

chapter one

The Magnifying Glass

“Grandma Moustachio’s here, Jake!” exclaimed Alexa, as she pressed her nose up against the frosty glass of her bedroom window.

Jake and Alexa had been waiting very patiently for their Grandmother to arrive. It was Jake’s eleventh birthday and his Grandma had promised him a fantastic surprise when she came over to baby-sit that evening.

Jake had a huge smile on his face as he yelled through the hallways. “I can’t wait to open my birthday present.”

“I wonder what it is?” said Alexa, as she met him outside the playroom that was filled with gifts galore from Jake’s birthday party that afternoon.

“I don’t know,” he said, with a big grin.

Alexa reached up on her tippy toes and grabbed her favorite doll off the top toy shelf. Her doll had the same big blue eyes and long strawberry blonde hair as she had. “I hope it’s another U.S.A. Girl Doll,” she said.

“A doll,” moaned Jake. “Dolls are for eight year old girls. I’m expecting something big! Bigger than big, BIG! BIG!”

Wayne Madsen

Large, fluffy snowflakes started to sprinkle down to the ground outside the Moustachio's home. As the backdoor opened up, a blast of frigid air from the January sky poured into the warm toasty house. The children raced each other frantically through the house, sliding on the shiny wood floor to see who could reach Grandma first.

"I'm here!" shouted Grandma.

"Grandma, Grandma, you're here!" screamed Alexa, as she grabbed her hand and tugged her grandmother further into the house. "Come quickly into the playroom, so we can open up Jake's present."

Grandma Moustachio scurried up into the playroom, brushing snowflakes out of her wild and crazy, salt and pepper hair. Alexa walked behind her, picking up hair pins as they fell out of her Grandmother's hair. She placed half of them neatly in her own hair as she created a new hairdo. With the remaining hair pins Alexa made a matching hairstyle for her U.S.A. Girl Doll and then placed her back on the toy shelf.

"What's this?" Grandma asked, looking at the floor as she plopped down on the large overstuffed, flowered sofa.

The children were just finishing up a game of House Detective which they had started earlier. Jake and Alexa dove to the gameboard where scorecards were spread all over the playroom floor.

"We're playing House Detective, Grandma," Jake said, as he looked patiently at Alexa, whose turn it was to guess the culprit of the crime.

Alexa raised her left eyebrow and did a final check of her scorecard. She smirked at Jake, almost assured of a correct

The Case Of Stolen Time

guess. "It was Mrs. Pumpernickel, in the garden, with the candlestick."

"You win!" frowned Jake, as he scratched his head.

"I have a birthday present for my favorite red-headed eleven year old boy!" Grandma exclaimed. "Why, I think you get taller every time I see you."

"I'm the tallest boy in my class," he said, stretching himself taller as he stood up.

Grandma proceeded to open up her very large black canvas pocket book that was always filled with many wonderful and mysterious treasures.

Bouncing from sofa to sofa, Jake yelled, "Show me! Show me!" His big green eyes opened as wide as they could go, in anticipation of what she had buried deep beneath the clutter of her pocketbook.

At that moment, she pulled out the most wonderful magnifying glass the children had ever seen. The round glass sparkled like a shooting star and was surrounded by a golden frame with a cherry wood handle.

"This was your Grandpa's most cherished possession," she said, as she fumbled for her crossword puzzle. "It always brought him such luck on all of his cases when he was a detective for the police department."

"Wow!" exclaimed the children.

Jake snatched up the magnifying glass and immediately started to bounce around the room inspecting the wrinkles on his Grandmother's face.

She looked somewhat amused and a little annoyed as he moved the magnifying glass all around her face. "Hey, not so close," she muttered. "This magnifying glass is now

Wayne Madsen

yours, Inspector Moustachio!”

“Cool, Grandma, I can use this on all my adventures!” he exclaimed.

The children’s Dad came down the stairs all dressed up in his blue suit and his favorite yellow tie with the blue stripes on it. “You mean misadventures,” said Dad, as he adjusted his tie.

