, and he has an uncanny ability to take a seemingly random set of clues and forge them into a perfectly reasonable solution. Pete Crenshaw is the outfit's Second Investigator. Lanky and muscular, Pete is a stellar athlete who is often asked to put his dexterity to use. While he usually deplores Jupe's knack for finding trouble, he has yet to back down in the face of danger or turn his back on his friends. Bob Andrews is a quiet, studious youth who is in charge of the firm's records and research – and believe me, it's a big job! When Bob's not filing paperwork or taking meticulous notes in his own shorthand he invented, he often finds time to provide a case-breaking clue, or help Jupiter make a deduction or two.

The boys make their home in the coastal town of Rocky Beach, located in Southern California. It's on the outskirts of Los Angeles and only a stone's throw from Hollywood. Needless to say, there are plenty of strange characters populating the area. They make their headquarters in a battered trailer home which is hidden from view by carefully placed bric-a-brac inside the Jones Salvage Yard – the super junkyard owned by Jupiter's aunt and uncle: Titus and Mathilda Jones.

So much for the formalities. Now that you have been properly introduced, I can quit typing and you can proceed immediately to much more interesting fare. So settle back, get a good grip on your nerves, and get comfortable – if you can...

On to Chapter One - the mysterious traveler is about to arrive!

John Crowe

Chapter One

The Mysterious Traveler

THE MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER walked through the gates of the Jones Salvage Yard and immediately commanded attention. Dressed head to toe in white silk, his exotic garb was enough to make the usually unflappable Jupiter Jones stare in wonder.

The man's suit was custom fitted and exquisitely tailored. His shoes were white leather that gleamed as if they had just come out of a box. A maroon fez sat carefully on top of his head. His white suit and fashionable scarf were in sharp contrast to the deeply tanned skin that showed on his face and hands. Piercing, steel-blue eyes gazed at Jupiter from beneath bushy black eyebrows. His narrow, goateed face did not smile, but seemed to beckon to Jupiter without saying a word.

Bob Andrews and Pete Crenshaw had been in the back of the yard scrubbing a large crate full of bowling pins that Jupe's Uncle Titus had recently purchased. They were just coming up to the front gates for lunch when they spotted the man in white. Both boys stopped in their tracks and gaped at the immaculately dressed stranger.

Jupiter finally found his tongue. "May I help you, sir?"

The stranger looked down his nose at him, and then, with a great flourish, pulled a crimson handkerchief from his breast pocket. He stooped and rubbed the silk cloth over his shoes, a look of distaste on his swarthy features. When his footwear had been returned once more to its fabulous luster, he pocketed the handkerchief and clicked his heels together, bowing low before Jupiter and waving his hand majestically in the air. The stocky boy noted that the man's fingernails were rough and chewed down to the quick, as if he had a nervous habit of biting them.

"I sincerely hope you may help me, *Monsieur Jones*."

Jupiter pushed aside an old-fashioned lawnmower he had been tinkering with and scratched his head. "I'm sorry, have we met?"

The stranger smirked and pointed toward the salvage yard's large iron gates. Parked on the street in front of the junk yard was a luxurious gold-plated Rolls Royce that the boys recognized at once. It was the same automobile that Jupiter had won the use of some time ago in a contest sponsored by the Rent-'n-Ride Auto Agency. Worthington, the tall English chauffeur that always accompanied the car, stood beside the auto and tipped his cap to the boys in a silent greeting. The stranger spoke again.

"My driver was kind enough to point you out to me." He then gestured to Bob and Pete. "But let me assure you, your reputation precedes you as detectives."

Jupe glanced warily at his partners, and then stood up very straight and talked in his most adult manner. "May I infer that you would like to engage the services of our firm?"

The stranger laughed sardonically, his lips twisted into a devilish grin. "You do not disappoint, *Señor* Jones – every bit as clever as I have heard."

Pete and Bob joined Jupiter at his side. Without saying a word, they had both agreed that this man was dangerous, perhaps deadly! They had seen ruthless international villains kidnap Jupe once before when they tackled the *Mystery of the Deadly Double*, and they weren't about to let it happen again!

"Indeed, I would very much like to engage the services of the renowned Three Investigators," the man continued. "But I must warn you, it is no ordinary case I am asking you to embark upon. There is danger ahead – perhaps grave danger! If you are not ready for the challenge, then perhaps I should take my inquiry elsewhere."

Pete cleared his throat and spoke nervously. "Gosh, mister, if you're in trouble maybe you should call the police. I bet Chief

Reynolds would be happy to help you.”

The foreigner glared at Pete, his eyes seeming to burn. “The police – bah! They are of no use to me! I am a traveler, you see. I have been around the globe more times than I can count. I have chased spies in Stockholm, hunted tigers in Bangladesh, and swam the currents of the mighty Amazon. I have seen the world from pole to pole and I have learned very well how to get what I want. Some matters, private matters, are best dealt with discreetly. That is why I have come to you, professional private detectives, instead of some bumbling flatfoot.”

Jupiter watched with interest as the mysterious traveler suddenly thrust a hand inside his jacket. Bob tensed, readying himself should the man pull out a weapon, and Pete’s eyes danced, scanning the area for a board or a length of pipe he could use to disarm the man.

To their relief, the stranger’s hand came out clenched in a fist – whatever he held inside was obviously quite small. Despite their initial apprehension, the boys found themselves crowding close to the stranger as he held his hand out before them. His tanned palm was extended, face up, and resting in it was a shriveled up monkey’s paw!

“Gleepls!” Pete gasped. “You really had me going! I thought you were going to pull out a cobra or something. Instead it’s just some old good luck charm.”

The traveler gripped the paw tightly and hissed at Pete. “Fool! Do not speak ill in its presence – you will doom us all! The power of the paw goes beyond the physical realm. Its powers rest in the old world teachings – the ancient arts of magic and witchcraft! A simple incantation could leave you turned to solid stone, or bleating like the senseless sheep you are!”

Startled, Pete shivered, gooseflesh breaking out on his skin as if someone had just walked over his grave. He gulped and looked worriedly at Juve.

The stocky First Investigator stepped closer to the traveler and spoke calmly. “Is the paw what you want investigated? We’d be happy to examine it for you. We have access to quite a sophisticated crime-lab.”

The mysterious traveler bowed low before Jupe and once again flashed his sinister smile. He fished a purple satin pouch out of his jacket pocket and carefully placed the paw inside. He pulled two ornate drawstrings tight on the bag and handed the small parcel to Jupiter – holding Jupe’s hand tight for a moment and gazing into his eyes with a hypnotic stare.

“Do not underestimate the power of the paw,” he hissed. “It is not something to be trifled with! Learn what you can – what secrets it holds in its grip. I shall reward you handsomely, provided you do not fail in your task.”

The stranger’s eyes, like two chips of ice, narrowed cruelly. “And you dare not fail.”

The traveler backed away, laughing lowly. He passed through the front gates of the salvage yard. The boys watched as Worthington opened the back door for the man and then took his seat, rather reluctantly, behind the steering wheel. The luxurious car zoomed off down the street.

“Creeps!” said Bob. “That guy was sure spooky! We didn’t even get his name or phone number. How are we supposed to get in touch with him, Jupe?”

Jupiter thoughtfully bounced the small purple pouch in his palm and shrugged. “I have a feeling, fellows, the mysterious traveler will be getting in touch with us!”

Chapter Two

Strange Letters

WHEN THE MYSTERIOUS TRAVELER had left, The Three Investigators immediately headed to the corner of the salvage yard where Jupiter's outdoor workshop was located. The salvage yard was owned by Jupiter's aunt and uncle, Titus and Mathilda Jones, and the boys earned extra spending money, and paid for the telephone in their headquarters, by rebuilding broken items in the workshop.

Piled high around them was an enormous stack of miscellaneous junk: second-hand lumber, rusty steel beams, crates of various sizes, an old playground slide, and on and on. It was all meticulously arranged to conceal the small mobile home trailer that served as their Headquarters. They entered into it through various secret entrances with code names like Door Four and Easy Three.

At the moment, Jupiter headed for the large printing press that sat in the corner of his workshop. He found a small section of iron grillwork underneath and moved it, revealing the entrance to Tunnel Two. On their hands and knees, the boys scrambled along about forty feet – the floor of the corrugated pipe was padded with scraps of carpet so their knees wouldn't be battered. Near the end, the tunnel dipped underground. It was very dark in the secret tunnel, and without a flashlight a curious kid that may stumble across the entrance might think it was a dead end. But the boys knew better – for here the tunnel went up! One had only to push up on an unseen trap door above their heads and they were in their secret office!

The Three Investigators climbed up one by one, and took their seats around a fire-scarred desk. Bob switched on the light hanging over the desk which awoke Blackbeard, the pet myna bird the

boys had inherited from a previous case. The bird flapped its feathers impatiently while Jupiter undid the front gate of the cage. He put a handful of seeds in the bird's dish while Pete filled up his water dispenser. Jupiter set the bird down on the desk and let him strut around, and then undid the drawstrings of the satin pouch and dropped the paw into his hand.

"Uh-oh," Blackbeard squawked. "Uh-oh!" The bird flapped its wings crazily, sending feathers flying. Finally, Bob had to gently return the bird to its cage.

"Gee, what's gotten into him?" he wondered.

"Maybe he knows something about the paw that we don't," Pete said darkly. "I have a bad feeling about that thing. Like it's more trouble than it's worth!"

Jupiter wasn't listening. He opened a drawer of the desk and pulled out an oversized magnifying glass. For several minutes he turned the paw over in his fingers, saying nothing. Pete and Bob looked at each other and shrugged. They wondered what there was to see. It was clearly just an old souvenir. The white hair was matted and gnarled. The skin on the palm was withered and leathery, the fingernails yellow and weathered smooth with age.

Finally, Jupe gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"There's something here, but I can't make out all of it. See for yourselves."

He handed the claw and looking glass to Bob. Pete crowded close to see as well.

"Inside the paw," Jupiter explained, "there appears to be some writing. The hand is closed in a fist, and I don't dare move the fingers for fear of breaking them off."

"Good night!" said Pete, "it looks like a word!"

"I see a 'D' and an 'A!'" Bob exclaimed. "The rest of the letters are hidden behind the fingers. How are we going to see them without breaking it?"

Jupiter leaned back in his swivel chair and pinched his lower



lip – a habit of his that signaled he was putting his mind into high gear.

Before he could arrive at a solution, however, there came a loud voice from the front of the yard.

“Jupiter Jones! Bob Andrews! Pete Crenshaw! Where have you scamps gotten off to now!”

Pete gulped. “Uh-oh, it’s your Aunt Mathilda, Jupe, and she sounds pretty sore.”

“I concur,” Jupiter said grimly, dropping the paw back into its bag. “We’ll have to resume our investigation of the mysterious traveler’s charm later on.”

He pulled the gold drawstrings of the pouch tight and felt under the desk with his hand. Hidden beneath the regular drawers of the desk was a secret drawer the boys used whenever they wanted to hide something of particular value. It was practically invisible unless you knew where to look for it. Jupiter dropped the pouch inside and shut the drawer. Then he grabbed a microphone from the desktop and spoke into it. The microphone lead to a concealed loudspeaker near the salvage yard’s front office.

“Coming, Aunt Mathilda.” He looked at Bob and Pete and sighed. “Just when the mystery was getting good, too!”

“Uh-oh!” Blackbeard cried.

“Hush up, you!” Pete snapped. “I’m nervous enough about that thing as it is without your opinion!”

Laughing, the boys switched off the light and headed back to work.

Chapter Three

Band of Gypsies

JUPITER'S UNCLE TITUS prided himself in running the most unusual junkyard in Southern California. Nothing demonstrated this fact more clearly than the ornately decorated high fence that surrounded his salvage empire. Because he was always letting local artisans have various pieces of "art" for free, Rocky Beach's thriving artistic community had banded together to return the favor. Over the course of a long summer weekend, every imaginative soul in town had descended upon The Jones Salvage Yard with buckets of paint and brushes. What followed was the creation of the most wild, colorful, and eye-catching fence in the entire state – maybe the country!

Jupe's Aunt Mathilda, the woman who really ran the salvage yard, was initially reluctant about having such an unusual fence surrounding her property. But once she witnessed how many people drove by just to catch a glimpse of the oddity, she was sold on it! Particularly when most people, overcome with curiosity, decided to find out what could be behind such an amazing fence. This meant sales; which was always a good thing considering how many buying trips Titus Jones went on, and how many bizarre items he brought back from those trips!

Since Rocky Beach was a coastal town with a favorable climate, the artistic community was thriving. There were various tradesmen and women populating the historic downtown shopping strip, each with their own small shop, store, or vending street cart. On any given summer day, local tourists were treated to a host of painters, jewelers, blacksmiths, potters, sculptors, and more.

With this free spirit and attitude of cooperation and sharing, a local art fair was inevitable. For as long as Jupe, Pete, and Bob

could remember, there had always been an art fair each summer at the small fairgrounds not far from the salvage yard. This festive event was a boon for area businesses, as tourists and artists alike came from miles around to take part in the exciting week-long celebration.

The artists the boys liked the best were the Gypsies. Each year the sound of clip-clopping horse hooves could be heard clattering up the main thoroughfare of Main Street. Tourists and long-time residents alike would invariably line the sidewalks to watch the small parade of eccentric characters. Women with large hoop earrings and brightly colored scarves drove huge covered wagons up the street, while men walked alongside playing fiddles, singing songs, and juggling everything from fresh fruit to gleaming daggers.

Many of the same Gypsies came back every year, but there were always new faces, too. Titus Jones was particularly fond of the troupe, as he had spent time in his youth with a traveling carnival working as a calliope player. He would always be the first to welcome the Gypsies to town, opening his yard just for them and allowing them to take whatever items they needed for repairs on their wagons free of charge. A proud and honest clan, the Gypsies always insisted on paying for their necessities.

This summer looked to be the biggest ever for the art fair. The whole town was abuzz with excited chatter for the upcoming festivities. The Gypsies, who always seemed to know instinctively when to arrive, had clattered into town with their biggest caravan yet. When they reached the fairgrounds, they began to work busily at obtaining the proper vending licenses from Rocky Beach's town hall, and setting up their wagons in their designated spots among the other artists' booths.

It was with some surprise then, when the local leaders of the Gypsy council arrived at the gates of the Jones Salvage Yard and asked for Jupiter Jones instead of Titus! Wondering what kind of

trouble the boys were in, Aunt Mathilda sent Hans and Konrad, the two blond Bavarian brothers who worked as handymen at the yard, off to find Jupiter while she bustled across the way to the Joneses' small white house to prepare sandwiches and lemonade for the Gypsy guests.

The boys were where they could usually be found on a typical summer day – in Jupe's workshop, fiddling with a fresh batch of miscellaneous junk that only needed minor repairs to make it suitable, sellable merchandise.

"Jupe," said Konrad, "people here to see you."

"Yup," Hans agreed, "the Gypsies, they ask for you."

Jupiter looked up from the small transistor radio he was soldering. "The Gypsies want to talk to *me*?"

"Yah," Hans nodded, "they ask to speak to young Jones, who finds all that is missing."

Jupe looked at Bob and Pete in wonder and then followed the two brothers to the front of the yard. Standing by the small cabin that served as the yard's office were three Gypsy men: two powerfully built young men and one elderly man who looked as old as time, but who still possessed a fire in his eyes that suggested he was capable of much more than he seemed. The older man, dressed in a billowing white shirt, old fashioned button trousers that stopped just below the knee, and purple stockings that matched the scarf covering his head, stepped forward when the boys arrived and bowed low before them.

Showing great respect for their visitors, the boys silently bowed in return. The elder Gypsy clasped his hands before him and smiled warmly. When he spoke, his voice held a thick accent, but his words came out strong and clear.

"You are young Jones, ward of Titus Jones – friend of Gypsies everywhere, yes?"

Jupiter nodded his head. "Yes, sir. I am Jupiter Jones, and these are my colleagues, Bob Andrews and Pete Crenshaw."

The old Gypsy greeted the boys and turned to the two men who accompanied him. They were dressed in similar attire, and looked so much alike that Jupiter guessed they were twins. "I am Gregorio, and these are my grandsons: Viktor and Carlos. Anything which shall be discussed before Gregorio, shall be said before them as well. I am the soul of our family, and they are the heart, the arms, and legs. What is mine shall one day be theirs. Now then, is there a private retreat we can adjourn to where we may discuss private matters?"

Jupiter directed them to the small office just as Aunt Mathilda returned with a plate of thick ham sandwiches and a pitcher of iced lemonade.

"A thousand thanks, kind lady," said Viktor, smiling happily at Aunt Mathilda.

"Blessings and good fortune to your family," Carlos added. "A meal as beautiful as the one who prepared it!"

Blushing, Aunt Mathilda fussed about filling their glasses and passing out napkins; then hurried out the door, still smiling broadly. The boys watched in wonder as the three Gypsies tucked napkins into their shirts and placed them carefully across their knees, and then began dining with the table manners of royal aristocrats! When they had completely emptied their plates and stacked them neatly on the center of the desk, the old man named Gregorio lit a fragrant pipe and peered at Jupiter through the cloud of smoke. "And now we talk," he said gravely. "I have been told by your uncle that you three lads seek the truth to many of life's mysteries."

"Yes, sir," Jupiter answered. "My partners and I are detectives. We've solved some cases that have baffled many adults. Our motto is: 'We Investigate Anything.'" He dug in his shirt pocket and produced two oversized business cards, handing them to the old man. "Our credentials."

