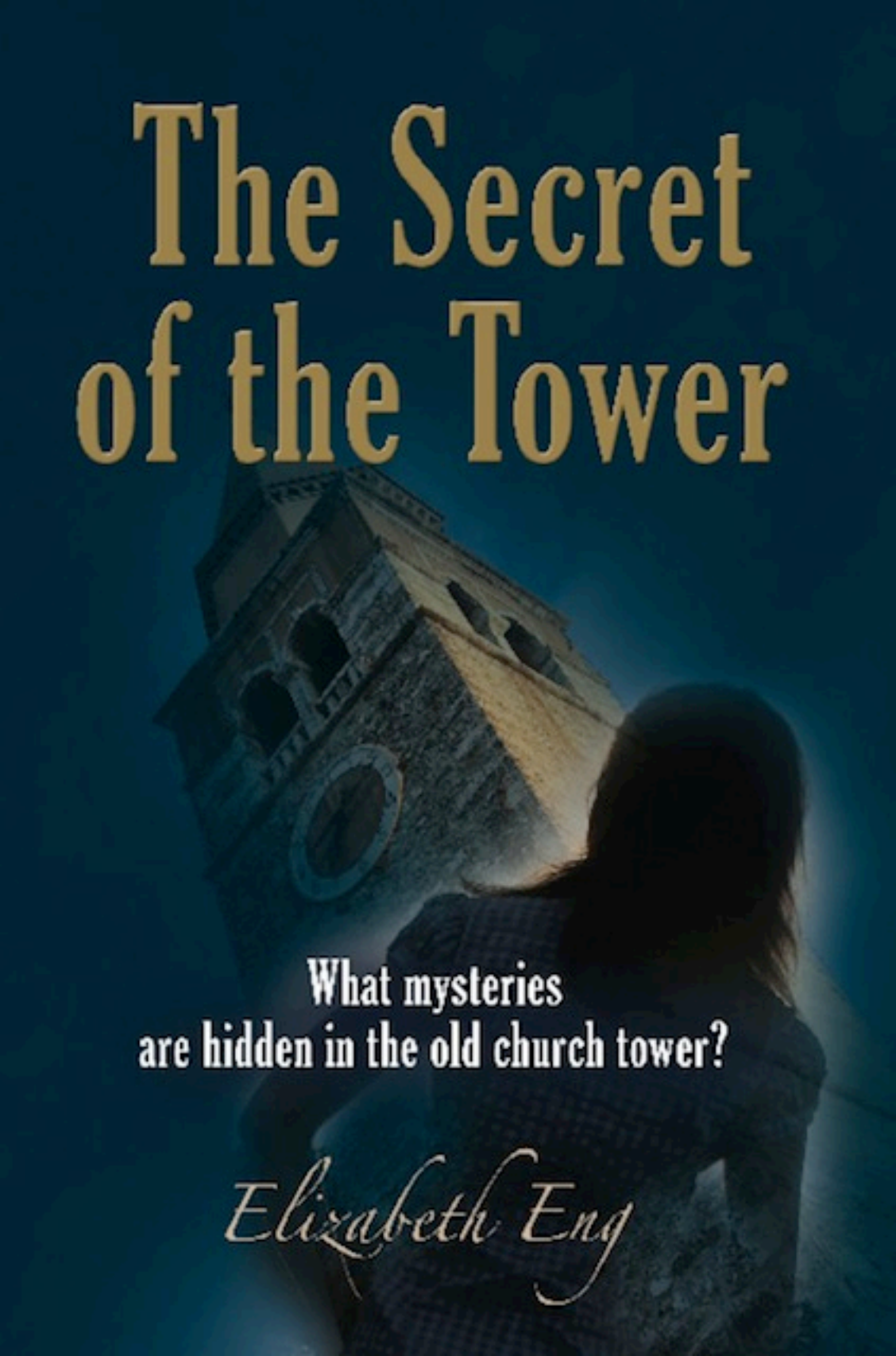
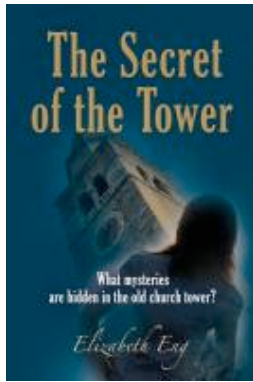


# The Secret of the Tower

A woman with long dark hair, seen from behind, is looking towards an old, multi-story stone church tower. The scene is set at night, with a dark blue sky and a bright light source behind the woman, creating a silhouette effect. The church tower has several arched windows and a large circular opening on its side.