The children’s parents were on their way to a party. Mom was still upstairs fussing over her last minute bedtime preparations for the children. She placed Alexa’s purple satin U.S.A. Girl pajamas on the corner of her white princess bed and then grabbed Jake’s green and brown camouflage PJ’s and tossed them on the top of his blue, roaring-race-car-shaped bed.

“Lexy and Jake, did you brush your teeth yet?” yelled Mom from above.

“We sure did!” exclaimed Alexa.

“I put your pajamas on your beds,” she said, as she walked down the stairs in a beautiful pink fuzzy sweater and skirt with shoes so high Jake thought she might topple over. Still trying to get her last sparkly earring in her right ear, she said, “Be in bed in one hour and don’t get into too much mischief.”

“The children and I will have loads of fun!” said Grandma.

“Bye Mom! Bye Dad! We love you!” shouted the children.

“Love you too,” said Mom, as she grabbed her overstuffed white coat that reminded the children of a large polar bear.

The Case Of Stolen Time

Dad grabbed his coat and car keys and yelled from the closet door, “Don’t forget to feed the cat.”

“We won’t,” said Jake, as he cleverly slid the House Detective game under the sofa so he wouldn’t have to clean it up.

Mom and Dad hurried out the back door into the frosty night. Jake and Alexa were filled with excitement about what to look for next with the magnifying glass.

“Why don’t we search for the cat?” asked Alexa.

“That’s a marvelous idea,” said Grandma, as she pulled a pencil out of her fluffy hair. “I will start my crossword puzzle and you look for your furry pal, Rex, until bedtime.”

“We’ll have ourselves a short adventure!” declared Jake.

“I’ll grab my Inspector Girl backpack, in case we need any supplies,” said Alexa.

chapter two

The Attic

Alexa ran upstairs to her overly pink bedroom with the numerous stuffed animals scattered across her bed and charged straight for the closet. She pulled everything out until she found her pink and purple Inspector Girl backpack that Grandma had given her for her sixth birthday.

Jake and Alexa then proceeded to comb the house, for any clues of Rex, their rusty-colored, furry pal. The children found many interesting things while looking through the magnifying glass: a small piece of popcorn behind the sofa, a hair pin that fell from Grandma's hair onto the kitchen floor, an old sock of Dad's behind the coffee table, but no sign of Rex!

"Where do you think that pesky cat is?" questioned Jake, curious, as he leaned over to examine the crack in Mom's vase that he had crazy glued yesterday after his airplane had accidentally flown into it.

"I think he's hiding in the attic," Alexa whispered. "And Mommy knows *all* about that crack!"

"Lexy!" he scolded. "Did you tell?"

Alexa tossed her hair back and exclaimed, "I didn't have to; you glued the flower upside-down."

The Case Of Stolen Time

Jake and Alexa slowly tip-toed up the attic stairs, examining each step with the magnifying glass, as they got closer and closer to the door. Jake turned the door knob with some hesitation. It squeaked open. Jake poked his head in first, with Alexa squeezing right in behind him.

“Do you see anything, Jake?” she asked, as she sniffed the musty smelling air.

“Too dark,” whispered Jake.

They entered the room, cautiously, as Jake found the light switch. The attic was dusty and smelled of old things from years gone by.

“Look, Lexy, here’s your old rocking horse,” said Jake, jumping into the saddle. Jake began to rock back and forth as Alexa put on her old cowgirl vest. She threw her old red cowgirl hat with the white fringe on top of Jake’s head.

“Giddy up horsy!” he yelled. “Giddy up!”

Alexa laughed so loud she nearly tore the stitching off the tiny pink and red vest. As she pulled off the vest, she sighed, “I can’t believe I was ever that small.”

“Hmmm...those were the good old days, huh Lex,” said Jake, jumping off the horse.

“Most definitely, Inspector!” agreed Alexa.

Suddenly a huge green and red box filled with Christmas ornaments started to fall from a top shelf. Silver and gold tinsel showered from above. The box hit the light switch off, before crashing to the floor.

“REX!” shouted the children.

