

Night at the Capitol



Chapter Three

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Charlie saw a crowd of business people gathering in front of a doorway. No one saw as he slipped away from his class and blended silently into the group. He examined an elaborate drinking fountain with a carved bear on top and a button just below it. Without thinking, he pressed the button, and to his delight, the bear spit water onto the floor.

“Ha!” Charlie laughed. Now this was sort of interesting.

“Watch it, son, you’re getting water all over the floor!” One of the men scolded him.

Charlie looked up and noticed that the man had already turned his attention back to the group of people he was following. They looked both important and serious.

Where important people go, interesting stuff happens! Charlie thought. He followed the group, staying just a few feet behind so that they wouldn’t notice the curious 11-year-old boy trailing them.

The group opened a door and pushed their way into a separate room. Charlie followed.

Wow, he thought. It’s beautiful! For a very boring building, this room isn’t half bad.

The chamber was flanked by marble, grecian pillars and large, elegant murals on either side of a big, important looking desk. Thick, starburst carpeting covered the floor on top of which sat row upon row of desks, giving Charlie the impression that this was a place

where very important work was done. Suddenly, people began sitting at the desks one by one. Charlie was still standing right there, on the carpeted floor. They’d see him!

Quick as a flash, Charlie darted beneath one of the vacant desks in the back of the room.



He curled up into a tiny ball, and tucked himself into a back corner. He hoped he couldn’t be seen.

From his hiding place, Charlie listened to the start of what sounded like a meeting. A very boring meeting. He heard someone say a prayer.

“I’d like to take a few moments to alert the senators to changes to the floor schedule, comment on issues of the day and address a few important matters ...” a voice called out.

And then they all talked. A lot.

Charlie tried to listen for awhile, but, like everything else in Missouri, the entire matter was pretty boring. It wasn’t long before Charlie’s eyelids grew heavy. Warm sleep enveloped him so that his head began to nod and dreams began to swirl through his mind.

Charlie climbed out of his hiding place and stretched his legs and his arms. His blonde hair was sticking up in all sorts of crazy directions and his stomach rumbled with hunger. How long had he been asleep? He was still in the Senate Chamber. He walked across the plush

carpeting when suddenly ... darkness! The lights snapped off! Charlie was plunged into complete blackness, bright stars of light popped before his eyes.

What time is it? He thought, desperately. And how do I get out of here?

He felt along the wall until he reached a door. Pushing it open he entered a hallway, which was also dark. He followed the glow of the electric EXIT signs and safety lights until he discovered the marble staircases he and his classmates had used to climb to the various floors. Running down the staircase, Charlie entered the rotunda. Moonlight flooded in from the windows above. It was silent, dark and empty. There were chains over the gift shop.

No one was around.

Charlie ran over to the front doors and tugged on them. Locked! He ran to the side doors and tried them as well. They were locked too!

Charlie could feel cold panic rising in his gut. He was locked inside of the Missouri Capitol and it was closed for the night!

He began to tremble. *I’m going to have to stay here, Charlie thought. I’m going to have to spend the night in the Capitol, totally alone.*

And that’s when he heard voices, echoing in the dark.

Capitol Ideas



Charlie is hoping to find some excitement in the Senate Chamber. Senators represent their community’s concerns. They evaluate legislation for new laws and regulations. Look through your newspaper’s editorial section to find examples of concerns. What other concerns are featured in the newspaper?

Learning Standards: I can read historical fiction to develop fluency and to make text-to-world connections. I can identify vocabulary in context. I can comprehend main idea and supporting details. I can analyze literary techniques and make predictions.