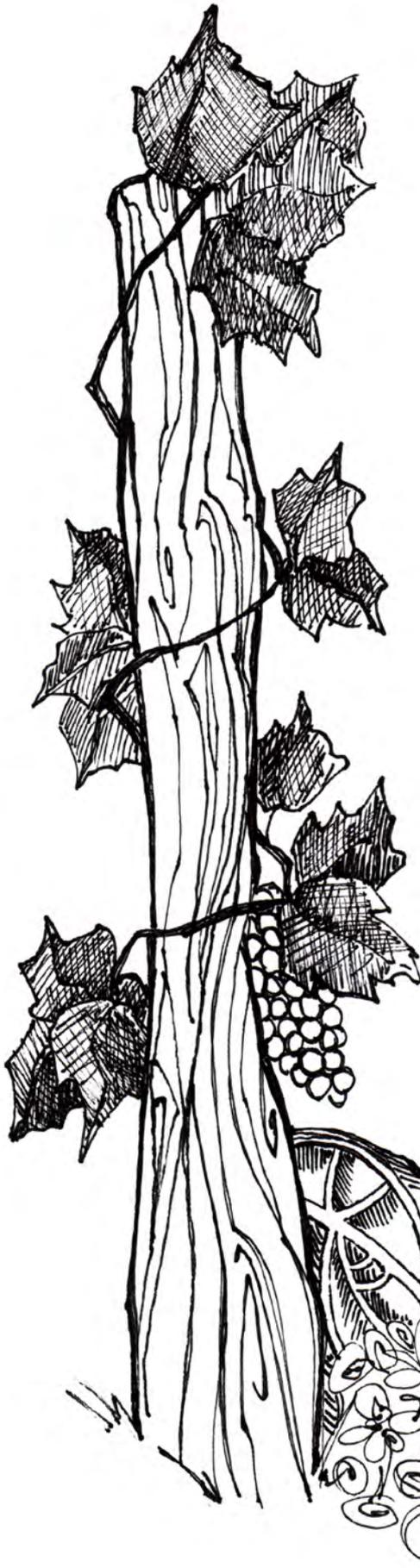


A mystery grows at Chimney Bluffs

Chapter 2: "Lost and found in wine country"

by Jonathan Everitt

Illustration by Steve Smock



"Let's stop. I've heard about an antique shop here and I want to check it out," Vivian said to Edgar as they passed a sign for Hammondsport on Route 54.

Their trunk was filled to capacity with spicy, golden Riesling and Gewürztraminer. After an afternoon of tastings at the wineries dotting the lake, the vacationers were ready for a diversion.

They parked the little black convertible in the afternoon shade of a giant oak on the edge of the town square. Peeled off their pastel sweaters, and surveyed the local landmarks.

A white country church. A gazebo. A tavern. All of them crisp against a delphinium sky. And there, across the street, along a row of weathered shops, the promise of an antique dealer. A 19th century storefront with gleaming windows that showcased upstate artifacts.

Vivian could already smell their musty nostalgia as she perched her sunglasses atop her perfect hair. She was half way across the street with her cash-stuffed purse before Edgar could unwrap his stick of gum.

As they climbed the stone step into the doorway, a portly calico cat surprised them with a hiss, then darted into oblivion beyond an ice cream shop down the way. They collected themselves and walked into the dark store, a bell ringing as they swung open the door.

There was barely anywhere to walk, so full it was with brown, crackled side tables, dressers, jewelry, china, buttons and books. Through the haze of old time, Edgar glimpsed the silhouette of a man at the back of the room, hunched over a desk. The shape of his head looked up at them.

"Welcome," he called tiredly as the couple drew closer on the creaking floorboards. An object just beyond his desk caught Vivian's eye.

"What—is this!" she gasped, gazing at the wood-framed thing that glowed in reds and blues and golds, conjuring the image of sunlit seaside cliffs.

"Ah, the window," said her knowing host. "Came from a captain's cabin."

"You mean a ship?" asked Edgar.

"Perhaps you've heard of the Chimney Bluffs," said the old man, staring into his memory. "That's where it ended. And where it began."

"Oh my God," whispered Vivian. "My grandmother."

To be continued