



I have this recurring dream.

In the dream, I'm in a used book store—sometimes a tidy little shop with a friendly cat and a quiet atmosphere, sometimes in a larger discount-type store, replete with racks of videos and row after row of used books. Regardless, I'm wandering around the store, not expecting to find anything of value, when, out of the corner of my eye, I spot something familiar—sometimes the yellow spines of later Nancy picture covers, sometimes the white dust jacket of a few old volumes. I hurry over and eagerly inspect the volumes, but, alas, I always own the copies there.

I'm just about to walk off when I spy, usually on the shelf just above or just below the one I was looking at, more Nancy Drew books—only these Nancy Drews are not like any Nancy Drews I've ever seen before. As I pick one up, I find that while yes, it

is a Nancy Drew book, I don't recognize the title, or the title of the next one, or the next. Slowly it dawns on me that I've hit paydirt, and what I've uncovered here is an entirely *new* Nancy Drew series that I never even knew existed—but here, in this amazing store, I've found them all, usually at low, low prices. I quickly gather every new title I find, my heart pounding like a very happy jackhammer, and then, having secured all my precious new prizes, I head towards the counter, ready to add these beauties to my collection.

And then I wake up.

I always wake up pretty happy from this dream. I mean, I know it'll never happen in real life—it's rare to find good Nancy Drew books in *any* used book store these days, and I've been a Nancy fan long enough to know every title, every series, and every edition ever released. I've read my *Farah's Guide* front to cover and studied every website and book guide relevant to the series. There are no surprises left in Nancy Drew land for me. Or so I thought. But then, just recently and quite marvelously, my dream came true.

It all wasn't quite as dramatic as my dream entailed, but it was still an amazing moment for this collector. It happened while I was shopping on eBay for a specific cover to one of the later Nancy Drew paperbacks. I'm one of those completist collectors who wants a copy of every Nancy cover released in the United States, and while I long had copies of all the paperbacks, I've been spending time over the last few years picking up copies of all the different covers. I'm not a dogged collector—I look on eBay when the

mood strikes me and I think I might find a bargain. I've picked just as many of these books up in used book stores.

Some are harder to find than others, but I've come pretty close to completing the collection. I'd made a list a few years back describing the different covers so I'd know them when I came across them; I picked up all the Wanderer arches and the Wandered checked covers and most of the Minstrels, and even snagged all the silhouette re-releases that came out. I'd discovered that *Disappearing DeeJay* and *Disappearing Diamonds* had been released in two similar covers and got them both. Indeed, as I perused eBay for a copy of the yellow checked cover of *Mysterious Image*, I was only two short titles away from completing my paperback collection.

I found a copy and though it had a little damage it was a Buy-It-Now auction, so I snagged it before someone else did for a rather fair price. Satisfied, I went to check out when I noticed something unusual at the bottom of the screen, in the area where eBay lists the seller's other items. This particular seller, whom I had purchased from several times, always had a bunch of Nancy Drew paperbacks for sale, but this one seemed unusual for some reason. It deserved a second glance.

The book was #87, *The Case of the Rising Stars*. The cover featured Nancy dangling from a theatrical rope while a hand holding a lighter tried to burn the rope, sending Nancy plummeting to the stage far below. A tense scene, though the disembodied hand always looked a bit funny to me. What looked even more funny was this cover. I had remembered the cover on my version to have a purple border, and Nancy's clothes and hair seemed different and less severe than the cover before me. I felt my heart begin to pound in my chest. Could this be a cover I never knew existed?

I ran downstairs to my collection and pulled out my copy. Indeed, it was not the same cover. I raced back upstairs, taking them two at a time, a smile growing ever wider on my face. I checked to make sure it simply wasn't a British edition of the book. No, it was legitimate. I couldn't believe it. Somehow, with all my searching and list-making and careful scrutiny of various websites and books I had missed this cover. Then it dawned on me—here was a wholly new Nancy Drew book that I never even knew had existed, just sitting right there, for sale, begging me to buy it. It was my dream come true.

Well, okay, I wasn't in a used book store, and it wasn't a new title, just a new cover but still, I was thrilled. Unlike other titles, which I had been searching for quite some time, this one came almost too easily, as I snapped it up along with my copy of *Mysterious Image*. Still, it was one of those great moments Nancy seems capable of providing for us all every now and again—another great Nancy memory to add to the file.

As I write this, my new cover of *Rising Stars* is flying its way towards me, heading via media mail from California (so it'll likely take a week or so to get here.) No matter. I

added it to my list of books to get, anyway, just so I could cross it off. And just think, when I finally find that copy of the Minstrel *Enemy Match* with the purple border, I'll have them all. But if it wasn't for a chance encounter, and my favorite Nancy Drew dream, I might never have completed my paperback collection. And who knows? Maybe someday I'll find another Nancy Drew book I never knew existed. You know Nancy—always full of mysteries...