The elder Gypsy took the cards in his gnarled hands and stud-

ied them intently. The first card read:

THE THREE INVESTIGATORS

“We Investigate Anything”

? ? ?

First Investigator.....Jupiter Jones

Second Investigator.....Peter Crenshaw

Records & Research.....Bob Andrews

The second card was given to each of the boys by Rocky Beach’s Chief of Police, Sam Reynolds. It was a sign of appreciation and respect for all the help The Three Investigators had given him on various cases. It read:

*This certifies that the bearer is a Volunteer
Junior Assistant Deputy cooperating with
the police force of Rocky Beach. Any assistance
given him will be appreciated.*

*(Signed) Samuel Reynolds
Chief of Police*

Gregorio passed the cards to his grandsons and smiled.

“All is well,” he said quietly. “I can see you are strong-willed boys. You are wise for your age – for you have selected the interrogation mark as your sign. Many would think you question your abilities by placing this on your card. I see it as a challenge. You seek out life’s puzzles, and in doing so help out the less fortunate. Most importantly, you are held in high regard by the elders in your community. In fact, it was your Chief who sent us to you. We seek something of great value, and you are the finders of all that is missing.”

“Our services are currently engaged by another client,” Jupiter explained, “but we’d be willing to make an exception in your

case. Perhaps you can begin by telling us what it is that has been lost?”

Gregorio blew a veil of smoke before him and leaned in close to the boys. “Not lost,” he said bitterly. “Stolen! An ancient amulet of great power. Kept in our family for generations – passed on from one elder to the next. It holds a great secret. A riddle with an answer that has remained hidden for over fifteen years!”

The wise Gypsy was nearly quivering with rage. His voice came out in a harsh rasp. “That of which I speak is of paramount importance to our family – our history! It would be a crushing blow to our way of life if it is not recovered. I speak of the monkey’s paw!”

Chapter Four

The Paw Is Mine!

THE THREE INVESTIGATORS gaped at each other in surprise. For the second time in as many days, someone had laid claim to the mysterious monkey's paw!

"Pardon me, sir," Bob said slowly, "but did you say 'monkey's paw?'"

Gregorio the Gypsy nodded his head and thumped a fist to his chest. "A sacred relic of great power. Given to me by my father, and his father before him. A talisman of our family since time out of mind. It has brought us good fortune and kept us healthy – and delivered omens of ill-will when certain parties have conspired against us."

"Gee, mister, we've..." Pete began. He was cut off by a kick to his ankle from Jupiter. "Ow! What was that for?"

The First Investigator's eyes darted over the tall boy's shoulder. Pete and Bob both whirled toward the office door and gasped.

The mysterious traveler stood in the doorway!

He was once more dressed completely in white, the scarlet fez perched atop his head. His piercing blue eyes seemed kindled by an insane rage!

"So, you have come to steal the paw?" he seethed.

Carlos and Viktor immediately stood up and stepped in front of the old man. They crossed their powerful arms over their chests and waited for Gregorio to speak, all the while watching the traveler like he was a dangerous viper.

"You accuse us of stealing?" the old man asked in surprise. He chuckled and then began laughing wildly, his laughter finally subsiding into a grating cough.

Being laughed at seemed to infuriate the traveler even more. His swarthy features became flushed and his hands clenched and

unclenched spasmodically.

“How – How dare you laugh at me! Do you know who I am? I am Jujab, Duke of Lapathia, killer of spies! I have smuggled in the most dangerous bazaars of Istanbul. I have stolen treasures from the most sacred tombs of Cairo. I have looked death in the face and laughed, old man. And I am the rightful owner of the monkey’s paw!”

The Three Investigators watched with trepidation as Gregorio stepped past his grandsons and pointed a twisted finger at Jujab. “You are nothing – insignificant.” The old man turned to Jupiter. “This man has stolen that of which we speak. Our first night in town, as we are setting up camp, his men slink into my tent. Viktor happens upon the thieves, but it is too late – they have already found the paw. There is a scuffle. A man with a long scar pulls a knife and attacks Viktor. There is much blood.

As if to illustrate the point, Viktor pulled up the corner of his shirt to reveal a large bandage on his side.

Gregorio turned a gnarled finger to Jujab. “The devils slash their way out of the tent with thier knives! Viktor and Carlos give chase, only to see them enter a fine Rolls Royce automobile with this man waiting at the door! It speeds away into the night.”

The old man squared his shoulders and jutted his jaw out proudly. “And now he has the paw. But it is useless to him. He does not know what secrets it holds in its grasp. It is but a trifle, a mere trinket. The secret will only be revealed to those with pure Gypsy blood in their veins!”

Jujab took a step forward, his teeth bared.

“The paw is mine!”

Jupiter gulped as the Gypsy twins raised their fists in a defensive posture. It was up to him to defuse the situation before it turned ugly!

“We’ll get the paw for you, Mr. Jujab,” he said quickly. “We don’t want any trouble!”

“Ah – the boy sees reason,” Jujab said in a mocking voice. “Bring it to me at once!”

“Jupe!” Bob cried. “Don’t do it!”

“He stole it from the Gypsies!” Pete added.

Jupiter pinched his bottom lip and scowled. He looked helplessly at Gregorio.

“We have no proof that you were in possession of the paw first, sir. After all, Jujab did bring it to us. Perhaps if I return it to him, you can work out some kind of deal.”

After a long pause, Gregorio finally sighed and nodded his head. “Difficult as it is, we must honor your decision, young Jones. It is the will of the paw. It has begun to work its magic – I have felt it in my bones for many moons now.”

The old man stood up and pointed two fingers at the mysterious traveler in a hex sign. “The paw is about to reveal something. But mark my words, stranger; with every wish there comes a curse!”

Jujab scoffed at the old Gypsy, and then whirled on Jupiter.

“The paw!” he growled.

“Yes, sir,” Jupiter choked. “It won’t take me but a minute to fetch it.” He looked at Bob and Pete with a grim expression. “Stay here, fellows. I’ll be right back.”

The stocky boy stepped out of the small office and trotted through the towering piles of salvage to his workshop. Once there, he opened a large oak door, still in its frame, which leaned against a big pile of granite blocks – the key was hidden in plain sight amid a box of other rusty keys. This was Easy Three. Hunching over, he passed through a large iron boiler from an old steam engine, and then through the round side door of Headquarters.

When he clicked on the light that hung over the desk, Jupiter paused at a length of stove-pipe that hung from the ceiling in the middle of Headquarters. This was the See-All – a crude but effi-

cient periscope that he had rigged up so the boys could see out of the buried mobile home trailer. He made a mental note to remind Pete to bring the periscope down when not in use. The last thing they needed was Aunt Mathilda seeing it sticking above the piles of junk and deciding to throw it out!

He pulled the contraption down then stepped quickly over to the desk. Reaching underneath, he felt for the hidden drawer and pulled it open. Suddenly his heart skipped a beat. His hand scrambled about, feeling frantically for the monkey's paw.

It was gone!

Chapter Five

The Curse of Jujab

JUPITER'S HEART RACED. He ran his hand over every square inch of the secret drawer. The paw had simply vanished without a trace! He thought of Jujab and shivered. Surely the mysterious traveler wouldn't try anything rash with the burly Carlos and Viktor on hand. But they couldn't stay forever. What would happen when they left? Jupiter couldn't be sure.

He snapped off the light and let himself out through Easy Three, his mind racing a million miles an hour. He trudged slowly up to the salvage yard's office, trying to think of some kind of plan. He decided, finally, that the only thing to do was to tell the truth and hope for the best.

When he reached the front of the yard, everyone was waiting in the driveway just inside the large front gates. They turned and looked at him expectantly.

"Well?" Jujab hissed icily. "I believe you have something that belongs to me."

Jupe cleared his throat and licked his lips nervously. "Well, uh – you see..." he began.

The tassel on Jujab's fez fell in front of his eyes. He swiped it away and glowered at Jupiter.

"What is it, boy? Spit it out! Do you have the paw or not?"

"That's just it," Jupiter moaned, "its gone!"

There was a terrible moment of silence, and then everyone started talking at once.

"Gone? What do you mean gone?" cried Bob and Pete. "We just had it a moment ago!"

"What is the meaning of this?" snarled Jujab. He suddenly pulled a wicked looking dagger out of his jacket. The golden blade had several curves and ended in a very sharp point. He

directed the vicious weapon toward Jupiter. "I'm warning you, boy; don't play games with me! Now hand over the paw, or do I have to get it myself?"

Just then, Hans and Konrad appeared from the back of the yard. They took one look at the crowd of people gathered at the front gates and immediately came to Jupiter's side.

"Everything hokay here, Jupe?" asked Hans.

Konrad caught sight of Jujab's dagger and frowned. "This man, he give you trouble. You want I should break him over my knee?"

"That's okay, Konrad," Jupiter replied. "I think Mr. Jujab was just leaving."

Jujab's black eyes darted about from one person to the next. Realizing he was outnumbered, the mysterious traveler tucked his knife back inside his jacket and backed away.

"You will regret this, boy! All of you! I shall return to claim what is mine – mark my words! But before I depart I shall leave you with what the Lapathian's call a shiver, but you will know it as a curse!"

The man named Jujab closed his eyes and raised his hands to the sky. His voice rang out in a horrible moan that made Pete and Bob's hair stand on end.

"I summon the vanquished demons of the earth, wind, fire, and sea. I beckon the great spirit Gort! I summon the blackness from the four corners! Hear me – hear me as I invoke your terrible curse! Klaatu, Baradda, Nikto!"

He balled his right hand up and then brought his arm forward as if he were throwing a baseball. Bob and Pete ducked, half expecting another dagger to come shooting from inside his sleeve. But Jupiter stood his ground, his face blank as if lost in thought. "If you are lucky, you will live to regret the curse of Jujab," the mysterious traveler hissed, backing away toward the large front gates. "When you have suffered enough pain and torment, bring



me the paw and the curse shall be lifted. Remember – I see all!”

The group watched in silence as Jujab disappeared around the corner of the fence. Finally, Hans whistled lowly.

“That man, he’s crazy I think, Jupe.”

“Yah,” Konrad agreed, nodding emphatically and twirling a finger beside his blond head. “If he comes back, I call the police, you bet!”

Jupiter was still silent. The sudden loss of the paw had left him in a sour mood. He watched sullenly as the Gypsies helped Gregorio into their wagon and then clattered off down the street. When they were gone, he turned to Bob and Pete.

“Come on, I want to give Headquarters a thorough search before Aunt Mathilda gets back. That paw has to be in there somewhere!”

The boys marched back to Jupiter’s workshop and crawled through Tunnel Two. Once inside their secret trailer, they began examining the large fire-scarred desk and the area around it. As they were all down on their hands and knees with flashlights, a ghostly, gurgling voice suddenly broke the silence.

“Beware the monkey’s paw...”

Bob stiffened, staring at Jupiter. Pete jumped so high he hit his head on the bottom of the desk.

“Yikes – what was that?” he gulped, rubbing his head.

The disembodied voice came again.

“Pete Crenshaw... I’ve come from beyond the grave!”

Pete’s teeth were chattering now. With a shaking hand, he pointed his flashlight into the dim corner of the trailer where their laboratory was located. Suddenly the curtain was whisked aside. Pete clamped his eyes shut and looked away. He didn’t want to see the ghoul that was about to devour him! But when he heard the sound of laughter, he turned his head and opened one eye.

“Allie Jamison!” he cried. “You nearly gave me a heart attack!”

A young girl stepped out from shadows of the lab.

She had tawny hair, hazel eyes, and her skin was tanned from many hours spent outdoors riding her horse, Indian Queen.

Even though her parents were very wealthy and dressed in the latest designer clothes, Allie Jamison preferred wearing a plain western shirt and a worn pair of jeans. When her folks took lavish trips to the far corners of the world, she usually stayed behind in Rocky Beach with her Aunt Pat in the sprawling mansion just up the street from the salvage yard. Allie would rather spend the summer riding her Appaloosa every day than lugging a suitcase around airports and posh hotels!

The boys had first met Allie when she hired them to solve the *Mystery of the Singing Serpent* two summers ago. Last summer she had gotten them into all kinds of trouble when she talked them into traveling to a remote mining town in New Mexico to unravel the *Mystery of Death Trap Mine*. Now she stood before them in their top-secret Headquarters, and she was grinning from ear to ear!

"Some detectives," she scoffed. "Admit it – I had you scaredy-cats positively quivering with that ghost routine."

Jupiter stood up and brushed off his knees. "Your appearance took us by surprise," he said stiffly. "But I will concede that your appearance is enough to strike fear into the hearts of most people."

"Still talking like a walking dictionary," Allie laughed. She brushed past Bob and Pete and plopped down in Jupiter's swivel chair behind the desk.

Jupiter crossed his arms and glared at her. "I won't bother asking how you entered the premises. You proved last summer that you know your way in and out of here. Rather, I'd prefer that you tell us all you know about the monkey's paw."

Allie looked at them innocently and then dug in her shirt pocket. "Oh, you mean this old thing?" she chuckled, holding the

paw up before them. "I found it on the beach while I was riding Indian Queen this morning."

"Likely story," Bob frowned. "You took it from our desk and you know it!"

Allie tossed the paw to Bob and leaned back in the chair, putting her feet up on the desk. "And Sherlock Holmes wins a prize!" she laughed. "I came in here this morning looking for you three. It's always so boring over at Aunt Pat's. I figured you fellows are usually up to no good, so I thought I'd join in on whatever investigation you have going! There was no one here, but I figured it couldn't hurt to snoop around a little bit."

She smiled brightly at Jupiter. "That secret drawer in your desk was a snap to find. You should really find a better hiding place for your clues!"

"Noted," Jupiter said dryly. "But I hope you know how much trouble you've caused by your little stunt. There are a lot of disgruntled people wanting to get their hands on that paw. One of them had a very sharp knife."

The stocky boy took the paw from Bob and held it tightly in his hand. He looked at Allie sternly, and then allowed himself a slight grin.

"However, I must admit that your little stunt *has* allowed us to hold onto the paw for a little while longer. At least until Jujab comes looking for it."

"What do you have in mind, First?" asked Bob.

"I propose we head down to the Art Festival and have another talk with the Gypsies. While we can't give them the paw, perhaps there is more we can learn from them about this mysterious artifact – like what is written on the inside of the hand!"

"Swell!" crowed Allie. "I knew I could count on you guys for a little adventure!"

"Thanks, but no thanks," Pete protested. "We don't have a need for a fourth investigator. You'd just get in the way, and

besides, you've got Indian King to take care of."

"Indian *Queen*," Allie said hotly. "And I'm going with you whether you like it or not! If it wasn't for me you wouldn't even have that darn paw right now!"

Bob and Pete looked helplessly at Jupiter. The First Investigator could only shrug. "So this is what it feels like to get out-voted," he groaned. "All right, you can come with us – but after that it's straight back to your Aunt Pat's. We're in the middle of a case and we can't worry about baby-sitting you, too. Agreed?"

"I'm not a baby, I'm the same age as you – but... agreed," Allie grinned. "I knew you'd see it my way!"

The four of them exited Headquarters through Easy Three and then headed to Jupiter's workshop where the boys had parked their bicycles. That was when disaster struck!

As they threaded through the towering mounds of bed frames and auto parts, Jupiter failed to see a length of pipe that had shifted in a pile of salvage. He tripped over it and, with a cry, went tumbling head-first to the ground. As Bob, Pete, and Allie crowded around him, they saw that he was cradling his right arm.

Allie was about to make a sly remark about Jupiter's clumsiness when she saw that he looked like he was really injured. "Say, are you okay, Jones?" she asked seriously.

"My... my wrist," Jupe said, gritting his teeth. "I think I may have fractured my scaphoid bone!"

Bob and Pete helped their friend up and began walking him slowly to the front office.

"We'd better get you to the hospital," Bob said with concern.

"You'll have to have your arm x-rayed. I guess we'll have to go see the Gypsies later."

Jupiter shook his head vehemently. "No. You'll have to go on without me. We don't know when Jujab will come back looking for the paw. He may be watching us right now! The three of you

will have to ride over to the Art Festival and see what you can learn. Then report back here as soon as possible!”

“Gosh,” Pete said nervously, “Maybe that Jujab character is the genuine article. First Allie shows up, and then Jupe breaks his arm. I’m starting to think we really *are* cursed!”

Chapter Six

Ancient History

PREDICTABLY, Aunt Mathilda was beside herself with worry for Jupiter. She first scolded him for not watching where he was going, and in the next moment was hovering over him clucking like a nervous hen. When Mrs. Jones dashed off to the office to get the keys to the salvage yard's small truck and to instruct Hans and Konrad to watch over the yard, Jupe gave final instructions to his partners.

"Take the paw to Gregorio," he said, handing it over to Bob. "Tell him we're very sorry, but we can't return it – but we would like to know all he can tell us about it."

As an afterthought that made Pete gulp, he added: "And whatever you do, guard it with your life!"

Aunt Mathilda came bustling back to the truck and climbed inside. She handed a bag of frozen peas to Jupiter to put on his wrist, and then fired the truck to life. Pete called out to Jupe as they pulled away.

"What do we do if we run into Jujab?"

He didn't much care for Jupe's answer as the truck disappeared from sight. The First Investigator had simply shouted out one word in reply.

"Run!"

"Creeps!" Pete shivered. "Sometimes this investigating business is more trouble than I bargained for!"

"Come on," Bob said grimly. "Here comes Allie."

"I've put Indian Queen in her stall with a fresh bag of oats," she said sunnily as if nothing had happened. "I don't have a bicycle here so I'll have to borrow Jupe's."

