

CLASS ACTS

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"BEST IN CLASS" with the
CLASS ACTS CHALLENGE!

YEARBOOK

MEET THE AUTHOR

Dan Gutman is the author of the *My Weird School* series, the *Baseball Card Adventures*, and the *New York Times* bestselling *Genius Files*. He has received numerous state book awards and nominations for his work. Dan graduated from Rutgers University with a degree in psychology. He lives in New York with his wife, Nina, and has two children. When Dan isn't writing wacky and wonderful stories for children of all ages, he enjoys riding his bike, playing ping-pong, and throwing Frisbees. Visit him at www.dangutman.com.



CLASS CHEER

Hey!
It isn't
a mystery—
We're head over
heels about history!

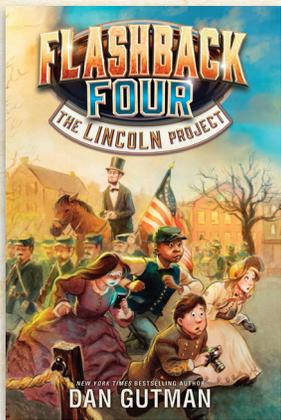


Dan Gutman
"History Buff"

Courtesy of Dan Gutman

ABOUT THE BOOK

Would you like to be propelled back in history? Join the Flashback Four: Isabel, David, Luke, and Julia on an adventure of a lifetime as they try to do something that has never been done before—photograph Abraham Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address. The game plan is orchestrated by eccentric billionaire Miss Z, but the four very different seventh graders must rely on their own special talents and teamwork to solve the unexpected. What they experience firsthand about our country's struggle for liberty for all can't easily be learned in any history book.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

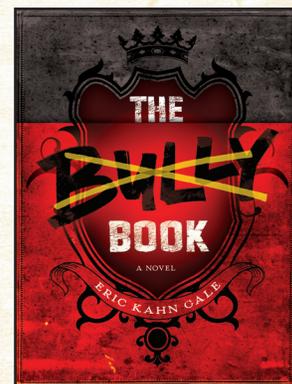
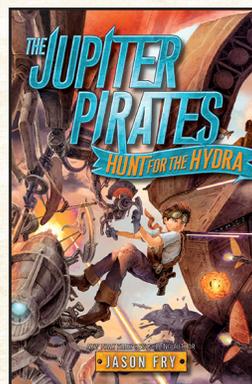
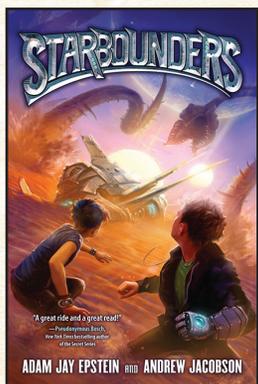
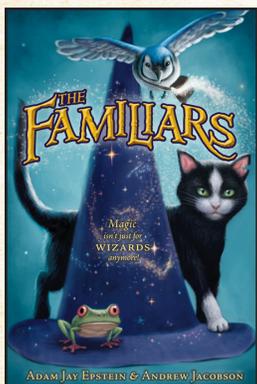
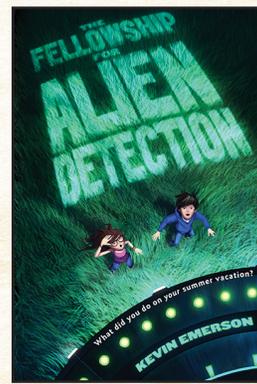
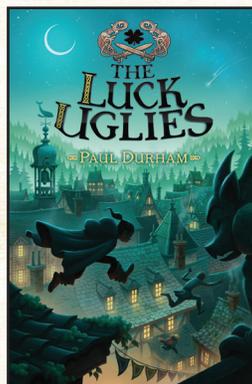
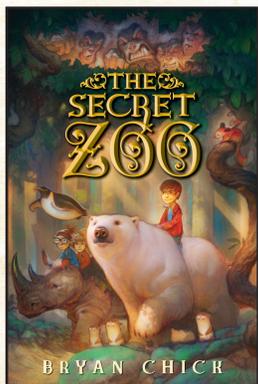
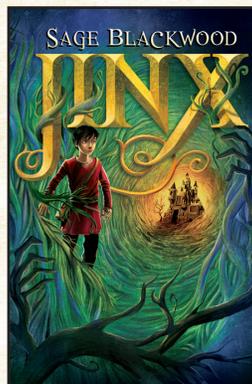
1. In the introduction, a young man struggles with a small device "powerful enough to change every history book ever written." Predict what it might be. Do you know of any other device or invention that has changed the course of history? Discuss.
2. Why do you think the children responded positively to the invitation "to participate in a very special once-in-a-lifetime experience"? Would you have done the same? Explain.
3. Miss Z selects the four children "very carefully" for compatibility using her powerful software algorithms. Do you think matching people's likes, dislikes, strengths, and weaknesses can make them better suited to work together? Why or why not?
4. Miss Z asks the four children about the most significant event from their history. How would you answer this question?
5. Miss Z worries that taking artifacts from the past while time traveling might change the course of history. Explain what she means.
6. Miss Z believes that "photography is a form of time travel." Why was it so important to her to get a picture of Abraham Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address?
7. The children say that the Gettysburg Address was Lincoln's way of "hitting the Reset button on America." Explain what they mean. Can you think of any unfairness today that needs to be reset or corrected?

