



Screen Treatment

Cherokee Emerald

by R.M. Morgan

(3rd Book in the Harriet Roth & Don Gannon Murder/Mystery Series)

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Genre: Murder/Mystery.

Logline: *Dances with Wolves* meets *The Maltese Falcon*.

An American Indian legend relates a magnificent emerald lies hidden on a family farm near Cherokee. Two men struggle against each other in a hunt for the gem. Unfortunately, a fight to the death will not have a good ending, and the way to the treasure is lost. Without a map to show how to locate the emerald, Harriett Roth, the master detective, must use her ingenuity and unconventional thinking to solve the mystery.

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Reviewer Comments:

“R.M. Morgan has done it yet again! After giving us the *Crown Hunt* and *Last Train to Danville*, he offers us a third helping of a gripping mystery begging to be solved. As always, he incites us 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*.

“I am a history buff and, while I knew of the *Trail of Tears*' episode that forced the Cherokee Indians from the Carolinas to Oklahoma, I didn't know why. I enjoyed this fictionalized recounting - in large part because it was personalized.

“The Roth Agency's cast of characters is hired to help a poor woman salvage her heritage farm. A rare large emerald is fabled to be buried on the farm but no one knows where. The search is complicated because 1. the treasure's map was stolen and 2. other parties are digging holes on the land.

“The conclusion surprised me and there may/may not be a new member of the Roth Agency... to be revealed in the next book by R.M. Morgan, I hope.” — PJ Colando, author of the award-winning *Faith, Family, Frenzy* series.

Protagonists:

Main Characters at Roth Security:

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 complex at times: cranky, agoraphobic, and greedy.

Roth solves mysteries in two steps. First, she sends her operatives to gather critical information. Second, she guides the team based on their reports and her keen deduction. She frequently is clad in a dark, full-length dress of luxurious satin, with her alabaster white hair falling to the top of her shoulders.

Don Gannon: Protagonist, He is Roth's errant, fast-talking, right-hand investigator. He is large, served as a military policeman in the first Iraqi War, and is tongue-tied around women. The relationship between Roth and Gannon is complex: perhaps an older aunt mentoring a misbehaving nephew. Roth is a deep thinker. Don is action, often hit-or-miss.

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 shoeorns in a slowly simmering relationship as he searches for a killer and a lost emerald. Carla has elevated interest in Don and Roth's sleuth for the truth. As a young girl, she was fascinated by Nancy Drew novels. Carla introduces romance and investigative smarts.

Bruce Seeker: This is Roth's number two investigator and a colleague to Don. Since high school in Asheville, Bruce and Don have known each other and served in the military police. 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. The entire team works out of Roth's two-story mansion of gray brick, situated on ten acres in Asheville. 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, where her parents instilled a deep appreciation of Appalachia. 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, solid and hefty. Don and Bruce see him as an older brother, albeit a drinking buddy, older than Don or Bruce. He has mechanical skills and is good with firearms. Mickey isn't very talkative, enjoys food, and nibbles when given a chance. He speaks in short, clipped phrases.

Antagonists:

Connor Sandford: He lives near the McDonald farm, and his neighbors refer to him as the *mountain man*. His hair is long and white and shaggy, with a goatee, white and long. He lives in a trailer on stilts in the middle of a river. The water's surface reaches the sill of Connor's door. Sandford hunts at night and trades game he shot for vegetables. Is Stanford dangerous? He always carries a rifle.

Jeremiah Johnson: Jeremiah is a Vietnam veteran and a distant relative of Grandma McDonald. He is a middle-aged man who has fallen on bad times. He survives on odd jobs and must sleep in the old McDonald's shack in Coloma, California. To kill time, Jeremiah explores the tools, gear, and journals stored away in the cabin after the gold rush period. Jeremiah finds the old McDonald's diaries and reads them.

He reads a journal description of Waya and a McDonald relative burying the emerald. Jeremiah has an idea of where they buried the gem.

Other Individuals in the Story:

Waya: He was a Cherokee Indian born in the Nation in the mountains of North Carolina in the early 1800s. Raised in his mother's hut, he learned to hunt deer from his uncles. He fell in love with a young maiden and settled in with her. With the demise of the deer population, he learned to prospect for minerals and uncovered a large emerald gem of deepest green. A white man knew of the treasure and conspired to steal it. Waya buried the emerald on a farm in Western North Carolina; he made two copies of the map to the burial site. He died on the Trail of Tears in 1838 without giving up the map. The gem was lost. More than a hundred years would pass before a hunt for the long-lost treasure would begin again.

