



The Dead Man's Treasure

By Kris Bock

Pig River Press
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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, in the form of a green-eyed rock-climbing stud determined to show her 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. In a frantic race across New Mexico, Rebecca will have to ignore caution in a defiant bid for victory. If she fails, she could lose everything.

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.

If you would like to try to solve the clues yourself, you can download a printable copy from [*The Dead Man's Treasure page*](#) of the Kris Bock website. That document also includes some of the Southwestern recipes mentioned in the book.

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Chapter 1

Rebecca peered through the small, cloudy window into the machine shop. Inside, someone held a flaming welding torch to an odd jumble of metal. She couldn't see the person's features beyond the face shield, but a glimpse of tousled, dark blond hair suggested it might be the woman from the article. The treasure hunter.

The woman who could help. If only she would.

Rebecca made sure her blouse was neatly tucked into her skirt and pushed through the door. A burning, metallic smell hit her. The new angle gave her a glimpse of the welder's shoulders and she reversed her opinion. That was no woman.

He turned off the torch and removed the welding helmet. "Hey." He was average height, with sun-streaked hair and a killer smile. Sweat glistened on his face and lean, muscular arms. He was sexy in an athletic way, though she preferred the work-obsessed brainiac type.

Rebecca gave a brief nod of greeting. In the clutter of odd machinery, it took her a moment to spot the woman leaning against a long metal table. Curly blonde hair, curvy figure in jeans and a tank top. That was whom she'd come to see. "Camille Dagneau?"

"Call me Camie." The blue eyes studied her with open curiosity.

Rebecca forced a smile, hoping her fatigue and anxiety didn't show. "I'm Rebecca Westin. Can we talk?"

"Sure, go ahead."

Rebecca glanced at the man, but he was poking at his project, testing the weld or something, and it would be rude to insist he leave in the middle of his work. He was probably a student, though he looked close to thirty, and the metal thing looked more like an artistic sculpture than an engineering project.

She moved closer to Camie and spoke in a low voice. "I read about you in a *National Geographic* article. And when I found out you were here, in New Mexico.... Well, it seemed like too good a coincidence to pass up. I'm hoping I can convince you to help me find another treasure."

Behind her, the man said, "Wait a minute, if this is a treasure hunt, I want in this time."

Rebecca shot him a frosty look, but he kept smiling. He was probably used to getting whatever he wanted with that smile. But this wasn't a game. Her future was at stake. She turned back to Camie, shifting slightly to block out the man, and waited for a response.

"You want to hire me as a treasure hunting guide?"

Here's where things got tricky. "That's the thing. I don't actually have any money to pay you." She wouldn't explain why she was broke, why she needed more money. She didn't want pity. She tried to project a confidence she didn't feel. "But I'd like to propose a partnership. I supply the clues, and you supply the expertise."

Camie leaned back against the table and crossed her arms. "What makes you think this treasure is something I couldn't research and find on my own?"

"It's a family treasure. Not something from legends, like that other one you found. That's why I'm coming to you. I understand your partner is the historian, but you're the one who knows the desert."

"I'm intrigued. Can I see some ID?"

Rebecca blinked in surprise, then fished her wallet out of her purse and handed over her driver's license. Camie leaned over the table and made notes on a pad of paper. Rebecca rubbed her nose, which tickled from the acrid smells – burning metal and something like motor oil or grease, as near as she could guess.

After a minute, Camie tore off the bottom half of the paper and handed it to Rebecca. "Come to this address at six. We'll give you dinner and then we can talk."

Rebecca opened her mouth. She'd expected to explain a lot more, had been ready to persuade, to negotiate. But she closed her mouth and nodded. This was a start. No point in pushing it and maybe ruining things. Besides, she didn't want to go into detail with the strange man in the room.

She wanted to ask who "we" referred to, but it was probably Erin Mayer, the woman's partner from their big find the previous year. That was fair, although Rebecca didn't want to bring too many people into this. It was bad enough that she'd already be competing against her half-siblings. She didn't need strangers in the race as well. But she'd never win on her own.

"I'll see you then." Rebecca turned and left, without even a glance of acknowledgment at the man. Hopefully he got the message.

