

Chapter 5

The Secret Hiding Place

The early morning sun blazed through the open window. Erin and Kim jumped out of bed and quickly got dressed. They could hardly wait to eat breakfast and then start their search for Annabelle's hiding place.

All through breakfast they waited, but Mom and Dad didn't mention that they had to clean their bedroom or empty any of the boxes; so, *technically*, they figured they were free to go ahead and search the playroom until they got busted. When they got up to their bedroom, Erin paused before she reached out and opened the hidden door's latch. "When do you think we should tell Mom and Dad about Annabelle's playroom?" she asked.

Kim thought for a moment and then answered, "Let's find the treasure first. Then we can tell them everything."

"Okay," agreed Erin, not needing much encouragement. She reached up and twisted the molding and the door slid

silently open. They went up to the playroom and stood in the center, deciding where to begin.

"Where do you think we should start?" asked Kim after a moment of silence. Although she was excited about the search for the hidden treasure, the room seemed a little overwhelming.

"Let's check the walls first," suggested Erin. She had thought about the hunt all through breakfast and had developed a plan to search the room in an organized way so they wouldn't miss anything. For the next half hour, the two girls poked and prodded every inch of the playroom's walls but found nothing. When they had finally eliminated all possible hiding places on the walls, they started on the doll closet. They carefully took everything out of the closet and searched the inside woodwork. After removing the drawer and finding nothing behind it, they put everything back into the closet just the way they found it.

"I give up," stated Kim, plunking herself down on one of the chairs. She leaned forward, resting her elbows on the table and her head in her hands.

“We’ve only checked two things so far!” exclaimed Erin.
“We still have a million places to look!”

“A million?” cried Kim. She rolled her eyes and then dropped her head further into her hands, mumbling, “Now I really give up.”

“Ok, you can give up if you want. But then I get to keep the treasure when I find it.”

She knew that would get action from her little sister. Kim was up in a flash.

“I’m ready now. Where should we look next?” she asked, crossing over to stand beside Erin.

The two of them searched every nook and cranny over the next two hours but could not find any treasure. When they had looked just about everywhere they could imagine, they both sat down at the table to plan their next move.

“I don’t think there is any old treasure,” grumbled Kim after a moment’s rest.

Erin wasn’t too sure anymore. Her confidence was a little shaken and she couldn’t think of another place to look that they hadn’t already searched at least twice.

Kim got up and walked over to the doll house. She started to play with the miniature furniture. She moved the table across the tiny playroom and the doll closet over to the opposite wall. Reaching down, she opened the tiny doors to the closet. The inside was painted to look like there were rows and rows of dolls on the shelves. The tiny drawer slid open, and inside were little bits of cloth carefully folded to look just like the doll clothes in the large closet.

“Look at this stuff, Erin,” she marveled.

Erin came across the room and knelt down next to Kim. Bending in close, she peered into the tiny closet.

“Wow,” she said. “It’s just like the real thing. I wonder what’s in the hope chest. I’ll bet it’s just like the real one.”

She reached down and tried to lift the lid on the miniature hope chest. It didn’t budge. “I wonder why this doesn’t open.”

Erin reached into the doll house to take out the chest. She held it close to her face so she could get a better look at it.

“Look!” exclaimed Kim, pointing at the spot where the chest had been. There on the floor of the doll house was a neatly painted ‘X’.

“That’s it!” exclaimed Erin. “You’ve found it!”

“Found what?” asked Kim.

“The ‘X!’” replied Erin. She got up and rushed over to the large hope chest. “On old treasure maps, ‘X’ always marks the spot where the treasure is hidden!” She gave the chest a hard push but it wouldn’t budge.

“Come give me a hand!”

Kim dashed across the room and together they pushed the chest out of the way. Under it was a cleverly hidden handle built into the false floor. The girls could just make out the outline of a trap door.

“Go ahead, Kim,” urged Erin. “You’re the one who found the secret hiding place.”

Kim reached down and lifted the handle. Inside, a cloth bag and a wooden box were nestled in the opening. A newspaper and a small envelope were next to the wooden box. They carefully took everything out. Twenty silver dollars and fifteen gold coins were inside the bag. In the wooden box was the most beautiful silver tea set that the girls had ever seen. “This must be the silver set that belonged to Kristina,” said Erin.

She reached into the hiding place, took out the envelope, and opened it. Inside was a single sheet of paper with a note in Annabelle’s handwriting. Erin read the note aloud.

If you are reading this note, you have found my secret hiding place and all of the treasure inside. You are welcome to it, but there is more if you’re willing to look. With this key you can get into the boathouse where the real treasure is hidden.

Good Luck. Love, Annabelle

“What key?” asked Erin. She looked around the floor and back into the hiding place but could not find the key that Annabelle had mentioned in the note.

Kim picked up the envelope off of the floor and tipped it upside-down but there was nothing inside. She picked up the newspaper and out of it dropped a large heavy metal key. It clanged loudly as it hit the floor of the playroom.