“Quick, Jake, grab the flashlight and the magnifying glass!” Alexa exclaimed. “It’s time for us to put our detective

Wayne Madsen

skills to work!”

The children ran around wildly in the dark, squealing with delight as they hunted for their absent cat. The tinsel was flying everywhere as they heard Rex running around the attic jumping from box to box. Rex knocked over everything in his path, including an old box of blankets that fell over the children’s heads.

“Can you see him, Jake?” shouted Alexa. “Can you see him?”

“I can’t see anything with this old baby blanket on my head,” said Jake, “but I think he is tapping on the magnifying glass.”

Jake proceeded to pull the blanket off his head so he could get a better look into the magnifying glass. His red hair was sticking straight up from the static electricity that radiated from the blanket.

“Cool!” he said, as he looked closer and closer with the flashlight into the magnifying glass. “Look how BIG Rex’s eyeball is!”

Alexa became scared and started to shake and stutter. She tugged on the end of Jake’s red and white baseball shirt.

“JAKE — JAKE!” she stuttered.

“Lex, don’t bother me,” he snapped, as he tried to push her out of his way. “I’m investigating Rex’s eyeball.”

“But, Jake!” quivered Alexa, “REX IS SITTING NEXT TO ME!”

Rex walked around Alexa and started to sniff Jake’s back. Jake began to tremble when he felt Rex behind him. Then, he realized that the eyeball in the magnifying glass

The Case Of Stolen Time

did not belong to his cat, after all. Horrified, both children jumped up. Their eyeballs grew as big as the one in the magnifying glass.

“Ahhhhhhhh!” they screamed.

“Run, Lexy! Run! Run for your life!” shouted Jake.

Both the magnifying glass and the flashlight went flying into the air. The cat’s fur blew up like an overstuffed jelly donut, as he MEOOOWED in terror.

Jake and Alexa went running into the dark toward the door. Just as the children reached it, they heard a loud *BANG* as the magnifying glass and the flashlight hit the floor.

As her curiosity got the best of her, Alexa bravely clicked on the light switch to see what had happened. Rex was so scared he was sitting on top of Jake’s head. The children turned to get a better look, and saw in amazement the magnifying glass bouncing, shaking, and dancing on the big knotty attic wood floor.

“Do you hear that tapping again, Alexa?” whispered Jake, as he shook off his furry cat hat.

“I think it’s coming from the magnifying glass! It’s alive!” she whispered back.

“Don’t be ridiculous. It’s an inanimate object,” he said. “It can’t be alive!”

Jake and Alexa slowly started creeping towards the magnifying glass. As they got closer and closer, the strange tapping sound from the bouncing object got louder and louder.

“Hello! Hello! Anyone out there?” called the magnifying glass.

Wayne Madsen

“Inspector Moustachio, is that you?” said the strange voice from beyond.

Jake’s hand was shaking as he picked up the magnifying glass from the floor. He looked into it with wide open eyes and, to his surprise, saw a strange little man looking back at him from the other side.

“Are you The Great Inspector Moustachio?” the little man questioned.

Jake raised his left eyebrow, as he thought about an answer. His last name was after all, Moustachio, and he truly was a great detective. “*THAT’S ME!*” he shouted. “I’m Inspector Jake Moustachio!”

“Thank heavens I found you,” said the strange little man. “I desperately need your help!”

Alexa stomped over and plucked the magnifying glass right out of Jake’s hand. She stuck her nose so tight against it that her long eyelashes curled around the corners of the gold frame.

“*HELP WITH WHAT!*” she yelled, as the glass fogged up with every breath she took.

The little man looked puzzled and annoyed as he wiped the cloudy fog away with his red and black polka dot handkerchief. “And who are you, little lady?” he asked.

“I am Alexa Moustachio, assistant to The Great Inspector Jake Moustachio — my Brother,” she said. “By the way, who are you?”

“Why, I am, Delbert, The Keeper of Time,” he said. “I need your help, because time has been stolen!”

“*STOLEN!*” they cried.