Outside the building, she walked slowly across the small college campus. It didn't look like any university she'd seen before. No massive brick buildings, no huge sports stadium. Just a dozen or so tan stucco buildings with red tile roofs. Nothing was over three stories high. At least it had grass under big shade trees, the green soothing and familiar. She'd been chilly that morning leaving Albuquerque, but now, eighty miles south and heading toward noon, it was time to peel off her suit jacket. If nothing else, a week in New Mexico in May made a nice vacation after a wet, dreary Seattle winter that seemed determined to hold on forever.

What could she do for the next few hours? She was in no mood for sightseeing, even if she knew what sights the area boasted. The drive south had been enough to make her feel like a fish very far out of water. All that desert, all those browns and reds. Even the distant mountains that paralleled the highway hadn't helped. They were the wrong color, and there were so many of them. She could see for miles, which proved how large the state was, vast plains and mesas and canyons. How would she ever find the treasure?

She paused as if looking at some flyers pasted on the glass door of a building, though really it was an excuse to stop her aimless wandering. She couldn't afford to waste time. And she'd make herself sick if she spent the afternoon worrying about whether that woman would help. Rebecca would simply have to persuade her. She'd never backed down from a challenge.

Her gaze shifted past the glass into the building – a library. Libraries had information. A local college library might have resources she couldn't find anywhere else. She had her plan for the afternoon.

Rebecca pulled up to the address Camie had given her. She was ten minutes early, since it hadn't taken much time to get across the small town. Her stomach gurgled. It was nice of them to offer her a meal, and it would save her a few dollars. Hopefully they'd have something better than the slice of cafeteria pizza she'd had for lunch. She needed to get back on a healthy diet. Her pants had started digging into her belly six months earlier. She'd recently bumped into an old coworker who had assumed she was pregnant. That was embarrassing for both of them.

At least she'd forced herself to run twice a week throughout the entire ordeal. It had been mainly stress relief, but it also burned calories. She quickly did the math in her head. Five hundred calories per run, twice a week, was over a pound a month. Without those jogs, she'd

have added another dozen or so pounds and probably wouldn't fit into her clothes at all. And she certainly wouldn't be in any kind of shape for treasure hunting in the desert.

She glanced at her watch. Three minutes till six. She left the car and headed for the house.

A slim woman with short dark hair opened the door. "Hi, you must be Rebecca. I'm Erin. Come on in." Rebecca met her friendly smile with a silent sigh of relief. Whatever Camie had found out or decided over the course of the afternoon, apparently they weren't ready to laugh at Rebecca or turn her away – yet.

The fact that male voices came from the back of the house was less encouraging. How big was her audience?

Camie came out of the back room, probably the kitchen, carrying a pitcher of what looked like iced tea. "Good, you're prompt. I hate people who are late." She put the pitcher on the table. "I made my famous green chile stew. I hope you don't mind spicy food."

"No, I like it."

Camie grinned. "Points for that as well." She gestured toward a tall, lanky man as he came out of the kitchen. "That's Drew. He hangs around with Erin a lot, and for some reason she lets him."

The man shook Rebecca's hand and then draped an arm over Erin's shoulder. She looked perfectly happy to have him around, and Rebecca could see why. He was tall, dark, and handsome in jeans and cowboy boots. A man had been involved in that other treasure hunt as well, according to the article. A helicopter pilot. If this was him, he might come in handy after all. Not that she could imagine locating buried treasure from a helicopter, but at least it was less mind-boggling than heading into the desert on foot.

Rebecca's smile froze in place as the man who'd been welding came out of the kitchen. He leaned forward to put a plastic container on the table, and his forearms were sculpted works of art. His gray T-shirt showed those well-defined shoulder muscles, though he wasn't bulky overall. He was built like a professional dancer, but that seemed an unlikely profession in a small town in the middle of New Mexico.

He reached out to take her hand in a warm, firm grip. "We didn't officially meet. I'm Sam."

Before Rebecca could respond, Camie said, "And I'm hungry. Let's eat." She slid past Sam, giving his sides a quick squeeze that made him jump and chuckle. They must be a couple. Good thing Rebecca hadn't been even ruder to him earlier.