“That’s it!” cried Erin, picking it up off the floor and holding it up to the light. The key had a beautiful floral design on the handle and three teeth on the end. It looked as if it

would be a perfect match to the rusty old padlock on the door of the boathouse.

“Erin! Kim!” The sound of their mother’s muffled voice startled the two girls.

“Uh-oh. We’re dead,” sighed Kim.

“Where are those two?” They heard their mother say.

Erin slid the key and Annabelle’s note into her pocket and grabbed Kim’s arm. “Don’t say anything about the treasure out in the boathouse,” she urged. “We’ll find it first, and then show Mom and Dad.”

“Okay,” answered Kim.

The two girls quickly went back down the stairs to show their parents everything they had found so far.

“Where have you two been? And why isn’t your room done yet?” demanded Mom when Erin and Kim entered the bedroom through the secret entry. “Here it is, almost lunch time, and it doesn’t look as if you two have done anything in here!”

She was so upset she hadn’t even noticed the secret door to Annabelle’s playroom. Erin inched over to the secret latch and quickly turned it. The door shut with a bang.

“And another thing...” Mom never finished what she was about to say. She looked over at the wall where Erin and Kim had just appeared and then back at the girls.

“What was that noise? And where did you two just come from?” she asked, crossing over to where the secret door had shut.

Erin and Kim both started to giggle, but before they could answer their mom, Dad walked into the room.

“What’s going on in here? It doesn’t look like you two did anything this morning.” Standing in the doorway with arms folded across his chest, he leaned on the door jam. When he had this look on his face, the girls knew they had some explaining to do.

“What in the world are you doing, Laurie?”

The girls turned to see their mom carefully running her hands over the wall where the secret door was located.

“Okay, girls. Where’s the door?” she asked, turning around and smiling quizzically at Kim and Erin.

“We found a secret playroom with dolls, and toys, and a huge doll house, and a secret hiding place, and—ouch!” Kim

stopped mid-sentence and glared at Erin, who had pinched her arm.

“Kim! Don’t tell them everything! Let’s show them.”

Erin reached up and turned the latch. The door slid open. Mom leaned her head into the opening and looked up the stairs.

“Well, I’ll be,” she declared. “Jim, come and take a look at this.”

Dad crossed the room and stepped into the opening.

“I see you girls have found that entry into the upper turret room.” He smiled back into the bedroom at Erin and Kim. “That was quite a piece of detective work. What did you say was up there?”

“We’ll show you,” they both said at the same time.

Grabbing a flashlight, the two of them rushed through the door past Dad. When Kim got to the third step, Erin grabbed her arm to stop her from going any further. Kim looked back questioningly, but before she could say anything, Erin put her finger to her lips to signal that she wanted to surprise Mom and Dad with the automatic door-closer.

“Come on in,” she urged.

When they both stepped into the opening, Erin signaled Kim to continue on up. The moment she stepped on the fourth step, the door slammed shut.

“What happened?” asked Dad. “Who shut the door?”

He turned back and started running his hands over the door, but he could not find a latch to open it.

“I know how to open it,” said Erin.

“Me too,” said Kim.

Both Mom and Dad looked up at the girls. “Well?” they said, waiting.

“Everybody stand back,” ordered Erin. She looked up at Kim and gave her a smile.

“Open,” she commanded, as Kim stepped down on the fourth step. The door opened just as she had commanded.

“Now shut,” she commanded again, as Kim stepped down on the fourth step again.

“Now open,” she instructed. The door slid open again.

Both girls giggled at their parents’ confusion.

“All right, how did you do that?” asked Mom.

“I’ll show you,” said Kim. “Shut!” She stepped down on the step. The door slid shut.

“Kim!” cried Erin.

“Oops!”

Dad came up the steps and lifted Kim off the fourth step and put her back down on it. The door slid open. He then swooped down on both girls and tickled them until they begged him to stop.

“Jim, not on the stairs,” said Mom.

“Yes, Jim,” sing-songed Erin, trying to copy Mom’s voice.

“Not on the stairs!”

“I’ll get you later,” he answered, giving her one last tickle.

The two girls raced up ahead of their parents and opened the door to Annabelle’s playroom.

When their parents finally reached the entrance, they showed them all of the wonderful things they had found, including the beautiful tea set. A couple of times Kim almost blabbed about the key and the note that Erin had slipped into her pocket, but Erin was able to change the subject each time. Their secret was still safe.

Chapter 5 Discussion Questions

K – 2nd Grade

What is a detective?

If you found a treasure map, what treasure would you hope to find?

3 & 4th Grade

Why do you think Erin wanted to keep the key a secret?

Do you think the girls will show their parents the treasure chest? Why or why not?

5 & 6th Grade

Pretend you were going to show a parent, guardian, or close friend your secret playroom. Predict how they would react.

Think back to your earlier prediction about the boathouse. Now that you know a little more information, does your prediction about what’s in the boathouse change?