

# THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK



by  
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# **NANCY DREW MYSTERY #001 - THE SECRET OF THE OLD CLOCK**

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **The Rescue**

NANCY DREW, an attractive girl of eighteen, was driving home along a country road in her new, dark-blue convertible. She had just delivered some legal papers for her father.

"It was sweet of Dad to give me this car for my birthday," she thought.  
"And it's fun to help him in his work."

Her father, Carson Drew, a well-known lawyer in their home town of River Heights, frequently discussed puzzling aspects of cases with his blond, blue-eyed daughter.

Smiling, Nancy said to herself, "Dad depends on my intuition."

An instant later she gasped in horror. From the lawn of a house just ahead of her a little girl about five years of age had darted into the roadway. A van, turning out of the driveway of the house, was barely fifty feet away from her. As the driver vigorously sounded the horn in warning, the child became confused and ran directly in front of the van. Miraculously, the little girl managed to cross the road safely and pull herself up onto a low wall, which formed one side of a bridge. But the next second, as the van sped away, the child lost her balance and toppled off the wall out of sight!

"Oh my goodness!" Nancy cried out, slamming on her brakes. She had visions of the child plunging into the water below, perhaps striking her head fatally on a rock

Nancy leaped out of her car and dashed across the road. At the foot of the embankment, she could see the curly-haired little girl lying motionless, the right side of her body in the water.

"I hope" Nancy dared not complete the harrowing thought as she climbed down the steep slope.

When she reached the child, she saw to her great relief that the little girl was breathing normally and no water had entered her nose or mouth. A quick examination showed that she had suffered no broken bones.

Gently Nancy lifted the little girl, and holding her firmly in both arms, struggled to the top of the embankment. Then she hurried across the road and up the driveway to the child's house.

At this moment the front door flew open and an elderly woman rushed out, crying, "Judy! Judy!"

"I'm sure she'll be all right," said Nancy quickly.

The woman, seeing Nancy's car, asked excitedly, "Did you run into her?"

"No, no. Judy fell off the bridge." Nancy quickly explained what had taken place.

By this time another woman, slightly younger, had hurried from the house. "Our baby! What has happened to her?"

As the woman reached out to take Judy, Nancy said soothingly, "Judy's going to be all right. I'll carry her into the house and lay her on a couch."

One of the women opened the screen door and the other directed, "This way."

Nancy carried her little burden through a hallway and into a small, old-fashioned living room. As soon as she laid the child on the couch, Judy began to murmur and turn her head from side to side.

"I believe she'll come to in a few minutes," said Nancy.

The two women watched Judy intently as they introduced themselves as Edna and Mary Turner, great-aunts of the little girl.

"Judy lives with us," explained Edna, the older sister. "We're bringing her up."

Nancy was somewhat surprised to hear that these elderly women were rearing such a small child. She gave her name and address, just as Judy opened her eyes and looked around. Seeing Nancy, she asked, "Who are you?"

"My name is Nancy. I'm glad to know you, Judy."

"Did you see me fall?"

Nancy nodded, as the child's Aunt Mary said, "She rescued you from the river after you fell in."

Judy began to cry. "I'll never, never run into the road again, really I won't!" she told her aunts.

Nancy said she was sure that Judy never would. She patted the child, who smiled up at her. Although Nancy felt that Judy would be all right, she decided to stay a few minutes longer to see if she could be of help. The child's wet clothes were removed and a robe put on her.

Mary Turner started for the kitchen door. "I'd better get some medication and wet compresses for Judy. She's getting a good-sized lump on her head. Nancy, will you come with me?"

She led the way to the kitchen and headed for a first-aid cabinet which hung on the wall.

"I want to apologize to you, Nancy, for thinking you hit Judy," the woman said. "I guess Edna and I lost our heads. You see, Judy is very precious to us. We brought up her mother, who had been an only child and was orphaned when she was a little girl. The same thing happened to Judy. Her parents were killed in a boat explosion three years ago. The poor little girl has no close relatives except Edna and me."