Grandma McDonald: Waya buried the emerald on a farm in Macon County, North Carolina. The location of the gem was lost, but the farm remained in the McDonald family. The present matriarch is eighty years old and dismayed the old farm is turning to ruin. Her sorrow is deep. Then, one night, over a hundred years after Waya buried the emerald, burglars steal photos off the walls of the farm and attack her. The chase to find the gem begins. Grandma joins Roth in the pursuit.

Dr. Angela Lightfoot: She is a history professor at UNCA and frequently a consultant for Harriett Roth on cases with a profound historical aspect. Her deep knowledge of Colonial America, the US in the Civil War, and North Carolina's past are invaluable to Roth. In addition, she is an African American, quick-witted, and a deep-study. Angela first discovered burglary and assault at a farm and shared the facts with Roth.

Ashley McDonald: Grandson of the surviving matriarch of the McDonald family. A bit of a hillbilly with a full black beard, dressed in dusty blue overalls held up by only one strap over his shoulders and holding a can of Mountain Dew. He is argumentative and resists Roth and Don searching for the emerald.

Lieutenant James Hound: Hound is a Macon County Sheriff's Office Lieutenant and a bootlicker who treats the deputies like rubbish and grovels before everyone above his rank. The man is six feet tall, wears an immaculate, black uniform, and watches others with an unblinking stare. He speaks in a halting speech, a slow and soft cadence. Don and Carla coordinate with this vein man to search for Waya's map. Hound jumps to a conclusion and investigates Sandford, whom he calls the hillbilly sneaking around at night with a rifle.

Harry Goodman: He is a Chief Deputy with the Buncombe County Sheriff's Department and often cooperates in investigations with Roth and Don. He talks in a slow cadence and listens. Years passed, Goodman had run-ins with Don Gannon as a teenager and became a mentor to Don as he matured. An older man, his height above average, Goodman's build had started to expand. His hair, including mustache and goatee, had turned white, his eyebrows remained brown with streaks of white. His everyday aftershave, Aqua Velva, dominates his presence.

Corporal Hallowell: Deputy in the Macon County Sheriff's Office, who responds to Grandma's farm trouble.

Locations/Settings:

Multi-State Route of the *Trail of Tears*: The route passes through Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Tennessee.

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

Macon County, North Carolina: Located in the foothills of the sprawling Great Smoky Mountains region. Franklin is a town found in the county seat of Macon County. Surrounded by the Nantahala National Forest, Franklin is a prime location for gem-hunting and mining. The McDonald family has a farm and lives within this county.

Coloma and Placerville, California: Coloma is where James Marshall found gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills at Sutter's Mill in 1848. The discovery leads to the California Gold Rush. Placerville is a California *gold rush* town named after the placer gold deposits found in its river beds and hills in the late 1840s. Ian McDonald, who married Waya's sister, took one of the two emerald maps to Coloma to mine gold in 1849.

Nantahala National Forest: The Forest lies in the mountain and valleys of southwestern North Carolina. The largest of North Carolina's four National Forests, elevations ranging from 5,800 feet at Lone Bald in Jackson County to 1,200 feet in Cherokee County. "Nantahala" is a Cherokee word meaning "land of the noonday sun," a fitting name for the Nantahala Gorge, where the sun only reaches the valley floor at midday.

Act 1-The Set Up

WAYA, a Cherokee brave, has mined a large, flawless emerald. When thieves seek the gem, Waya and a friend bury the emerald on a farm in Macon County, North Carolina. Waya was murdered on the *Trail-of-Tears* road to Oklahoma on a freezing day in December 1838. He dies without revealing the location of the emerald. Master detective HARRIETT ROTH entertains her staff with a Kentucky Derby party. ROTH introduces her investigators: DON GANNON, BRUCE SEEKER, and MICKEY PLOUGHMAN. TAYLOR PLOUGHMAN, Roth's chef, serves drinks. History Professor ANGELA LIGHTFOOT arrived to describe a burglary of a Macon County farm. She found a journal describing Waya burying the emerald on that farm. Don makes the first of many trips to the Macon County farm. GRANDMA McDONALD owns the farm, which needs repairs. Her grandson, ASHLEY McDONALD, does the farm work. The burglars took photographs from the farm during the break-in. Why? Someone is digging deep holes at a site in front of the farmstead. Why? Does someone believe Waya hid the gem there? Grandma and Ashley drive to Roth's mansion to hear what she has to say. Grandma agrees to a salvage deal where Roth gets half the value if she recovers the emerald.

