CHAPTER 6

It was still dark when they awoke the next morning, but it was later than usual. The museum wouldn't open until one. Claudia was up first. She was getting dressed when Jamie opened his eyes.

"You know," he said, "Sunday is still Sunday. It feels like Sunday. Even here."

Claudia answered, "I noticed that. Do you think we ought to try to go to church when we go out?"

Jamie thought a minute before answering, "Well, let's say a prayer in that little room of the Middle Ages. The part with the pretty stained glass window."

They dressed and walked to the little chapel and knelt and said The Lord's Prayer. Jamie reminded Claudia to say she was sorry for stealing the newspaper. That made it officially Sunday.

"C'mon," Claudia said as she was rising, "let's go to the statue."

They walked over to Angel and looked very closely. It was difficult to look for clues. Even after their research. They were accustomed to having all the clues neatly laid out on a diagram placed in front of the exhibit.

"I still say that it's too bad we can't touch her," Claudia complained.

"At least we're living with it. We're the only two people in the whole world who live with it."

"Mrs. Frankweiler did, too. She could touch . . ."

"And hug it," Jamie teased.

"I'll bet she knows for sure if Michelangelo did it."

"Sure she does," Jamie said. He then threw his arms around himself, leaned his head way back, closed his eyes, and murmured, "Every morning when she got up, Mrs. Frankweiler would throw her arms about the statue, peer into its eyes, and say, 'speak to me, baby. ' One morning the statue ans ..."

Claudia was furious. "The men who moved it last night hugged it when they moved it. There's all kinds of hugging."

She refused to look at Jamie again and instead stared at the statue. The sound of footsteps broke the silence and her concentration. Footsteps from the Italian Renaissance were descending upon them! The guard was coming down the steps. Oh, boloney! thought Jamie. There was just too much time before the museum opened on Sundays. They should have been in hiding already. Here they were out in the open with a light on!

Jamie grabbed Claudia's hand and pulled her behind the booth where they rent walkie-talkies for a tour of the museum. Even though they were well hidden by the dark as they squatted there, they felt as exposed as that great bare lady in the painting upstairs.

The footsteps stopped in front of Angel. Jamie sent another mental telegram: Get going, get going, get going. Of course it worked. The guard moved on toward the Egyptian wing to cover the rest of his tour. The two children wouldn't even allow themselves a sigh of relief. They were that well disciplined.

After ten minutes lag time, Jamie tugged the hem of Claudia's jacket, and they cautiously got up. Jamie led the way back up the great stairway. As he did so, his logic became clear to Claudia. Thank goodness Jamie thought so clearly so fast, and thank goodness for those twenty acres of floor space. It would take the watchman more than an hour before he passed that way again.

They stealthily climbed the wide stairway, staying close to the rail. Step, pause. Step, pause. All the way to the top until they found themselves in front of the pedestal on which Angel had stood just the day before. Claudia paused to look; partly from habit and partly because anything associated with Angel was precious. Jamie paused to catch his breath.

"Why do you think they changed the velvet under her from blue to gold?" Claudia whispered.

This blue probably got dirty. C'mon, let's hide."

Claudia looked again at the velvet. Light was beginning to seep into the museum. Something on top of the velvet caught her eye. "One of the workmen must have been drinking beer when he moved the statue."

"Most people drink beer," Jamie said. "What's so unusual about that?"

"They don't let visitors bring in beer," answered Claudia. "I wonder why they allow the workers to do it? What if he had spilled it on Angel? See where he must have put his beer can on that platform." She pointed to the blue velvet covering the pedestal. "See the rings where the pile of the velvet isn't crushed."

Jamie said, "Yeah, Ballantine beer. Those three rings." Then he began humming a commercial that he had heard during the baseball game on television last spring.

Claudia interrupted, "Those are the marks of the beer can itself. After all, the emblem on the can is flat against the can. It could have been any kind of beer. Schlitz, Rheingold."

Jamie stared at the blue velvet. "You're right, Claude. Except for one thing. "

"What's that?" she asked.

"The rings the beer cans made would have crushed the plush of the velvet down . . . and the plush of this velvet is crushed up."

"What kind of a sentence is that? Crushed up!"

"Oh, boloney! You just go ahead and pick on my grammar. Go ahead pick on my grammar. But you can't pick on my logic. The weight of the statue crushed all the velvet down except where the marble was chipped away and the plush was crushed up. Claudia, there's a crushed-up W in one of those circles that is also crushed up."