"We better not take our bicycles," Bob decided. "It would be too easy for Jujab to ambush us. And Jupiter would never forgive

us if we lost the paw before we learned what's written on it! Let's ask Hans and Konrad if one of them can drive us to the fairgrounds in the big truck."

"That's swell thinking, Records," Pete said. "I'd feel a lot safer with one of them around!"

"Well, let's stop gabbing and start going!" Allie said impatiently. "We're not getting any younger standing here talking about it!"

Bob and Pete looked at each other with annoyed expressions. It had taken them a long time to get used to Jupiter's eccentric behavior while on a case – but they had the feeling they would never get used to Allie Jamison!

The two Investigators offered to put in extra time at the salvage yard for Konrad's help, but the big Bavarian was reluctant to leave.

"Mrs. Jones, she leaves Hans and me in charge," he explained. "She says not to leave the yard."

"But that crazy guy with the knife might try to jump us," Pete pointed out. "We can take care of ourselves, but Allie insists on coming along."

"Thanks a lot!" Allie hissed under her breath.

The argument seemed to work. Konrad finally nodded his head. "Hokay," he sighed, "Mrs. Jones would want for Allie to be safe. If that crazy guy makes trouble, Konrad snaps him like a twig!"

"Thanks, Konrad!" Bob grinned. "We owe you one!"

The three ran for the large truck and scrambled into the cab. Konrad explained to his brother that he had to run an errand, and then climbed inside the truck.

Ten minutes later the truck was pulling through the large brick entrance of the Rocky Beach Fairgrounds. Konrad drove slowly down the narrow avenue as his passengers scanned the booths and stalls for the Gypsies.

"There they are!" Allie cried. She pointed off to her right. The Gypsies' camp was hard to miss – it was the only one with horses! Allie hopped out and immediately went over to the animals. Bob and Pete sighed in exasperation.

"Some investigator," Pete grunted.

"She certainly is a free spirit," Bob laughed.

The two boys walked over to the Gypsy camp. Several men and women were working on setting up a large tent. They recognized one of the men as either Viktor or Carlos. The man smiled brightly and bowed as he saw the boys.

"My young friends," he said warmly. "I did not expect to see you again so soon! To what do we owe this honor?"

Bob held up the monkey's paw. "We found it!"

The Gypsy's eyes went wide. He pushed Bob's hand down and looked around nervously. "Come quickly! We must gather in Gregorio's wagon!"

The muscular man uttered a few words in a strange language to the group putting up the tent, and then walked quickly through the row of wagons.

"Allie," Pete hissed, "forget the horses and come on!"

The three dashed off after Viktor/Carlos. They found him waiting in front of the largest covered wagon they had ever seen. The big man pulled a curtain aside. Inside the wagon they could see Gregorio asleep in a rocking chair.

All four climbed into the wagon. Allie, Pete, and Bob sat themselves on the floor amid a scattering of pillows, while Viktor/Carlos whispered in the old man's ear.

Although his eyes were still shut, the ancient Gypsy smiled. Perhaps he wasn't sleeping after all! When Viktor/Carlos had left, Gregorio opened his eyes and smiled warmly at his guests.

"I have found that meditation is the best way to keep an old mind sharp. You would be surprised by what you can learn simply by closing your eyes and listening. For instance; I can tell that

the young lady has an affinity for horses.”

Blushing slightly, Allie grinned at Bob and Pete. “That’s a pretty neat trick!” she whispered.

Gregorio laughed and went on. “I can also tell that something has happened to young Jones – perhaps something unfortunate. You have come in his place, bearing the paw, although you do not mean to return it. Instead, you seek knowledge about its hidden secret.”

Pete and Bob looked at each other with wide eyes. It was almost like the old Gypsy had read their minds!

“How... How did you know?” Bob stammered.

Gregorio took a moment to light his long pipe, and then gave a chuckle that ended in a long cough. “Simple deduction, young lad. And listening!” he held out his hand to Bob. “Now, if I may...”

Bob handed the paw over to the old man. The three watched in wonder as the Gypsy seemed to conjure a match from thin air. He then proceeded to light several candles. When he was done with that, he took a battered stone bowl from a shelf and placed a small gray leaf inside. When he held a match to it, the wagon took on the strong scent of sage.

“The monkey’s paw belonged to my father,” Gregorio said quietly. He held the relic reverently, stroking it with the tip of his finger. “And his father before him. It has been in my family for generations, and while my own son is dead, the paw will be passed to Viktor and Carlos. Jujab has laid claim to it – but the paw will find its way back to us. Of this I am sure.”

The old Gypsy pointed to a large bookcase filled with ancient texts and manuscripts. “The history of the paw is written in these volumes. It tells of our great ancestors – and the greatest of them all: Romulus Romero! A sculptor of such renown that he is said to have worked in the very studio of the master himself, Leonardo DaVinci!”



Allie elbowed Pete, her eyes wide. “Did you hear that? His relatives were rubbing elbows with DaVinci!”

“Romulus worked as an artist’s apprentice in DaVinci’s studio in Milan,” the old man continued. “His preferred medium was stone – a sculptor; but he was also quite talented in painting and drawing. Alas, nothing remains of his work – only the words written in these books by his ancestors many centuries later; and this paw, which may or may not have belonged to him.”

“Perhaps it is legend,” Gregorio went on, “but I have reason to believe it is true.” Suddenly a look of deep sadness appeared on the old Gypsy’s face. He sighed and pointed to an empty slot in his bookcase.

“At least I *had* reason to believe it was true.”

“What do you mean, sir?” asked Bob. “Was something else stolen as well?”

Gregorio shook his head and puffed on his pipe. “No, not stolen – but lost all the same. A relic of great value and importance; tracing a direct link from our ancestry all the way back to the great Romulus Romero. I begged my son, Julius – Carlos and Viktor’s father – to take this with him when he fled Europe as a boy during our country’s great Civil War. Should anything happen to our family, this object would remain safe – in America! At first Julius refused, but my words finally persuaded him.”

The old Gypsy puffed thoughtfully on his pipe. “My son was in possession of the paw and the book when he came to America. A great artist in his own right, he came to California and worked for many years as a sculptor. He made enough money making statues out of bronze that he sent for the rest of his family. He worked in this very area – which is why we hold a great affinity for Rocky Beach.

“Poor Julius died tragically – much too young. We didn’t even find out the locations of many of his statues; something I would very much like to see. Through our travels we have found one or

two, but that is all. He was quite sick before he died, but before he passed he made sure to return the paw to me. Through a trusted friend, it made its way back to our family – just as it has throughout the ages. Imagine my surprise when I discovered a message had been printed on the palm of the monkey's paw!"

Bob was scribbling furiously in his notebook, trying to keep up with the Gypsy's story. He looked at Pete hopefully – they were finally going to learn what the word on the paw said!

"The friend had a message for me from my dying son," the old man said in a hushed voice. "Somehow villains had learned the true nature of the great relic he possessed – what it was and its priceless value. They followed him, and even attacked him. Deathly ill, he managed to hide the treasure away; leaving a clue for me inside the grip of the monkey's paw. But the clue remains a mystery to me. I know not its meaning or what my son was trying to say. But perhaps young minds, pure of worries and pain, can see what the wise Gregorio cannot."

He leaned forward in his rocking chair and held the paw tightly in his gnarled hand. Pete, Bob, and Allie watched, perplexed, as he began mumbling words in a strange tongue. This went on for several minutes with the old man's voice rising and falling until it was almost like he was singing. Beads of sweat appeared on his face as his voice rose. The chanting continued for several more minutes, and then the old Gypsy fell back into his chair, breathing deeply.

He held out his hand before them, the paw resting atop the deep creases of his palm.

Bob, Pete, and Allie gasped in astonishment. When they had brought the paw, its fingers were curled down as if in a fist. But now the small fingers had straightened.

The paw had opened!

Chapter Seven

The Word is Revealed

“GOOD GRIEF!” said Pete. “The paw opened!”

The old Gypsy nodded and breathed deeply, as if the incantation had taken all his strength.

“See the word,” he gasped. “Meditate on its meaning, and perhaps you can understand what my son was trying to tell me. Our family fortune is hidden so well that even *we* cannot find it. We have searched for many years, but it has taken the thievery of the scoundrel Jujab to lead us to you.”

Bob, Pete, and Allie sat up and peered at the shriveled monkey’s paw that rested in the old man’s hand. Its tiny fingers were now straight, the word that was printed on it in scraggly letters read:

DAEDALUS 3 RD

“I don’t get it,” said Allie. “What does ‘daedalus’ mean? Is it a foreign word or something?”

Gregorio shook his head. “It is not a Gypsy word. Julius knew no languages other than English and our own Gypsy tongue. I’m afraid this word is meaningless to me. What my son was trying to tell me remains shrouded in mystery. He died here in Rocky Beach; I thought ‘3 RD’ perhaps meant a road, but that is all that I can tell you.”

Bob copied the word down in his notebook.

“Leave it to The Three Investigators, sir,” he said, trying to sound more hopeful than he really felt. “If anyone can figure out what that word means, it’s Jupiter Jones!”

“I’ll buy a double helping of that!” agreed Pete. “Jupe’s brain works like a super computer.”

“But instead of electricity, he runs on food,” Allie laughed.

When the three youths arrived back at the salvage yard, Jupiter and Aunt Mathilda were just pulling through the gates in the small truck. Jupiter climbed out gingerly. He was wearing a sling and his right arm was encased in a cast from his knuckles to the middle of his forearm.

Seeing his friends, Juve's face brightened. He began heading in the direction of his workshop, but was immediately cornered by his aunt.

"You're to go straight to bed, young man!" she said sternly. "There'll be no foolishness with that club of yours until that arm heals properly."

"But Aunt Mathilda..." he protested.

It was no use. When Mrs. Jones made up her mind there was no point in arguing. She sized up Pete, Bob, and Allie.

"There will be no ifs, ands, or buts! I'm out one perfectly good worker. Allie will just have to pitch in while you mend. Bob, Pete – there's a whole shipment of pickle barrels that Titus just purchased waiting to be scrubbed and stored. Allie, you can grab a clipboard and catalogue."

"Yes, ma'am," Allie said politely. "I'd be glad to."

Bob and Pete looked at each other helplessly. If there was one thing that Aunt Mathilda excelled at, it was finding lazy kids and putting them to work! She marched Jupiter to their house, wondering how in the world she was expected to sell a bunch of barrels that smelled like pickles.

The three had just begun to work when Pete noticed a flashing light coming from an upstairs window of the Joneses house.

"What in the world is that?" he wondered.

"It's Juve!" Bob grinned. "He's giving us a message with Morse code." Bob watched the flashes of light as they flickered on and off. He grabbed his notebook and copied down the letters of his partner's message. When the flashes had stopped, he showed the message to Allie and Pete.

The message said:

Blue Gate Two what's the clue?

Bob knew the coded message meant that they should meet Jupe at the secret entrance in the salvage yard's fence called Blue Gate Two so they could tell him what the word on the paw said.

Blue Gate Two had got its name from the scene of a lake painted on the boards. A group of picnicking women in old fashioned dresses and parasols watched their children play near a pond. The blue of the water and the sky gave the gate its name. When a rope handle that was buried in the grass was pulled, two boards swung up. This entrance was closest to the Joneses house and to the front office of the salvage yard – which meant it was usually closest to Aunt Mathilda. That's why they didn't use it very often. But since his aunt was currently preparing dinner, Jupe took the opportunity to climb down the lattice outside his window and meet his partners at the secret entrance.

"You mean you fellows have more than one secret gate in that crazy fence?" Allie asked slyly. "I wonder what else I could find around this junk yard if I really tried."

"You already know too much for your own good," Pete said in exasperation. "We'll have to bury Headquarters underground before long, just to keep you from snooping!"

Keeping an eye out for Mrs. Jones, the three hurried over to the secret gate and pulled it open. Jupiter stepped through, still huffing and puffing from his awkward climb down the lattice.

"That's hard enough with *two* hands," he panted. "Let's make this quick – my aunt has a sixth sense for lackadaisical kids. Give me a brief overview of the events at the fairgrounds, and what the hidden word is."

Bob pulled out his notebook and neatly summed up Gregorio's story. He then showed Jupe the hidden word.

"Daedalus 3 – R - D," he murmured. He started to raise his right hand to pinch his lip, realized it was in a cast, and used his

left hand instead.

“Okay, Sherlock,” Allie grinned, “let’s see if your fall affected your gray matter. Is this some kind of foreign word? That old Gypsy said it meant zip to him.”

While Jupiter Jones was not exactly fat, he had always been on the slightly chubby side since birth. When he was just a child he acted on a short-lived television program – his character’s name was ‘Baby Fatso.’ Naturally, some of the meaner kids at school had teased him quite a bit about this chapter in his life. To make up for it, Jupe had read every book he could get his hands on. And, since his mind was practically photographic, he never forgot a single word. With this vast storehouse of knowledge, he was able to recall even the most obscure of facts.

“If I am not mistaken,” Jupiter began stuffily, as if he were a professor lecturing a classroom full of students, “Daedalus is a character in Greek mythology. According to legend, he was an inventor of great renown. He is most famous for building the wings that helped him and his son, Icarus, escape from prison on the island of Minos. As you recall, Icarus grew bold from the thrill of flight and ignored his father’s warning about flying too close to the sun. The heat of the sun melted the wax on the wings and Icarus plunged to his death in the sea.”

Allie shrugged her shoulders. “So, what does that tell us? The word is still Greek to me!”

Pete groaned at her lame joke. “I can’t believe I’m saying this, but for once I agree with her.”

Bob was still thinking about the strange Greek name.

“Julius wouldn’t have written that word on the paw unless he was sure that his father, Gregorio, would understand its meaning,” he said.

“That much is certain,” Jupiter agreed. “But Gregorio has stated that the name Daedalus is meaningless to him.”

“Uh-oh,” Pete warned, “your Uncle Titus is coming down the

street in the big truck. You better get back inside, Jupe, before your aunt catches you out of your room!”

Jupe scowled. He wanted desperately to tackle the mystery head on, but he also didn’t want to tempt the wrath of his aunt!

“Perhaps we should all mull over Julius’ message at home tonight. We’ll get a fresh start on the mystery tomorrow. Now I must depart the premises before my absence from the house is detected. Meet here tomorrow!”

“I’ll be here first thing in the morning!” Allie cried. “I have to run now. Indian Queen needs brushing. See you fellows later!”

Bob and Pete watched as Allie strolled through the front gate, waved at Uncle Titus, and then disappeared around the corner. It was only then that they realized she had left them in the middle of their pickle barrel assignment!

“Hey! How did she get out of work?” Pete cried.

Bob spotted the heaping stack of junk in the back of Titus’s truck and moaned.

“How are we going to get out of *that*?”

It was quite late by the time Bob and Pete had helped unload the big truck. When the work was done, they bicycled for home, riding part of the way together, and then heading in the direction of their own homes.

When Bob arrived at his house, he found a plate of dinner waiting for him in the refrigerator. Mrs. Andrews was quite used to her son’s irregular eating habits – particularly during the summer months. Bob ate at Jupiter’s house as often as he ate at his own! When he finished, he found his father quietly reading a newspaper in the den.

“Good evening, son,” Mr. Andrews said. Being a reporter for one of Los Angeles’ biggest newspapers, Bob’s father often took a keen interest in the adventures of The Three Investigators. He put his paper down and lit his pipe.

“Are The Three Investigators involved in a case?”

Bob nodded and began explaining all that had happened with the arrival of the mysterious traveler, Jujab; the monkey's paw; the Gypsy's; and the strange message written inside the paw.

"Daedalus," his father said thoughtfully. "I believe he was a character from Greek mythology. An inventor of some sort. Made wings for Icarus if I remember my old school lessons correctly." "That's what Jupiter said, too," Bob sighed. "But the name doesn't mean anything to Gregorio. We're sure his son assumed the old Gypsy would understand its meaning."

Mr. Andrews rubbed his chin and then picked up his newspaper once more. Bob sat quietly, pondering what the name might mean, when his father spoke up again.

"Of course, the character of Daedalus invented more than just the wings for his son. He was also famous for designing a huge maze known as the labyrinth that was home to the Minotaur. A monster that was half man and half bull."

Bob sat up straight, intrigued by this new information. Jupiter hadn't mentioned anything about a maze! But what his father said next made him positively jump from his chair as if stung by a bee! "There used to be a Labyrinth Park here in Rocky Beach years and years ago – before you were born, son," Mr. Andrews said, almost as an afterthought.

"It was renamed for an important philanthropist about fifteen years ago – but it wasn't on a 'Third Road.' Your mother and I took you there when you were just a youngster. There used to be a small hedge maze for kids in the center of the park. But you're much too big for the maze now. You'd probably see right over the tops of the bushes – if it's still there, that is."

His father chuckled and relit his pipe. "At the center of the maze was a big, ugly bronze statue of the minotaur – used to scare the dickens out of you!"

Bob stared at his father, wide-eyed. "Would you excuse me, dad?" he gasped. "I've got to make an important phone call!"

Chapter Eight

A Walk in the Park

“OF COURSE!” Jupiter said excitedly. “That *must* have been what Julius was trying to say!”

Jupe had nearly dropped the telephone when Bob had called to relay the information about the park. When they had hung up, he mentally kicked himself for not figuring it out himself. If there was one thing Jupiter Jones hated, it was being beaten to a clue!

Now that they had a solid lead, Jupiter was anxious to get to the park with the hedge maze as soon as possible.