Ashley doesn't want to partner, but Grandma insists Don and the other investigators undertake a salvage agreement to retrieve the treasure. Roth asks what the stolen photographs showed. The old lady explained that the seized photos showed the farmhouse's front from a distance. The history professor reads the McDonald diaries seeking more details about the emerald burial but finds they stopped about 1849. Where are the later writings? At night Don and Bruce try to capture the hole diggers. The diggers outrun them, but they find CONNOR STANFORD in his trailer in the middle of a stream. The next day, Grandma explained the individual who buried the emerald with Waya went to California during the gold rush. That individual continued writing a journal. Don talks with Stanford, who admits he sees the diggers most nights, but has no reason to stop them. That night, Don and Bruce wait in the rain to catch the diggers. The intruders never come. Don and Bruce run to their vehicle. As Bruce warms up the car, they observe a black rain suit figure power down the road on a red and white motorcycle. Later, Don thinks about his next investigative step; he decides to take Grandma to California to search for a clue in the journal. Don, Grandma, and Angela take a flight to San Francisco the following day. Grandma has never traveled by plane and drinks to calm her nerves. In California, they drive to Placerville to look for the last journals of the McDonald family. The diaries aren't there. Where are they? The three break into the old McDonald cabin in Coloma, California. They find the ancient journals, and Angela reads through them. The map had been there, but it was missing. Don deduces an out-of-work McDonald relative, JEREMIAH JOHNSON, found the map and went to North Carolina for the emerald. They travel back to North Carolina. When Don is back in Asheville and rested, he, Angela, and Bruce meet Roth at the patio behind the mansion. Roth agrees Don has a suspect and directs him to look for Jeremiah. Roth instructs Bruce, a computer whiz, to develop a dossier on Jeremiah and any accomplice. Roth, the master detective, reviews Don's finding. If Jeremiah had the map, it made sense he would dig on the farm. But why take the photographs? Angela had multiple pictures of Grandma's farmstead over the years. She spread them over the table. Roth studied the photos and announced she knew why Jeremiah had wanted the photographs on the wall.

Act 2-The Conflict

Roth explains the map to the emerald had to have physical marking as a lake. In the multiple photos gathered by Angela, the small lake had moved, filling in and moving farther downstream. The burglars stole pictures off the wall to seek the lake's location circa 1838. Roth needs to figure the lake's position. Don needed to find the map.

CARLA DIAZ, Don's old heartthrob and striking beauty, reappears at the mansion. Roth and Don welcome her back. Carla wants to become a criminal investigator like Nancy Drew. Don and Carla begin the morning hunting Jeremiah in Macon County. Bruce found Jeremiah drives a 1990 Ford Ranger pickup. In the woods around Grandma's farm, they meet the mountain man, Sandford. Carla sees the trailer house in the stream. "That eccentric mountain man is crafty," Carla says. "He wears a disguise, a mask."

At dusk, Mickey Ploughman and Don wait on a platform in a tree at the farm. They climb down when they hear shovels against dirt. They capture a man, a woman, and a girl—no Jeremiah. However, Don sees many individuals shoveling holes in the ground. CORPORAL HALLOWELL arrives and questions the intruders. With a white beard and mustache, an older man approached each individual at a convenience store or gas station and talked them into digging for treasure on the McDonald farm. Don and Carla reason the *older man* was Jeremiah

Johnson. Roth directs Don and Carla to search for Jeremiah in his Ford Range pickup during the day. Mickey and Don will hunt Jeremiah among the intruders, digging up the ground during the night.

Don and his group gathered up the trespassers. Grandma said, "They don't look like criminals." Later, Carla and Don take the rest of the day off and hike up Mount Pisgah. They work well together, and Don is fascinated by her. Roth gathers Don, Carla, and Bruce to discuss Waya's map. A key question is what effect the migrating lake might have on the diagram. Roth assumes the thieves stole the photographs to track down the original location of the pond. How does one find where a pond was when it's long gone? Scientists take cores over an area to examine strata over time. The earth samples along the side of the stream with the most duck droppings identify an earlier pond. Waya buried the emerald in a wooden barrel. Is there a more efficient way to search than digging up a farm? Angela says she would run an X-ray machine over the ground seeking the barrel. At Grandma's farm, Don posts signs with Jeremiah's picture and a reward for information of his whereabouts.

