

Bella Morgenstein, a social worker & mother of two, is arrested for the murder of her boss, Agnus Corbett, who kept her inheritance from her. Was she charged with this heinous crime? What happened to Bella and her family?

The Pirate Map

by Sherry K. Pinchak

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The Pirate Map



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Print ISBN: 978-1-961267-46-6

Ebook ISBN: 979-8-88532-499-1

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Trenton, Georgia, U.S.A.

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Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Pinchak, Sherry K.

The Pirate Map by Sherry K. Pinchak

Library of Congress Control Number: 2026906398

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2026

Chapter 1

The Arrest

“You can’t do this to me,” Bella Morganstein shouted as Officer Harry White snapped the cold metal handcuffs on her wrists and led her away from her workplace.

The muscular female officer from the New York Police Department thanked Officer White as she shut Bella into the small space, which she would call home for the next several days.

“I’ve never seen the inside of a jail,” she wailed to the jailer as the clang of the door echoed behind her. Inside the damp, gray cell, there was a tiny, rusted wire cot with a mildewed mattress barely covered by a dirty white sheet. From the cement floor to the crumbling ceiling, long black bars formed a cage-like atmosphere. Tears streamed down her face as Bella, surrounded by faded, peeling lime-green walls, demanded to know why she had been arrested.

The muscular, middle-aged female jailer, nicknamed Pearlie, had a short neck to match her short stature, long brown hair tied up with bobby pins, and said with a nonchalant look, “Young lady, you have been accused of murder.”

“What! I don’t believe it,” Bella exclaimed. She was not corrupt. She had committed no crime. She was innocent.

Her boss and friend, Agnus Corbett, was found dead on the afternoon of October 4, 1916, inside the Grantham Charitable Foundation on 5th Avenue in New York City, where Bella worked as a social worker. The smoking gun was located in her

office along with the body. The housekeeper, Mrs. Louise Brown, discovered the body and immediately called the police. It seemed to take forever, given the busy New York City crime scene, but Officer Harry White was the first to arrive and quickly arrested Mrs. Morganstein, who was talking with a new client.

The staff was stunned as they watched Bella being handcuffed and taken to the 42nd Street jail in New York City; after all, the body and gun were found as evidence in her office. The police cordoned off the crime scene as the staff of the Grantham Charitably Foundation looked on.

If it had been 40 years later, Bella would have been read her Miranda rights, but those rights didn't exist back then, so she was out of luck.

From the moment she arrived in New York City from San Francisco at age twenty-two in 1908, Bella was an honest, compassionate citizen who supported reforms and humanitarian causes, advocating for women's suffrage and protections against child labor. The previous year, she had even marched in the Women's Suffrage Parade, her feet pounding the pavement on 5th Avenue. Despite her political and progressive views, she had never resorted to violence, nor would she ever consider it.

However, today she sat with tears streaming down her cheeks, her head resting on her lap on the rumpled, stinky cot, feeling the hardwood planks beneath her cold feet, and decided she needed to call her brother, Charles, the lawyer, first thing in the morning.

Charles Garrison, three years older than Bella, was a senior partner at their father Arthur's firm, 'The Law Offices of Garrison and Son,' in Buffalo Ridge, California. This small, quiet Western mining town, with fewer than 20,000 residents, is a short drive north of San Francisco, where they grew up. Still, she thought, *'He is three thousand miles across the country, so very far away, can he really get here in time to help me? But, I have to try.'*

Charles was a confirmed bachelor. He had a laid-back personality and enjoyed being free from family responsibilities. He was attractive with a muscular build. Dedicated to his work, he often stayed late at the firm, which specialized in divorce and property law.

Noticing how many people were getting divorced, he felt happy to stay single, enjoying his evenings with friends at the local piano bar, where they drank beer, played darts, and participated in chess tournaments. Single women flirted with him, seeing him as a good catch because of his striking blue eyes and wavy blond hair.

Bella, nearly thirty and of average height, had a stunning, curvy figure inherited from her mother that would make any woman her age jealous. Her long, wavy blonde hair, with ringlets framing her face, complemented her bright blue eyes. With her sharp mind, ambitious goals, and keen intelligence, Bella was a force to be reckoned with. Her adventurous spirit made her fun to be around, always ready for a challenge. But today, she was in shock. Why was she accused of such a heinous crime?

The following morning, after a restless night and a dull breakfast of white toast with a spoonful of strawberry jam and a day-old banana with black spots, Bella was permitted to make her one phone call. Standing near the jailor's desk, she held the receiver to her ear. The operator connected her long-distance call. The line rang for what felt like hours before her brother finally answered.

Bella whispered into the black candlestick phone on the police station desk, turning around to check that no one was listening. "Charles, I need your help. I've been arrested." Her vision blurred as salty tears streamed down her face.

Charles asked suspiciously, "Arrested? What have you gotten yourself into now, Bella? Did one of your protests go wrong?"

Bella was humiliated and rambling, "Last night they took me away in handcuffs. That's insane. You know I would never harm a soul, right? You need to come to New York as soon as possible to help me."

Charles was panicked as he asked, "Are you alright, Bella? Did they hurt you in any way? I can't believe you're in jail. Where were you when they arrested you?"

Bella said, "I was at work, Charles, in the middle of a meeting when I heard sirens. The police busted in and arrested me in front of all my colleagues. I was so embarrassed."

Charles said, "Did they hurt you? Are you okay? I'll be on the next train to New York. I should get there by the end of the week. What are you being accused of?"

A shiver ran down her spine as Bella said, "They said I killed a woman! They said I murdered my boss, Agnes Corbett,

two days ago. I worked for her for nearly eight years. That poor woman. She was so kind to me. I would never, could never, have killed her.”

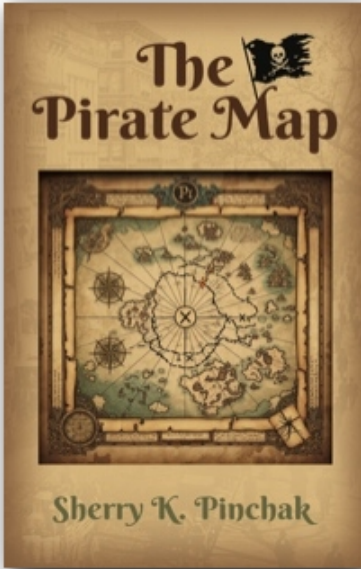
Charles responded, “You kill someone, impossible. But remember, I’m a civil lawyer and can’t represent you in court. We’ll have to find you a criminal lawyer as soon as I get to the city.”

Pearlie was timing her phone call, stood up from the black steel desk, and looked at Bella, signaling her to hang up.

Bella motioned, “I can’t talk much longer. They want me to hang up. Please come. I need you.”

Charles’s emotion surged through the phone as he said, “Of course I will. Nobody can accuse my baby sister of murder. You are such a gentle soul, and I love you so much. I’ll arrange time off and buy railroad tickets right away. I should arrive by Sunday.”

Bella responded, “Thank you, Charles. Please don’t tell Father or Mother about this. They’d both be furious. I don’t want him to get upset, and she couldn’t handle the stress of the situation.”



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