However, Aunt Mathilda had other ideas. The whole next day she watched Jupe like a hawk. And, with Bob’s part-time job at the library, and Pete’s baseball practice, two days passed before they were able to gather in Headquarters for a meeting. Jupe was just about to call the meeting to order when Allie’s head popped up through Tunnel Two’s trap door.

“I knew I’d find you guys in here,” she grinned. “I hope you weren’t starting without me!”

Jupiter looked at her distastefully. “We really need to install a lock on that door.”

He rapped his knuckles on the desk and called the meeting to order.

“Since Aunt Mathilda hasn’t let me out of her sight in the past two days, we need to seize any opportunity to get out of her line of vision. Fortunately, that opportunity is this evening! I overheard Uncle Titus telling Hans that he and Aunt Mathilda are going to their bridge club tonight. That should give us several hours to conduct a thorough search of the statue.”

“But what about Jujab?” Pete said shakily. “What if we run into him? I sure don’t want to be the one to come between him and his knife!”

"Pete has a point," agreed Bob. "Besides, I asked Miss Bennett at the library about Daedalus Park. According to her it's located in a run-down section of Rocky Beach. She said you wouldn't catch *her* there after dark!"

"That's what I love about librarians;" said Pete, "they're full of good, common sense!"

"You can count me in!" Allie said bravely, making a fist. "Just let that weirdo try anything funny. I'll knock him straight into next week!"

Jupiter leaned back in his chair, thinking hard. After a moment he sat up straight. "I'm not sure this Jujab character is all that he claims to be," he declared.

"How so?" asked Allie.

Pete shrugged. "He sure looked authentic to me!"

Jupiter bridged his fingers; his round, owlsh face gave them a shrewd look.

"That's the trouble. By looking at him you would assume that he is very refined. He speaks intelligently and dresses exquisitely. And yet when we first met him I observed that he had bitten his fingernails ragged. Hardly a trait of someone as cultured as he claims to be!"

"So what?" Bob laughed. "Everyone has a few bad habits. I still say the guy is dangerous!"

"Perhaps," Jupiter said loftily. "But you'll also recall he addressed me as both *Señor* Jones and *Monsieur* Jones. *Señor*, of course, is Spanish. And *Monsieur* is French. That indicates to me that he is either fluent in several languages, and hence, a world traveler just as he claims – or that he is a fraud who doesn't know French from Spanish!"

Several hours later, the three boys gathered outside the gates of the salvage yard. The sun was just setting and a cool fog was beginning to form low to the ground. They were beginning to

wonder if Allie had gotten bored with detective work and had decided to stay home to watch television, when they saw her ride rather unsteadily up to the gates on an old fashioned bicycle.

“Good gravy!” Pete laughed. “Where in the world did you get that antique?”

“Go soak your head, Crenshaw!” Allie replied, sticking out her tongue at Pete. “It’s my Aunt Pat’s. She’s got three cars in her garage – but only one bicycle. I can’t help it if it’s a little outdated.”

“Outdated is hardly the word,” Bob chuckled. “Carbon dated is more like it!”

“Laugh it up all you want,” Allie shot back. “At least I’m not the scaredy-cat who’s afraid of Jujab!”

Jupiter cleared his throat. “We had better get going. The sun will be down in an hour.” He looked at Allie with a mischievous grin. “And for goodness sakes, try to keep up on that relic!”

Miss Bennett, the librarian, hadn’t been exaggerating about the section of town the park was located in. While at his job, Bob had looked up city maps of the area and had learned that the neighborhood was slated for major renovation in the coming months. However, for the moment, it was run-down and practically deserted.

Gray, sagging buildings lined the pot-holed streets; and weeds grew near the weary sidewalks. As they rode their bicycles down the barren avenues, Pete gulped and pointed out that most of the street lights were burned out.

When they reached Daedalus Park, now renamed Philip Fulmer Park, they observed its condition wasn’t any better. A broken slide and seesaws stood deserted in the fading light. Nearby was a bent swing set, its swings swaying eerily in the cool evening breeze. A canopy of trees crowded over their heads, blocking out most of the remaining rays of sunlight.

“Come on,” Jupiter commanded, pedaling his bicycle through

the fog. "The hedge maze should be just up here."

Bob and Pete followed close behind Jupe, while Allie pedaled furiously trying to keep up.

"Wait up, you guys!" she hissed. She didn't know why she was whispering – it just seemed appropriate somehow in such a spooky place.

When they reached the hedge maze, they parked their bicycles and stepped up to the overgrown entrance.

"Creeps!" Pete shuddered. "This place would give me the willies in the daytime!"

"No kidding," Allie agreed. "No parent in their right mind would let their kids play in this park."

"I can see the statue ahead," said Jupiter, clicking on a flashlight. "It should be in the exact center of the maze. Watch your step, though. The hedge is overgrown and tangled. There might be branches obstructing the path."

As they shuffled along the unpleasant walkway, each following closely behind the other, strange sounds seemed to fill the air. The wind swished through the scraggily leaves of the maze. Off in the distance a crow cawed. But even with the overgrown state of the hedge, it wasn't difficult to find the center of the maze. It was, after all, designed for children, and the bushes barely came up to their shoulders.

Within minutes they were at the center. Jupe shined his light on the shiny bronze statue of Rocky Beach's renowned philanthropist, Philip Fulmer.

"Here it is!" he said excitedly. "We know that Gregorio's son was a sculptor that lived in Rocky Beach. We also know that the clue on the monkey's paw said to come to this park. The Gypsy's inheritance must be hidden somewhere near here. Perhaps inside the statue!"

With excitement, they all turned on their flashlights and began searching the area. Pete even climbed up on top of the statue and



examined it thoroughly. After several minutes, Jupiter stopped and pinched his lip.

“Have you given up already?” Allie scoffed.

Jupe paced back and forth in front of the statue, his hands behind his back.

“Something’s not right here,” he said finally.

“What is it, First?” asked Bob.

Before Jupe could answer, Pete hissed a warning.

“Fellows – someone’s coming!”

Everyone strained to see through the growing darkness.

Pete was right! At the entrance to the maze stood two men. They advanced through the bushes, moving at a quick pace. Suddenly, Jupiter gave the secret code that meant to run for it.

“Ramble and scramble!” he ordered.

The four darted off through the murky growth of the hedge maze, zigging and zagging as fast as they could move their feet. They were near the end when Allie stumbled over a root and went sprawling to the ground. She cried out and her flashlight clattered away.

Pete skidded to a stop and raced back. The men were gaining on them! He helped Allie up and they ran hand in hand toward the exit. The two thugs were close enough now that Pete could see that one of them had a large nose that was smashed flat, and the other had a wicked scar that went from one side of his throat to the other!

Chapter Nine

Ghost to Ghost

“RUN FOR IT!” Pete cried. The fastest runner in their school, Pete was practically pulling Allie along as they sprinted through the darkness.

When they reached their bicycles, Pete let Allie ride his as he climbed on her antique. All four pumped their pedals furiously, throwing occasional glances behind them to make sure they weren’t being followed.

As Jupe looked over his shoulder, he noticed lights blinking on and off around the statue. The two men were searching the area!

“Who were they?” Bob gasped.

“They must be the two men Gregorio mentioned. The men who stole the paw and slashed their way out of his tent,” was Jupiter’s reply.

A short time later they were back in a familiar neighborhood. Feeling more confident, they eased their pace as they rode back to the salvage yard.

“Some detectives you guys turned out to be!” Allie smirked. “The first sign of danger and you high-tail it!”

“Remember, you were right behind us!” countered Bob.

“What do we do now, First?” asked Pete. “Those two men may have found the Gypsy’s treasure. We’ve failed!”

“On the contrary,” Jupiter said solemnly. “I believe we are still very much in the thick of things!”

“How can you be so sure?” Allie said skeptically. “Those two goons just chased us off like a bunch of scared little kids. Jujab’s probably counting his loot by now!”

But Jupiter would say no more. He remained silent for the rest of the ride back to the junkyard.

When they reached the front gates, they pulled up their bicycles in the gravel drive beneath a streetlight, each breathing hard.

"I suppose I should get home," said Bob. "Mom's going to start nagging me about being out so late."

"Me too," said Pete. "It's been a crazy night anyway. My nerves need to rest for awhile!"

"I guess I should get home, too," Allie conceded. "Indian Queen needs a brushing and some fresh water."

Everyone looked at Jupiter expectantly.

"It is barely nine o'clock," he said finally. "There is still time to carry out the next stage of the operation before we each depart for our homes."

"Next stage?" Allie cried. "I've had enough excitement for one evening, thank you very much!"

"I'll take a double helping of that!" Pete agreed. "I'm going to have nightmares as it is after coming face to face with those two crooks!"

"You will not face any immediate danger," said Jupe. "We only need to call on a few ghosts!"

"Ghosts?" Allie gasped. "That's it – old Jones has finally lost his marbles! Now he believes in ghosts!"

"Not real ghosts, Allie," laughed Bob. "It's a code word we use for one of Jupe's schemes. It's a real beauty, too. When we need help on a case, I call five of my friends. Pete calls five different friends. And Jupiter calls five more. In turn, each "ghost" calls five of their friends, and so on. In no time at all we've got the entire population of kids in Rocky Beach helping us out! We call it the Ghost to Ghost Hookup!"

"Say, that's a swell plan," Allie said with genuine admiration. "And you say Sherlock Jones came up with that? That's pretty clever – even for him! But wait... I don't know anyone in Rocky Beach other than you three and Aunt Pat!"

"You can simply observe the operation," said Jupiter, pushing

his bicycle along the long fence that surrounded the yard. "But since it is so late, we had better utilize the phone in Headquarters. Our folks might be displeased if we began calling up half the town at this late hour."

After about a hundred yards, Jupiter stopped near the corner. On the boards of the tall fence was painted an ocean scene. A single fish looked out of the green waves of the water, watching a two-masted ship founder in a fierce storm. Jupe pushed the eye of the fish and two boards swung up. The boys called this entrance Green Gate One.

They all shoved their bikes through into Jupiter's outdoor workshop, and then admitted themselves into Headquarters through Tunnel Two.

Blackbeard fluttered crankily in his cage as Pete snapped on the light, then tucked his head under his wing and went back to sleep.

"What are our ghosts going to be looking for, Jupe?" Bob wondered. "The two crooks that got the treasure?"

Jupiter shook his head. "They didn't get the treasure. At least, I'm fairly confident they didn't get it."

"How can you be so sure?" Allie quizzed him. "Do you have a crystal ball you're not telling us about?"

"Nothing as fanciful as that," Jupiter replied somewhat pompously. "As an Investigator, I rely on observation and simple deduction. Pete, you were actually on top of the statue tonight. Pray tell, what exactly did you see?"

Pete thought for a moment. "Well, it was made out of bronze. It was on a cement base about four feet tall by four feet wide. And it's a prime spot for pigeons!"

"But describe the statue," Jupe urged.

"The statue was of a man," Allie helped out. "A Philip someone. The philanthropist guy the park was renamed for. But what does that have to do with..."

“Oh!” Bob cried, snapping his fingers. “I get it! We didn’t go there looking for a statue of a *man* - we went there looking for a statue of the *minotaur*! We got so wrapped up with finding the treasure; no one noticed the statue had changed!”

“Precisely,” Jupiter agreed. “When the park was renamed for Philip Fulmer fifteen years ago, the statue of the minotaur was taken down and a statue of a man was put in its place. That’s why the name ‘Daedalus’ meant nothing to Gregorio. Had the park still been named Labyrinth Park, he might have made the connection. We need to know what happened to that statue! If we’re lucky it’s still here in Rocky Beach somewhere.”

With renewed vigor, Bob began the Ghost to Ghost Hookup by calling five of his friends. Then Pete and Jupiter did the same. Jupe had just hung up from his last call and they were about to exit the trailer when the telephone suddenly rang. They looked at each other in surprise. The Ghost to Ghost had never worked so quickly before! Jupiter snatched up the phone.

“The Three Investigators, Jupiter Jones speaking.”

Pete, Bob, and Allie watched Jupiter as he cradled the phone by his shoulder and jotted down an address on a notepad.

“Oh – hello! Of course. I see,” he was murmuring into the phone. “You don’t say? Are you sure about that? Hmmm... You’re absolutely positive? Well, The Three Investigators thank you for your help. Please stop by the salvage yard tomorrow to pick out one free item under five dollars. We appreciate your swift reply. Goodbye.”

Jupiter hung up the phone and plopped down in his office chair. He let out a long sigh and itched at his cast.

“Well?” Pete cried. “Spill it!”

Jupiter looked at his friends and sighed again. “We’ve found the statue. Unfortunately it is presently presiding over the garden of one E. Skinner Norris!”

Chapter Ten

House Call

“SKINNY NORRIS?” Pete howled. “Anyone but him!”

E. Skinner Norris spent part of each year in Rocky Beach with his family, who had a second mansion in another state. As his second home provided driver’s licenses to juveniles, Skinny was able to drive his own car. This fact, along with a considerable weekly spending allowance, led Skinny to trouble more often than not. He tried to make himself a leader among the kids in town by paying for their friendship.

Skinny’s ultimate goal each summer was to prove that he was smarter and more clever than Jupiter Jones. He had tried many times in the past – but he never succeeded! Still, this didn’t stop him from snooping into Jupe’s business, and that of The Three Investigators; making him a genuine, Grade-A headache!

“Who’s Skinny Norris?” Allie wanted to know. “Why can’t we just ask him if we can look at his statue?”

“We might as well try to build a rocket ship and fly to the moon,” Bob said dejectedly. “If the statue is at Skinny’s house, we’re sunk! He hates Jupe – and The Three Investigators!”

“It’s the curse,” Pete said finally. “The curse is working against us! Nothing has gone right on this case from the start. And now the minotaur statue is at Skinny’s house.”

“Nonsense,” Jupiter snapped. “Jujab must know we have the monkey’s paw – he could come and get it anytime he wanted. But he hasn’t! I don’t think he’s interested in the paw at all. Somehow he knows about the treasure and is using us to find it!”

“But he wasn’t counting on Skinny Norris!” Bob added.

“It certainly is an obstacle,” Jupiter said lamely. “Naturally, Skinny won’t let us within a half mile of his garden, much less the statue!”

Feeling glum at this new development, they sat quietly around the desk, each trying to figure out a way to get past Skinny Norris. After a moment, Jupe cleared his throat.

“Of course, there is one way we could circumvent this unfortunate predicament.”

“And what is that, Encyclopedia Jones?” Allie snorted.

Jupiter gave her a smug grin. “Skinny knows us – but he doesn’t know *you*!”

“Oh no you don’t!” cried Allie. “I didn’t sign on for this!”

“You were the one who was bored and insisted on tagging along on this investigation,” Bob exclaimed.

“That’s right!” agreed Pete. “Besides, if you want to solve this mystery you have to do it. There’s no other way we can get past Skinny!”

Allie knew they were right, but she pretended to think about it just to get under their skin.

“I’ll do it on one condition,” she grinned.

“Name it!” Pete said.

Allie opened the trap door to Tunnel Two and started climbing down. “That you three clean Indian Queen’s stable when this case is all over!”

The boys just sat there, their mouths hanging open. Before they could think up a reply, Allie had disappeared. They could still hear her laughing as she made her way down the long corrugated pipe.”

“She’s got some nerve!” Pete seethed.

“She certainly has,” Jupe agreed. “And unfortunately we have no other alternative.”

The next day, the boys put in a few hours of work at the salvage yard and then took their lunch in Jupiter’s workshop, where they waited for Allie to arrive.

They had just cleaned their plates when the boards for Green

Gate One swung open and she pushed her Aunt's old bicycle through. Pete was the first to notice her clothes. Instead of faded jeans and a t-shirt, she was wearing a fashionable yellow sun dress and matching designer shoes!

"Whiskers! What's got into you?" he cried.

"Not another word!" Allie warned. "I'm only doing this for the case. My Aunt Pat bought this crazy get-up last summer. I never even took the price-tags off of it! But I figured I would never get past this Skinny character as a reporter for the Junior Girl's League wearing torn jeans and a western shirt!"

"The old Junior Girls League ploy," Jupiter said with admiration. "An excellent cover story."

Allie wasn't sure if Jupiter was serious or giving her a genuine compliment, but she let it slip. "That's right. As far as Skinny Norris knows, I'm simply a reporter for the JGL doing an editorial on strange works of art in Rocky Beach for our monthly newsletter."

Jupiter took her bicycle and leaned it against the printing press. "Fortunately, you won't need this today. The Norris's live in a big mansion on the far side of town. I wouldn't dream of having you ride this contraption all that distance in a dress. I have arranged for far more suitable transportation."

Just then a car horn honked out front. The four hurried to the front gates where they found Worthington waiting for them beside the gleaming, gold-plated Rolls Royce. Pete gave a low whistle. No matter how many times he saw it, he was always impressed by the automobile's fabulous black luster and gleaming golden adornments.

"Good afternoon, sirs," Worthington said in a crisp British accent. "Good afternoon, ma'am." He tipped his cap to Allie and then opened the back door for them. "The Rolls is filled with petrol and at your disposal, Master Jones."

"Very good, Worthington," Jupiter grinned. As Worthington

drove them up through the hilly section of Rocky Beach where much of the town's ritzy population lived, Jupiter explained their current case to the chauffeur. Worthington always took a keen interest in their cases.

"Your client last week," said Jupiter. "The one with the fez and the white suit. Can you tell us anything about him?"

Worthington shook his head. "As you know, I am always grateful when I am given the opportunity to assist The Three Investigators. It is much more fulfilling work than catering to bored millionaires. However, as I'm sure you can understand, it is against regulations to provide details about another client. My apologies, Master Jones."