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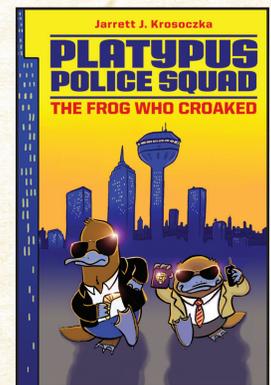
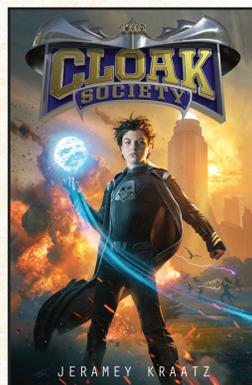
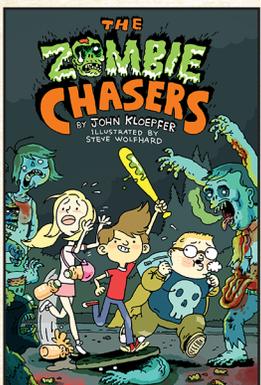
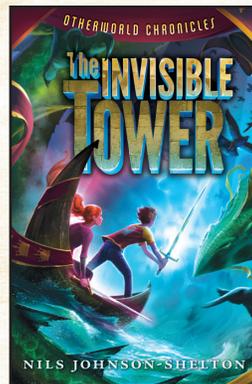
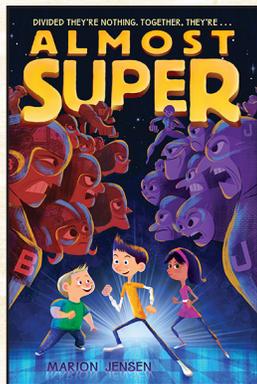
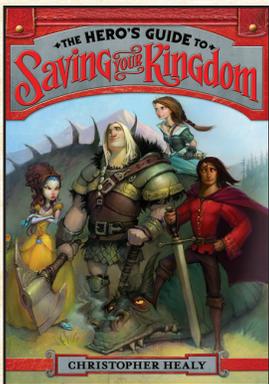
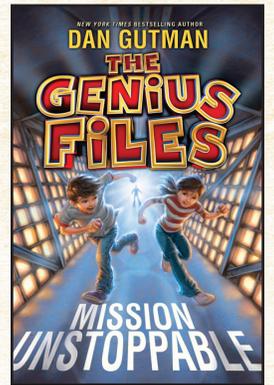
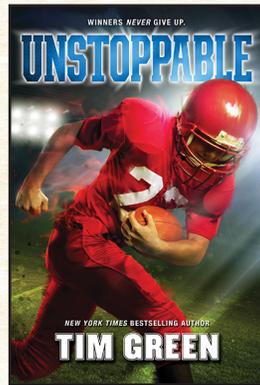
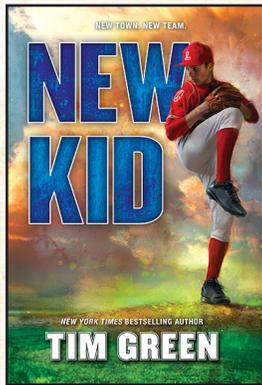
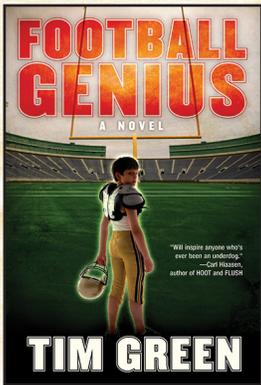


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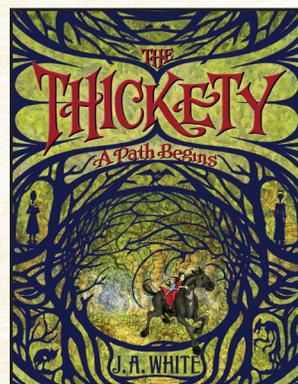
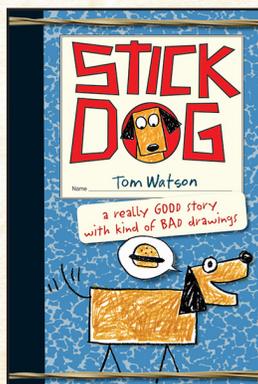
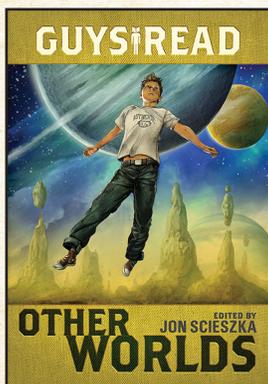
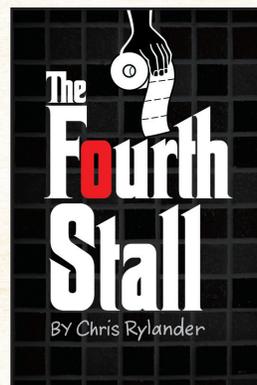
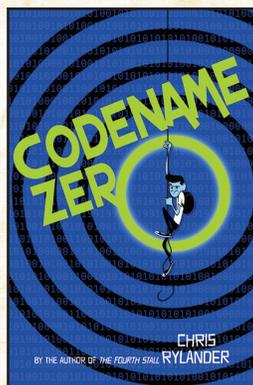
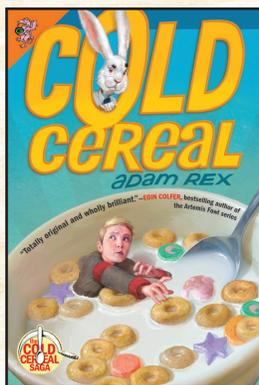
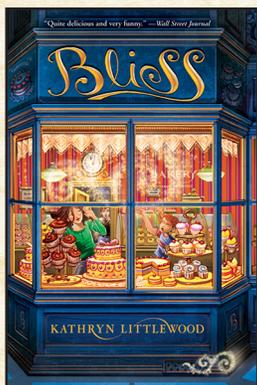
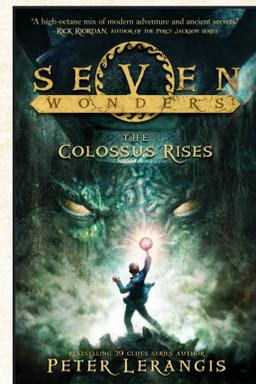
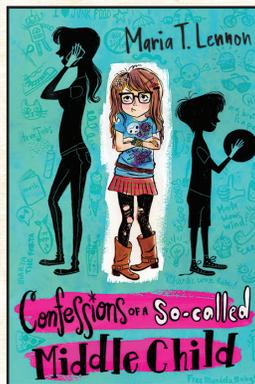
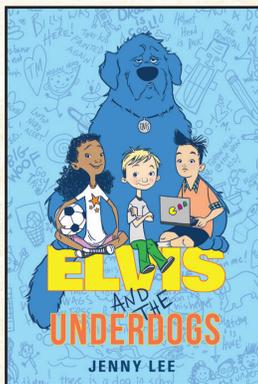
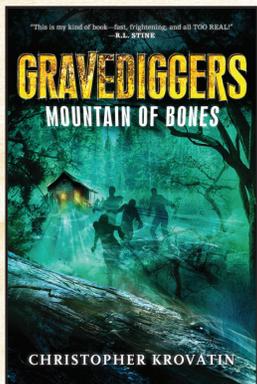
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First Edition