What mysteries  
are hidden in the old church tower?

*Elizabeth Eng*



*Who knew a fourteen-year-old could become a hero? Charmaine isn't looking for adventure when she begins her job as a camp counselor in Rochester, New York, but it turns into much more than just summer work. With strange noises, disappearing objects and scares aplenty, this is not your average summer camp. With friendships and her own well being threatened, will Charmaine solve the tower secret before another friend is placed in danger?*

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# **The Secret of the Tower**

**Elizabeth Eng**

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First Edition

## **Dedication**

I lovingly dedicate this book to the memory of my parents.



## CHAPTER ONE

Charmaine Harp believed in good fortune. She was so lucky to have a summer job. Spending money! New clothes! New cd's! This was without doubt a summer to be noted in her journal – “First summer job, having a blast with my friends!” Of course, this being her first day on the job as a counselor-in-training, she hadn't been able to write that yet. Little did she know that those words might never make it onto the diary page.

Taking the corner onto Terrace Park on her silver mountain bike, Charmaine was totally aware of the time and totally unaware of other traffic. It was a good thing that the side streets she traveled were relatively empty of moving vehicles. Oversleeping on the first day was not a great way to make a good impression. The cool early summer breeze helped waken her senses and she caught a whiff of someone's breakfast bacon. She thought of the orange juice she had gulped down and wished she had had time for something more substantial.

A fat gray squirrel bounded in front of her as she raced down the road and she swerved to avoid it. Charmaine grimaced as she veered around the green glass of a broken beer bottle smashed on the pavement. She hoped her first paycheck wouldn't have to go toward a new tire.

Sailing through two intersections and past many green yards with rainbow-colored gardens full of hyacinth and petunias, she turned left into the parking lot of the old Highland Community Church, taken over by the city as a family recreation center several years ago. She skidded to a stop at the back door in the alley, locked her bike to the fence next to some others, and took the back steps two at a time.

In addition to the keys to her house and bike lock, Charmaine possessed keys to the building and its office so she could fill in for Peggy Moore, the center's secretary. Right now Peggy was on sick leave, recovering from a foot operation. Charmaine entered the office to see if

the rec center's director had left her any notes about special jobs to be taken care of.

"I'm surprised to see you here on time." Michael Lee, a friend and second-year counselor, stopped by the open office door. He leaned against the doorframe, a sparkle in his almond-shaped eyes and a hint of a smile. "Let's see. Am I going to hear, 'My dog ate my alarm clock' or 'I stopped to smell the roses?' Have an excuse this morning?"

Charmaine read the note on the counter and then squeezed past him out the door. "Hey, if I was tearing tickets at the movie theater instead I could be sleeping right now."

"Yeah, but you wouldn't have as much fun." He moved aside as she locked the office. "Where else can you work with all your friends?"

"I should tell you about the nightmare I had last night," Charmaine said to Michael in a low voice as they walked together. "Screaming, crying kids running all over, out of control. I'm surprised I'm here at all."

In the parlor, Charmaine smiled as she looked around at her friends. This would be a fun summer job, even if it didn't make her wealthy. The other counselors were all kids she knew from school. Seated together next to the amber-tinted windows across the room were Karla Robinson and Jarret Majors, two of Charmaine's best friends. Karla was busily explaining something to Jarret, gesturing with her hands. Jarret listened, arms slung over the back of his chair, rocking it on two legs in one of his favorite postures. Charmaine smiled. It always bugged the teachers to see him sit that way.

Meryl Proctor and Daniel Rivera, who both had worked at the camp last year, sat on the brown brocade couch farthest from the door. She heard Meryl protest, "I only moved here three years ago from North Carolina, Danny, how can I be used to Rochester winters already?" She didn't hear Danny's reply, but Charmaine wondered how that conversation began when here it was early July. Charmaine had known Danny since they were toddlers and his family had moved onto the street behind hers.

