



Screen Treatment

Last Train to Danville, by

R.M. Morgan (2nd Book in the Harriet Roth & Don Gannon Murder/Mystery Series)

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Genre: Murder/Mystery. Book Two of the Harriet Roth & Don Gannon Murder/Mystery Series

Logline: *The Curse of Confederate Gold* meets *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*.

A killer murders Don Gannon's childhood friend. And the murdered man's fiancée vows to avenge the murder. Harriett Roth masterminds a search for the killer. She finds the deceased had been searching for Confederate gold, which had lain buried for 135 years. A savage man assaults Don with a machete. Next, the killer attacks the fiancée. Roth tracks down the killer, but a man with a shotgun thwarts the sheriff.

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Reviewer Comments:

"R.M. Morgan has done it again! After writing the riveting detective mystery *Crown Hunt*, he tantalizes us with *Last Train to Danville*. Again, he incites readers to sleuth for the truth!" — Leonard Szymczak, bestselling author of *The Roadmap Home: Your GPS to Inner Peace* and award-winning author of *Kookaburra's Last Laugh*.

“For me, two things stand out about Mr. Morgan’s *Last Train to Danville*. The first is the nuanced, quirky characters populating this “who dun it.” The second is the authentic local color that only comes from personal knowledge. The mystery lives in the mountains of North Carolina, too. An enjoyable read!” — Dirk B. Sayers, author of *Tier Zero, Vol 1 of the Knolan Cycle*.

Protagonists:

Harriett Roth: She is a brainy, eccentric detective specializing in recovering lost objects. She commands a trio of investigators from her headquarters in Asheville, NC. Her mood is difficult at times: cranky, agoraphobic, and greedy. The entire team works out of Roth’s two-story mansion of gray brick in Asheville.

Don Gannon: Teller of the tale. He is Roth’s errand, fast-talking, right-hand investigator. He is large, served as a military policeman in the first Iraqi War, and is tongue-tied around women. Roth is a deep thinker. Don is action, often hit-or-miss.

Bruce Seeker: He is Roth’s number two investigator and a sidekick to Don. Like brothers, they spar night and day. Bruce is the computer whizz and database guy. He is a black man of medium height and a beefy build.

Taylor Ploughman: She is Roth’s cook at the mansion. Taylor is a cook extraordinaire and strange hillbilly lady. Petite with red hair and blue eyes, she had grown up deep in the mountains around Asheville. Sort of a female Huckleberry Finn. As an old saying goes, she is “as different as chalk from cheese.”

Mickey Ploughman: He is Roth’s number three investigator and husband of Taylor. He is the muscle for the team, strong and hefty. He has mechanical skills and is good with firearms.

Carla Diaz: A young Hispanic lady with a mega-bright smile, mischievous grin, and smarts. Don is smitten by Carla, with her short but full-bodied figure. He shoehorns in a slowly simmering relationship as he searches for a killer and a lost Confederate gold shipment.

Lilith Johnson: She is Digger’s fiancée and deeply loved him. Determined to have the killer caught and impatient with the Sheriff’s progress, she employs Harriett Roth to find the culprit. Lilith is smart and self-assured and doesn’t give up easily but bulldogs her way past difficulties.

Harry Goodman: He is a Chief Deputy Sheriff with the Buncombe County Sheriff’s Department and investigates Digger’s poisoning. He talks slowly and listens. Years past, Goodman had run-ins with Don Gannon as a teenager and became a mentor to Don as he matured.

Joseph Kanuna: He is a Cherokee Tribal Police detective. He has been with the department for more than 20 years. Kanuna is searching for the man funding the plunder of tribal relics. The Cherokee detective is observing Atsadi, hoping he will contact the man organizing the illegal tomb robberies.

Antagonists:

Johnny Hayes: Lilith believes this man killed her fiancée and wants Roth to prove he did it. Hayes, also a treasure hunter, was a part-time partner of Digger, but often argued with him. Lilith says he killed Digger for the gold.

Paul Atsadi: A Cherokee Indian who first worked as a lawyer but developed a methamphetamine habit. The tribal police arrested him on Cherokee land for digging into an ancient Indian burial mound at night. He served three years in prison and got released on parole as the story begins. During Atsadi's trial, Digger testified against him.

Leonard Eiggis: He goes to great lengths to collect art—searching, spending, and even stealing to satisfy his cravings. He collects Cherokee Indian artifacts using Atsadi and Digger. Eiggis is wealthy with an estate in Asheville.

Palo Sanchez: Employed as Eiggis' gardener. A violent man who is lethal with a machete.