TO LIZA, ANDREW, AND ROSEMARY

THANKS TO:

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Jennifer Mills-Knutsen, and Maura Jane Farrelly.*



INTRODUCTION

“Four score and seven years ago . . .”

It is Thursday, November 19, 1863. Two o’clock in the afternoon. It’s a warm day for autumn. President Abraham Lincoln stands tall over the speaker’s platform. A huge crowd is spread out on the grassy hillside before him, watching him deliver perhaps the most memorable speech in American history. He speaks slowly and clearly.

“. . . our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to

the proposition that all men are created equal. . . .”

Cheers and applause wash over the audience. Lincoln has to stop to wait until the noise dies down before he can continue. He wants the people to hear every word he has to say.

While the president speaks, four shadowy figures, who just arrived in Gettysburg the night before and are unknown to everyone in the crowd, push and elbow their way past onlookers.

“Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. . . .”

It will be fifteen months until the war is over. Fifteen months until Americans will finally lay down their guns and stop killing one another. And fifteen months until one of them will pick up a gun and assassinate the president himself. Lincoln glances up briefly to scan the crowd before him, but doesn't notice anything unusual.

“We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as

a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. . . .”

The four figures strain to hear the president’s words. They feel a sense of urgency as they try to get close enough to the stage. They won’t have a lot of time to complete their mission. They, and they alone, know that the president’s speech will be very short. Two hundred seventy words, give or take a few. In two short minutes, it will all be over. They have to act fast.

“But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. . . .”

One of the conspirators, a boy, holds a small device in his hand. It’s a strange-looking thing, or at least it’s strange-looking to the people who might have noticed it that day. Silvery and metallic, it’s small enough to fit in one hand, but powerful enough to change every history book ever written.

“The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. . . .”

The young man fiddles with the device in his hand. Something seems to be wrong. It’s not working. He stops moving forward. Time is running out. Drop-lets of sweat slide down his forehead. His hands have become slippery.

“It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. . . .”

The young man gnashes his teeth. *What’s the problem?* he asks himself. He has to solve it. And fast. After all the preparation they have been through, it can’t end now. If he fails in this mission, all will have been for nothing.

“It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion . . .”

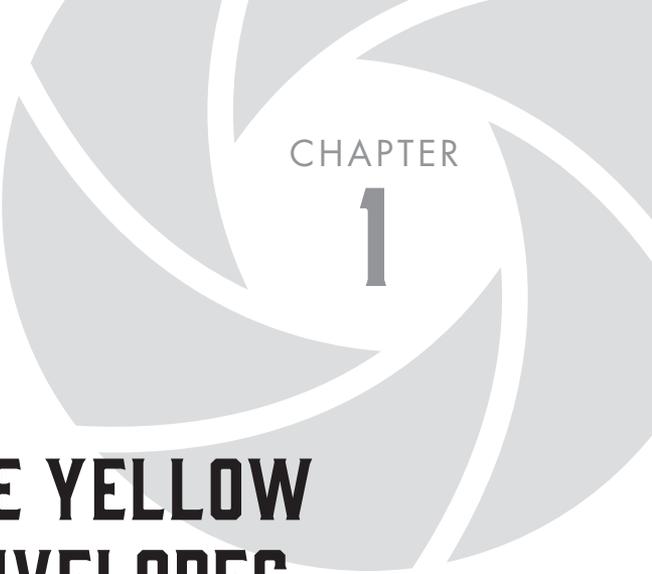
There are only a few seconds left. The young man's companions surround him, imploring him to figure out what's wrong with the device. He fiddles some more with the buttons, trying anything to make it work.

“that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom . . .”

Finally, for reasons unexplained, the device turns on. It seems to be working to the young man's satisfaction. He holds it up in the air over his head. He points it in the direction of the president.

“and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the . . .”

As Abraham Lincoln speaks the final word of the Gettysburg Address, the boy pushes the button.



CHAPTER

1

THE YELLOW ENVELOPES

EVERY STORY SHOULD START AT THE BEGINNING, of course. As the old song goes, it's *a very good place to start*.

This particular story begins in Boston, Massachusetts, and it takes place, oddly enough, in the present day. Or it *starts* in the present day, anyway. My apologies for not providing you with the exact year, but by the time you read this book, that year will very possibly have come and gone. Suffice to say, our story begins *now*. Let's call it four o'clock in the afternoon, shortly after school has let out for the day.