"Judy looks very healthy and happy," Nancy said quickly, "so I'm sure she must love it here."

Mary smiled. "We do the best we can on our small income. Sometimes it just doesn't suffice, though. We sold some old furniture to the two men in that van you saw. I don't know who they were, but I guess the price was all right."

Mary Turner's thoughts went back to little Judy. "She's so little now that Edna and I are able to manage with our small income. But we worry about the future. We're dressmakers but our fingers aren't so nimble with the needle as they used to be.

"To tell you the truth, Nancy, at the time Judy's parents were killed, Edna and I wondered whether we would be able to take care of Judy properly. But we decided to try it and now we wouldn't part with her for anything in the world. She's won our hearts completely."

Nancy was touched by the story. She knew what was in the minds of the Turner sisters living costs would become higher, and with their advancing years, their own income would become lower.

"Unfortunately," Mary went on, "Judy's parents left very little money. But they were extremely bright people and Judy is going to be like them. She ought to study music and dancing, and have a college education. But I'm afraid we'll never be able to give her those things."

Nancy said reassuringly, "Judy may be able to win a scholarship, or get other financial aid."

Mary, finding Nancy a sympathetic listener, continued, "A cousin of our father's named Josiah Crowley used to help us. But he passed away a couple of months ago. For years he used to pay us long visits and was very generous with his money." Miss Turner sighed. "He always promised to remember us in his will he loved little Judy and I am afraid Edna and I came to depend on that in our plans for her. But he did not carry out his promise."

Nancy smiled understandingly and made, no comment. But she did wonder why Mr. Crowley had changed his mind.

"Josiah went to live with some other cousins. After that, things changed. He rarely came to see us. But he was here just last February and said the same thing that Edna and I were to inherit money from him. He had always helped us and it seemed strange that he should stop so suddenly."

Mary Turner looked at Nancy. "Maybe you know our well-to-do cousins that he went to stay with. They live in River Heights. They're the Richard Tophams."

"Do they have two daughters named Ada and Isabel?" Nancy asked. "If so, I know them."

"That's the family all right," replied Mary.

Nancy detected a hint of coolness in the woman's voice. "Do you like those two girls?" Miss Turner asked.

Nancy did not answer at once. She had been taught never to gossip. But finally she said tactfully, "Ada and Isabel were in high school with me. They were never my close friends. Weuhdidn't see eye to eye on various things."

By this time Mary Turner had selected a few items from the first-aid chest. Now she went to the refrigerator for some ice cubes. As she arranged the

various articles on a tray, she said, "Well, when Cousin Josiah passed away, to our amazement Richard Topham produced a will which made him executor of the Crowley estate and left all the money to him, his wife, and the two girls."

"Yes. I did read that in the newspaper," Nancy recalled. "Is the estate a large one?"

"I understand there's considerable money in it," Mary Turner replied. "Some of Josiah's other cousins say he told them the same thing he told us, and they are planning to go to court about the matter." The woman shrugged. "But I guess a fight to break the will would be hopeless. Nevertheless, Edna and I cannot help feeling there must be a later will, although as yet no one has presented it."

Nancy followed Miss Turner into the living room. The cold compresses helped to reduce the swelling where Judy had hit her head on a rock. Convinced now that the little girl was all right, Nancy said she must leave.

"Come to see me again soon," Judy spoke up. "I like you, Nancy. "You're my saving girl."

"You bet I'll come," Nancy answered. "I like you too. You're a good sport!"

The child's great-aunts profusely thanked Nancy again for rescuing Judy. The visitor had barely reached the door when Edna suddenly said, "Mary, where's our silver teapot?"

"Why, right there on the tea table Oh, it's gone!"

Edna ran into the dining room. "The silver candlesticks! They're gone too!"