Bertha Harper: In 1945, after the war ended, she served simple meals in a German village. Michael was a Jewish soldier at a U.S. army base nearby. He met and married Bertha. After the army discharged Michael, she moved to the U.S. with her husband to his old family home in North Carolina. Michael's wife is mean-spirited, condescending, and ice cold.

Other Characters in the Story:

Digger Harper: He was a high-school buddy of Don Gannon and Bruce Seeker. After graduation, Digger hunted lost treasures while Don and Bruce played college football and went into the army. Digger searches the attic in the Harper family home and finds a map, which purports to locate a cache of Confederate gold buried in August 1865 in Morganton, North Carolina. As the story begins, Digger is shot at whilst jogging and then poisoned in his kitchen.

Nathaniel Harper: This Harper family member was a midshipman in the Confederate navy in the Civil War. He was stationed on the James River near Richmond throughout the war. When Richmond fell in April 1865, he guarded gold for the Confederate Treasury. Nathaniel traveled first to Danville, Virginia, and then to Salisbury, N. C. He left the main train and took guns and gold west to support guerrilla bands in Appalachia. The train tracks stopped at Morganton, where he buried the supplies, planning to return later with wagons.

Michael Harper: He was a foot soldier in Europe in WWII, stationed in Germany after the war, where he met and married Bertha. After his discharge, he returned to his hometown, Old Fort, North Carolina, with his bride. He adopted his nephew Digger when his parents died in an automotive crash.

Locations/Settings:

Richmond, Virginia: In April 1865, at the end of the Civil War, Richmond fell to the Federal forces of General Grant.

Asheville, North Carolina: Roth's detective agency operates from a mansion in this city.

Old Fort, North Carolina: The Harper family lives in this town.

Morganton, North Carolina: N. C.'s westward railroad tracks ended here in 1865.

Danville, Virginia: A town on the border near North Carolina.

Act 1-The Set Up

The tale begins with someone shooting at DIGGER HARPER whilst jogging and then poisoning him in his kitchen, but he manages to draw a symbol—a skull and crossed bones—in spilled sugar. Shortly after that, we meet DON GANNON and BRUCE SEEKER, who grew up with Digger at his funeral. Suddenly, LILITH JOHNSON—Digger’s fiancée—requests Don to find his killer. The next day, Lilith meets HARRIETT ROTH at Roth mansion and explains Digger had been searching for lost Confederate gold when the killer murdered him.

Don finds the poison was aconite. TAYLOR PLOUGHMAN, cook and mountain flora expert, explains aconite is a blue flower growing wild. Taylor agrees to search for the plant in the area around the home of any suspect. Lilith explains the Confederacy sent gold—as the Civil War was ending—from Richmond to Danville. Some of the coinage went on a train to Morganton, North Carolina, where NATHANIEL HARPER buried it. Nathaniel drew a map showing the location of the buried gold, and—135 years later—Digger discovers that map.

Don drives to the Harper home in Old Fort, N. C., to interview Digger’s father, MICHAEL HARPER. In his stroll around the house, Don sees a shotgun hung on the wall. As he leaves the house, Michael’s wife, BERTHA HARPER, arrives at the front door. She is rude, short-tempered, and unremorseful about Digger’s death.

Lilith continues to assert JOHNNY HAYES, who had been an off-and-on partner with Digger, killed him. CARLA DIAZ—Don’s heartthrob—arrives at Roth mansion to assist Don in hunting for the killer/gold. Don and MICKEY PLOUGHMAN, Roth’s third investigator, drive to rural Asheville to question Hayes. He refuses to talk with Don and threatens to sick three vicious hounds on Don. Mickey appears behind Don with a Remington 870 shotgun; Hayes pulls back the hounds.

Bruce searches police and court records for Digger’s name and finds the Cherokee tribal police arrested an individual on Indian land. PAUL ATSADI, a member of the tribe, dug into an ancient Indian burial mound. Digger testified against him at his trial. Carla and Don drive to Cherokee to question Atsadi. He claims he stole artifacts to exchange for methamphetamine but has reformed. Carla and Don return at night and place a tracking device on Atsadi’s car; Don discovers someone else had mounted a tracking device on Atsadi’s car.

Act 2-The Conflict

Lilith explains she has been tailing Hayes on her Vespa motorbike, and he goes to Morganton every night. Don goes out on his morning jog through the forest surrounding the mansion. Three men, their faces hidden by Spock masks, attack Don and thrash him to the ground. Bruce and Mickey, jogging behind Don, arrive to chase the three bushwhackers away. Don spends a day in the hospital for observation. Deputy Sheriff HARRY GOODMAN questions Hayes and his two hangers-on but can’t prove they attacked Don.

