

Night at the Capitol



Chapter Eight

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"It's gone!" Jeb, the Confederate soldier shouted.

"Gone?" Phil from WWII said. "How can it be gone? I mean, well, it can't be gone gone, because we're still alive, right? So, it must be somewhere in the Capitol!"

"You're right, Phil," said Tom. "But it's not where it should be. Somebody obviously stole it. In all of my 115 years I've never seen that seal leave that desk."

Charlie watched the four soldiers with growing dread. How could the magic state seal that allowed these men to come alive at night be missing?

"Well, looky here!" Jeb suddenly shouted. "A clue!"

Charlie saw that Jeb was holding a teeny, tiny red thread that he'd gently pulled from the holding place of the bronze seal.

"Whoever took our state seal sure was wearin' a very red shirt this evening!" Jeb said.

"Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle. We'll all be up a creek if we don't get that seal back here, safe and sound before sunrise. What if the thief takes it outside when the daylight hits? We'll die ... for good I mean!"

Charlie didn't want to see these men lose their power to come alive. They were living remnants of history! And, Charlie admitted to himself, he genuinely liked the soldiers — even Jeb.

"I'll help you," he told them. "Together we'll find the seal, I know it."

Will nodded.

"Right. Let's split up then. The Capitol is a big place and the thief could be hiding anywhere. There are five of us, so we should be able to easily cover each area. Tom, you can take the basement. Phil, you go up to the fourth floor. Jeb, you take the second floor and I'll take the first floor and rotunda. Charlie you can search the third floor."

"Yeah, sure, like I'm gonna take orders from a stinkin' Union man ..." Jeb groaned.

"That's the spirit, man! Righto. Meet back here at 0300 hours. Let's go!"

The two World War heroes took off down the staircases. Will followed after them, heading for the rotunda and Jeb jogged toward the governor's office.

Charlie began to climb the marble staircase toward the third floor. Immediately, he heard voices. Was it the thief?

Charlie rounded the corner and found himself in the Hall of Famous Missourians — the very

"Whatever you say, man, whatever you say."

The friendly banter didn't sound like a thief to Charlie.

"Hello?" he said, his voice echoing in the dark chamber.

"Hello?"

"Hello!"

The two voices answered back.

"Who's there?" Charlie called as he rounded the corner and stopped short.

He suddenly realized where the

voices were coming from. The busts were talking! Two men looked out at him with friendly eyes. They were very much alive — their eyes blinked and mouths moved — yet they were cast in bronze and still didn't have bodies. It would have been very

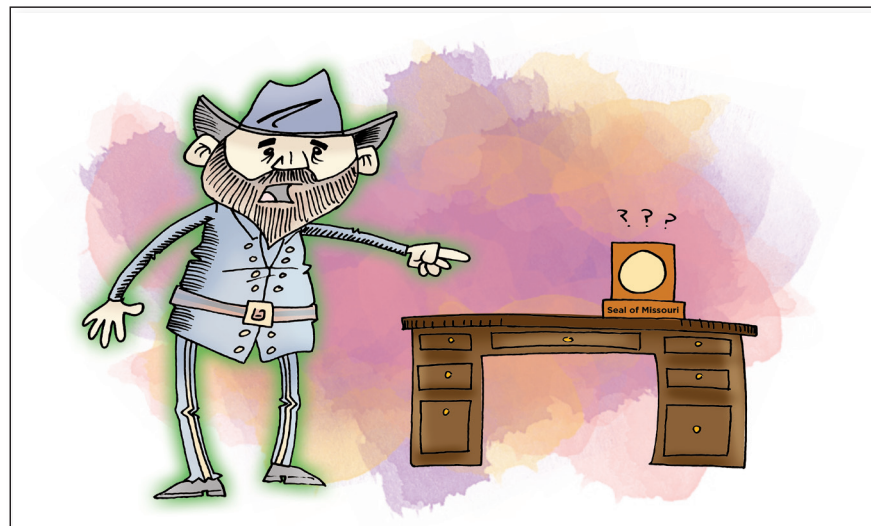
creepy, except that these two men just seemed so nice.

"Hi," Charlie said, tentatively.

"Well, howdy do!" one of the men said. "I'm Stan!"

"And I'm Jack."

"Stan Musial and Jack Buck," Charlie said, reading from their name plates.



"Jeb! We must work as a team!" Will said. "And besides, the second floor is home to the governor's office, making it the most important floor to search. Only one man could be trusted with such a job! You're the one to do it!"

Jeb swelled with pride.

"Darn tootin'! I'm gonna catch that thief or else!"

place he'd snuck away from during his class field trip so many hours earlier!

"It was 49, I tell you, Jack, not 45, I promise!"

"No, no, Stan, I remember. It was 45. He said 45."

"Uh uh, Dizzy said they'd win 45 games, but they actually won 49! I swear!"

"True, true," Stan said. "Stan Musial and Jack Buck. We're guilty as charged."

"You're baseball players?"

"You're a sharp one, kid," Stan said. "Well, at least I'm a baseball player. I played for the St. Louis Cardinals from 1941 to 1963. But Jack's an announcer."

"Wow," Charlie said. "You must have been really good to be here, in the Hall of Famous Missourians."

"Yes sir, we both did pretty well in our time, I'd say. That explains why we're both here, so tell me, why are you here in the Hall of Famous Missourians? At night, nonetheless!"

"Well," Charlie started. "I'm looking for a thief."

Capitol Ideas

Stan Musial and Jack Buck were in the Hall of Famous Missourians for their contributions in baseball. Looking through the newspaper, what athlete would you recommend for the Hall? Why? Write a letter of recommendation for your athlete to be considered for this honor. Be sure to list specific accomplishments on and off the field.

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.