There are four main characters you'll need to keep

track of as you read this story, but it shouldn't be that difficult. Two girls, two boys. They're all native Bostonians of approximately the same age—twelve years old.

Julia comes from an affluent family and attends the expensive, private, all-girls Winsor School, a short walk from Fenway Park.

Luke has more humble roots and lives in the Dorchester section of town. His parents are both long-time members of the Boston Police Department.

David—tall, thin, and athletic—is a good student but is more interested in cracking jokes than books.

Isabel is quite bookish, serious, and eager to succeed.

David, Isabel, Julia, and Luke have never met before this day, but circumstances beyond their control will bring them together, as you're about to see.

David Williams was shooting hoops with some friends at Medal of Honor Park near East First Street. He came out to the park most days after school looking for a game. Usually, he found one with teenagers a few years older. On this particular day, he had just poured in a jump shot from the top of the key when everybody

decided to take a water break. As David toweled off his face, a middle-aged man in a suit and tie leaned over the bench where David was sitting.

“Excuse me,” the man said. “Is your name David Williams?”

“Yeah, so what?”

David turned around and eyed the well-dressed man suspiciously. Was he a cop? A crazy person? Maybe he was a college recruiter. They scout kids really young these days.

The man handed David a yellow envelope, then turned on his heel and left without saying another word.

At almost the same time, Isabel Alvarez was doing her homework at a corner desk on the third floor of the Boston Public Library on Boylston Street. She usually came to this spot because it was quiet and she wouldn't be bothered by her family, or by giggly classmates who would rather socialize and gossip than get their schoolwork done. Isabel worked hard at her studies, having come to accept the conventional wisdom that hard work leads to a high grade point average, which leads to a smart mind, which leads to a good

college, which leads to a high-paying job, which leads to a successful life.

She was deeply immersed in solving an algebraic equation with one variable when a man in a suit and tie tapped her on the shoulder, startling her.

“Excuse me,” the man whispered. “Is your name Isabel Alvarez?”

“Yes. Is something wrong?”

The man didn’t reply. He simply reached into his jacket pocket, pulled out a yellow envelope, handed it to her, and left.

Minutes later, Luke Borowicz was banging away on an old Ms. Pac-Man machine at the little grocery store on Washington Street around the corner from his house. Luke was a stocky boy with floppy brown hair, and he was wearing his favorite Red Sox T-shirt. He came to this store a lot, and seven of the top ten scores on the machine were immortalized with his initials. The game relaxed him. Even though he had been diagnosed with mild ADD several years earlier, Luke found that he could focus his attention like a laser when it came to things that interested him, like old arcade games.

Luke had just broken through the 300,000-point

mark when he noticed the reflection of a man in a suit and tie on the screen.

“Excuse me,” the man said. “Is your name Luke Borowicz?”

“Uh-huh,” Luke said, without turning around. “What can I do for you?”

The man put a yellow envelope on the console and silently walked away.

Several minutes later, Julia Brennan was at the Urban Outfitters store in nearby Harvard Square with two girlfriends. She had a dance coming up in a few weeks, and she’d already tried on five dresses. Her father had given her a hundred dollars to spend, even though he saw no reason why Julia couldn’t wear one of the dresses she already had in her closet. He also saw no reason why a girl of Julia’s age should be going to dances in the first place. He lamented over how fast his kids were growing up. Before she’d left the house that morning, Julia had rolled her eyes and told him, “You wouldn’t understand.”

Now, as she came out of the fitting room, a man in a suit and tie approached her.

“Excuse me,” the man said. “Is your name Julia Brennan?”

“Who wants to know?” she replied, instinctively taking a step back and glancing left and right for exits.

“If your name is Julia Brennan, this is for you,” the man said, holding out a yellow envelope.

Julia took it. The man nodded, turned, and walked away without saying another word.

All four of the kids had received their envelope within five minutes. Each of them tore it open and read the sheet of paper tucked inside. . . .

CONGRATULATIONS!

You are invited to participate in a very special, once-in-a-lifetime experience. Please join me at 4:30 p.m. today. No RSVP necessary. We will hold your place for thirty minutes only. Address: John Hancock Tower, 200 Clarendon Street, Boston. Twenty-third floor. Pasture Company. Please do not share this invitation or discuss it with anyone.

That’s all it said. There was no phone number to call. No email address. No closing, and no signature. There was no indication of what one might encounter if one followed the instructions and went to the address. It could be a party, a concert, or some sort of

a sporting event, maybe. Most likely, they all figured, it was a scam.

Most people would throw an invitation like that away. But each envelope did include one small enticement to increase the chance that it would get noticed. Paper-clipped to each invitation were four crisp five-dollar bills.

David read his invitation a second time. He held the bills up to the sun and determined that they were legit. Then he took out his cell phone to check the time. It was already four minutes after four o'clock. There was just enough time to get to the John Hancock Tower.

David stuffed the bills in his pocket, said good-bye to his friends at the basketball court, and hopped on his bike. It was a quick ride to the Hancock Tower.

Why would somebody give me twenty bucks for doing nothing? he wondered as he pedaled down Harrison Avenue. *There's gotta be a catch.*

When David got to the Hancock, a sixty-story skyscraper, he locked his bike to a street sign and walked over to the front door.

Isabel was already inside the Hancock, waiting in the lobby. She liked to arrive at places early so she could decompress and get her bearings before any

social event. It helped calm her down. Also, she felt that being early for an appointment was the right thing to do. People who show up late for things are inconsiderate, she believed.

Moments later, Julia and Luke came from opposite directions, nearly bumping into each other as they passed through the big revolving door.

