

Tales of Marvelous Missouri

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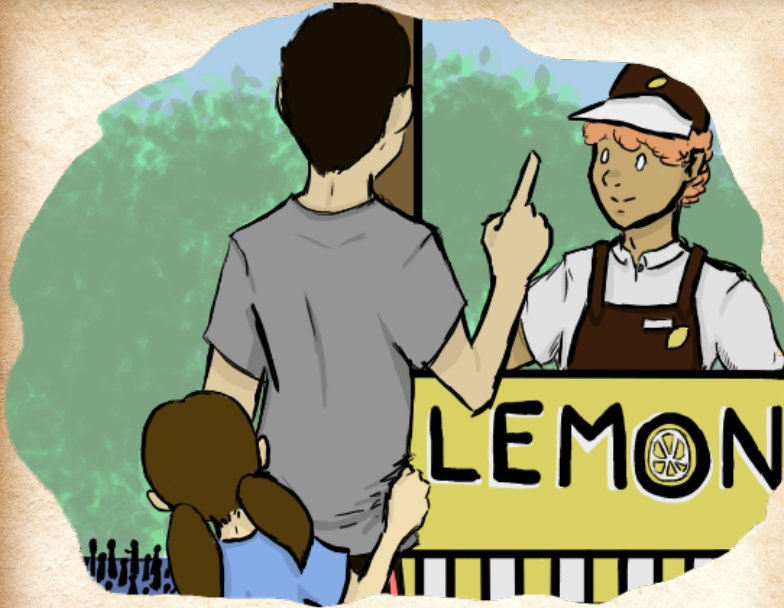
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Chapter 1: Leaving the Lemonade Line

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Molly was DIZZY. She'd just stepped off of the Thunderation, her fifth, no, sixth roller coaster ride of the day. She'd gone up hills and down, twisted and turned and didn't even get scared on the loop the loops!

"Let's go again!" she shouted to her family, racing to get back in line.

The sun was shining, warming the humid, Missouri summer day. Molly was on vacation with her family at Silver Dollar City. She lived in St. Louis with her brother and their parents, but they'd all made the four-hour trip to Branson so they could visit the iconic theme park. Dad recalled coming here as a kid, and he couldn't wait to show Molly and Sam the rides.

"Hold on, Molly," Dad said. "Maybe we should take a little breather? Get some lemonade?"

Molly was starting to think maybe Dad couldn't handle the roller coasters as well as he could thirty years ago! She shrugged.

"Sure, lemonade sounds great."

She followed her family as they joined the queue at a refreshment stand. The line was long, so Molly looked around while they waited. Near the lemonade stand, she saw a gathering of people by the dark entrance to...something. *What is that place?* Molly wondered. She didn't see a roller coaster, or any of Silver Dollar City's well-known rides nearby. Molly couldn't resist a mystery. She had to check it out.

"Mom! Dad!" Molly said. "Can I run over and see what all of those people are looking at? *Pleeeeeeassee??*"

"Ok, Molly," her mom answered. "But don't go far."

"I won't," Molly insisted.

Molly had a history of sometimes going a bit *too far*.

"We'll get the lemonade and come meet you in a minute," Dad told her.

Molly left her family and ran over to the mysterious cluster of visitors and wiggled her way through toward the front. There she found the dark, massive opening to a cave!

"Wow!" Molly whispered. "A real cave!"

Molly's teacher had told her Missouri was known as "The Cave State." Even though she'd lived in Missouri her entire life, she'd never seen a real cave. She didn't know that there would be one in Silver Dollar City!

"Not just any cave," a voice near her said. "This is Marvel Cave!"

Molly turned and saw an elderly woman sitting on a stool near the entrance. She carried a cane and was wearing a straw hat. She wore a Silver Dollar City name tag that said ELSIE, and she smelled like peppermints.

"Marvel Cave?" Molly asked. "What's that?"

The lady patted the ledge next to her stool.

"Come on over," she said. "Take a seat in the shade, it'll cool you right down. I'll tell you all about the cave!"

Newspaper Connections:

Use the weather map in the newspaper to locate Silver Dollar City, and then estimate the travel time from your home to the theme park.