At dusk, Don and Mickey hear shouting and find an intruder identified Jeremiah. Don captures the man from California. Someone shoots from the woods, allowing their captive to escape. The Macon County Sheriff's Office will send its lead investigator to the McDonald farm. LIEUTENANT JAMES HOUND arrives. He is an alpha-type male who argues with Don, who decides to cooperate with Hound as a fight would distract from searching for the gem. The lieutenant chooses to believe the mountain man shot at Don and the lanterns. Hound drags Don to interrogate Sandford, who refuses to let Hound into the trailer in the stream without a warrant.

In the afternoon, Hound takes Don and Carla to a motorcycle repair shop in Franklin, the county seat in Macon County, North Carolina. A red and white Honda XR650L is in the parking lot, and a sign over the shop says *Motorcycle Repair*. A teenage dropout sprawls on a bench. Hound brushes past the teenager and explores the shop. He finds Sandford was doing business with the kids in the shop and uses that information to get a warrant to enter the mountain man's trailer. Later, Don wonders how investigating Stanford and a group of teenagers will find the emerald. Only time will tell. Roth tells Angela to core out soil samples along the bank of the stream and locate where the pond was in 1838. Early afternoon, Hound serves a warrant on Sandford. Our lieutenant and his deputies search the trailer on the lake but uncover no evidence Sandford shot at Don and Mickey. In addition, Hound searches for drugs and discovers nothing. Don and Carla continue searching for Jeremiah's 1990 Ford Ranger pickup. The pickup passes them in the opposite lane. Don does a U-turn on the mountain road and follows. They trail Jeremiah until he turns up a narrow sideroad. Wanting to find his camp, they drive up the secondary road at dusk until finding the pickup in a clearing. Don gets an M1911 pistol and two flashlights out of his trunk. They walk up the clearing. Carla sees a solitary mass in the clearing and screams. The mass is a crumpled body. Don grabs Carla's arm and pulls her into the car to drive off. Roth sends Mickey and Bruce to help. They find attackers had killed Jeremiah in a firefight. A trail of blood leading away from the battle verifies Jeremiah shot one of the attackers. The attackers had smashed Jeremiah's camp, and someone seized the map to the gem. Hound arrives and arrests Don for tramping on the crime scene. Roth's lawyer gets Don released. Later, Angela reports she has begun coring soil along the bank of the stream. Someone offers to buy Grandma's farm. Roth concludes that the person has the map. Who is it? Don decides to get the buyer's name from the lawyer proposing the sale. Don and Carla query the lawyer to get the potential buyer's name for Grandma's farm; the lawyer tells them nothing. Don has lunch with HARRY GOODMAN, a Deputy Sheriff with the Buncombe County Sheriff's Department.

Goodman suspects teenage dropouts from the town of Franklin are running drugs into the Asheville region. Don and Carla keep watch on the motorcycle repair shop in Franklin. At night, Don burglarizes the lawyer's office. He doesn't find the name of the potential buyer. Carla and Don continue their stakeout of the motorcycle repair shop in Franklin. After a while, a teenager mounted his red and white cycle and left. Don and Carla follow the bike to Tooney's bar. An hour later, the teenager returns to the shop. Don has an idea. "Tomorrow, we'll put you in disguise," Don says. "It's the only way we can get close to these guys." The next day, Carla was in the garb of a sexy young lady at the bar. The teenager parks his red and white motorcycle at Tooney's. She attracts the young male to her table. His name is Joel, and he is eager to date her. Carla arranged to meet him at, same time and same place. Hound asks Don if he has a stakeout at the motorcycle repair place to interfere with Sandford's investigation. Don explains he searches for an old map. Hound accepts this explanation. Our Lieutenant says he knows Sandford has a hideout, but he can't follow the red and white motorcycles to the lair.

Don realizes the map could be at the refuge. Grandma upsets Roth by announcing she has decided to sell her farm. Roth realizes she needs to keep Grandma's farm so they can search for the emerald in a barrel. Grandma agrees to hold off selling. Carla waits at a table in Tooney's. Joel enters and spills the hideout information to her. Sandford mentors the teenagers in the art of drug dealing. The hideout is an old family farm of Sandford's, the Buckho farm. It is off by itself in the woods near the Nantahala National Forest. Grandma wants to tell Hound the location of the Buckho farm and attack it at once. Roth wants to first look through Sandford's hideout for Waya's map. After discussion, Roth instructs Carla, Mickey, and Don to hike through the Nantahala National Forest to the rear of the refuge and search it when no one is home.