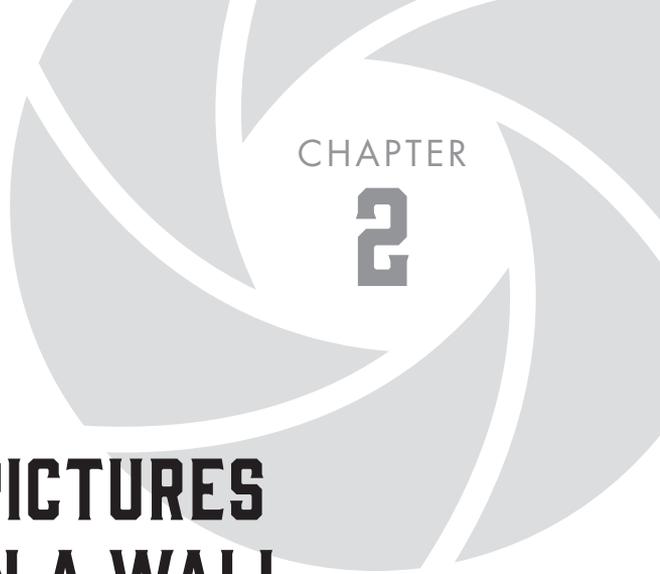
All four of them—David, Luke, Julia, and Isabel—surrounded by a group of well-dressed twenty-somethings, squeezed into an elevator and rode it up to the twenty-third floor. When the doors opened, they were the only ones who got out.

Luke looked around the hallway suspiciously. Only once in his life had he been inside a fancy office building like this. The sign on the wall behind the front desk read PASTURE COMPANY.

Julia looked around. There was no clue as to what kind of a company this was, or why she had been summoned to this particular spot at this time.

When the glass door to the waiting area buzzed open, all four of them approached the front desk. A nameplate read MRS. ELLA VADER. The receptionist looked up from her computer and smiled.

“Ah, you made it! Splendid!” Mrs. Vader said. “We’ve been waiting for you.”



CHAPTER

2

PICTURES ON A WALL

YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING WHY THESE FOUR kids were summoned to this office in the Hancock Tower. Patience, reader.

David, Julia, Isabel, and Luke cast sidelong glances at one another, each wondering if the rest of them already knew one another.

“Is this gonna take long?” David asked the receptionist.

“I’d say an hour or so should do it,” replied Mrs. Vader. “If you would all take a seat, we’ll get started shortly.”

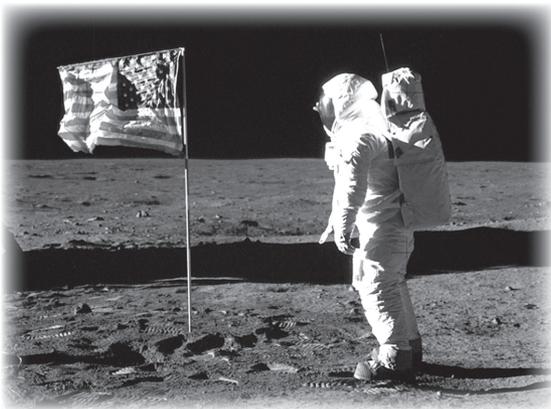
While the others sat down, Luke paced around

the waiting room. He didn't like sitting. It made him nervous.

None of the kids had spoken a word to the other three yet. Awkward silence hung in the air. Julia sighed, pulled out her cell phone, and began texting her friends. David picked up a copy of *Sports Illustrated* from the coffee table in front of him and leafed mindlessly through the pages. Isabel looked around anxiously.

The wall of the waiting room was filled with dozens of eight-by-ten photos, framed and lined up perfectly. Luke went over to take a closer look.

Each photo depicted a dramatic moment in history. Astronaut Buzz Aldrin standing on the moon. The mushroom cloud from the first atomic test blowing up over the New Mexico desert. Ecstatic young Germans tearing down the Berlin Wall. The *Hindenburg* erupting into flames over Lakehurst, New Jersey.



A few of the events depicted in the photos were familiar to Luke. Most of them had taken place long before he was born and didn't mean much to him.

"Follow me, please," Mrs. Vader said to the group.

She ushered them into a large office, invited them to sit down again, and left. There were more photos on the walls here. American soldiers rushing the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. A lone protestor holding up a long line of tanks at Tiananmen Square in China. Lots of famous faces—Franklin Delano Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, Jackie Robinson, James Dean, Marilyn Monroe.

In the middle of the wall was one empty rectangle where a photo had either fallen off or been removed, been stolen, or perhaps borrowed temporarily. A visitor's eye was drawn not so much to the famous photos on the wall, but to the one spot that didn't have one.

On the other side of the room was a large whiteboard, like one of those smartboards you've seen in your school. It was connected to a laptop computer on a cart, and also to a projector that hung down from the ceiling. The board itself was on wheels, so it could be moved around.

In the center of the room was a huge desk, carved

from dark, heavy wood. There were only a few papers and knickknacks on it. It was almost *too* neat. This was the desk of a man who didn't have enough to do. There was no chair behind the desk, which was odd. But none of the kids noticed that.

They couldn't *help* but notice the prism-shaped nameplate at the edge of the desk. It had an unusual name on it—CHRIS ZANDERGOth.

After a few minutes of looking around awkwardly, it became impossible for the four of them to avoid eye contact with one another. David was the first to break the silence.

"Anybody know why we're here?" he asked.

"Nope," Luke replied.

"I got this invitation," Isabel volunteered, taking it out of her pocket.

"Me too," said Julia.

"It's like a golden ticket," David said. "I feel like Willy Wonka's gonna come walking in here and take us to his chocolate factory."