Nancy had paused in the doorway, startled. "Do you mean the pieces have been stolen?" she asked.

"They must have been," replied Mary Turner, who was white with apprehension. "By those men who bought some furniture from us!"

Instantly Nancy thought of the men in the van. "Who were the men?" she asked.

"Oh, Mary, how could we have been so careless?" Edna Turner wailed. "We don't know who the men were. They just knocked on the door and asked if we had any old furniture that we wanted to sell. We'll never get the silver back!"

"Maybe you will!" said Nancy. "I'll call the police."

"Oh dear!" Mary said woefully. "Our phone is out of order."

"Then I'll try to catch up to the van!" Nancy declared. "What did the men look like?"

"They were short and heavy-set. One had dark hair, the other light. They had kind of large noses. That's about all I noticed."

"Me too," said Edna.

With a hasty good-by Nancy dashed from the house and ran to her car.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **A Missing Will**

THE BLUE convertible sped along the country road. Nancy smiled grimly.

"I'm afraid I'm exceeding the speed limit," she thought. "But I almost wish a trooper would stop me. Then I could tell him what happened to the poor Turner sisters."

Nancy watched the tire marks which the van driven by the thieves had evidently made in the dirt road. But a few miles farther on a feeling of dismay came over her. She had reached a V-shaped intersection of two highways. Both roads were paved, and since no tire impressions could be seen, Nancy did not know which highway the thieves had taken.

"Oh dear!" she sighed. "Now what shall I do?"

Nancy concluded that her wisest move would be to take the road which led to River Heights. There was a State Police barracks just a few miles ahead.

"I'll stop there and report the theft."

She kept looking for the van, which she recalled as charcoal gray. "I wish I'd seen the license number or the name of the firm that owns the van," Nancy said to herself ruefully.

When she reached State Police headquarters Nancy introduced herself to Captain Runcie and told about the robbery, giving what meager information she could about the suspects. The officer promised to send out an alarm immediately for the thieves and their charcoal-gray moving van.

Nancy continued her journey home, thinking of the Turners and their problems.

"I wonder why Mr. Josiah Crowley left all his money to the Tophams and none to his other relatives. Why did he change his mind? Those Tophams are well to do and don't need money as much as the Turners."

Nancy did not know Richard Topham, but she was acquainted with his wife, as well as his daughters. They were arrogant and unreasonable, and disliked by many of the shopkeepers in town. Ada and Isabel had been unpopular in high school. They had talked incessantly of money and social position, making themselves very obnoxious to the other students.

"I wonder," Nancy thought, "if a way can't be found so the Turners could get a share of the Crowley money. I'll ask Dad."

Five minutes later Nancy pulled into the double garage and hurried across the lawn to the kitchen door of the Drews' large red-brick house. The building stood well back from the street, and was surrounded by tall, beautiful trees.

"Hello, Nancy," greeted the pleasant, slightly plump woman who opened the door. She was Hannah Gruen, housekeeper for the Drews, who had helped rear Nancy since the death of the girl's own mother many years before.

Nancy gave her a hug, then asked, "Dad home? I see his car is in the garage."

"Your father's in the living room and dinner will be ready in a few minutes."

Nancy went to say hello to her tall, handsome father, then hurried to wash her hands and comb her hair before the three who formed the Drew household sat down to dinner. During the meal Nancy related her adventure of the afternoon.

"What tricky thieves!" Hannah Gruen burst out. "Oh, I hope the police capture them!"

"They certainly took advantage of those Turner sisters," Mr. Drew commented.

"Mary and Edna are in financial difficulties," Nancy commented. "Isn't it a shame that Josiah Crowley didn't bequeath some of his estate to the Turners and other relatives who need the money?"

Carson Drew smiled affectionately at his only child, then said, "Yes, it is, Nancy. But unless a will written later turns up, that's the way it has to be."

"The Turners think there is another will," Nancy told him. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if it can be found?"