

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, which 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!”

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 that they had started earlier. Jake and Alexa dove to the game board 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 guess. "It was Mrs. Pumpernickel, in the garden, with the candlestick."

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“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, which 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 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.

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

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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.