At that moment, the door opened and a woman in a wheelchair rolled into the room.

"Welcome!" she said cheerfully. "I'm Chris, and I'm so glad you were able to join me this afternoon."

Although we've come a long way in the last fifty

years, here in the twenty-first century, most of us still assume that any rich, powerful person is a man. But Chris Zandergoth, the CEO of Pasture Company, was a woman.



CHAPTER

3

ONE MOMENT IN TIME

CHRIS ZANDERGOTH WAS FORTYISH, WITH A round face and dark eyes. She was dressed in a conservative business suit. She appeared to be a tall woman, although it was hard to tell because she was sitting in a wheelchair.

“You must be David,” she said, locking eyes and putting out her hand. “And I guess you’re Isabel.”

After shaking hands with all four of the children, she wheeled herself around to the other side of the desk.

“I know Zandergoth is a mouthful,” she said. “My friends call me Miss Z, and I hope you will, too. Have you heard of me? Do you know my name?”

“No,” murmured the group.

“Good,” Miss Z said. “I’d hate to be a celebrity. Can you imagine enjoying a meal at your favorite restaurant, and having to stop every five minutes to autograph some scrap of paper? I wouldn’t enjoy that one bit.”

“Your photos are cool,” said Julia. “Did you take them yourself?”

David rolled his eyes. *Is this girl some kind of a dope?* he thought. *Does she really think this Zandergoth lady took the picture of that astronaut on the moon?*

“No,” Miss Z said, smiling. “Photography is a hobby, a *passion*, of mine. Well, *collecting* photos more than shooting them. I think it’s human nature to collect things, don’t you? We seem to have this curious desire to hang on to material objects. We must derive some degree of pleasure from accumulating stuff. You all probably collect something, am I right?”

“I collect glass horses,” said Isabel.

“I collect Pez dispensers,” said David.

“I don’t collect anything,” said Luke.

“I like to collect money,” said Julia, provoking some good-natured chuckling.

“Don’t we all?” Miss Z said. She turned her chair around and rolled closer to the wall of photos,

pointing up at one of them.

“I’m a history buff myself,” Miss Z said. “See this photo? Do you have any idea why it’s significant? It doesn’t look very historical. Why would I have it up on my wall?”

David, Julia, Luke, and Isabel studied the photo. There was nothing special about it. Just an old-time street scene.

“Give up?” Miss Z asked. “This was the first photo



ever taken that had a person in it. See those men in the lower left corner? One appears to be shining the shoes of the other one. This picture was taken in Paris during the spring of 1838. Before that instant in time,

no human being had ever been photographed.”

Miss Z gazed at the photo, letting her words sink in. She was fascinated by the idea that none of the millions of people who had lived before that moment had ever been preserved in a photographic image.

“Very interesting,” Isabel said, and she wasn’t just saying that to butter up a grown-up. She had always been interested in history, and social studies was her favorite subject.

“Yeah, but why are we here?” David asked, glancing at the clock on the wall. “I have practice tonight.”

“Is this a job interview or something?” asked Julia.

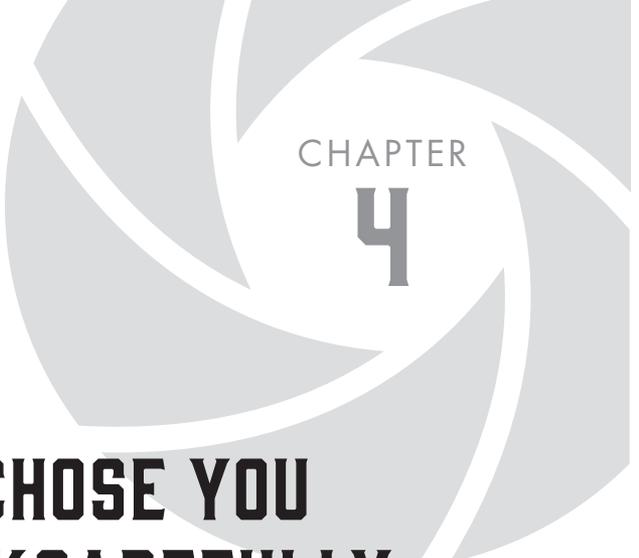
“Or is this some kind of a scam?” asked Luke, who was never one to mince words.

Luke didn’t trust Chris Zandergoth, no matter how fancy her office was. In Luke’s short lifetime, he had already figured out that almost every grown-up he’d met was running some kind of a game.

“Oh, it’s no scam,” Miss Z replied. “Let me ask you a question. Do you kids like adventure?”

“Depends on the adventure,” replied Luke.

“Good answer!” said Miss Z. “Well, I hope you *do* like adventure, because that’s the reason why I asked you to come here today. I’d like to send you on the adventure of a lifetime.”



CHAPTER

4

I CHOSE YOU *VERY* CAREFULLY

“WILL YOU EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT?” MISS Zandergoth asked the kids. “I need to go to the little girls’ room.”

David shot a glance at the others. *Little girls’ room?* Who says *that?*

As soon as Miss Z wheeled herself out of the room and closed the bathroom door behind her, all four kids whipped out their cell phones and Googled “Chris Zandergoth.”

“Got ’er,” Luke whispered. “She’s thirty-nine. The picture on Wikipedia looks just like her.”

“Born in Palo Alto, California,” said Isabel.

“It says here that she’s a *billionaire*,” said Julia, impressed. Anybody who had a lot of money was impressive to Julia.

“Check it out!” exclaimed David. “She’s the one who started Findamater.com, that online dating service.”

In a matter of seconds, they had gathered enough information about Chris Zandergoth to write a term paper.

