

The Mad Monk's Treasure

by Kris Bock

Chapter 1

Erin could hardly believe what she was seeing. Could this be it? After all this time waiting, searching, had she finally, finally, found what she was looking for?

She forced herself to sit back and take a deep breath. Don't make assumptions. Don't rush into things. She wanted to leap up and scream her excitement, but years of academic training held. Slow down, double-check everything, and make sure you are right!

She leaned forward and ran her fingers over the grainy photograph. With that one image, everything seemed to fall into place. This was the clue. It had to be.

She fumbled in her desk drawer for a magnifying glass and studied the symbols in the photo more closely. At a glance, they looked like your standard Indian petroglyphs. You could find them throughout the Southwest, tucked away in caves or scattered among boulder fields. She'd been on a hike just a few miles outside of town which took her past a wonderful series of handprints and spirals, and what looked strangely like a robot.

But this was different.

If she was right—and she had to be right—these symbols were a map. A map that could lead her to one of the greatest caches of buried treasure ever.

Erin flipped back a few pages, to the first photograph, the one that showed an overview of the boulder field. She confirmed that it had numbers identifying the specific rocks that the book then showed in detail. She could see a few outcroppings that would help orient anyone searching for those petroglyphs. The book also had a map of the area, and clear directions. She would be able to find the carved map. If the landscape hadn't changed too much the last century, anyway.

She pushed that thought aside, jumped up, and did a little dance.

She reached for the phone. In a few seconds a voice said, "Yeah." Erin could hear the sound of some tool on metal in the background.

"Camie? I found it!"

The working sounds stopped. Camie said, "You'd better not be talking about that sweater you lost."

Erin laughed. "No, I found the clue! I know where the treasure is—well, at least, I think I've found the first clue that will—"

Camie cut her off. "Forget the disclaimers. You really found something? You mean, we might actually do this?"

The two women laughed into the phone together. Erin collapsed into her desk chair, her cheeks sore from smiling. "I'm so excited I can hardly breathe. Look, are you at work? I'll come by. I can get out of here in, oh, fifteen minutes, so I'll see you in half an hour?" She leaned over her desk and gazed down at the photo in the battered old book. "I want to show you where we're going. We need to make plans."

"I'll be here waiting." Camie's voice purred, with a touch of twang. "Honey, we're going places."

Erin hung up and gazed at the book a moment longer. Who would believe she'd found the clue to one of the most fabulous hidden treasures ever, in a battered old library book? The book

must have been sitting there for years, quietly hoarding its secrets. But she had found it. Six months of research had led to this.

In the beginning, it had been a whim. Something to distract her from the tedium of teaching history classes at a small science college where students didn't value history. Researching lost treasures was fun, and she'd written a few articles about it for magazines. Reading the books on lost mines and buried treasures, you'd think the entire country was covered with them. The Southwest had more than its fair share, from miners who lost track of their remote gold mines, to prospectors who had buried bags of gold and never returned to retrieve them, to bandits who had hidden stolen loot and been killed.

But among all the legends, all the fact and fiction, one story stood out. The Victorio Peak legend had it all. A Franciscan priest and a swindler. Torture, murder, a government cover-up. Where was the truth, among all the stories? Erin wanted to find out. Over time, and with Camie's encouragement, she'd started to take the treasure hunt more seriously. It wasn't so much for the treasure itself—that would most likely belong to the government or the landowners. But from the start, she'd recognized the potential, should she ever unearth new information. Forget academic publications; this was the kind of story which could capture the general imagination and catapult her into success as a writer of popular nonfiction. It would make her reputation, open up new job opportunities—change her life in ways she hardly dared dream.

She touched the book gently. The pages were falling out; she didn't want to risk carrying it around. Instead, Erin snapped a picture of the petroglyphs with her phone. That would be enough to show Camie for now.

She put the book back on her shelf among the hundreds of others she either owned or had borrowed from various libraries. Then she flipped through her stack of topographic maps and found the right one in southern New Mexico. She tucked the phone and the map into the small waist pack she used when biking around town.