Act 3-The Resolution

Don prepares to hike through the woods to Sandford's refuge. The lawyer calls Grandma, who confirms she must have more time to decide to sell her farm. Late afternoon, Don, Mickey, and Carla begin hiking. They make good time crossing a stream and reach a concealed perch behind the Buckho farm in the dark of night. The following day, two teenagers come out of the farmhouse and push their motorcycles out into the yard. Sandford appears and mounts a cycle behind one of the teenagers. When they leave, Mickey and Don search the house. They didn't find the map but did find bloody bandages in a trashcan in one of the rooms. They left past a pigpen and realized the pigs were gnawing what appeared to be human bones. They hike back through the forest and return to Asheville. Roth contacts Hound and talks him into designating her a confidential informer. She explains Sandford's hideout is the old Buckho farm. Hound announces his intention to get a warrant and charge the farmhouse. Carla and Don suggest Hound storm the Buckho farm from the sides. He says no, he will rush in from the front to serve a warrant. In exchange for informing Hound about the Sandford's hideout, he will allow Roth's investigators to look for the map in the house. Roth figures the mountain man will escape out the back while Hound attacks the farmhouse's front. She instructs Don to hike to the perch behind the hideout.

Meanwhile, Angela reports the coring of the sides of Grandma's stream is complete, and she knows the location in the early eighteen hundred. Bruce draws the early 1800's pond on a diagram with Grandma's farmhouse. Don, Mickey, and Carla hike through the woods to behind the Buckho farm. At seven in the morning, Hound's men attack. As the gunfire died away, the mountain man flees out the rear. Don and Mickey stop Sandford as he reaches the woods at the

farm's back. When the mountain man tries to grab his rifle, Don shoots Stanford in his chest and arm with an M1911 pistol.

As Sandford lies injured, Don asks the mountain man if he stole Waya's map. Sandford stammers that he memorized the map and then burned it. Stanford dies from the chest wound, and his death destroys all knowledge of where Waya hid the emerald. No map or copy survives. Roth calls a meeting of the entire team. Don is in misery. He didn't subdue Stanford but killed him. He didn't get the Waya map but ensured Stanford's death abolished all the map's information. Roth encourages Don and says blaming himself will accomplish nothing. They know Jeremiah dug holes where the map indicated. But she thinks the map's directions used the pond's position in 1838, not the pond's current location. Roth believes Jeremiah drew a straight line from the farmhouse door that touched the boundary of the present pond and ended at 253-feet. Roth proposes redoing Jeremiah's steps but with the pond's position in 1838 when Waya drew his map. Don studied Bruce's diagram of the present-day farm; a straight line went from the door to the dug-out pits by cutting through the edge of the pond. Roth tells Bruce to redo Jeremiah's action using the 1838 pond. Bruce does a new diagram with a straight line going from the door cutting through the edge of the 1838 pond and ending at 253-feet. Bruce draws an X at the terminus of the new line. Roth tells her team to dig for the gem at the X. Next afternoon, at Grandma's farm, Bruce marked off an area corresponding to the new X. Diggers used a portable X-ray machine to search below the ground. The group first found an underground boulder, a big rock.

Finally, Bruce dug up a wooden cask. Angela pulled forth a burlap bundle. "Goddamn, it's huge," she said. "It's the emerald—the Cherokee Emerald." Roth had found the gem. Grandma and Roth split the payout from the treasure. The old lady rebuilt her farm to its former magnificence. Roth had more wealth to save for a rainy day. To celebrate finding the emerald, grandma threw a Kentucky Derby party.

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 fourth book in the Roth/Gannon series.

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

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

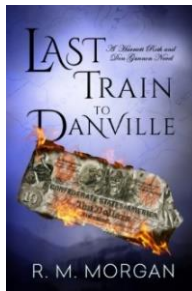
Other Works by R. M. Morgan



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



Last Train to Danville: 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.

Amazon link to Book:

https://www.amazon.com/Train-Danville-Harriet-Gannon-Novels/dp/1946743259/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1585169523&sr=8-1