Miss Zandergoth, they discovered, was a computer prodigy who’d dropped out of Stanford University after two years to start Findamater. The site took off, and by the time she was twenty, she was a millionaire several times over. By the time she was thirty, she was one of the richest women in America.

What the kids did *not* discover online was exactly how Findamater had become so successful. Instead of relying on the typical questionnaires to help people find their “love match,” Zandergoth had figured out how to hack into the computers of the National Security Agency.

As you may or may not know, reader, the NSA was founded to fight terrorism by monitoring information. After 9/11 the NSA began a secret mass surveillance program in which they scooped up data from cell

phones, emails, and text messages sent by ordinary Americans.

While the NSA was spying on every man, woman, and child in America, the agency never suspected that Chris Zandergoth was spying on *them*. By tapping into the NSA database, she was able to match up like-minded people much better than PerfectDate, LoveBug, or any other online dating service. Best of all, she was able to get away with it, because the NSA was too embarrassed to admit their own computers had been hacked. To this day, the American public has no knowledge of this secret. You're reading it here for the first time.

But as far as David, Julia, Isabel, and Luke were concerned, Chris Zandergoth simply started a hugely successful online dating service.

"Online dating is creepy," said Isabel.

"Maybe we should get out of here," said Julia.

The two girls were about to head for the door when they heard the toilet flush.

"What's she gonna do?" David asked. "There are four of us and one of her."

"I don't feel good about this," Isabel whispered, getting back in her seat.

The bathroom door opened and Miss Zandergoth rolled out into the office.

“So,” she said cheerfully, “have you finished Googling me?”

The kids laughed, trying to put their phones away without being too obvious about it.

“I figured that letting you kids do a little research would be a lot easier than telling you my own boring life story,” Miss Z continued. “By now you know how I started Findamate. The *Huffington Post* said I’ve been responsible for more marriages than anyone in the world. That should be in the *Guinness Book of World Records*, don’t you think?”

Luke looked at Miss Zandergoth’s desk again. He noticed that there were no framed photos of her family. For a woman who had helped so many people find love, it looked like she had never found the perfect match for herself.

“What does any of this have to do with *us*?” asked Isabel.

“Yeah, did you bring us here to fix us up with each other?” asked David.

Julia glanced at the boys and giggled nervously.

“No, not at all,” Miss Z said, leaning her head back

to laugh. “But I do know for a fact that the four of you will work well together. You would be amazed at how powerful my software algorithms are. I chose you *very* carefully.”

“Oh, I can see that,” David said. “Two boys. Two girls. I guess you picked me because you needed a black kid.”

“I suppose I’m the token Hispanic,” said Isabel.

“What, no Asian?” asked Luke. “How do you expect to win Multicultural Humanitarian of the Year?”

“Very funny,” said Miss Z. “I matched up your personalities, your likes, your dislikes, your strengths, and your weaknesses. I chose you for your compatibility, not your ethnicity.”

“How do you know so much about us?” asked Julia.

“Oh, nothing is private anymore, my dear,” Miss Z replied. “You should know that. Americans gave up their privacy the day we accepted cell phones.”

Julia thought of all the information stored on the phone in her handbag—all the photos, texts, and private messages she shared with her friends. Maybe this lady had seen them all.

“Oh, don’t worry,” Miss Z continued, “I assure you that your crushes and selfies are of no interest to me. I

have far more important concerns. But I promised you an adventure, and that's what I hope to deliver."

"So what's the adventure?" Luke asked.

"Well, let me ask you this, Luke. Do you like history, or as I guess you call it, social studies?"

"It's okay," Luke replied. The others mumbled similar noncommittal responses, not wanting to go out on a limb until they'd heard more.

"Then tell me, what's the most significant thing that ever happened in *your* history?" Miss Z asked.

The four of them thought about it.

"I went to Disney World for my tenth birthday," Isabel said.

"I broke both of my arms in second grade when I fell off the monkey bars," said David.

"I scored a million points at Centipede once," said Luke.

"Some guy once gave me an envelope with twenty bucks in it," said Julia, provoking a laugh.

"That's it, huh? Don't you find that sad?" asked Miss Z. She waved her arm toward the photos all over the walls. "Look around you. Don't our lives seem trivial and dull compared with all these amazing moments? We only get to hang around this silly planet for about

eighty short years. Shouldn't we be allowed to have at least *one* truly memorable moment in that time?"

"Yeah, I suppose," Luke said.

"Well, most people can only dream about what I'm going to offer you. This will dwarf anything you will ever do for the rest of your lives."



CHAPTER

5

THE SMARTEST SMARTBOARD

THE RECEPTIONIST, MRS. VADER, KNOCKED ON the door and brought in a platter full of cookies, little cakes, and other treats. She poured a cup of tea for Miss Z and set the platter down on her desk. Then she left the room.

“We don’t know you,” David said, eyeing the platter suspiciously. “Why should we trust you? Because you gave us twenty bucks and some sweets?”

“You *shouldn’t* trust me,” Miss Z admitted, taking a cookie. “It’s *good* that you don’t trust me. That shows that you’re smart. I could be anybody. But I’m *not* anybody.”

“Yeah, you’re a super-rich lady,” said Julia, picking up a brownie and taking a bite. “That doesn’t mean we should trust you more than any stranger we met on the street.”

When Julia didn’t topple over dead, the others took treats off the platter.

“So what’s the big adventure?” Isabel asked, nibbling a pastry.

“Is it dangerous?” asked Julia.

“It could be,” Miss Z replied. “I won’t lie to you.”

“Will we have to do anything illegal?” David asked.

“Definitely not,” Miss Z replied. “I would never ask you to break a law.”

“I need some more details before I commit to anything,” said Luke.

