

Night at the Capitol

Chapter Twelve

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The infamous outlaw, Jesse James, and the warrior, Machk, stood at a standstill in the middle of the Governor's office. Charlie, was stuck right between them. Jesse James stole the Great Seal of the State of Missouri. He wanted to melt it down and sell the bronze, but without it the men and women who lived in the Capitol could not come alive at night.

The four soldiers — Will, Jeb, Tom and Phil — stood bound and muffled behind the Governor's desk, helpless.

"Unarm yourself," Machk said.

"Son, I've been an outlaw for a long time," Jesse started. "I've been a robber, a gang leader, a guerrilla fighter and, yes, a murderer in my time. And I ain't afraid to add two more credits to my name."

Charlie watched in horror as he saw Jesse's finger curl around the gun's trigger.

It all happened at once.

The gun went off with a loud bang. Charlie heard the crack of the weapon, immediately followed by the deafening clang of metal on metal. *What had it hit?* He thought desperately. He saw that Machk was looking around urgently as well. He seemed OK. Looking back toward Jesse, Charlie registered a look of horror crossing the outlaw's face.

When Charlie turned, he saw it. Or rather, he saw them.

It was Mr. Priddy! His tour guide from his class trip! Accompanying the old man was

an extremely large, moving, bronze man. Charlie recognized him immediately from his history book. It was Thomas Jefferson! Albeit, a 13-foot tall Jefferson, but still, he could tell that it was him.



"Aha!" Mr. Priddy cried out. "And what do we have here?"

He shone his flashlight on the scene, illuminating the soldiers, outlaw, warrior and school boy.

"You hold up right there," Jesse growled at them as the bronze Jefferson strode forward.

BANG! CLANG! The gun went off again, and Charlie realized Jesse had shot Jefferson. But the bullets simply ricocheted off his bronze chest. The gunshots could not stop his advance.

Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States, took his giant, baseball mitt-sized hands and wrapped them around Jesse James' shoulders. He plucked the silver gun from the man's hands as if he were

stealing candy from a baby.

"Got him, Tom?"

Mr. Priddy cried, darting toward the trapped outlaw faster than Charlie would've thought possible.

With one swift motion,

Mr. Priddy raised his great, big flashlight and CRACK! brought it down upon Jesse's head.

The outlaw was out cold.

"I swear," the deep, rumbling voice of Thomas Jefferson echoed. "This is the third time this month! How are we going to keep this man under control, Bob?"

"We'll figure something out. For now, let's get the seal and put ol' Mr. James here in the House Lounge stockade.

Thomas Jefferson nodded,

plucking the seal from the unconscious Jesse James. It looked like a little penny in the statue's giant fingers.

"Here you are, Bob," he said to Mr. Priddy, handing him the seal. He then turned to Charlie. "You know, as I like to say, Charlie, one man with courage is a majority. I commend you on your strength and bravery this evening, young man. You represent the state of Missouri most nobly."

With that, the giant statue rumbled out the door, taking the limp form of Jesse James along with him.

You represent the state of Missouri most nobly. Charlie thought for a moment about all of the people he'd met that night who represented the state of Missouri — the four soldiers (all of whom Mr. Priddy was busily untying), the warrior, Machk, Stan Musial and Jack Buck. There was Laura Ingalls Wilder, Scott Joplin and Walt Disney. But even more than that, the regular everyday people throughout the museum: the pioneers, coal miners, foot soldiers and townsfolk.

The everyday workers and heroes, like Mr. Priddy here.

Charlie thought himself lucky to be counted as one of them. For the first time, possibly ever, he thought himself lucky to be a Missourian.

Mr. Priddy untied the soldiers and the group reconvened.

"Well done, Charlie!" Will said to him, clapping him on the back.

The others gathered round, shaking his hand amiably.

"I didn't really do anything, it was Mr. Priddy and President Jefferson who rescued us. I didn't even have a bow and arrow like Machk, here."

"You found the thief and stood up to him," Phil said. "That's a heck of a lot of bravery, if you ask me."

The others nodded in agreement.

Charlie blushed and turned to Mr. Priddy.

"Mr. Priddy! What are you even doing here?" He asked, suddenly alarmed, "Aren't you ... er ... a bit surprised to see these guys, you know, talking and stuff?"

"Ah, Charlie," the man said. "Remember? I told you earlier: here at the Capitol, history comes to life."

Capitol Ideas



The arrest of Jesse James is quite newsworthy! Create a news story that details his arrest that includes who, what, when, where, why and how. Be sure to include an illustration and a catchy headline.

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.