"For goodness' sake, Jamie. That's not a W; that's an M." She looked at Jamie, and her eyes widened, "M for Michelangelo!"

Jamie was rubbing his eyes. "You know, Claude, I saw that symbol yesterday on the cover of one of the books I looked at."

"What was it, Jamie? What was it?"

"How should I know? You were supposed to be doing the reading! I was just supposed to be looking for pictures and clues."

"James Kincaid, you are something. You are absolutely something. As if it would have hurt you to read one little thing. Just one little thing!"

Jamie said, "Well, we have a clue."

"We could know already."

"We have an important clue. I'll bet they never even looked at the bottom of the statue."

"Now we have to go back to the library today to find out what that symbol means. But we can't! That library is closed on Sundays. Oh, Jamie, I've got to know."

"We'll check the museum bookshop. Don't worry, Claude; I'll recognize the book. Right now, we better hide."

Claudia glanced at her watch. "Where are we going to hide up here? There's no furniture. We can't risk going downstairs again."

Jamie picked up a corner of the blue velvet drape. "Be my guest," he said indicating the floor under the platform with an elegant sweep of his hand.

Jamie and Claudia squatted under the platform waiting. It was close quarters under there. Jamie needed only to point his fingers to poke his sister in the ribs. "I say, Lady Claudia, I do believe we're safe and onto something really great."

"Perhaps, Sir James, perhaps."

Claudia didn't think about their close calls. They were unimportant; they wouldn't matter in the end, the end having something to do with Michelangelo, Angel, history, and herself. She thought about the history test she had had on Monday at school. There had been a question on the test that she couldn't answer. She had studied hard and read the chapter thoroughly. She knew where the answer was ?the second paragraph in the right hand column of page 157. In her mind she could actually see where the answer was, but she couldn't think of what it was.

Angel was that way. An answer to running away, and also to going home again, lay in Angel. She knew it was there, but she didn't know what it was. It was just escaping her as the answer to the question on the test had . . . except this was even harder, for she wasn't exactly certain of the question she was trying to answer. The question had something to do with why Angel had become more Important than having run away or even being safe, at the museum. Oh! she was right back where she had started. It was too stuffy under that velvet. How could anyone think straight? No wonder her thinking came out in circles. She knew one thing for sure: maybe they had a clue.

A crowd formed in front of the museum before it opened. The guard who was to have removed the pedestal and drape was called outside to set up saw-horses and make orderly rows out of the mass of people. The museum couldn't spare Morris until after the police had sent help for the sidewalk traffic. When he finally moved the platform and drape and took them to the basement for storage, Claudia and Jamie had already left and were browsing around the crowded bookshop peeking under the dust jackets of books about Michelangelo.

They found the book with the mark on the cover! The crushed-up mark on the dark blue velvet was Michelangelo's stonemason's mark. He had chipped it into the base of the marble to identify himself as owner, much as brands are burned into the hides of cattle to identify their owners.

They emerged from the bookshop feeling triumphant. And hungry.

"C'mon," Claudia shouted as soon as they got out, "Let's grab a taxi to the Automat . "

"We'll walk," Jamie said.

"We have income now. All we have to do is take a bath whenever we need money. "

Jamie thought a second. "O.K. I'll allow a bus."

Claudia smiled. "Thank you, Mr. Pinchpenny."

"You call me Pinchpenny, and I'll call you . . ."

"Call me a taxi," she laughed, running toward the bus stop in front of the museum.

Jamie was feeling so satisfied that he gave Claudia seventy-five cents for brunch. He allowed himself the same. As they ate, they discussed what they should do about the awesome information they had.

"Let's call the New York Times," Jamie suggested.

All that publicity! They'll want to know how we found out."

"Let's call the head of the Metropolitan."

"He'll want to know how we found out."

"We'll tell him," Jamie said.

"Are you out of your mind?" Claudia asked. "Tell him we've been living there?"

"Don't you think we ought to tell the museum about the crushed-up mark on the velvet?"

"We owe it to them," Claudia answered. "We've been their guests all this time . "

"Then you figure out how we can let them know without getting caught. I'll bet you already have it all worked out."

"As a matter of fact, I do." Claudia leaned across the table and spoke to Jamie in her best secret agent fashion. "We'll write them a letter and tell them to look at the base of the statue for an important clue."