Her stomach rumbled, a reminder that she'd been so caught up in her work she'd skipped lunch. She forced herself to stop and have a bowl of cereal. She ate standing up in the kitchen while her mind raced through the planning of the treasure hunt. The timing was perfect; she'd made her students' final papers due the previous week, before finals. She just had to turn in grades and field a few tearful last-minute requests for extensions, and she'd be done for the semester. What better way to spend the summer, than hunting for buried treasure?

Erin shook her head. Who would've thought that she, the quiet, studious girl who'd spent her entire adult life in academia in one way or another, would be planning such an adventure?

She checked that the front door was locked, a habit left over from living in bigger cities, grabbed her bike helmet, and went out the back.

Erin wheeled the bike around the front of her house and mounted. At the corner, she paused and looked both ways. The long frontage road was dangerously narrow, with a cement wall on one side and a ditch on the other. Fortunately, traffic was normally light, and at this time of day the road lay empty. Erin pushed off, still grinning from her find. She rode on the right side, by the ditch, instead of facing traffic, because it was just too frightening to ride alongside the wall when a car passed.

She'd gone a block when she heard the hum of a car engine as it pulled out from a side street behind her. She rode along the very edge of the pavement, even though the car would have plenty of room to pass her without oncoming traffic.

Erin glanced over her shoulder. The black SUV 20 feet behind her hadn't bothered to pull out into the road at all. Jerk. When would drivers learn to share the road with bicyclists? Erin

pulled onto the two-foot wide gravel strip between the pavement and the ditch. She couldn't stop without risking a skid, but she slowed so the SUV could pass.

The engine roared. Erin glanced back again.

Black metal bore down on her. Her heart lurched and the bike wobbled. This guy was crazy! She whipped her gaze forward, rose up in the seat, and pumped the pedals with all her power, skimming along inches from the ditch. He was just trying to scare her. She'd get his license plate and—

She felt the bumper hit her back tire. The bike seemed to leap into the air, and she went flying. The dried mud and weeds of the ditch seemed to rise up to meet her.

She didn't even have time to scream.

About the Author

Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Adventures

Kris Bock writes novels of suspense and romance with outdoor adventures and Southwestern landscapes. *The Mad Monk's Treasure* follows the hunt for a long-lost treasure in the New Mexico desert. In *The Dead Man's Treasure*, estranged relatives compete to reach a buried treasure by following a series of complex clues. In *The Skeleton Canyon Treasure*, sparks fly when reader favorites Camie and Tiger help a mysterious man track down his missing uncle. *Whispers in the Dark* features archaeology and intrigue among ancient Southwest ruins. *What We Found* is a mystery with strong romantic elements about a young woman who finds a murder victim in the woods. In *Counterfeits*, stolen Rembrandt paintings bring danger to a small New Mexico town.

Read excerpts at www.krisbock.com or visit her [Amazon page](#). [Sign up for Kris Bock newsletter](#) for announcements of new books, sales, and more.

The Mad Monk's Treasure is the first of the Southwest Treasure Hunters novels. *The Dead Man's Treasure* is book 2 and *The Skeleton Canyon Treasure* is book 3. Each novel stands alone and is complete, with no cliffhangers. This series mixes action and adventure with sweet romance. The stories explore the Southwest, especially New Mexico.



The Dead Man's Treasure

Rebecca Westin is shocked to learn the grandfather she never knew has left her a bona fide buried treasure – but only if she can decipher a complex series of clues leading to it. The hunt would be challenging enough without interference from her half-siblings, who are determined to find the treasure first and keep it for themselves. Good thing Rebecca has recruited some help.

Sam is determined to show Rebecca that a desert adventure can be sexy and fun. But there's a treacherous wildcard in the mix, a man willing to do anything to get that treasure – and revenge.

Action and romance combine in this lively Southwestern adventure, complete with riddles the reader is invited to solve to identify historical and cultural sites around New Mexico.



Counterfeits

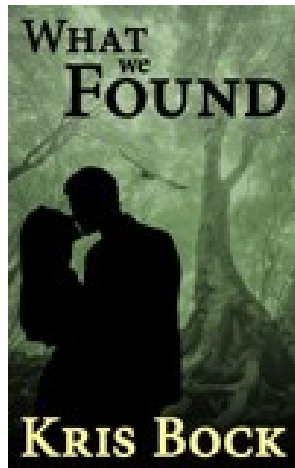
Painter Jenny Kinley has spent the last decade struggling in the New York art world. Her grandmother's sudden death brings her home to New Mexico, but inheriting the children's art camp her grandmother ran is more of a burden than a gift. How can she give up her lifelong dreams of showing her work in galleries and museums?

