

Night at the Capitol

Chapter Nine

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Charlie found himself in the Hall of Famous Missourians talking to the bronze busts of Stan Musial and Jack Buck.

"The Great Seal of the State of Missouri is missing! Someone stole it from the Secretary of State's office and I'm out to find it!" he told them.

"Well, I haven't seen any thief," Jack said.

"I'll tell you what, though, those two beauties over there sure have stolen my heart!" Stan said.

The two men laughed uproariously as the bronzes of two women batted their lashes and giggled flirtatiously.

Ginger Rogers and Betty Grable, Charlie read on the women's nameplates.

"Well, thanks anyway," Charlie told Stan and Jack. He looked around him. "I guess I'll just go ask a few others."

The room was filled with bronze busts chatting, arguing and laughing away.

"Good luck, kid," Jack told him.

Charlie wandered to the other side of the room and walked up to a bust with the name "Scott Joplin" beneath it.

"Uh, Mr. Joplin," Charlie said.

The man seemed to be in his own little world, humming a soft tune to himself. He snapped to attention when Charlie called his name.

"Oh! Didn't see you there! How can I help you?"

"Hi Mr. Joplin. I was just wondering if you've seen a thief around here. Or, maybe any kind of suspicious activity?"

"The only suspicious activity I've seen around here is you! Never did see a kid around here at night before anyhow. Yes, you and that ..."

Scott trailed off and began humming a little tune again, this time louder.

"Me and what else?" Charlie asked.

Scott Joplin ignored him and kept humming, even louder than before.



"Sir?" Charlie said.

"Sorry, but you'll have to excuse me, I've just got to get this melody down ..." Scott said, trailing off as he became lost in his humming once more.

Charlie wondered how Scott Joplin was going to record his new melody, since the bronze bust technically didn't have any arms.

"Hey! Kid!" A voice called to him.

Charlie turned and saw a face he recognized from the field trip earlier. Mr. Priddy had told the class who this was!

"Hello, Mr. Disney," Charlie said.

"Hi there!" Walt Disney responded. "I just happened to overhear you there, asking Mr. Joplin about any suspicious activity in the Hall this evening? That correct, kid?"

"Yes, sir!" Charlie responded. "I'm looking for a thief!"

"Well, I'll tell you there was some fellow in here earlier, sneaking around and the likes. Goofy looking guy. Ha! Goofy! Do you know about my Goofy, kid? How

about Donald? Of course, you must be familiar with Mickey!"

"Yes, yes, I love your movies Mr. Disney! I've even been to Disneyland in California, where I used to live. But now I need you to tell me more about this man! Who was he? What did he look like?"

"Average height, brown hair, red shirt, can't say who he was, but

he was not made of bronze," Walt answered.

"Ok, well, thank you for your help," Charlie sighed. He really wanted to catch this thief! Not only to help all of the people who lived in the Capitol museum, but also to prove to the four soldiers that he could be brave too.

"Child? What's your name, child?" a sympathetic voice called to him.

Charlie looked up and saw that the voice came from the bust of a kind looking woman. He approached her and saw that he recognized her sculpture from earlier in the day.

It was Laura Ingalls Wilder.

"My name is Charlie," he answered. "And I'm looking for a thief. Walt Disney said that he saw a man pass through here, but he doesn't have any more information for me."

Laura nodded.

"I understand. Walt is often lost in his own imagination, and sometimes details slip past him. I'm a pioneer woman, though! Observation is key on the frontier. It can mean the difference between life and death!" she declared.

"What did you see?" Charlie asked, hope starting to bubble up inside of him.

"Walt was right with his description, and I don't know him either, but I may have something that could help you."

She glanced down, nodding, to the left of her pillar. On the floor

lay a well worn black cowboy hat. Charlie picked it up.

"He dropped his hat?" he asked, incredulously.

"Yes," Laura answered. "He dropped his hat."

"Thank you!" Charlie said. "A clue!"

"Here's another tip," Laura told him. "I've learned from my years on the prairie that the Native Americans are expert trackers. Take that hat to the paintings on the second floor. There is a tribe of Native Americans that live together inside a few of the paintings. Tell them you could use their help. And tell them Laura sent you."

Charlie nodded and Laura gave him a warm smile.

Then he was off.

Capitol Ideas

This chapter is filled with dialogue. When writers quote someone, they have to be creative and think of very unique and specific ways of saying "said." Look through the newspaper and make a list of the examples you can find. What words would you add to this list?

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.