To Charmaine's left the camp's administrator, Mrs. Helen Nolan, spoke with the center's custodians, Mr. and Mrs. Unger. Mrs. Nolan, all five feet nine of her, towered over the gray-haired couple. Each of them

must have been a good six inches shorter than she was. Charmaine gave them all a wave and turned to Michael. "What needs to be done? Anything?"

"I think we got it covered," Michael answered. "Besides, it looks like Mrs. Nolan is ready to start."

Charmaine glanced over her shoulder. Mrs. Nolan had turned from the custodians and was looking at the teenagers.

"Will all of you join me over here for a brief meeting?" Mrs. Nolan said. "First, welcome to what's going to be a great four weeks of camp, both for you and the children. In a minute I'll go over your duties one last time, but before that I'd like to introduce you to Mr. and Mrs. Unger, the center's custodians. They will be here every afternoon to help us restock things like paper towels and such, and they'll also help clean up." She turned to pair. "Is there anything you'd like to say to the group?"

Appearing uncomfortable under the scrutinizing eyes of six teenagers, the couple looked at each other. Which one would talk first? Would either of them?

Finally, Mrs. Unger took the reins. "I just want to let you know that we'll do our best to make this a good few weeks for all of you. Last year was a bit bumpy, if you know what I mean, and we straightened some stuff out with Mrs. Nolan here." She looked at her husband, who was staring at the worn beige carpet. "Anything you wanna say, Artie?" Artie shook his head. Mrs. Unger shrugged her shoulders and turned back to Mrs. Nolan.

"Well, then, thanks, Artie and June, for your help in getting set up." Less than five minutes later Mrs. Nolan had finished reminding the group of their responsibilities. "The most important thing," she told them, "besides the safety of all involved, is that the children enjoy their experience. Let's give them a chance to be themselves and have fun."

She paused and smiled at the teens. "You all have your assignments, class rosters, and rooms set up. And thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Shipman, members of the neighborhood association, a bountiful breakfast awaits us in the fellowship hall when the children arrive. So if there are any questions, let's address them now." She waited. "Anyone?"

Meryl raised her hand. "Where's a first aid kit?"

Danny hooted. "Haven't even started and you need it already?"

"It's here in the parlor, Meryl, in the bookcase." Mrs. Nolan sent a frown in Danny's direction. "For anyone who needs it. Good question, Meryl, since I changed its storage place from last year." She looked at her watch. "Let's start our day, then. The children should be arriving any minute. Don't forget to send everyone to me first for registration sign-in at the hall table."

"I can't wait to see the little sweeties I'll be teaching," said Karla, as she and Charmaine headed toward the old church's huge, wooden doors. "Five and six year olds are so cute."

"Yeah, I guess," Charmaine replied. "I asked for an older group because I thought they might be easier to work with."

As she leaned against the vestibule inner door, Karla asked, "Char, you think you and Meryl will work okay together?"

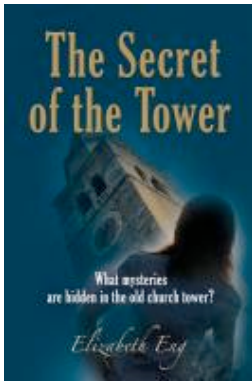
"Sure. She told me that she worked with kids last year, plus at a summer camp at Lake Arrowhead, so I'm sure that what I don't know, she will. At least, that's what I'm hoping." Charmaine looked over her shoulder for some of the other counselors, then back at Karla. "Where did everybody go?"

"Hmm." Karla looked down the hall past Charmaine and saw only Mrs. Nolan and Mr. and Mrs. Unger. "Who knows? Maybe the bathroom before the mad rush of kiddies."

As if on cue, Meryl joined them. "Knowing those guys, they probably went downstairs to check out the breakfast. If they're anything like my cousins, they're hungry all the time!" Peering out the door, she sang, "Here come the kids, right on time!"

Charmaine and Karla put on big smiles and faced the front yard of the church.

Suddenly, Charmaine caught her breath, her eyes focusing on something in the distance. "Oh, no!" she moaned, and shrank back against the vestibule wall. Walking toward her was the last person she wanted to see.



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