"What if they can't figure out what the clue is?"

"We'll help them with that when they need help. We'll reveal ourselves then. And they'll be very happy to have been our hosts," Claudia said. She paused long enough for Jamie to begin to get impatient, but just begin. "Here's the plan: we rent a post office box in Grand Central. Like when you send in box tops, you always send them to P.O. Box Number So-and-so. We write a letter and tell them to answer us at the box number. After they tell us that they need help, we reveal ourselves. As heroes."

"Can't we go home and wait? That was rough last night and this morning. Besides, then we can be heroes twice. Once when we return home and once when we reveal ourselves."

"No!" Claudia screeched. "We have to know about Angel first. We have to be right . "

"Wow! What's the matter with you, Claude? You know you planned on going home sometime."

"Yes," she answered, "sometime. But not just anytime." Her voice was becoming high pitched again.

"Anytime we come home-from a visit to Grandpa's or from summer camp-they're always glad to see us."

"But it never makes any difference. Going home without knowing about Angel for sure will be the same as going home from camp. It won't be any different. After one day, maybe two, we'll be back to the same old thing. And I didn't run away to come home the same."

"Well, this has been more fun than camp. Even the food's been better. There's that difference."

"But, Jamie, it's not enough."

"Yeah, I know, it's not enough. I'm hungry most of the time."

"I mean the difference is not enough. Like being born with perfect pitch, or being born very ordinary and then winning the Congressional Medal of Honor or getting an Academy Award. Those are differences that will last a lifetime. Finding out about Angel will be that kind of difference.

"I think you're different already, Claude."

"Do you?" she asked. She was smiling and her eyes were modestly lowered, ready for a compliment.

"Yes. We're all sane, and you're insane."

"Jamie Kincaid!"

"O.K. O.K. I'm insane, too. I'll go along with you. Besides some of the complications are getting interesting, even though some are dull. How will you disguise your handwriting?"

"No need to do that I'll use a typewriter." Claudia waited for Jamie's look of surprise.

She got it. "Where are you going to get a typewriter?"

"In front of the Olivetti place on Fifth Avenue. We passed it twice yesterday. Once when you made us walk from the laundromat. And again when we walked from library to library. It's bolted to a stand outside the building for everyone to use. You know, sort of a sample of their product. It ' s free . "

Jamie smiled, "It's a good thing that I'm insane about walking.

Otherwise, you would never have found that typewriter."

"And it's a good thing that I'm an excellent observer," Claudia added.

They marched up Fifth Avenue and were delighted to find a piece of paper already in the typewriter. Across the top of the page someone had typed: Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party. Claudia didn't know that this sentence was a common one used in practice typing. She thought it appeared appropriate to their message and would add a proper note of mystery besides. (Here, Saxonberg, is a copy of the letter Claudia typed. You can see that her typing needed a great deal of improvement.)

Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party;

Dear Museum Head,

We think that you should examine the bottom of the statue for an importandt clue. The statue we mean is the oen you bought for $225.00. And the clue is that you will find Michelangelo's stone 'mason' s markk on the bottom. If you need help about this clue, you may write to us at Grande Central Post Office. Box in Manhanttan .

Sincerely,

Friends of the Museum

Pleased with their effort, they felt that they could take the rest of the day off. They wandered around Rockefeller Center and watched the skaters for a short while. They watched the crowd watching the skaters for a while longer. When they returned to the museum filled with satisfaction and with snacks for their supper, they saw a long line of Sunday people waiting to climb the museum steps. Knowing that everyone in that line would be shepherded in and out, in front of and past the statue in a matter of minutes, they decided to enter through the rear entrance instead. The guard at that door told them that they would have to use the Fifth Avenue entrance if they wished to see Angel.

"Oh, we've already seen that!" Jamie said.

The guard from friendliness, helpfulness or, perhaps, sheer loneliness (very few people had entered through his door that day) asked Jamie what he thought of it.

"Well, we need to do more research, but it seems to me that . . ."

Claudia pulled Jamie's arm. "Come along, Albert," she urged.

On their way to the rooms containing Greek vases, they again observed the enormous crowd passing by the statue.

"As I was about to tell that guard, it seems to me that they should try to get to the bottom of the mystery."

Claudia giggled; Jamie joined in. They spent exactly enough time among the vases of ancient Greece to be able to man their waiting stations and not be discovered.