Rob Caruso, the camp cook and all-around handyman, would be happy to run the camp with Jenny. Dare he even dream of that, when his past holds dark secrets that he can never share? When Jenny's father reappears after a decade-long absence, only Rob knows where he's been and what danger he's brought with him.

Jenny and Rob face midnight break-ins and make desperate escapes, but the biggest danger may come from the secrets that don't want to stay buried. In the end, they must decide whether their dreams will bring them together or force them apart.

Praise for *Counterfeits*:

“‘Counterfeits’ is the kind of romantic suspense novel I have enjoyed since I first read Mary Stewart’s ‘Moonspinners’, and Kris Bock used all the things I love about this genre. Appealing lead characters, careful development of the mysterious danger facing one or both of those characters, a great location that is virtually a character on its own, interesting secondary characters who might or might not be involved or threatened, and many surprises building up to the climax.” 5 Stars – Roberta at Sensuous Reviews blog



What We Found

22-year-old Audra Needham is back in her small New Mexico hometown. She just wants to fit in, work hard, and help her younger brother. Going for a walk in the woods with her former crush, Jay, is a harmless distraction.

Until they stumble on a body.

Jay, who has secrets of his own to protect, insists they walk away and keep quiet. But Audra can't forget what she's seen. The woman deserves to be found, and her story deserves to be told.

More than one person isn't happy about Audra bringing a crime to life.

The dead woman was murdered, and Audra could be next on the vengeful killer's list. She'll have to stand up for herself in order to stand

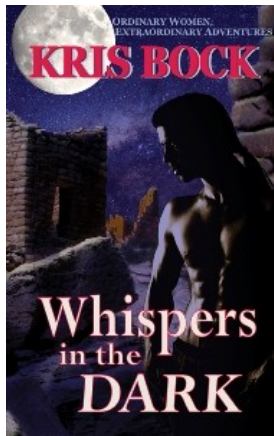
up for the murder victim. It's a risk, and so is reaching out to the mysterious young man who works with deadly birds of prey. With her 12-year-old brother determined to play detective, and romance budding in the last place she expected, Audra learns that some risks are worth taking – no matter the danger, to her body or her heart.

Praise for *What We Found*:

“Another action-packed suspense novel by Kris Bock, perhaps her best to date. The author weaves an intriguing tale with appealing characters. Watching Audra, the main character, evolve into an emotionally-mature and independent young woman is gratifying.”

“This book had me guessing to the end who was the murderer. Well written characters drive the story. Good romance. Exceptional and believable plot twists and turns. I loved it!”

“This is a nonstop suspense. Love the characters and how real they seem with every episode played out. This is a love story and suspense all in one.”



Whispers in the Dark

Young archeologist Kylie Hafford heads to the remote Puebloan ruins of Lost Valley, Colorado, to excavate. Her first exploration of the crumbling ruins ends in a confrontation with a gorgeous, angry man who looks like a warrior from the Pueblo's ancient past. If only Danesh weren't so aggravating... and fascinating. Then she literally stumbles across Sean, a charming, playful tourist. His attentions feel safer, until she glimpses secrets he'd rather keep hidden.

The summer heats up as two sexy men pursue her. She finds mysteries – and surprising friendships – among the other campground residents. Could the wide-eyed woman and her silent children be in the kind of

danger all too familiar to Kylie?

Mysterious lights, murmuring voices, and equipment gone missing plague her dig. A midnight encounter sends Kylie plummeting into a deep canyon. She'll need all her strength and wits to survive. Everything becomes clear – if she wants to save the man she's come to love and see the villains brought to justice, she must face her demons and fight.

Whispers in the Dark is action-packed romantic suspense set in the Four Corners region of the Southwest.

Praise for *Whispers in the Dark*:

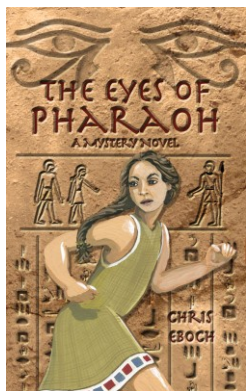
“This book was a delight from start to finish!”