Dr. ANGELA LIGHTFOOT, a history professor at the University of North Carolina at Asheville, is employed to assess if Nathaniel’s diary is genuine. Lilith identifies a middleman who had carried theft orders from a boss to Atsadi. Roth sends Don and Carla to question the middleman about Digger’s death. Meanwhile, Deputy Sheriff Goodman tells Don a clue: the hunter who shot at Digger used a pistol, a 9mm pistol, not a rifle, which is what a professional assassin would have used. Angela thinks the Nathaniel diary is real, and that he probably buried something in the ground.

Goodman introduces Don to JOSEPH KANUNA, a tribal police officer searching for the person funding the stealing of Indian relics. His main suspect for the thefts is a wealthy collector named LEONARD EIGGES. Don asks Kanuna to help him determine if the tomb robberies caused Digger's death.

Carla and Don go to question the middleman. To enter his house, Don claims he has a message from Eiggles. The middleman opens the door, suggesting he knows Eiggles. A blow on his head dazes Don, and the person they're questioning escapes. Meanwhile, Taylor finishes searching for monkshood, the plant producing aconite. Monkhood grows near the Harper and Atsadi houses but not near the Hayes' shack or Digger's house.

Lilith, Carla, and Don follow the Hayes' pickup truck to Morganton, to an area where the train tracks ended in 1865. They creep through trees to observe Hayes and two men digging. Don decides the three men had excavated a large area. A reporter at the Asheville Citizen-Times tells Don that Leonard Eiggles is from old money and has an impressive Native-American collection. Carla, Don, and Roth listened to Angela review her recent readings of the Nathaniel diaries. At the fall of Richmond in 1865, the Confederates assigned the midshipmen—who had been in the James River Squadron—to guard the gold train leaving for Danville.

Goodman sets up an interview with Eiggles, to question him about Digger Harper. Driving to the Eiggles Estate, Don sees the middleman who had escaped from him and chases that individual. Eiggles' gardener, PALO SANCHEZ, attacks Don with a machete, but Goodman stops the attack. Afterward, Roth orders the Handyman's Spy, a panel van with cameras and listening devices, to snoop on Atsadi and the middleman.

Because Hayes has dug up a large area around the tracks in Morganton, Roth suspects the gold isn't there. Goodman and Don interview Eiggles at his estate. He admits he hired Digger and Atsadi as private contractors, but he never told them to steal Indian relics. Furthermore, he knows nothing about Digger's death. Bruce, Lilith, and Don drive to Morganton and arrive in time to observe the Morganton Police Department arrest Hayes and his fellow diggers.

Angela and Lilith go through newspapers at the library in Morganton. Railroad workers dug up the Harper cache back in 1923. Oops, there is no gold. Talking with Don, Angela, and Lilith, Roth instructs them to regroup and search for a skull with crossed bones, which was the figure Digger had drawn in his dying moments. What did it mean?

When the middleman and Palo discover the hidden listening device, Bruce and Don are outside in the panel van listening in on the two spied-upon men. Palo rushes into the street and charges the van, with a drawn machete. Palo cuts Don, who shoots the machete waving man in the shoulder. The middleman confesses Eiggles stole Cherokee artifacts and hides them on his estate. Goodman and Kanuna get a warrant to listen in on Eiggles' phone calls.

Don and Lilith go through the items Digger collected in the Harper house attic. Lilith finds a pendant with an embroidered skull with crossed bones. It is old, but not the Civil War old. What is it? When Don goes to bed, he finds a call from Lilith on voice mail. She knows what the pendant is and will tell Don tomorrow.

Don finds Lilith dead at Digger's house. The CSI forensic tech finds three 9-mm shell casings, which is the ammo used in the attack on Digger. Lilith's killer didn't get their hands on the pendant because it had been at Roth's mansion. Later, Goodman describes the crime scene to Roth and Don. He says the odd thing is, he has accounted for all the usual suspects for at the time of the murder.

As there was no gold and he had an alibi for Lilith's murder, Hayes had fallen out as a prime suspect. He shares info with Don. He says an older woman went into a tattoo parlor to

have a tattoo removed. It was Digger's mother, and she had a single letter removed from under her left arm. Roth asks Angela if the pendant was from the Civil War, and she says it doesn't feel right. Don plans to investigate if it was part of a medical bracelet.

