

# Night at the Capitol



## Chapter Seven

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**T**he Great Seal of the State of Missouri resides in the Secretary of State's office," Will, the Union soldier said.

The unlikely group — two Civil War soldiers, two World War soldiers, and an 11-year-old school boy — moved through the hallways of the Missouri Capitol and down a set of stairs to the second floor.

"What makes it so special?" Charlie asked. "I mean, how exactly did a spell get cast on it so that you guys and the rest of the museum here can come alive at night?"

"Well, that's quite a tale, Charlie," Will answered.

As they moved through the darkened hallways, lit by the dim buzz of the exit lights, the soldier began to tell the story of the seal.

"The seal is a bronze medallion, about 3 inches in diameter. It depicts, quite obviously, the Great Seal of the State of Missouri — that is, the symbols of our state, including two bears for strength and bravery, a crescent moon to represent potential, and the motto United We Stand, Divided We Fall."

Will gave Jeb a sharp look as he said this last bit.

"It also features the motto of the state of Missouri; *Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto.*"

"Huh?"

"Let the welfare of the people be the supreme law."

Charlie nodded.

"Our story really begins in 1861."

"The year the South began its just fight for secession!" Jeb called out.

"Really, Jeb? Alright, well, yes, the year the South began its, er, bid to secede from the Union. Rather, the start of the Civil War was indeed in 1861. In that year, Gov. Claiborne Fox Jackson made off with the seal, as a result of an argument over

journey, while passing through Arkansas, Gov. Jackson died. Lt. Gov. Thomas C. Reynolds took up the seal and carried it to Marshall, Texas, in his saddlebags. This action left the state of Missouri in utter chaos. The state could not legalize any document without imprinting the seal! It wasn't until 1865 — after the Civil War ended, that

Queen Mama Couteaux. Mama Couteaux arrived on the scene in Marshall at the very end of the Civil War. No one really knew how old she was, but take my word for it, she was very, very old. Mama Couteaux was known to have the powers to raise men from the grave with voodoo magic. She sympathized with the South in the war, and when the

Union forces won, she was mad. She tried to put a curse on the Missouri Seal before it returned to its rightful place at the center of our government, here in Jefferson City. But her powers were weakened by her age, and it didn't quite work. Instead of cursing our government for all eternity, her powers manifested themselves

instead into a magic spell.

Stolen seals? Missouri seemed a bit more exciting than he'd originally imagined.

The group stepped quietly up to the Secretary of State's office.

"Would you like to see this remarkable seal?" Charlie nodded. Will cracked open the doors of the office. Moonlight flooded through the window, casting everything in an eerie, bluish glow.

"Take a look, it's right ..."

Will paused as the other soldiers collectively gasped. The space where the seal resided was empty.

The seal was gone.



whether Missouri should claim allegiance to the North or the South. Jackson, was in favor of joining the South."

"Good man, that Jackson," commented Jeb.

"Oh will you please quit your jabber, Jeb!" Will cried.

"Sorry."

"As I was saying. Jackson favored the South and so he snatched the seal and made for Texas on horseback. During the

the Great Seal of the State of Missouri was returned right here, to Jefferson City, where it sits in the Secretary of State's office. At least that's the story everyone knows."

"What do you mean the story everyone knows? Is there something more?" Charlie asked.

"Well, yes, there is actually. There's the spell, of course," Will said. "Many in Marshall will tell you the tale of the voodoo

instead into a magic spell.

"Now, as long as the Great Seal is present in the Capitol of Missouri," Will continued, "all those who do not technically live during the daytime will be granted life during the hours of the night. And that, dear Charlie, is how we are able to reside in this Capitol each night, quite well and alive."

"Wow," Charlie whispered. "Voodoo queens? Magic spells?"



## Capitol Ideas

The Missouri Seal is missing ... again! Newspapers are a great resource for lost and found items. Locate the lost and found section of your newspaper. How much does it cost to place an ad? Write an ad seeking the Missouri Seal. How much will it cost to run your ad for one week? How much will it cost to run your ad for one month?

**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.