

Night at the Capitol



Chapter Four

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I say, secession is the only option. And the only way to preserve the dignity and tradition of the South!”

“No! We must be united under new economic frontiers. Secession is unacceptable!”

Two voices echoed against the marble floors of the Capitol

Charlie listened, and a wave of relief swept over him. *Security guards!* He thought. *Thank goodness, there's still someone here to get me out of this place.*

Charlie ran toward the voices. He turned a corner and WHACK! He collided with the creepy Civil War soldier he'd seen that morning with his class.

Strange though, because Charlie wasn't standing in the Civil War area ...

“Oh, pardon me, young fellow! Carry on.”

Charlie looked around for the source of the voice. Where was that security guard anyway?

“Now, what y'all doin' here at night now anyway?” the other soldier asked.

The other soldier?

A slow chill crept up his spine as Charlie slowly realized that the voices were coming from the SOLDIERS!

He could only assume he'd been asleep for too long and was in the midst of a fitful dream.

Charlie slowly backed away from the soldiers, when one spoke again!

“Why fella, are you scared?”

Charlie could no longer deny it.

The voices were most definitely coming from the soldiers. The creepy blank faces he'd noticed earlier had somehow developed eyes, noses and mouths. And they were moving too!

“AHHHHHH!” Charlie screamed, right into the Confederate soldier's face.



“AHHHHHH!” the Confederate screamed back.

“Why are we screaming?” the second soldier asked, politely.

“Because! Because you, you, you're, well, you're talking!” Charlie shrieked. “And walking! And, you're alive! This has to be some kind of weird dream.”

“Ah, no, not a dream, son. This is simply night at the Capitol!” the soldier answered.

The soldier's blank face looked up, as if to survey the scene, behind Charlie.

Charlie slowly turned and tried to absorb what was happening all around him.

The dioramas were no longer pretending to shoot each other with the match stick-sized guns — they were actually shooting at each other! A pioneer woman rocked in her chair as she truly churned butter. Miners began to

heave and haul coal through the tiny, replica mine. Charlie could even hear their little grunts as the coal made its way up to the surface of their world. The WWI and WWII soldiers opened the doors of their glass cases and joined Charlie, the Union man and the Confederate.

“Heya fellas,” the WWII soldier said.

“Like I said,” the Union soldier told him. “This is what it's like at night at the Capitol! No need to be afraid. Buff up your

courage, young fellow. There's no space nor need for cowards here! This is Phil, a soldier of the second World War. And this young man is Tom, from the first World War.”

“The Great War,” Tom muttered, solemnly.

“So ... you're all ... soldiers?” Charlie asked, staring from face to face.

“Yessir, that is correct!” the Confederate answered. “I'm Jeb. And my dear, confused, Union friend here is William.”

“Will is fine,” the Union soldier said.

“I just don't get it though,” Charlie started. “You guys are mannequins. Mannequins can't just come alive, even if it is nighttime. This has to be just some sort of weird dream, right? Hey, pinch me, why don't ya? Wake me up! Please?”

“Pinch you, lad?” Will said. “Why ever should we pinch you?”

“It will wake me up!”

“I know what to do!” Jeb said. He slowly drew his sword.

“Now, Jeb ...” Will started.

“Relax ol' Willie. I'm not gonna hurt him! Just gonna give him a little poke is all.”

Charlie stood stock still. He wasn't afraid. You can't get hurt while you're dreaming. Jeb was going to poke him with the sword and then he'd wake up and find himself back at home in his new house, here in Missouri, tucked in his boring, but warm, old bed. Charlie squeezed his eyes shut tight.

Poke!

Charlie felt Jeb's sword right in his belly, just one, quick, sharp jab.

“Ouch!” he said.

When he opened his eyes it was still nighttime, he was still at the Capitol and the mannequins were still standing there, very much alive.

Perhaps, this wasn't a dream after all.

Charlie looked from soldier to soldier, before allowing his gaze to drift to the living dioramas behind them.

This, Charlie thought, was more like some kind of nightmare.

Capitol Ideas

In this chapter, inanimate objects come to life. Use the newspaper to find three examples of inanimate objects. Personification is writing in a way that gives human traits to inanimate objects, such as the leaves danced on the sidewalk. Use personification to create a sentence for the inanimate objects that you listed.

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.

