

Night at the Capitol



Chapter Five

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Charlie was locked in the Missouri Capitol at night, with all of the people and paintings around him coming to life. It made no sense. This was no Hollywood movie, this was Missouri after all, where nothing remotely interesting ever happened.

Charlie was in grave need of some kind of explanation.

“Ok, well, I guess I’m not dreaming,” he said as Jeb, one of the Civil War era soldiers sheathed his sword. “So, what is happening here? How did you guys just come to life? Are you always alive? Do you just hold really still during the daytime?”

The four men — a Confederate soldier, a Union soldier, a WWI soldier and a WWII soldier — all chuckled.

“I shall explain,” Will, the Union soldier, said to the others. “During the daytime while the sun shines above us, we are frozen in time. But once the sun sets and the stars unsheathe themselves from the shroud of the dark we ...”

“Confound it man, get to the point!” Jeb interrupted. “There’s a spell. A spell was once cast on to the Missouri State Seal and that allows us to come alive at night. As long as the bronze Missouri State Seal is present in the Capitol, we come alive after sundown. Y’all get it?”

“Wow, a spell,” Charlie said.

This place was actually becoming interesting.

“I have an idea,” Phil, the WWII

soldier, said. “Why don’t we take our young friend here around the place. Show him some stuff, don’t ya think? What is your name now, anyway, son?”

“Charlie.”

Charlie flushed with excitement. The idea of touring the Capitol museum with four American



soldiers was so much more appealing than trudging after his teacher and old Mr. Priddy had been that afternoon.

They walked to the first exhibit in the the Civil War section. Mr. Priddy had said it was called Civil War Missouri: A House Dividing.

“This area documents the most important era in American history,” Will began. “The War of Southern Aggression.”

“Don’t y’all mean the War Between the States,” Jeb interjected.

“No, I mean exactly what I say,” Will said. “This section of the museum documents a bloody, traitorous time in the United States, when the Southern states rebelled against their government and caused the start of a terrible, unforgiving war.”

“Now, see here y’all ...” Jeb yelled. “I don’t think you quite got all your biscuits in the fryer with these facts you’re giving him, William.”

“Alright, alright, now,” Tom, the WWI soldier, interrupted. “You two. Quiet. I’ll tell him.

This section documents the American Civil War. It was a very dramatic time

in Missouri.” He turned toward Will and Jeb and rolled his eyes. “As you can see.”

“Half of the state commiserated with the North, otherwise known as the Union. These people wanted to abolish slavery and keep the United States as one whole nation. The other half were on the side of the South, or the Confederacy. These people wanted to keep slavery as an economic institution, and secede from the United States to become their own independent, Southern nation. You see? Missouri was a state, or

a house, divided. Our state was a reflection of the entire nation, really.”

Charlie nodded, watching tiny replica soldiers charge each other on horseback in a miniature diorama scene. These soldiers looked much more serious than Jeb and Will. They were out for blood. Charlie watched a puff of smoke, no bigger than that from a cigarette, bellow from a miniature cannon.

“Come on, Charlie, boy,” Phil said. “Let me show you our digs.”

Charlie followed the four uniformed men into the World Wars wing of the museum.

“This here’s a replica battleship,” Phil said. “Just like the one I was stationed on in the Pacific!”

Charlie watched as little sailors wearing uniforms just like Phil’s ran from one end of the battleship to the other, all busily taking care of their chores.

“Look at this guy, here. See how he’s rat-tat-tatting like that? Morse code! He’s sending a message to another ship!”

Charlie looked around.

“What other ship?”

He only saw display cases with ragged, old flags in them. Phil ignored him.

“See, in the Pacific, we were battling against the Japanese. The state of Missouri sent more than 500,000 men into the theaters during those years. And I was one of them!”

Tom nodded gravely, leading

Charlie over to one of the ragged flags.

“This was left on one of the German battlefields during WWI. It’s the flag of Missouri. We spent long days and nights dug into foxholes during that war. We ate nothing but trench rations. Survived only on grit, soul and love for our country.”

Charlie nodded solemnly, looking from soldier to soldier. He could not imagine ever growing up to be as brave as these four. Maybe Missourians were a lot tougher than he thought.

Phil spoke to him, snapping him from his reverie.

“Come now, lad, follow us and we’ll take you to a really special place here in the Capitol.”

Capitol Ideas



In this chapter, Charlie learned how the Civil War divided the United States. This war was a result of unresolved conflict. What examples of conflict can you find in the newspaper? What solutions are an option? Create a pro and con chart of the solutions.

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.