

The Annabel Warrant Files, Part I

“Girl Detective”

My name is Annabel Warrant and I’m a girl detective.

I began my investigative career in grade four, complete with a sign featuring a lifelike human eye that my best friend sketched for me. With that little sign propped up against my tartan pencil case, I set about uncovering the truth behind the schoolyard injustices that I saw each day.

I’m in high school now, and although I would have been the *perfect* candidate for hall monitor I let that duty fall to my peers for just long enough to discover that our biology teacher, Mr. Franklin, had been attempting to create some sort of super-jock serum by collecting sweat from the school football team.

You might think *that’s* gross, but really it’s only scratching the surface of the weirdness that happens at Genoa City High.

While most other girls spend their lunchtimes eagerly discussing their plans for the future (or, at least, who they’re gonna marry), I’ve already chosen my career and my calling. My whole life it has seemed like there was no other path for me to take, no other possible outcome. I *never* wanted to be a doctor or an acrobat, and I certainly don’t want to work at *Dairy Shack*.

Would *you* like chocolate sprinkles with that?

Everyone in my family thinks that I’m mad. Hell, even *Sarah* thinks that I’m mad, and she’s the one that drew the eye on my sign all those years ago.

And so, with two more years of school ahead of me, I’m already accepting jobs from paying clients. To help them. Or, at least, to try. It’s not always easy, especially competing for business with that son-of-a-gun (that’s professional detective lingo, I assure you) named Harvey MacDowell.

Harvey’s “highly-trained team” of private eyes consists of nothing more than a couple of gorillas with a background in debt-collection and Harvey himself, whose “powers of deductive reasoning” are limited to calculating how much whiskey is required to numb the pain of his multiple divorces.

Every week I’m forced to deal with cheating husbands and wives, drug-addicts and long-lost relatives. Sometimes my job is dangerous, I suppose, but I don’t really see it that way. When I’m on the job they seem less like people and more like...

Like chains. Or like the *links* on a chain, all bound together. It fascinates me, this constant song and dance, unfolding over countless lives. When you spend so much time observing people, the interplay of cause and effect starts to become so obvious that you begin to notice it in other aspects of your life as well.

The key to solving mysteries, I believe, isn't so much about *looking for clues*, as it is about waiting for them to come to you. The *real* secret is knowing when to recognise them for what they are.

One such "clue" has revealed itself to me time and time again during my investigations, in the form of a single word that I can't place. It refers to nothing that I can find recorded, nothing *specific*.

I've seen it written on a police statement taken from homeless man and in the hasty scrawl of cubicle graffiti in the men's toilets at Primegate Station (toilets are a *great* place to eavesdrop). I've heard it muttered anonymously from within several crowds. I've seen it scribbled on random slips of paper and written on the sidewalk in yellow chalk.

It's become an obsession, I suppose. In the rustling of autumnal leaves, in the distant ululations of migrating birds, in the gentle stirring of the waters at the edge of Lake Freyja, I hear it.

There are strange things happening in Genoa City that most people aren't aware of. There's a secret here, a big, *important* secret and I know—in my heart of hearts—that it has something to do with that very same word that I can't get out of my head.

The word is *Westcrest*; and I have something that belongs to them.