The stew wasn't what she would have called chili. No tomato, just beef, onions, beans, and the local green chile, with sour cream, cheese, and cilantro served separately to sprinkle on top. It was delicious, even if it made her mouth burn and her nose run. Sam's plastic container turned out to be a tortilla warmer and he'd apparently made the tortillas himself. She'd never been a fan of flour tortillas, but these were light and flaky, not like the usual bland cardboard ones. They were perfect for soothing her tongue when the stew got to be too much.

It was a friendly, noisy meal, as the others joked and teased. No one brought up the treasure hunt or asked Rebecca any questions. She couldn't quite relax, knowing what was to come. She was an outsider, watching people who knew each other well, but at least she had a reminder of what life could be like. The last time she'd felt that kind of camaraderie had been in college, which seemed like lifetimes ago, not a mere decade.

This. This is what I want. Someday.

For now, it was enough that she could dream again. That she'd taken these first steps. If she found the treasure, it might not solve all her problems – but it would be a big help. Rebecca could pay off her debts and make sure her niece kept getting the best medical care. With enough

money, she could take time off before looking for another job. Relax a little. Do something for herself for a change. Figure out her future.

Two years earlier, she'd been well on her way to her goal of being financially independent by age 35. She could've quit her job and started her own company, or thought about having a family. Now she was worse off than she'd been at twenty. No job, no home, credit card debt, and a gap in her résumé that would raise uncomfortable questions. The treasure would put her back on track, and then some.

Finally the meal ended and Camie waved everyone to the living room to "get down to business." Rebecca was tired of business in all its forms, but she couldn't slow down yet.

Erin and Drew sat hip to hip on the couch, with Sam sprawled next to them. Rebecca settled into one of the facing chairs.

Camie dropped to the floor, cross-legged. "Tell us what this is all about."

Rebecca gathered her thoughts. "I'm going to have to start with some family history." She didn't want to, but the rest wouldn't make sense without it. "My father, Arnold Westin Junior, grew up here in New Mexico. In Santa Fe, specifically. He married a woman called Isabel and had three children – Arnold the Third, Benjamin, and Tiffany. A few years later, Arnold left Isabel and moved to Oregon. I don't think he ever saw those children, or any of his family in New Mexico, again. However, his father, the first Arnold, was a wealthy man and took care of his daughter-in-law and grandchildren."

She took a deep breath, avoiding meeting anyone's eyes. The story was sordid, but that wasn't her fault. Worse, though, it made them all look pitiful. "Arnold met my mother, and they had two more children, my sister Sophia and me, before he died in a car accident twenty years ago. We never heard from Dad's New Mexico family – until a few weeks ago. Arnold Senior died of cancer and left an unusual will."

Interest, which had been polite, sharpened. Now she had to hook them. "Apparently my grandfather was a collector. His house is full of antiques. But he particularly collected small items of very high value. Spanish doubloons. Old native jewelry." She shrugged. "I don't know what exactly. But enough treasure to fill a treasure chest."

Camie grinned. "And what, he lost it?"

"No. He buried it."

Dear Readers,

The Dead Man's Treasure is the second of my treasure hunting book, following *The Mad Monk's Treasure* (originally published as *Rattled*). Book 3 is Camie's story, *The Skeleton Canyon Treasure*.

To learn more, please visit my website at www.krisbock.com or sign up for the [Kris Bock newsletter](#).

If you're interested in learning more about New Mexico and the surrounding states, visit my blog, "[The Southwest Armchair Traveler](#)." I'll be sharing Southwestern travel tidbits, recipes, quirky historical notes, and guest posts.

Kris Bock

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

A legendary treasure hunt in the dramatic—and deadly—New Mexico desert....

The lost Victorio Peak treasure is the stuff of legends—a heretic Spanish priest's gold mine, made richer by the spoils of bandits and an Apache raider.

When Erin, a quiet history professor, uncovers a clue that may pinpoint the lost treasure cave, she prepares for adventure. But when a hit and run driver nearly kills her, she realizes she's not the only one after the treasure. And is Drew, the handsome helicopter pilot who found her

bleeding in a ditch, really a hero, or one of the enemy?

Just how far will Erin go to find the treasure and discover what she's really made of?

Praise for *The Mad Monk's Treasure*:

"The action never stopped It was adventure and romance at its best."