"Of course, Worthington," said Juve. "I understand. It looks like we have arrived. Continue on down the block and park around the corner. We want to attract as little attention as possible."

"Very good, sir," said Worthington.

When the big car had been parked, the four climbed out and began walking back toward the Norris's sprawling estate.

"Remember your cover story," Jupiter was instructing Allie. "Skinny may be a nuisance, but he's no dummy. He'll suspect something if he thinks that you're lying. We'll be observing the garden from a distance. If you can, try to get him to leave you alone with the statue. Look for a hidden compartment of some kind."

"All right, all right!" she sighed. "Just leave it to me!"

The boys watched her enter the front gate of the giant mansion and stroll up to the front door. Then they hurried along the side of the property's large stone wall and found a tree that allowed them to see over.

Jupiter held binoculars up to his eyes and scanned the Norris's vast garden.

"I see the statue," he reported. "It's the only bronze one out

there. All the rest are white marble.”

Five minutes passed before he saw movement at the back door. “There she is!” Jupe hissed. “And Skinny’s with her! They’re walking over to the statue. Skinny’s saying something. Now they’re laughing.”

Jupiter watched quietly for a moment, but his next words made Pete and Bob’s hair stand on end.

“Uh-oh!”

“What’s wrong?” Pete demanded. He grabbed the glasses from Jupiter and peered at the garden. It didn’t take him long to see what had alarmed Jupiter.

“Creeps! It’s those two thugs from the park! Where’d they come from?”

Chapter Eleven

Masher & Croaker

"THEY MUST HAVE scaled the wall," Jupiter said grimly. "Come on!"

Without a second thought, Jupe leapt from the branch he was perched on to the top of the large stone wall. Pete and Bob followed suit and all three dropped down into the Norris's garden.

With Pete in the lead, The Three Investigators made their way along a stone walkway; past various marble statues and beds of exotic flowers and plants. When they reached the statue they were out of breath. The minotaur presided over the small gathering of people; its blue-green body, highly polished, gleamed majestically in the afternoon sunlight.

Allie was looking nervously at the two thugs when the boys arrived, and Skinny was looking positively terrified as he stared wide-eyed from behind her. But when Skinny saw Jupe, Pete, and Bob his demeanor changed. He stepped from behind Allie and leered at the boys.

"What are you three doing here? Don't you know this is private property? Why, I ought to call the cops!"

The flat-nosed thug growled and flicked open a switchblade knife. "Zip it kid. Or I'll shut it permanently!"

The man had broad shoulders and large, meaty hands. His face was rumpled like he had been in many fistfights over the years. He looked to Jupiter like the type of criminal who wouldn't hesitate to use a knife!

Now the second thug stepped forward. He was smaller in size but looked just as dangerous. A wicked looking scar ran across his neck from ear to ear. When he spoke he held a small microphone to his throat. A wire ran from the device to a portable speaker about the size of a deck of playing cards that was attached to his



belt. When he talked his words came out in a robotic, monotone voice that chilled their blood.

“Don’t... get... any... wise... ideas.”

The flat-nosed thug nodded and grinned. His two front teeth were gold, and many of the others were missing.

“That’s right,” he said in a gravelly voice. “I’d listen to Croaker if I were you. He’s been known to get rough with unco-operative... clients.” Flat-nose pointed his knife at Skinny. “You – come over here!”

Skinny shook his head and took a step backward.

“N-N-No way,” he yelled, his voice cracking slightly. “I’m calling the cops! You’re trespassing on private property.”

Suddenly the man named Croaker grabbed Skinny by his shirt front. He moved as fast as lightening – Skinny never had a chance to make a break for it. The small man maneuvered behind him, putting his forearm around Skinny’s neck. With his other hand he held the microphone to his throat.

“No... cops...” said the robotic voice. “Should... I... rough... him... up... Masher?”

The flat-nosed thug named Masher shook his head.

“Nah – Boss might get sore if we get too rough. Let’s just get what we came for and beat it outta here – before someone really does call the cops!”

Croaker pushed Skinny toward the statue. The gangly, freckle-faced boy tripped and went sprawling to the grass. Allie took the opportunity to dash over to the boys. Clearly frightened, she gripped Jupiter’s arm tightly.

In an instant, a knife had appeared in Croaker’s hand. He stood over Skinny and glowered.

“No... tricks... kid... or... else....”

Skinny licked his lips and nodded, then looked wildly at Jupiter. Despite his dislike for E. Skinner Norris, the stocky First Investigator could only watch helplessly – he could see no way

out of the situation.

They had come so close to finding the treasure, only to have plucked from their grasp by Masher and Croaker!

“All right, kid,” growled Masher, “there’s a secret opening somewhere on this statue. You’ve got thirty seconds to get up there and find it!”

Trembling, Skinny picked himself up from the lawn and climbed onto the statue’s base. Pinching his bottom lip, Jupiter watched intently as Skinny examined the statue. The red-headed boy looked at the shining bronze minotaur front and back, but it wasn’t until he had shimmied up the statue of the monster that he gave a cry of success.

“Here it is!” he yelped. “On top of its head – there’s a little hatch. It has a lock!”

Croaker flicked his knife savagely.

“All... right... kid... off... the... statue...”

Skinny frowned at the crook. “Anything you find inside this thing belongs to my father! He bought this hunk of junk fair and square!”

The flat-nosed Masher chuckled. “I wouldn’t argue with Croaker, kid. It’s not good for your health.”

Skinny gulped. For an instant he looked like he might have something else to say, then thought better of it and climbed down off the statue.

Once more moving with surprising speed and dexterity, Croaker leapt up onto the statue’s base and clambered on top so he was sitting on its shoulders. He produced a small leather case from his jacket pocket, unzipped it, and took out several small tools. Jupiter recognized it immediately as a kit criminals used to pick locks.

The crook with the horrible scar worked on the lock for several minutes as Masher kept watch over the kids. The Three Investigators and Allie could only look on, their spirits sinking, as

Croaker fiddled with the lock. Finally, the small thug held his microphone to his throat.

“Got... it...”

“Good work,” said Masher. “What’s inside?”

Croaker took a small pen light from his jacket and shined it inside the minotaur’s head. Next he reached within the cavity and felt around with his hand. He moved his head very close to the opening and peered inside, then looked down at Masher and shook his head.

“It’s... empty...” said the robotic voice.

Chapter Twelve

Find the Treasure... Or Else!

THE THREE INVESTIGATORS and Allie looked from Masher to Croaker. They could tell by the expressions on the crooks' faces that they were unsure of what to do next. They, too, had expected to find the Gypsy's treasure inside the minotaur's head!

"All right, Croaker, come on down," Masher said heavily. He paced about in front of the statue for a moment, rubbing his lumpy chin and scowling.

Croaker spoke into his microphone. "What... do... we... do... now...?"

Masher took off his hat and scratched his head. He seemed to be thinking quite hard. Finally, after several long minutes, he grunted and approached the four youths, grabbing Bob roughly by the arm.

"Hold on to this one, Croaker," the flat-nosed hood said in his gravelly voice. "If any of his friends try anything funny let him have it."

"Where... are... you... going?"

Next Masher grabbed onto Skinny. His bloodshot eyes narrowed to slits and he grinned, exposing his gruesome gold teeth. "Me and the brat are going inside to use the telephone. Ain't that right, kid?"

Jupiter was relieved to see that Skinny was too scared to think of anything wise to say to the criminal. This was one of the few times that he was at a loss for words. The horse-faced boy just nodded his head weakly, his face blank with terror.

Masher grabbed Skinny by the back of his shirt and began marching him in the direction of the Norris's mansion. He stopped half way and called back to his partner.

"Remember, if anyone tries to make a break for it, you let the

air out of their pal!”

Beneath the shadow of the minotaur, Croaker nodded and held Bob tightly, his switchblade gleaming cruelly in the sun.

Not daring to move, Jupiter, Pete, and Allie watched as Skinny admitted himself and Masher through the back door of his home. They waited for what seemed like an eternity for the two of them to return. Finally the back door opened and Masher and Skinny walked back to the gleaming, green-blue statue.

Looking slightly chagrined, Masher tucked his knife away in his jacket pocket. “All right Croaker, let the kid go,” he said to his partner.

“What... did... the... Boss... say?” Croaker asked, shoving Bob back toward his friends.

Masher sighed and scratched his head again. “He says to let them go.” His meaty hand pointed at Jupiter. “He says we must have missed a clue somewhere along the way, but not to worry, the fat one will figure it out. He says he’s an ace at figuring out puzzles.”

Skinny sniggered at this reference to Jupiter’s weight. Somewhat ruffled, Juve stepped forward and spoke in his most dignified manner.

“I presume, sir, that your boss is the mysterious traveler known as Jujab. We are in possession of the monkey’s paw. Now that the clue from the paw has been deciphered, we’d like to return it to the Gypsies. Is this course of action acceptable to Jujab?”

Masher looked at him quizzically, and then shrugged his massive shoulders.

“I don’t know no Jujab, kid.” He turned to walk away, then added: “Do what you got to do with the paw, but find that treasure... or else!”

Masher paused to let his words sink in, and then waved a hand at his crony. “Come on, Croaker, let’s beat it.”

Croaker put his knife away and the two crooks disappeared into the deep shadow of trees near the wall of the Norris's garden.

When they were gone, Pete heaved a deep sigh of relief. "Yikes! I thought our goose was cooked for sure! I'll be happy if I never have to see their ugly faces again!"

"I'm in complete agreement," Bob gulped. "But how could we have missed a clue, Jupe? The monkey's paw was pretty clear if you ask me!"

Jupiter didn't answer – he was busy pinching his lip.

"Still smarting from the wisecrack about your weight?" said Allie. "Don't let it bother you; Masher doesn't look like the type to be overly sensitive about a person's feelings!"

Up to this point Skinny had been unusually silent – still too scared to speak. But with the mention of Jupiter's weight he seemed to snap out of it.

"Okay you four, just stay right there! I've been waiting for years to catch you do-gooders in the act, and now I finally have you where I want you! Trespassing, attempted robbery, vandalism – Chief Reynolds will throw you in the clink for sure!"

Pete's face grew red. "Vandalism? Robbery? What in blue blazes are you talking about, Skinny? We just tried to help you out, or have you forgotten already?"

"Yeah," Allie leered, "and if I remember correctly, you were the one hiding behind me when those two hoodlums showed up – quivering like a little baby!"

Now it was Skinny's for a flushed face. He ignored Allie's barb and turned his attention to the First Investigator. He gloated as he poked a bony finger into Jupiter's chest.

"I'm going to yell for my maid and have her call the cops. I've finally got the goods on you, Fatso McSherlock! Brother, I never thought this day would come! Well, you're usually full of big words – what have you got to say for yourself now?"

Jupiter, who still hadn't said a word since Masher and Croaker

had left, finally spoke up.

“Actually, Skinny, I do have something to say.”

He gestured to Bob, Pete, and Allie.

“In fact, it’s something I just communicated to my associates last night. However, judging by our current situation, I think it bears repeating.”

Bob looked just as puzzled as Skinny. “Gee, what did you say last night, First?”

Jupiter’s round face turned up in a sly grin, and then he bolted for the garden wall – calling over his shoulder.

“Run!”

Chapter Thirteen

Cursed?

BOB, PETE AND ALLIE followed Jupe's lead and made a dash for the garden wall – leaving Skinny behind them bellowing and shaking his fists in fury.

When they had scaled the wall – Pete helping Jupiter, who was hindered by his cast – they dropped back down to the other side and scrambled back to the Rolls Royce and Worthington, who was pacing worriedly by the car.

A short time later, the gleaming Rolls coasted through the large iron gates. They hopped out of the elegant auto and began heading toward Jupiter's workshop when a voice rang out that stopped them in their tracks.

“Not so fast!”

Jupiter gulped and turned slowly.

“Just where do you think you're going?” asked his Uncle Titus. “Your aunt has a list of chores as long as my arm, but every time she turns around you've vanished. And who has to hear about it? I do – that's who!”

Jupe's Uncle Titus was a small man with an enormous black mustache. While he was more prone to letting the boys out of work than his wife, he could be strict when Mathilda Jones really nagged him.

Jupiter, who was always good at thinking on his feet, thought of the first thing that might get them out of work and back on the trail of the mysterious traveler.

“But Uncle Titus, we're in the midst of an investigation – we're helping the Gypsies.”

“That's right,” Allie added helpfully, “we only have until the Art Festival is over to solve the mystery!”

“We're on the verge of cracking the case,” Bob chimed in.

“We just need a little more time.”

“And then we’ll do any job you’d like,” finished Pete.

Titus Jones eyed his nephew shrewdly, tugged at his mustache, and then grinned at the boys and Allie.

“The Gypsies, eh? Well why didn’t you say so? Good people, the Gypsies. I’ve always liked them. They remind me of my days in the carnival – I used to play the calliope, you know. Perhaps you’d like a little concert?”

“We really must get going,” said Jupiter quickly. “We don’t have much time left.”

“I see. I see...” Titus Jones smiled. “Well then, let us just pretend we never saw each other and no one will be the wiser. Okay?”

Jupiter grinned at his uncle. “Thanks, Uncle Titus!”

They immediately moved quickly to get out of sight.

When they reached the outdoor workshop and parked their bikes against the printing press, Pete spoke dejectedly.

“On the verge of cracking the case?” he said, looking doubtfully at Bob and Jupiter. “Let’s face it – Jujab’s curse is the real thing. The statue was empty – this may be the first case The Three Investigators have ever failed!”

Jupiter shook his head stubbornly and scratched at his cast. “I admit there have been some setbacks.”

“Setbacks?” Pete crowed. “Nothing has gone right so far! First you break your arm. Then we find the wrong statue at the park – which turned up at Skinny Norris’ house I might add – and then that statue ends up being empty. Someone has already got the loot if you ask me, and I’m not too keen on waiting around for another bad thing to happen. Who knows what could be next!”

Allie looked at Jupiter. “I haven’t given up, but it sure seems like we’ve hit a dead end. Maybe Pete’s right. Not about the curse, but about the case. I don’t see where we can go from here!”

Jupiter began pacing, absent-mindedly scratching at his cast.

He glanced at Bob. “And what about you, Records? What are your thoughts on our present situation?”

Bob frowned and took off his glasses, polishing them on his shirtsleeve.

“Well, I’ve been thinking,” the studious boy said. “Something Masher said struck me as odd. When you mentioned the name ‘Jujab’ to him, he didn’t seem to know who you were talking about. Gregorio said he saw Masher, Croaker, and Jujab together when they broke into his tent; and we’ve assumed all along that he’s their boss. So how come Masher said he didn’t know anyone named Jujab?”

Jupiter’s eyes lit up and he rocked back on his heels, a satisfied look on his face.

“An excellent observation, Records. Masher’s comment about not knowing Jujab did not go unnoticed by me either.”

Bob was practically glowing from Jupiter’s praise. It wasn’t very often that their leader acknowledged their deductive skills while on a case!

“But how does that help us?” asked Allie, a touch of exasperation creeping into her voice. “It’s just another mystery to solve!”

“It doesn’t help us,” Jupiter said patiently. “But with a simple process of ratiocination, I’ve developed a course of action that may deliver results!”

“Rat – Ratio what?” Pete blinked. “Brother, you’ve used some whoppers in the past, but that word is the hands down, blue-ribbon, gold prize winner!”

“Ratiocination,” explained the First Investigator. “It’s an exact thinking process – a form of deductive reasoning in which a logical series of events can be inferred based upon the available facts.”

“And what’s your deduction based on the facts?” challenged Allie. “Did you see something in Skinny’s garden that we didn’t?”

Jupiter gave them a superior smile. He was always pleased when he felt he had come up with a particularly ingenious idea.

"I'm quite sure we all saw the same thing," he said, "but I'm not sure we all interpreted it the same way. I'm speaking, of course, about the minotaur statue."

"What about it?" Bob asked. "We all saw Croaker open up the head. It was empty just like he said!"

"But I'm talking about the statue itself," Jupiter lectured. "We know for a fact that it is quite old – at least fifteen years – perhaps more. Gregorio told us that his son made it out of copper right here in Rocky Beach. Naturally, a statue made of copper that has stood outside in the elements for over a decade would be subject to oxidation."

"What's oxidation?" asked Pete.

"I know that one," said Allie. "My dad's hired hand uses copper on the fences back at our farm. He told me oxidation is when a metal reacts to oxygen. Copper corrodes over time, turning it from its normal color to a kind of greenish-blue."

"Correct," said Jupiter. "The statue we saw today was green-blue, just as it should have been. However, it should also have had a dull finish, and perhaps have other blemishes from birds and the like."

Bob thought he understood where Jupiter was going with his reasoning. "I get it! The minotaur statue was perfectly clean and shiny – it was practically gleaming!"

Jupiter was already heading for Tunnel Two. He kept talking as he crawled through the corrugated pipe.

"A clean statue suggests to me that a professional metallurgist has worked on the minotaur very recently. If we can find out who that person was, perhaps we can ask him if he found anything inside the statue's head!"

"But how are we going to find this person?" Pete said skeptically. "It's not like a metallurgist is listed in the yellow pages!"

They had emerged through the trap door at the end of Tunnel Two and into Headquarters. Jupiter turned on the light over the desk and picked up the telephone.

“Leave that to me,” he said confidently, leafing through the Rocky Beach phone directory. When he found the number he was looking for, he snapped the book closed, dialed the number, and leaned back in his swivel chair.

“Hello, Chamber of Commerce? Yes, my name is E. Skinner Norris. My father has asked me to look into having a large copper statue in our garden restored. Is there anyone in the vicinity that could do the job?”