Act 3-The Resolution

The next day, Roth has figured it out. It is the death-head symbol used by the SS in World War II. It means Don and Roth need to look for a Nazi connection. Goodman and Kanuna serve a warrant at Eiggles' home and recover two unique clay statues and other Cherokee relics. Eiggles insists he had nothing to gain by murdering Digger. He is advanced in age. Eiggles asks why he would risk going to jail for the rest of his life, for Digger's murder. Also, he had an alibi during Lilith's shooting.

Meanwhile, Don asks Angela if a link existed between the SS and arm tattoos. She says the SS tattooed the blood type of each Waffen-SS member under the left arm. Angela begins to investigate Bertha. She finds Fürstenberg, Bertha's birth town is across the lake from Ravensbruck. It was one of the first Nazi camps for women. Roth assigns Don to get Bertha's fingerprints and have Goodman compare her prints to the whorls the sheriff department laboratory got off the spent shell casings from the bullets fired into Lilith.

Don meets Goodman at a bar. He reminds Goodman that Bertha Harper had a tattoo removed from her arm. Also, Digger drew a skull and crossed bones in the sugar pile on the floor. By linking the two, Roth believes she solved the Digger killing. Bertha was born in Germany just before World War II in a town near an SS concentration camp. The SS used the death's head symbol and tattooed their members with their blood type. Goodman agrees to seek federal help in confirming or disproving Bertha guarded an SS camp in Germany.

Goodman questions Bertha, who says she never argued with Digger. But neighbors had heard them arguing fiercely just before Digger's death.

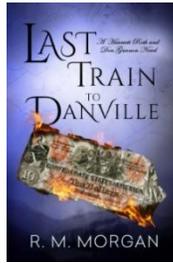
Don lifts Bertha's prints off a wine glass. He asks Goodman to check them against the whorls found on the shell casings. The two sets match. Eureka! Bertha is the killer.

The Justice Department finds Bertha entered the country illegally. Goodman coordinates with the different cities to get a search warrant for the Harper house. Deputies from the Buncombe County Sheriff's Department and Old Fort Police Department officers descend on the Old Fort house. Don must stay back in Goodman's patrol car during the raid. Afterward, Goodman returns to Don and reports they had found Bertha's gun and taken her fingerprints. Goodman had Digger and Lilith's killer. When told Bertha had killed Digger, Michael Harper shouts at his wife and has to be restrained by deputies.

Bertha sits arrested in a sheriff's department patrol car. All is calm. Chaos brakes out as Michael dashes out of the house rushes past the deputy standing beside the patrol car and fires the shotgun through a window into Bertha. By the time Don and Goodman reach the car, Bertha is dead.

Roth surmised Lilith had gone to Old Fort to confront Bertha. Afterward, the evil woman had shot Digger's courageous fiancée and searched for the pendant, which wasn't in Digger's house. Roth hadn't saved dear Lilith, she had missed the Confederate gold, but she has caught the killer.

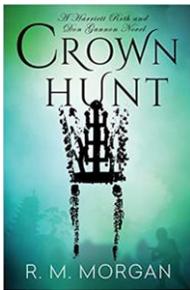
Author Bio/Head Shot



R. M. Morgan worked as an engineer in both the U.S. government and academia. In his job, he investigated mysteries like a detective, unraveling the physics of car crashes to establish how to save drivers and passengers. After years of writing articles in that world, R. M. Morgan discovered the joy of writing mystery novels. Currently, he lives in Southern California and is writing the third book in the Roth/Gannon series.

If you enjoy detective mysteries, give R. M. Morgan novels a read. The books that keep the reader guessing whodunit right up to the end.

Further information about R. M. Morgan is on his website, www.rmmorgan.com.



Crown Hunt: In the Korean War, S. Korean soldiers unearth the ancient Silla treasure containing billions of dollars worth of precious stones, gold and a crown worth millions. Some of the soldiers under strict secrecy smuggle the treasure to the U.S. Fifty years later the secret is out. People begin to die, giving up information on where the treasure is kept. The S. Korean government wants the treasure back. Psychopathic killers appear and steal the treasure. The Harriet Roth Investigative Agency is hired to seek out the culprits and recover the treasure for the Korean group of soldiers who smuggled the treasure. All very hush-hush. R.M. Morgan is a modern-day Mickey Spillane as he carefully and skillfully makes the treasure hunt a fantastic journey for the reader. An ending you won't see coming.

Amazon link to Book:

https://www.amazon.com/Crown-Hunt-R-M-Morgan/dp/1946743224/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=Crown+Hunt%2C+R.M.+Morgan&qid=1577123159&s=books&sr=1-1.