“That’s what I said,” he muttered. “*STOLEN!*”



Wayne Madsen

Jake and Alexa were ecstatic to finally get a real mystery to solve. Up to now they'd been helping the little old lady up the street find out who'd been stealing her afternoon newspaper. After only one day of combing the neighborhood for clues, they'd figured out, without much excitement, it was Graham, the next door neighbor's dog, who was collecting the papers in his dog house.

Delbert stuck his eyeball up against the magnifying glass once again, and shouted, "Now quickly, I need you, on my side of the magnifying glass, so you can solve this case and return time back where it belongs!"

"How do you expect us to do that?" asked Jake, with a puzzled look on his face.

"You've never gone through the magnifying glass before?" he asked.

Jake scratched his head as he paced back and forth across the attic floor, kicking tinsel with his sneaker, pondering his dilemma.

"Nope!" answered Jake. "Never have."

"All you have to do," explained Delbert, "is read the words that are written on the handle of the magnifying glass, three times out loud."

Jake began very carefully to inspect the cherry wood handle of the magnifying glass for the words Delbert spoke of. Jake could not see any of the words and shook his head in frustration. "I don't see anything!" he mumbled.

Alexa became annoyed and grabbed the magnifying glass out of Jake's hand to take a look herself. "I don't see anything either!" she muttered.

Delbert looked a little worried that he might have

The Case Of Stolen Time

made a mistake in calling upon Jake for help. “Look again Inspector,” he cried. “Look again. Only a truly great detective can activate the magnifying glass. I am certain that’s you!”

Jake’s hand trembled as he held the handle and looked again. All of a sudden a small flicker of light glimmered as the words, one by one, appeared on the handle.

***Through the magnifying glass you will see,
the many misadventures that can be.***

The children gasped in disbelief. “How did you do that?” questioned Jake.

“I didn’t, Inspector,” Delbert explained.

“You did.”

“He did?” asked Alexa.

“Of course!” proclaimed Delbert. “The greatest gift in life is the power to believe!”

Jake and Alexa repeated the words three times out loud as they were instructed. The magnifying glass began to shake and fell out of Jake’s hand. As it fell to the floor, a huge flash of light bolted out from it. The magnifying glass was growing larger and larger!

“Grab your sister’s hand, Inspector,” said Delbert. “The ride gets a little bumpy from this point on!”

Alexa quickly opened up her backpack and signaled Rex to jump in. She then grabbed Jake’s hand, shaking in anticipation of what was coming next.

Suddenly a large vortex of wind shot out of the magnifying glass spinning tinsel all around the room like socks tumble drying in Mom’s dryer.

Wayne Madsen

“Jump in, Inspector!” yelled Delbert. “Jump in!”

Jake and Alexa hesitated a moment then grabbed each other tightly. They looked at each other with curious grins, took a deep breath, and jumped into the magnifying glass. They slid down a gigantic endless slide, twisting and turning inside the magnifying glass. With every turn they slid faster and faster, as sparkles of color and flashing stars flew past their wide-opened eyes.

“Ahhhhh!” screamed the children.

“Hold on !!!!!” yelled Delbert. “Hold on!”

Rex, being the curious cat he was, stuck his head out of the backpack to see what was going on. The force of the wind blew against his fluffy furry face, exciting him as his meow echoed for miles and miles, into the stars.

“Don’t let go of me, Jake,” cried Alexa, with half closed eyes. “I’m scared.”

Jake held onto her as tight as he could. “I have you Lexy,” he said. “Don’t worry.”

“You’re almost there, Inspector,” screamed Delbert.

Their fast and furious journey finally came to an end when they fell out of the magnifying glass, stumbling and rolling over each other, like two beach balls in a gust of wind. Then, they came to an abrupt stop. The backpack went flying upside-down across the room, knocking into an old suit of armor, trapping Rex inside.

The magnifying glass let out another burst of light, and shrunk back to its original size as it hit the floor. Jake grabbed the glass as he helped Alexa up; they

The Case Of Stolen Time

plucked the Christmas tinsel out of their hair and off of their clothes. Before Jake put the magnifying glass into his back pocket, he looked back into it and saw the attic, disappearing rapidly from the other side.