There was a short pause while the person on the other end replied, then Jupe jotted down an address on a piece of paper. He thanked the person and hung up, a victorious grin on his face.

“Short of going to Los Angeles or Hollywood, there is only one person in the area who restores statues – and he lives right here in Rocky Beach!”

Bob looked at the address and scowled.

“Yarborough Drive – that’s over by Fulmer Park, where we were chased the other night by Masher and Croaker. That’s too far away for me to go. I promised Miss Bennett I would put in a couple hours at the library. I guess I’ll have to catch up with you later.”

“And I was supposed to mow my Grandpa Peck’s lawn ages ago. My mother will have my head if I put it off another day!” Pete said morosely, looking at Jupiter and Allie. “I really wanted to be there when we found the treasure. It looks like it’s up to you two.”

“We shall report our findings immediately,” said Jupiter. “That is, if there’s anything to find. We must start thinking of a fresh approach should this turn out to be another dead end.”

Jupiter turned to Allie. “Shall we pay a visit to the metallurgist, or do you have somewhere to go as well?”

“I’m ready when you are,” said Allie. “But I have to do one thing before we go.”

“What’s that?” asked Pete.

Allie let herself out through Easy Three, a disgusted look on her face.

“Get out of this dress and into some nice, plain blue jeans!”

Chapter Fourteen

The Final Clue

WHEN ALLIE HAD changed out of her dress and into a pair of faded blue jeans and a worn denim shirt, she took a moment to feed and rub down Indian Queen, then proclaimed herself ready for the return trip to Fulmer Park. As she strained over the pedals of her ancient bicycle, she kept up a constant stream of chatter.

“What are we looking for anyway? How will we know when we’ve found the treasure?”

“I have yet to speak to Gregorio concerning the treasure,” Jupiter admitted. “An oversight on my part. However, according to Bob’s notes, he seemed to indicate that it was a book of some kind.”

“A book?” Allie cried. “We’re going to all this trouble for a lousy book?”

“We are going to all this trouble to help the Gypsies,” Jupiter reminded her. “Besides, it doesn’t matter what the treasure is, just as long as we find it before Jujab does.”

Allie suddenly looked behind her nervously.

“Do you think Masher and Croaker are following us?”

“Most likely,” said Jupiter evenly. “But I don’t expect any trouble from them. They won’t bother us as long as we’re looking for the treasure. It’s when we find it that we may require assistance.”

“I don’t like the sound of that,” Allie muttered. “By the way, what are you going to say to this fellow once we get there? Assuming, of course, that he found anything inside the statue in the first place.”

“I hadn’t thought about it,” Jupiter shrugged.

Allie rambled on for the remainder of the trip, but she was talking to herself for the most part. Lost in thought, Jupiter only

replied in grunts and shrugs. They finally arrived in the run-down neighborhood of Fulmer Park. Jupiter pulled the slip of paper from his shirt pocket and examined the address.

“1022 Yarborough Drive. I believe that is in this direction.” The stocky boy began pedaling up a side street and after several blocks, turned left. They were now in a small business district of seedy shops and tired looking storefronts. “Here we are. Yarborough Drive. It should be on the next block.”

Allie was still peering behind them on occasion. “I have a funny feeling – like we’re being watched. Maybe we should have had Hans and Konrad come along, huh?”

“That can’t be helped now,” Jupiter said grimly. “This is it. Thorwald Metallics: Restoration and Repair.”

The old building looked like it had once been a barbershop. A battered barber’s pole still hung by the faded awning. Thorwald’s was sandwiched between a pawn shop and a thrift store – the entire establishment seemed to be sagging slightly, as if a strong wind might bring the whole thing crashing down. Jupiter assumed his most dignified manner and, before Allie could protest, marched through the grimy front door.

The inside of the shop wasn’t much better than the outside. A strong smell of metal, grease, and powerful cleaning agents hit their noses. Enormous statues and strange works of art were piled to the ceiling. A single pathway snaked through various mounds of clutter to a front counter littered with hundreds of paperback books.

“Look at all these books!” Allie hissed, picking up a battered romance novel. “Yuck! Who actually reads this garbage – besides my Aunt Pat, that is? Look, they’re all the same,” she grinned, reading off the titles from a pile near the cash register. “*Passion Wind*; *Autumn’s Child*; *Cape Destiny* ... they’re not exactly Shakespeare!”

Jupiter ignored her – he was busy scanning the front counter

for a bell. He finally found one beneath a copy of *Audrey's Yearning* and gave it a sharp ring. Something stirred in a back room. Jupiter and Allie watched in amazement as a huge man in a muscle-shirt parted the beads in the doorway and stepped behind the counter.

Allie tried not to stare. The man towered over them, his face and shirt were grimy with grease and various stains. His long curly hair and beard were singed in places, most likely from working with a blowtorch, Jupiter surmised. Large tattoos of fiery skulls and snakes wound down his massive arms.

"Can I help you?" he said in a surprisingly gentle voice.

"Uh ... we, er ..." Jupiter had lost his train of thought for a moment. He quickly regrouped and held himself up straight once more.

"We hope you can be of assistance, sir. My uncle owns and operates the Jones Salvage Yard here in town. A lot of statues come and go through there. One in particular came through not long ago that he sold to the Norris Estate. I believe your services were recently engaged by them. A cleaning job of a minotaur statue in their garden."

The huge man nodded his head and looked at Jupiter and Allie suspiciously. "Sure, I remember that one. Pretty dirty statue, but the pay was good. What's it to you?"

Jupiter smiled politely. "I am a good friend of their son, Skinner. While out in the garden, my friend happened to notice a small latch on the statue's head. He asked me to come down and inquire if anything was inside the statue."

The man's eyes narrowed. "You accusing me of stealing?"

"Of course not, sir," Jupiter said quickly. "A man of your character, who obviously runs a reputable business establishment, needs not resort to petty theft. It is only a trivial matter. More a curiosity than anything."

Thorwald rubbed his shaggy beard and stared off in the dis-



tance, as if trying to recall something.

“Yeah, there was something in it all right ...”

Allie’s eyes lit up. She stepped on Jupiter’s toe and had to restrain herself from looking too excited.

“It was a piece of paper,” Thorwald continued. “Just a little scrap. Had a message to someone that didn’t make any sense. I thought it had fallen in somehow – maybe when it was built or cleaned last.”

“Do you still have this scrap of paper?” Jupiter said urgently. “My friend would really like to know what it said. It may be from a deceased family member.”

Once more, the big man rubbed his beard. He rocked back on his heels and scratched his head.

“Hmmm ... Now what did I do with that? Oh yeah, I remember now. I took a lunch break while I was cleaning the statue. As it was so nice that day I ate right there in the garden. I remember I had a book in my pocket; I was reading as I ate my sandwich. When I was finished, I stuck the scrap of paper between the pages for a bookmark.”

“Do you still have the book?” Allie said, her voice quivering with excitement. “Do you remember which one it was you were reading?”

Thorwald looked doubtfully at the pile of books on the countertop, and then turned and glanced at the huge pile of paperbacks behind the cash register.

“I don’t rightly know offhand,” he shrugged. “They’re all the same, you know ...” he said slyly, winking at Allie.

“Oh, you heard that,” Allie gulped, turning three shades of red. “I didn’t mean ...”

“Don’t sweat it, kid. You’re right – they’re not exactly Shakespeare.”

He crossed his arms and thought quietly for a moment, and then shook his shaggy head.

“It could honestly be any one of these books,” he said sheepishly. “I just don’t remember.”

“Would you mind if we looked?” Jupiter asked. “It really is important!”

“Sure,” Thorwald shrugged. “Help yourself. I’ll even give you a hand – business is kind of slow.”

The three searchers began leafing through paperback after paperback. Jupiter cleared a spot on the floor and they stacked the discarded books in a neat pile. Thirty minutes passed. The pile on the floor continued to grow. They had hardly made a dent in Thorwald’s collection when Allie finally let out a triumphant cry.

“I think I found it!”

Jupiter rushed over, followed closely by Thorwald. They all read the scrap of paper together. It read:

Father,

I’ve carried on – on to what could be the end. The Minotaur quite obviously stands for secrets. Look very deep inside your heart and perhaps you’ll find forgiveness. Is it too late?

*I hope not. Your loving son,
Julius*

“Jumping catfish!” Allie cried. “What in the world does that mean? We finally find a real clue and it’s all gibberish – it makes no sense!”

“On the contrary,” said Jupe. “It makes perfect sense!”

Chapter Fifteen

A Slight Diversion

“IF YOU CAN MAKE SENSE out of that, you’re a better detective than I thought!” Allie exclaimed.

Thorwald shook his shaggy head and returned to his place behind the front counter.

“If you know who the father is,” he said helpfully, “then he might know what it means. It sure seems like some kind of riddle to me!”

Jupiter tucked the note into his pocket and patted it.

“Thank you for your assistance, Mr. Thorwald. I know my friend Skinner will be quite pleased with this. I only wish there were some kind of reward we could offer for your assistance.”

Thorwald’s eyes lit up. He grinned and tugged at his shaggy beard.

“If you want to repay me, I’ve got an idea.”

Jupiter frowned slightly but humored the huge man by offering his full attention.

“You said your uncle runs the salvage yard here in town?”

Jupiter nodded quietly.

“Well, how about taking some of these books off my hands? I’ll give you the lot if you’ll lug ‘em out of here!”

Allie nudged Jupiter in the back.

“Sounds like a fair trade – don’t you think?”

Jupiter cleared his throat and stared hopelessly at the mountain of books in Thorwald’s cluttered workspace.

“I suppose I could take a box now and have Hans come back for the rest. I know my Aunt Mathilda would be interested in some of these titles.”

“It’s a deal!” Thorwald exclaimed, rapping his hand down on the countertop. He began tossing romance novels into a small box

and handed it to Jupe.

"I'm here all day, every day. Just send your man around to pick up the rest – I'll have them all boxed up for you!"

Jupiter gave him a placating smile, then marched out the front door and mounted his bicycle. Allie strapped the box of books to the rack on Jupiter's bike, and then looked at the First Investigator expectantly.

"Well?" she cried, as they began the long trip home. "Aren't you going to tell me what the message means?"

"In time," Jupiter said stubbornly. "I'm sure Bob and Pete would want to be included. Besides, we'll need their help if tonight's operation is to be successful!"

"Tonight's operation?" Allie crowed. "What operation are you talking about?"

"In time," was all Jupe would say. He remained quiet for the rest of the trip back to the yard, much to Allie's chagrin.

When they reached the gates of the Jones Salvage Yard, Allie sulked off to her Aunt Pat's, still steamed at Jupiter's silence. Meanwhile, Jupe set the small box of books by the office door, and then headed for Headquarters. He placed a few telephone calls, and then went about making secret preparations while waiting for Bob, Pete, and Allie to arrive.

The sun was just starting to set and the evening fog, so common in the coastal towns, had begun to form when all four had gathered in Jupiter's workshop.

Lightning flickered within the clouds off on the horizon when Bob and Pete arrived through Green Gate One just as Jupe had instructed over the telephone. Allie let herself in through Red Gate Rover in the back of the yard, being extra careful not to be seen by anyone. Meanwhile, Jupiter sat by the printing press, a wide-brimmed hat that his Aunt Mathilda wore when gardening was jammed atop his head.

"What's with the hat?" Pete laughed.

“A new fashion statement, Jones?” Allie snorted. “I think you’ve been spending too much time in the sun!”

“Actually, I think it’s just your size,” Jupiter grinned at Allie as he pulled aside the grate to Tunnel Two.

When they had settled themselves around the fire-scarred desk inside the buried trailer, Jupiter called the meeting to order by placing the scrap of paper in front of his chums. They all took turns reading it.

“Gosh!” Bob exclaimed. “That’s a puzzle wrapped up inside an enigma inside a conundrum!”

Pete frowned as he read the note. “Why couldn’t Julius just say what he wanted to say? Why does everything have to be in riddles?”

“It may be a riddle,” Allie grinned, “but Jupe thinks he knows what it means!”

The First Investigator rummaged through the desk and brought out a piece of paper and a pencil.

“I have a theory,” he began, pushing the hat back on his head, “that I think might lead us to the Gypsies’ hidden treasure. Bob – would you read the message aloud, please.”

Bob took the scrap of paper, pushed up his glasses, and recited Julius Romero’s final words.

*Father,
I’ve carried on – on to what could be the end. The
Minotaur quite obviously stands for secrets. Look very
deep inside your heart and perhaps you’ll find
forgiveness. Is it too late?*

*I hope not. Your loving son,
Julius*

“That’s about as clear as mud,” the studious boy added.

"It's really quite simple," Jupiter said importantly. "As trained investigators, you and Pete should see right through such a simple code."

"Code?" Allie blinked, reading the message once more. "If there's a code in there, it would take a brain like Einstein's to figure it out!"

"Not at all," Jupiter said, pulling the note close to him. "The message is a code telling the exact location of the Gypsies treasure; and the monkey's paw is the key that unlocks the code. One is useless without the other!"

"The paw?" Pete cried.

"Paw! Paw!" Blackbeard screeched.

"Zip it!" Pete warned the bird. "I had forgotten all about that old thing. How does the paw tie in with the mystery?"

"Remember," Jupiter lectured, "the message on the paw said: DAEDULUS 3 RD. We assumed '3 RD' meant some kind of road. But it actually functions as a shortcut way of saying: t – h – i – r – d."

"Third," Bob murmured. "Daedalus Third."

"If my theory is correct, Julius was telling his father to locate the note in the statue," Jupiter concluded, "and to take every third word of that note to make a new message!"

He began to scribble words down on his sheet of paper, muttering to himself as he worked. When he had crossed out the proper words, he was left with:

	<i>on</i>	<i>what</i>	<i>the</i>
<i>Minotaur</i>		<i>stands</i>	<i>Look</i>
<i>inside</i>		<i>and</i>	<i>find</i>
	<i>it</i>		

"Whiskers!" Pete cried, understanding dawning on his face. "The treasure was never inside the statue at all! It was hidden

inside the cement base the statue was standing on!”

“Which means it’s still at Fulmer Park!” Bob added in astonishment. “It was right under our noses!”

“Julius couldn’t be sure the statue would be there forever. But he gambled on the statue’s base staying put!” Allie crowed. “Now all we have to do is go and find it! Why didn’t you say that’s a thinking cap you’re wearing?”

“Which leads me to tonight’s operation,” Jupiter said importantly. “And unfortunately, you three won’t be there to see if my deductions prove accurate.”

“What?” Allie and Pete yelled together.

“Why not?” Bob demanded.

“Because we need a diversion,” Jupe explained. “We know Masher and Croaker will be following our every move. And who knows where Jubab is. He could appear at any moment to snatch the treasure away! But if we can fool them into following you three, while I go for the real treasure, we can safely return the Gypsies’ book back to Gregorio.”

“But isn’t that dangerous for you?” asked Allie. “Besides, how will you get the statue of Philip Fulmer off its base?”

“I’ve already made the proper arrangements,” Jupe grinned. “Hans and Konrad have volunteered to do the labor. They’re quite pleased to be able to help out the Gypsies.”

“So what’s the diversion going to be?” Pete wondered.

“I’ve arranged that as well,” Jupiter said with a satisfied smirk. “I took the liberty of calling Worthington at Rent ‘N Ride and reserved the use of the Rolls Royce for tonight. You may not be in the thick of the action, but at least you’ll be leading a wild goose chase in style!”

“But why did you call me and tell me to sneak over here – to be sure I wasn’t seen by anyone?” Allie asked. Jupiter smiled more broadly than ever.

“Because you’re playing me tonight!”

Chapter Sixteen

Rope, Chisel, Hammer

ALLIE GAVE JUPITER a rueful glance.

"Please tell me I don't have to wear that hat!" she grimaced.

"Indeed you do," Jupiter chuckled. "I've been wearing it around the yard all day in case Masher and Croaker have been spying on me. When they see you leave here tonight wearing one of my shirts and this hat, they should be adequately deceived. Then I'll sneak out through Blue Gate Two and into the back of the yard's small truck. Hans and Konrad will have their window open. When I hoot like an owl, they'll decide to go for a drive – to Fulmer Park!"

"Golly," Bob blinked, "that plan just might work!"

"Meet back at the front gates of the salvage yard at precisely ten o'clock. Hopefully I should have the Gypsies' treasure in hand – and perhaps something else as well!"

"What else is there?" Pete wondered.

"I'll leave it as a surprise," Jupiter said mysteriously. The stocky boy looked at his wristwatch and nodded grimly. "It's time." He stepped into the small room that served as Headquarters' laboratory and quickly changed shirts. He handed the shirt he had been wearing to Allie.

She looked at the flowered pattern on the shirt and rolled her eyes.

"Couldn't you have worn a simple t-shirt?"

"It's the smallest shirt I own," Jupe explained. "I've been suffocating in it all day. It will still be a little big for you, but in the darkness it should prove to be an adequate disguise."

Allie put it on over the shirt she was wearing, glaring at Bob and Pete when they started laughing.

"A little big?" Pete howled.

“You could fit two Allie’s in there!” Bob chuckled.

“Fortunately there is only one Allie in this world,” Jupiter sighed. “And that is more than enough. Now then, according to my watch, Worthington should be pulling up at the front gates at this very moment. I’ve instructed him to pull as far into the yard as possible and extinguish his headlights. Bob, Pete – I want you to get into the Rolls as quickly as possible, shielding Allie between you. If Masher and Croaker are only allowed a glimpse of someone in a flowered shirt and ridiculous hat, they should be completely fooled into believing it’s me. Which reminds me...”