“Whispers in the Dark has a hefty dose of adventure and mystery, as well as a strong main character.”

“This book kept me turning pages until the end. The plot was full of twists and turns, always keeping the reader rooting for the heroine. Excellent read!”

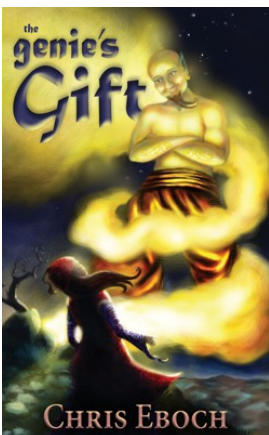
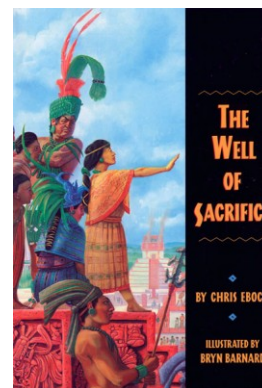
Children's books by Chris Eboch

Ms. Bock also writes for young people as Chris Eboch. Her novels are appropriate for ages nine and up. Learn more or read excerpts at www.chriseboch.com or Chris's [Amazon page](#). Sign up for the [Chris Eboch children's books](#) mailing list for special offers and new releases.



The Eyes of Pharaoh, a mystery set in Egypt in 1177 BC, brings an ancient world to life. When Reya hints that Egypt is in danger from foreign nomads, Seshta and Horus don't take him seriously. How could anyone challenge Egypt? Then Reya disappears. To save their friend, Seshta and Horus spy on merchants, soldiers, and royalty, and start to suspect even The Eyes of Pharaoh, the powerful head of the secret police. Will Seshta and Horus escape the traps set for them, rescue Reya, and stop the plot against Egypt in time?

In *The Well of Sacrifice*, a Mayan girl in ninth-century Guatemala rebels against the High Priest who sacrifices anyone challenging his power. Kirkus Reviews said, "[An] engrossing first novel.... Eboch crafts an exciting narrative with a richly textured depiction of ancient Mayan society.... The novel shines not only for a faithful recreation of an unfamiliar, ancient world, but also for the introduction of a brave, likable and determined heroine."

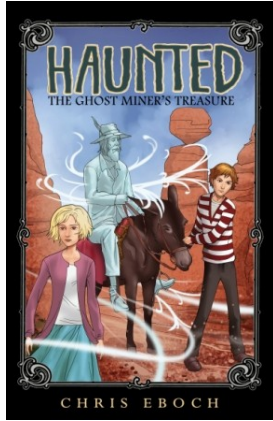


The Genie's Gift is a lighthearted action novel that draws on the mythology of The Arabian Nights. Shy and timid Anise determines to find the Genie Shakayak and claim the Gift of Sweet Speech. But the way is barred by a series of challenges, both ordinary and magical. How will Anise get past a vicious she-ghoul, a sorceress who turns people to stone, and mysterious sea monsters, when she can't even speak in front of strangers?

Bandits Peak: While hiking in the mountains, Jesse meets a strange trio. He befriends Maria, but he's suspicious of the men with her. Still, charmed by Maria, Jesse promises not to tell anyone that he met them. But his new friends have deadly secrets, and Jesse uncovers them. It will take all his wilderness skills, and all his courage, to survive.

Readers who enjoyed Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet* will love *Bandits Peak*. This heart-pounding adventure tale is full of danger and excitement.





The *Haunted* series follows a brother and sister who travel with their parents' ghost hunter TV show and try to help the ghosts. In *The Ghost on the Stairs*, an 1880s ghost bride haunts a Colorado hotel, waiting for her missing husband to return. *The Riverboat Phantom* features a steamboat pilot still trying to prevent a long-ago disaster. In *The Knight in the Shadows*, a Renaissance French squire protects a sword on display at a New York City museum. During *The Ghost Miner's Treasure*, Jon and Tania help a dead man find his lost gold mine—but they're not the only ones looking for it.

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