"I couldn't put this book down. You'll love it."

"The story has it all—action, romance, danger, intrigue, lost treasure, not to mention a sizzling relationship...."



Counterfeits

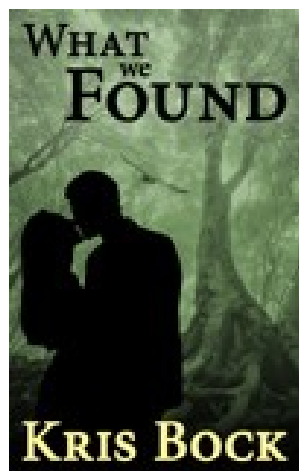
Painter Jenny Kinley has spent the last decade struggling in the New York art world. Her grandmother's sudden death brings her home to New Mexico, but inheriting the children's art camp her grandmother ran is more of a burden than a gift. How can she give up her lifelong dreams of showing her work in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

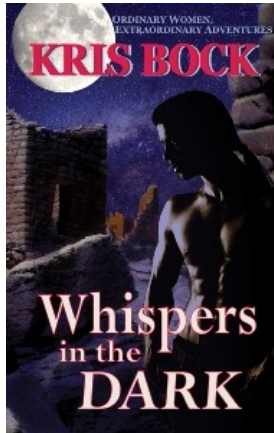
More than one person isn't happy about Audra bringing a crime to life. The dead woman was murdered, and Audra could be next on the vengeful killer's list. She'll have to stand up for herself in order to stand up for the murder victim. It's a risk, and so is reaching out to the mysterious young man who 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*:

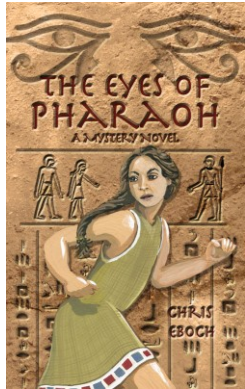
“This book was a delight from start to finish!”

“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!”

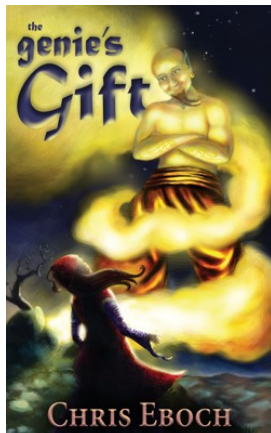
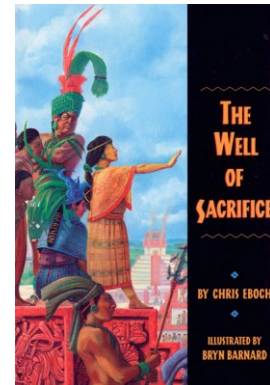
Children's books by Chris Eboch

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?

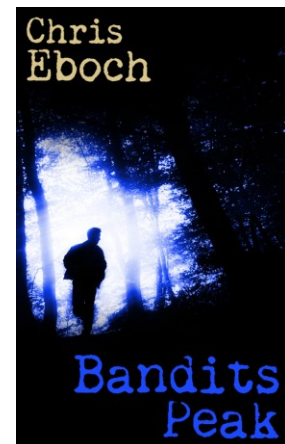
In *The Well of Sacrifice*, a Mayan girl in ninth-century Guatemala rebels against the High Priest who sacrifices anyone challenging his power. Kirkus Reviews said, "[An] engrossing first novel.... Eboch crafts an exciting narrative with a richly textured depiction of ancient Mayan society.... The novel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

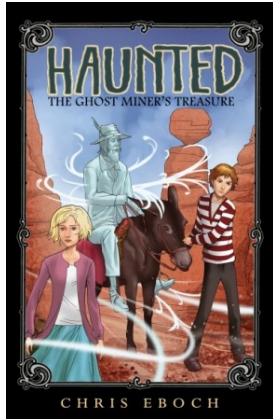


The Genie's Gift is a lighthearted action novel that draws on the mythology of The Arabian Nights. Shy and timid Anise determines to find the Genie Shakayak and claim the Gift of Sweet Speech. But the way is barred by a series of challenges, both ordinary and magical. How will Anise get past a vicious 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.

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.

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