The First Investigator plucked the gardening hat off and plopped it down on top of Allie’s head.

“A perfect fit!” he said proudly.

“I’ll get you for this if it’s the last thing I do,” Allie muttered. “But if we’re going to make the disguise as authentic as possible...” she grabbed an old burlap sack and tucked it up under her shirt, giving her the appearance of a roly poly stomach.

“There!” she said. “Now I’m practically your twin!”

“It’s time to begin phase one,” Jupiter announced, ignoring her attempt at humor. “I will wait in my workshop while you three commence to the car.”

When they had exited the trailer, Bob, Pete, and Allie hurried through the piles of salvage to the front gates. The boys talked loudly to ‘Jupiter’ the entire way, and when they reached the Rolls Royce, Worthington tipped his cap and opened the back door. Moving quickly, the three of them piled into the plush auto.

“Good evening, Master Jones,” the tall chauffeur said loudly as he shut the door behind them. He moved his lanky frame around the car and climbed behind the massive steering wheel, rolling down his window and speaking loudly once more. “Where shall our destination be tonight, Master Jones? Ice cream, you say? Splendid!”

The English chauffeur fired the car to life and pulled it gently

through the salvage yard's tall gates, driving off in the opposite direction of Fulmer Park.

Back in his workshop, Jupiter scratched absent-mindedly at his cast and paced back and forth, glancing every few seconds at his wristwatch. When the time came, he moved silently as a cat toward the front of the yard; taking a back way through the junk. When the yard's small office came into sight, he stopped and scanned the area. Lightning flickered once more in the darkening sky and thunder rumbled off in the distance. Jupiter could hear the television coming from Hans and Konrad's house, which meant they had remembered to leave their window open. He smiled and darted behind a stack of old bricks, and then waited once more, watching the front of the yard for any sign of Masher and Croaker.

When nothing moved, he crouched low and scooted behind an assortment of sundials. Stepping as quietly as a mouse, Jupe hurried to the rear corner of the yard. Here was located a secret entrance and exit that the boys seldom used – not even Allie knew about this one!

Fifty yards past Red Gate Rover's painting of the San Francisco fire, there was an abstract rendering of a whole collection of odds and ends, including a lava lamp, a giant magic eight ball, and a big American flag ten feet wide.

By the light of the streetlamps, Jupe located two garden gnomes that rested atop a large oil drum. As a joke, the boys had nicknamed the gnomes "Bogart" and "Bacall" after Aunt Mathilda's two favorite actors. The "Bogart" gnome's finger pointed at the fence – and at the exact location of the secret gate! On one particularly lazy day at the yard while Uncle Titus and Aunt Mathilda were on a buying trip in Sand Diego, Jupiter had rigged up a tension wire connected to a spring. One had only to give "Bogart's" head a half turn to the left, and a catch was released, allowing two boards in the fence to swing open.

On the opposite side of the fence was the painting of the giant eight ball. Because the boards in the fence were painted almost entirely black, and the number eight was squarely in the middle of the boards, the boys had named this gate “Black Gate Eight.” Jupiter had voted for “Contingency Eight,” but Bob and Pete thought “Black Gate Eight” had a better ring to it. Jupe finally relented, reasoning that the uninitiated might think that the salvage yard actually had eight secret gates!

Moving quickly, he opened the gate just enough to squeeze through, and then closed it gently behind him. Next he crawled to the salvage yard’s small truck, which was parked in the gravel drive beside the Hans and Konrad’s house, and slipped into the bed – covering himself with a tarp.

“Whoo... whooo...” he called softly.

A few moments later, Jupe heard the television turn off and the brothers leave the house. They talked jovially about the approaching storm, and Konrad hustled back inside to shut the window.

Jupe grinned again – phase two was in motion!

Following Jupiter’s instructions, Hans pulled out of the drive and pointed the truck away from Fulmer Park, just as Worthington had done earlier. He drove the truck all over Rocky Beach, turning at random and stopping for gas, and then stopping again for ice cream.

Jupiter eyed his watch apprehensively. When nine o’clock arrived, he rapped on the bed of the truck. This was the pre-arranged signal that Hans should start driving to the park. Within ten minutes they were across town and entering the dilapidated neighborhood near Fulmer Park. Hans parked the truck deep within the shadows a block away.

The brothers hopped out and fetched a tool box out of the back of the truck. Jupiter climbed out from beneath the tarp and led them toward the overgrown hedge maze. No one spoke a word.

When they reached the statue of the philanthropist in the center of the maze, Konrad set the tool box down and rolled up his sleeves.

“You sure about this, Jupe?” he asked uneasily.

“Yah,” Hans gulped, “we won’t break laws.”

“I’ve made the necessary arrangements,” Jupiter assured them. “Tonight’s activities are perfectly legal.”

“Hokay,” Konrad said warily. “Sure hope so.”

He pulled a monkey wrench from the tool box and handed it to Hans, and then grabbed one for himself. The two brothers strained at the large bolts at the base of the statue that held it in place, grunting and gritting their teeth as they worked.

Finally the bolts gave a tiny squeak.

Then a *creeeeeeeeeek...*”

And then they slowly began to turn!

Lightning was flashing almost continuously now and the wind had picked up, making the trees and the maze seem all the more ominous to the clandestine workers.

“We should hurry – before lightning strikes,” said Hans.

“Almost there now,” Konrad grunted.

With one last tug, the final bolt was removed. The brothers, sweating heavily despite the dropping temperature, tossed their wrenches aside. Hans pulled a rope from the toolbox and tied one end around the head of the statue. The other end he threw over a thick tree branch. Konrad rocked the statue gently, and then joined his brother as they eased the head of it to the ground. The base was now revealed and Jupiter rushed over to examine it, flashlight in hand.

“We’ll need a chisel and hammer!” he said urgently, licking his lips in excitement.

Hans handed him a hammer and then stepped back, still debating whether this was vandalism or not.

Jupiter began chipping away at the top of the statue’s cement base, holding the chisel awkwardly in his injured hand. He had

barely struck the chisel ten times when it suddenly broke through a little – revealing a small pocket inside. Jupe chipped away more concrete, and then grabbed his flashlight and shined it inside. Unable to contain their curiosity, Hans and Konrad looked over Jupiter's shoulders.

“There's something in there!” Jupiter crowed in triumph. “It looks like a metal box!”

“Let me help,” Hans grunted. “I get it out of there!”

With several swift blows of the hammer, the remaining concrete had been cleared. Once more, Jupiter shined his flashlight inside and grinned. A small metal box, about eight inches square and three inches deep rested inside the open cavity. It was slightly rusty, but otherwise appeared intact.

Jupe plucked the box out and sat it on the edge of the statue's base. A battered padlock was clamped tightly through a small loop on the front of the box. Konrad grabbed a pair of bolt cutters from his toolbox and snapped it off.

His eyes wide with excitement, Jupiter slowly lifted the lid of the box.

“Congratulations, young Jones!” said a voice in the darkness.

Hans and Konrad grabbed their wrenches and peered into the gloomy maze. Quick flashes of lightning showed a man in a white suit. His face remained shrouded in darkness.

“Who's that?” Konrad called out.

The stranger chuckled and puffed on a cigarette in a long holder. In his other hand he held a gun.

“Please drop them,” he said politely. “I am not a man of violence, but when the prize is so great, well...”

The brothers looked at each other, and then slowly dropped their wrenches to the ground. They stood up and moved in close beside Jupiter.

“I knew I could rely on you, my young friend. As always, you do not disappoint,” the stranger continued. “Clever to the last!

Masher and Croaker were fooled quite easily by your little misdirection ploy. Naturally, I am not so gullible!”

“Who is it?” Hans hissed to Jupiter. “Is it that crazy Jujab fellow? We should have the police!”

Jupiter shook his head and held the metal box close to his chest. “No – not Jujab. Someone much more dangerous!”

“Not Jujab?” Konrad blinked. “Then who?”

Jupiter gulped and nodded as the stranger stepped into the glow of the stocky boy’s flashlight.

“Hans, Konrad,” Jupiter announced in a steady voice, “I’d like you to meet Hugunay.”

Chapter Seventeen

The Tables are Turned!

HUGUNAY! The international art thief The Three Investigators had tangled with when they had solved the mystery of the stuttering parrot, and again when they had cracked the case of the screaming clock! The same art thief who had broken into the Louvre in Paris, who had stolen Rembrandts, Picassos and Van Goghs, and who was wanted by the police in a dozen different countries!

Hugunay gave a small bow and smiled.

“The pleasure is mine, I assure you,” he said in his distinct French accent. The debonair European gestured slightly with his gun hand. “But as much as I’d like catch up on old times, my young nemesis, I really must be flying. What you hold in your hands will finally allow me to retire – to hang up my tools of the trade once and for all – and vanish from the face of the Earth!”

“It’s a book, isn’t it?” Jupiter said suddenly, hoping to buy some time. “It’s Romulus Romero’s sketch book. That’s what we’ve been chasing after this whole time!”

Hugunay gave a bored smile and puffed on his cigarette.

“Indeed it is. One of the last of the missing DaVinci codexes. You seem surprised? But of course the old Gypsy Gregorio would not tell you more than you needed to know – for your own safety. Yes, there are sketches by his distant relative, Romulus Romero within those pages, a talented artist in his own right; but there is something more! Notations and diagrams by the master himself. One of the last unclaimed examples of Leonardo DaVinci’s genius! It is worth a fortune – it is priceless!”

“How do you know what’s in it?” Jupiter wondered. “For that matter, how did you know about the monkey’s paw?”

“My boy,” Hugunay shrugged, “it is my business to know. By

now you should realize that when a DaVinci surfaces, whether it is a painting, a sculpture, or a sketch, Hugunay will not be far behind."

The art thief took a step forward, the smile disappearing from his face. He cocked his pistol and held it up before him.

"And now that we all know what the grand prize is in our little game, it is time to hand it over to its rightful owner. So, if you please..."

Jupiter held the metal box tightly to his chest and shook his head. "The rightful owner is Gregorio Romero!"

"Careful, Juve!" Hans said nervously. "This man – he's not to be fooling around with!"

"Yah," Konrad agreed, "Maybe you should give him the box. We don't want trouble."

"Sound advice," Hugunay said softly. "You have proven yourself to be an admirable opponent, young Jones. Perhaps the most clever and resourceful foe I have faced in my long and illustrious career. But this time you have lost – you must realize this."

Jupiter's mind raced as lightning crackled all around, illuminating the hedge maze and the fallen statue of Philip Fulmer in an eerie glow. The stocky boy suddenly thought of something else to ask the thief.

"I will hand over the book – if you will answer one question for me."

Hugunay plucked his cigarette from its holder and produced another one from inside his jacket. Taking his time, he carefully inserted it into its holder. With a careless shrug, the art thief consulted a pocket watch that he produced from inside his jacket pocket.

"As you have once again proven yourself to be a worthy adversary, I will grant you one question – but then the box!"

Thunder boomed as Jupiter nodded his head.

"Agreed," he shouted above the tempest.



“Then ask away, my boy,” Hugunay said.

“I want to know who this Jujab character is. And Masher and Croaker, too!”

Hugunay chuckled and stepped closer so he could be heard above the howling wind.

“That is more like two questions – but I am in fine spirits tonight, so I will answer them. Jujab, my dear young fellow, does not exist!”

Jupiter gaped at the thief. “But... but...”

Hugunay laughed out loud. “Well, he doesn’t exist in any literal sense. The man who played the villainous Jujab is really named David Kogan. He’s a part time pilot and full-time out-of-work actor I found in Hollywood. Of course I knew you would recognize me instantly if I brought you the monkey’s paw, so I needed an unfamiliar, yet sinister, face to put with my inquiries. As you’ll recall from our last meeting at Bert Clock’s house, I’m not adverse to hiring actors or renting costumes if it suits my needs. Mr. Kogan’s portrayal of the swarthy Jujab was a bit over-the-top, but effective – wouldn’t you agree?”

Hans and Konrad stirred nervously at Jupiter’s side, but the stocky boy pressed on – a determined look on his face.

“And Masher and Croaker?” he shouted.

“Petty criminals. It is unfortunate that they got carried away with their assignment. As you know, I never condone violence if it can be avoided. I regret greatly that one of the gypsy men was injured by Croaker. He was dealt with severely.

“Their lot is a dime a dozen in the seedy underworld of Hollywood,” Hugunay continued. “I prefer more elegant help when it is available. But they are reliable. And I often need reliable help to, well... make ends meet while I hunt for the really big prizes – such as the book which you now hold in your hands. The book which will allow me to vanish from the world and grow old on some exotic island. And speaking of the book...”

Hugunay raised his gun once more and stepped closer still to the First Investigator.

“Now – I trust your questions have been answered to your satisfaction? Very well. I’ve grown fond of you, young Jones. But to the victor go the spoils. I wouldn’t want our transaction to get... unpleasant. I shall tell you one more time: hand it over!”

Jupiter remained still for a moment, as if thinking furiously. Hans and Konrad stood firmly by his side as the wind tossed their hair about and rippled their shirts.

Finally, Jupe’s shoulders sagged and he nodded his head in defeat. He stepped out slowly from between the burly brothers and approached his old enemy.

When he was five paces from the villain, the round-faced First Investigator stopped and cleared his throat.

“Before I hand over the DaVinci codex to you, sir, I feel it is my duty as a junior deputy of the Rocky Beach Police Department to inform you that tonight’s operation has just entered phase three.”

Hugunay threw a sharp glance at Jupiter, his thin, mustached face eyeing him suspiciously.

“Phase three? I do not understand.”

Jupiter grinned and pointed over Hugunay’s shoulder.

“Hugunay – I’d like to introduce you to Chief Samuel Reynolds of the Rocky Beach police force. I believe you’ve met before!”

Chapter Eighteen

Jupiter Formulates a Plan

“DROP THE GUN and put your hands where I can see them!” Chief Reynolds commanded.

Lightning arced across the sky and thunder roared as the wind blew a furious gust through the park. Hugunay glanced behind him. Chief Reynolds and a second policeman that Jupiter knew as Officer Carson stood with their guns raised. Hugunay gave Jupiter a look of supreme admiration.

“Well played, my boy,” the debonair villain smiled. “Very well played, indeed.”

“You were right,” Jupiter shouted. “When I heard the treasure might be even remotely connected to DaVinci, I had a hunch that Hugunay might be pulling the strings! I immediately suspected Jujab wasn’t all he seemed. His ragged fingernails and use of Spanish and French words tipped me off. I called Chief Reynolds and explained my plan, and then came here with Hans and Konrad, assuming you wouldn’t fall for our diversion with the Rolls Royce. If I was right, I could get the codex uninterrupted – but if I was wrong,” he gestured to Chief Reynolds and Officer Carson, “well, it pays to have insurance!”

Hugunay placed his cigarette between his teeth and raised his gun. Hans and Konrad bravely stepped forward in front of Jupe. Chief Reynolds pressed his own gun into the small of Hugunay’s back.

“This is your last warning,” the Chief growled, “drop the gun and put your hands in the air!”

Hugunay shrugged and gave a bemused smile. He held the barrel of the pistol up next to his cigarette and pulled the trigger. A small flame appeared out of the tip of the gun! The infamous thief puffed until his cigarette glowed red, and then turned to face

the Chief.

“Surely there is no crime in indulging a bad habit? This is a public park after all!” He handed his lighter/gun over to Chief Reynolds. “You’re welcome to examine it. It’s perfectly harmless.”

The Chief gave an uncertain look at Hugunay and then took the novelty lighter. He studied it and then handed it to Officer Carson. After a moment he holstered his own gun and then held a hand on top of his head to keep his hat from blowing away.

“As you can see, we were simply engaging in a little conversation between old friends,” Hugunay continued. “I have just as much right to be in this fine park as anyone else, do I not? I have committed no crime – and even if I did, you have no evidence to suggest otherwise.”

He turned to look at Jupiter, who reappeared from behind Hans and Konrad.

“And now I really must be flying, my boy. However, feel free to look me up should you decide to turn your considerable mental powers to more profitable endeavors. Until then... I bid you farewell!”

The art thief plucked his cigarette from its holder and flicked it on the ground, then tucked the holder inside his jacket pocket. He was just walking away when Chief Reynolds clamped a hand down on his shoulder.

“Not so fast,” he said grimly, gesturing toward the discarded butt smoldering in the grass. “Littering in a public park is a violation in Rocky Beach, punishable with a fine of up to one hundred dollars. I’ll have to write you a citation.”

The Chief paused and winked at Jupiter. He was still holding a hand to his head, trying to keep his hat in place as the wind whistled about.

“However, since we are standing near trees in the middle of a thunderstorm, I’m afraid I’m going to have to take you downtown

to the station. For your own safety, of course.”

Hugunay gave the Chief a contemptuous look, and then straightened his jacket in a dignified manner. He turned to look at Jupiter.

“I have your word that you will never begin smoking cigarettes? It is a foul habit that I should have quit ages ago!”

Jupiter nodded his head. “I wouldn’t dream of it!” He pinched his bottom lip and grinned. “Besides, I’ve got my own habits!”

Officer Carson snapped a pair of handcuffs on the art thief, and then conducted a thorough search of his clothing. He suddenly straightened; a small black object was in his hand. He called out to Chief Reynolds.

“Chief – I think I’ve found something!”

Chief Reynolds, Jupiter, Hans, and Konrad all came over to have a look. The object in the officer’s hand was a small walkie-talkie! The Chief examined it and then handed the small transmitter back to Officer Carson.

Hugunay looked somewhat surprised.

“Is it also a crime in Rocky Beach to carry such a device on one’s person? If so, then I am guilty as charged!”

“I’ll bet he uses it to keep in touch with Masher and Croaker,” Jupiter said smugly.

“All right,” the Chief shouted, struggling to be heard above the swirling wind, “read him his rights and then escort Mr. Hugunay to the cruiser, Jimmy.”

Officer Carson dropped the small walkie-talkie into his shirt pocket and nodded. “Yes, sir!”

“I suppose you’ll want to come down to the station while I call in Hugunay’s report to the F.B.I.?” the Chief asked Jupiter. “There must be ten countries that want to get their hands on him. I only wish we could have rounded up Masher and Croaker. They’ve both got outstanding warrants as long as my arm.”

Jupiter’s face suddenly lit up.

“I know how we can bring the two crooks in, sir!”

The Chief, his hat now yanked down around his ears, looked at Jupiter in surprise. “How?” he asked.

“We’ll have Hugunay do it for us!”

Chief Reynolds frowned. “Somehow I don’t think he’ll be too keen on helping us out.”

“It might look good in front of a judge if it was known that he cooperated with a police effort to capture two known felons,” Jupiter pointed out.

The Chief rubbed his chin and then nodded. “I suppose it wouldn’t hurt to try.”

An excited gleam was shining in Juve’s eyes. Still holding the small metal box to his chest, he pinched his bottom lip and frowned. A plan was taking shape in his mind!

“Let’s go back to the salvage yard – Masher and Croaker will know by now that we’ve fooled them. They’ll be expecting Hans, Konrad, and me to return with the box. We’ll have Hugunay call them on his walkie-talkie. When they come to rendezvous with their boss, we’ll nab them!”

The Chief thought for a moment, and then agreed. “Okay. But I want you boys to stay out of the way. These are dangerous men we’re dealing with. They won’t hesitate to resort to violence once they realize they’ve been trapped. Leave everything to Officer Carson and me!”

“Yes, sir!” Jupiter grinned – his heart racing a mile a minute. Hugunay was finally in police custody, the DaVinci codex was found, and Masher and Croaker would soon be behind bars. Not a bad night’s work for The Three Investigators!

Chapter Nineteen

What's That Sound?

"WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?" Pete cried.

It was nearly ten thirty when Jupiter had returned to the salvage yard. Jupiter deduced that Masher and Croaker, realizing they had been led on a wild goose chase, might be watching the salvage yard. He instructed Chief Reynolds to park his cruiser around back so that they might reach his workshop undetected. He led the Chief, Officer Carson, and the handcuffed Hugunay through Red Gate Rover, and then through the dark pathways of the salvage yard.

A nearby streetlight provided just enough light to see by in the workshop. Bob, Pete, and Allie hid under the printing press when they heard the party coming.

"Don't be alarmed," Jupe hissed. "It's just us."

The three crawled out from under the press. Bob looked curiously at Hugunay and the police officer.

"Say, who's with you First?" Bob asked.

"This is Officer Carson," Jupiter grinned. He was still holding the small metal box tight to his chest, as if Hugunay could make the treasure vanish just by looking at it. "And this is the infamous international art thief known as Hugunay!"

"Hugunay?" Bob and Pete cried in unison.

"Who's Hugunay?" Allie wondered.

Hugunay gave a stiff bow to Bob and Pete – his arms still tightly secured behind his back.

"Good evening, lads. I would shake your hands, but your Chief has deemed me a menace to society," he said wryly.

"You mean he was behind this whole thing?" Bob blinked.

"But what about Jujab – and Masher and Croaker?"

"Jujab was really just an actor hired by Hugunay," Jupiter

explained. "But Masher and Croaker are very real crooks. Hugunay has agreed to help us catch them. On the way over he radioed them using a walkie-talkie we found in his pocket. He told them to meet him here at eleven o'clock."

"But how did you know it was Hugunay?" Pete asked.

"It's almost eleven," Chief Reynolds interrupted. "Where can we hide out, Jones?"

Jupiter pointed his cast in the direction of the office.

"We'll leave the front gates open. Then, when Masher and Croaker pull in, Hans and Konrad can quickly lock them inside the yard. Officer Carson can keep watch over Hugunay inside the office."

"All right," the Chief said. "Let's move!"

Staying deep within the shadows, the group made their way to the front of the salvage yard. Jupiter unlocked the office door for Officer Carson and Hugunay, and then pointed out a spot nearby for Chief Reynolds to hide. Before finding a spot for himself, he knelt and, on an impulse, hid the DaVinci codex under a small space beneath the stoop of the office's front porch.

"Remember, I want you kids to stay put!" the Chief said sternly. "These are hardened criminals we're dealing with. They may put up a struggle when they realize they've been duped. Let Officer Carson and me handle this. If we need help, we have Hans and Konrad hiding by the gate."

"Yes, sir," Jupiter nodded. "We'll stay out of the way."

"Good," the Chief muttered. "Now get yourselves hidden. They should be here any minute!"

Jupe, Pete, Bob, and Allie hunkered down behind a huge claw-footed bathtub. From there they had an unobstructed view of the salvage yard's front drive. As they waited for Masher and Croaker to arrive, Pete, Bob, and Allie asked Jupiter excited questions about the treasure.

"It's mostly artwork by Romulus Romero," he explained, "a

direct descendant of Gregorio the Gypsy. However, there are a few sketches and notations by the master himself – Leonardo DaVinci! That’s why Hugunay wanted it so badly.”

“Wow,” Bob gasped in amazement. “Gregorio mentioned in his wagon that there was some kind of connection to DaVinci – but actual drawings? No wonder Hugunay told Masher and Croaker to let us go when we were at Skinny’s house!”

Suddenly, Pete held a finger up to his lips.

“Shhhh... Speaking of Masher and Croaker – I think they’re here!”

The tall boy peered over the top of the bathtub.

“They just pulled into the drive!”

“What’s that sound?” Allie hissed.

The boys listened for a moment, but they were too caught up in the action to listen carefully.

“Don’t you hear it?” Allie insisted.

Now the boys listened more carefully. Masher and Croaker got out of their car and looked up to the sky. It appeared they heard the sound too!

Off in the distance came a muffled *wup, wup, wup, wup...*

“What is it, Jupe?” Pete hissed.

The stocky boy studied the heavens.

“I don’t know...”

hings starting happening very quickly then.

Hans and Konrad slammed the large iron gates closed.

The Chief appeared from behind the office, his gun drawn and pointed at Masher and Croaker. The boys and Allie watched as the Chief handcuffed the crooks to the bumper of their car.

Wup, wup, wup, wup...

Suddenly, Bob gasped and pointed toward the office.

“It’s Hugunay!”

Bob was right. The villain had appeared in the doorway of the small office! His handcuffs were off and he was speaking into his

small walkie-talkie.

The strange sound was now quite loud, and, with the blowing wind, made it hard to hear. Pete shouted a warning to Chief Reynolds.

“Chief! Watch out behind you!”

But the warning went unheard. Hugunay snuck up behind the Chief and plucked his pistol from its holster. The boys watched, horrified, as Hugunay proceeded to handcuff the Chief to the car right next to Masher and Croaker! Hans and Konrad appeared, but they could only watch on helplessly.

“We’ve got to do something!” Allie cried. “He’s going to get away!”

Now Jupiter understood what the strange sound was. He pointed his cast up to the sky.

“Look!”

Bob, Pete, and Allie craned their necks skyward.

“It’s a helicopter!” Pete croaked.

“Uh, oh,” Allie gulped. “That Hugunay fellow is coming this way.”

“I’ll bet he wants the book!” shouted Bob. “He’s got a gun, and he looks like he might actually use it!”

Chapter Twenty

Until We Meet Again...

“WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?” Pete cried.

The tall, imposing figure of Hugunay stood over them. Chief Reynolds’ gun was clenched firmly in his hand! He gestured for the boys and Allie to stand up.

“You know what I want, my boy. The game is now at an end. It is time for Hugunay to take the prize. Kindly hand over the book and I shall be on my way.”

Thinking fast, Jupiter once more tried to stall for time.

“If Masher and Croaker are handcuffed to the police car, then who’s flying that helicopter?”

Hugunay gave Jupe a sinister smile.

“I told you Mr. Kogan – Jujab to you – worked as a part time pilot when he wasn’t looking for an acting job. You’d be surprised how easy it is for a man of my resources to locate a pilot willing to make an illegal flight – even in a storm. The promise of riches will make a desperate man do nearly anything!”

The helicopter was now hovering over the salvage yard, about fifty feet off the ground. A long rope ladder was thrown out of the copter’s bay door; it swayed dangerously in the high wind of the storm.

Jupiter looked around helplessly – there was no where for him to go – nothing for him to do but hand over the book to Hugunay! He looked over the art thief’s shoulder and held back a smile. Perhaps there was hope after all! Uncle Titus stood on the front porch of the Joneses small house in his bathrobe, watching the helicopter in bleary-eyed wonder. Aunt Mathilda was behind him in the doorway in her robe and curlers. Jupe could see that she was jabbering into a telephone. Aunt Mathilda had called the

police!

Jupiter shrugged his shoulders and smiled weakly at Hugunay. “Okay – you’ve won. I hid the book over by the office. I’ll go get it.”

Hugunay gave a narrow smile. “I knew I could count on you to show some good sense.”

Jupiter began walking toward the small cabin that served as the salvage yard’s office. Pete, Bob, and Allie began to follow, but were stopped by Hugunay.

“I would feel much better if you three stayed put. Dealing with young Jones can be tricky enough without adding two more investigators, and a young lady, into the mix.”

Pete and Bob looked at each other. How was Jupe going to get out of this one?

The wind from the storm and the hovering helicopter sent up a cloud of dust and dirt as Hugunay and Jupiter reached the office. Hugunay barked an order into his small walkie-talkie and then growled at Jupiter to get the book.

With the swirling dust it was very hard to see. Shielding his eyes from the growing cloud, Jupiter turned – and tripped over Chief Reynolds’ foot! The stocky boy went tumbling to the ground, knocking over the box of romance novels that he and Allie had brought home from Thorwald’s shop. The paperback books went scattering every which way as Jupiter grimaced and held his cast.

Hugunay watched warily as Jupiter fumbled about on his hands and knees for a moment, then gave a triumphant smile as the stocky boy reached under the small wooden porch of the office and produced the DaVinci codex.

“Here it is,” Jupiter said in defeat. “You’ve won.”

Hugunay took the book and smiled greedily. But his look of victory was short lived. The art thief’s eyes narrowed as he glanced at the salvage yard’s front gate. Jupiter turned to look as

well. Three police cars had pulled up in the drive – their sirens flashing red and blue! Uncle Titus was in the lead, picking through his large key ring trying to find the key that unlocked the front gate's large padlock.

"That is my cue to leave," Hugunay smirked. "As you know I have a deep aversion to sirens."

Jupiter watched helplessly as the helicopter descended and Hugunay grabbed on to the rope ladder.

Back at the bathtub, Pete, Bob, and Allie watched in excitement as the drama unfolded.

"Uncle Titus called the police!" Pete said, hurrying out from behind the bathtub. "But they'll be too late! Come on!"

The tall, lanky boy led the charge as the three raced toward Hugunay.

Uncle Titus had just got the gate unlocked and the police began rushing in as Hugunay grabbed hold of the ladder and began rising into the air.

Pete overtook his partners and scrambled on top of Masher and Croaker's car. The athletic boy took a flying leap from the roof of the vehicle and made a spectacular catch of the rope ladder's last rung. Jupe could see Hugunay frowning and barking orders into his walkie-talkie.

The helicopter remained hovering above the salvage yard, with Pete swaying dangerously from the bottom rung – his feet dangling ten feet above the ground!

Hugunay climbed down the ladder until his feet were on the last rung. The salvage yard was now a veritable circus of running, shouting people. Hugunay was shouting the loudest, however. He looked at Chief Reynolds and laughed.

"You didn't really think mere handcuffs could hold the incomparable Hugunay, did you?"

The thief stepped on Pete's fingers and the Second Investigator, yelping in pain, dropped to the ground.

Holding the DaVinci codex close to his chest, Hugunay spoke into his walkie talkie and the helicopter began to ascend into the raging lightning storm. The art thief then looked at Jupiter and winked.

“Until we meet again...”

He began climbing the rope ladder. The boys and Allie watched in dismay as the helicopter disappeared from sight.

“He got away!” Bob groaned.

“All that work for nothing!” Allie fumed. “I never thought I’d see the day when somebody got the upper hand on Jupiter Jones! Hugunay just escaped free and clear!”

“And with the DaVinci codex!” Pete said in disbelief.

Everyone turned to look at Jupiter. The round-faced boy was still reeling from the shock of Hugunay’s magnificent escape, for he only stood there silently, scratching his cast with a rather dazed look on his face.

“Well say something, Jones!” Allie demanded. “You’re usually full of big words!”

Still in shock, Jupiter looked off into the flickering sky. Suddenly his face broke into a huge grin.

“What’s so funny?” Pete said hotly. “We just failed our first case and you look like the cat that got the canary!”

Jupiter chuckled, and, before long, was doubled over, howling in fits of uncontrollable laughter.

“Yeah, Juve,” demanded Bob, “do you want to let us in on the joke?”

The stout First Investigator wiped the tears from his eyes and jerked his thumb in the direction of Hugunay’s escape.

“Oh, nothing really. I guess I was just imagining what Hugunay’s reaction will be when he discovers that he went to all that trouble for a second hand copy of *Autumn’s Child*!”

Jupiter Jones reached inside his shirt and pulled out the battered pages of the DaVinci codex.

Chapter Twenty One

John Crowe Speaking

THERE ARE A FEW points of interest concerning the case of the mysterious traveler that you may be wondering about. As the boys have already moved on to their next mystery, a minor affair they are calling *The Adventure of the Rival Poet*, I shall do my duty and provide insight into those specific events not detailed in the text.

Jupiter, of course, was not “blinded” at all by the swirling dust and debris that was churned up by the helicopter and the storm’s high winds. With that being said, you should be able to deduce that he did not trip over Chief Reynolds’ foot – at least not on accident. Once confronted by the armed and dangerous Hugunay, Jupiter’s cunning mind developed an ingenious plan that Pete refers to as: the old switcheroo.

As you have probably already guessed, Jupiter’s “trip” was simply a ploy that allowed him to knock over the box of books that he and Allie had brought back from Thorwald’s metal shop. Once the books were scattered about the ground, Jupe simply retrieved the DaVinci codex from its hiding spot, and, with his body providing cover, pulled the pages from the old book and replaced them with pages from one of the many romantic novels before him.

As for the codex itself, I am pleased to announce that it was returned to its rightful owners, the Gypsy’s, along with their sacred relic – the monkey’s paw. It is now residing within a safe deposit box inside a vault within the walls of Rocky Beach’s most secure bank. Gregorio informed the boys that he is planning on removing one or two “doodles” by DaVinci in order to place them on the auction block. The fortune they are sure to receive from this sale will be used to send family members to college, as well

as to provide safety and financial security to their band for many years to come.

Needless to say, since Jujab was a phony, there really was no curse. Jupiter's accident was just that, and any dead ends and bad breaks the boys and Allie encountered on the case were due to mere coincidence rather than bad luck. I was quick to point out to the First Investigator that if he had listened more carefully to Jujab's "curse," he would have noticed that the traveler's words were merely references to an old science fiction movie called *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. As you can imagine, Jupiter was rather ruffled that he missed this bit of movie trivia.

As for Allie Jamison, she made the boys pay up on their end of the bargain – and they spent a long, uncomfortable afternoon cleaning out Indian Queen's stall. Once that was completed, Allie returned to her boring life at her Aunt Pat's and awaited the return of her parents from their travels abroad. Before she left, however, she was sure to endear herself to Aunt Mathilda by pointing out the location of Black Gate Eight. It turns out she did know about the gate's location after all. There really is no keeping a secret from that girl! The gate has been boarded over and Bob and Pete assure me that Jupe is hard at work drawing up the blue prints for a new and improved secret gate.

The only other loose end that remains is one that I cannot possibly tie up. I am referring, of course, to that impeccable, incomparable art thief – Hugunay. While it is true that he slipped through the grasp of The Three Investigators yet again, the boys were satisfied that they at least recovered the DaVinci codex and kept Hugunay from making his escape with the book in his possession.

It is a surprise to no one that he remains at large. There is, however, an interesting side note to Mr. Hugunay. I could only laugh and marvel at the audacity of the villain when Jupiter informed me that a week after they had solved the case, he

received a parcel in his mailbox addressed to Mathilda Jones. When she opened the package, she was surprised to find a paperback copy of *Autumn's Child*! On the inside page was an inscription that read:

My Dear Lady – I know how you hate to miss a sale. Therefore I am returning this to you in the condition in which I received it. My regards to your family.

*Yours Sincerely,
Hugunay*

As you can imagine, Mrs. Jones was rather perplexed by the strange appearance of a rather battered paperback romantic novel. Jupiter, however, could only shake his head in wonder. Wherever Hugunay went, he didn't get far – and yet he managed to get far enough away that he eluded the local police and vanished as if into thin air.

Unless I am mistaken, I have covered every aspect of the case that bears further explanation. As I mentioned earlier, the boys are already hard at work on their next case. It sounds promising, although I must admit Jupiter was rather sketchy about the details when I spoke to him on the telephone. Regardless, I'm perfectly confident that a solution will be found, whatever the mystery may be.

And now that I have fulfilled my duty, it seems fitting to end this adventure with a quote from the boys' greatest rival. So, in the words of Hugunay:

Until we meet again...

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