“Smart boy,” said Miss Z. “I’m glad I chose you four.”

“Here’s what I want to know,” David asked. “What’s in it for us? Do we get paid?”

“Paid?” Miss Z looked hurt. “For the adventure of a lifetime? You should pay *me!*”

“Well, what’s in it for *you?*” David asked. “Money, right?”

“Young man, money is the least of my concerns,” Miss Z said, looking David in the eye. “Believe me, I

have achieved my financial goals *many* times over.”

“Look, I’m not in the mood for guessing games,” Luke said, getting to his feet. “What’s the big adventure? Tell me right now, or I walk.”

“Okay, okay,” Miss Z said as she put down her teacup and pulled her wheelchair back from the desk.

She rolled over to the smartboard on the other side of the room, admiring it for a moment. David, Isabel, Julia, and Luke turned to face her. They had been wondering why a wealthy businesswoman would have a smartboard in her office.

“When I was a kid, we had plain old blackboards in school,” Miss Z said. “The teacher would write on the board with chalk. Do you even know what chalk *is*?”

“Yeah,” Julia replied. “When I was little, I would draw pictures with it on the sidewalk.”

“At some point,” continued Miss Z, “they got rid of those old blackboards and replaced them with *whiteboards*. You’d write on them with erasable markers. No chalk dust! No mess. And now, of course, a lot of schools have replaced their whiteboards with smartboards, which interface with a computer and a projector. You can type on the computer, draw pictures, go online, and interact with the board like a computer screen.”

“Yeah, yeah, we know all that,” Luke said. “So?”

“Well,” said Miss Z, “now we have *this*.”

She gazed at the board again, almost lovingly.

“It looks like *any* smartboard,” said David.

“But it’s *not* like any smartboard,” said Miss Z. “It’s a *smarter* board. I call it simply the Board. It makes a regular smartboard look like a *dumbboard*. In fact, I’d go so far as to say this is the smartest smartboard in the *world*. I’ve spent the last ten years of my life perfecting this technology, and I spent hundreds of millions of dollars on it. If it were to fall into the wrong hands, it could be used for any number of nefarious purposes.”

Isabel looked up the word *nefarious* on her smart-phone.

“What does it do?” David asked.

“I’m sure you kids understand that we’re surrounded by invisible fields of force at all times. Like TV and radio signals. They move through the air in waves.”

“Microwaves, too,” added Luke.

“Right,” said Miss Z, “and I’m sure you also realize that as the earth turns around, we’re constantly in motion. Even though it seems like we’re in one place, we’re all moving faster than a jet plane right now. What you may *not* know is that light travels at a constant

speed of 186,000 miles per second,” Miss Z explained. “It’s sort of like a cosmic speed limit, which we call the speed of light. It works out to about 671 million miles per hour.”

“Your point?” asked Luke.

“Think about it,” said Miss Z. “The moon is about 240,000 miles away from the earth. So when you look out the window and see the moon, you’re not seeing the moon as it is *now*. You’re seeing the moon as it was a little over a second ago. In a way, you’ve traveled through time.”

“Slow down,” David said. “Are you telling us you’ve built yourself a time machine?”

“You might say that, yes,” replied Miss Z. “I’m not very good at explaining this stuff in simple terms.”

I know what you’re thinking, reader. Either Miss Z is some kind of a genius, or this is some kind of a prank. Well, I won’t keep you in suspense. She’s a genius.

“You turned a smartboard into a machine that can send people through time?” asked Isabel, incredulous.

“That sums it up nicely, yes.”

“Oh, come on!” Luke said. “That’s bull! That’s science fiction stuff.”

“I can understand why you would say that, Luke,” Miss Z said. “It seems too fantastic to be true. But remember, robots were the stuff of science fiction before we figured out how to build them. Space travel was science fiction before we figured out how to do it. Just about any advanced technology was science fiction before it became reality.”

“And you figured out how to do this?” asked Luke.

“Look,” replied Miss Z, “if a human being could move at the speed of light, any number of paradoxes would become possible. Space time is warped by the gravity of a black hole, for instance. If you fell into a black hole, you would appear at another place and time in the universe. Einstein said nobody can travel faster than the speed of light. But space can stretch, shrink, or be deformed. And when that happens, time is deformed, too. Space and time are two aspects of the same thing—space-time. It can deform enough to carry you anywhere at any speed. Black holes are tunnels through the universe. Am I making any sense at all?”

“So you can send somebody into a black hole?” asked Isabel.

“I don’t buy it,” David said, shaking his head. “That’s crazy.”

“Still sounds like a lot of mumbo jumbo to me,” said Luke.

“Look, I could spend the next hour explaining the nuts and bolts of this technology,” Miss Z told the group. “But I have a better idea. David, let’s assume for a moment that I *have* created a time machine, and you could use it to travel back to any date and place in history. Where would you go?”

David thought it over for a minute.

“Any time in history?” he finally said. “I’d go back to the day Wilt Chamberlain scored a hundred points in a single NBA game. It would be cool to see that.”

“A hundred points in one game?” asked Luke. “Now *that’s* crazy. I know that Michael Jordan’s high game was sixty-nine points, and that was only because the game went into overtime.”

“It *happened*,” David insisted. “My dad told me about it. He doesn’t lie. Wilt Chamberlain scored a hundred points. And it wasn’t in overtime.”

“Of all the things in history to witness, *that’s* what you choose?” asked Julia. “Who cares about some silly basketball game?”

“I care,” David said. “What would *you* do, travel back in time to witness the opening of the first Abercrombie & Fitch store?”

Julia looked hurt.

“Please don’t argue, children,” said Miss Z as she rolled over to her computer. “I specifically matched you four up because I thought you would get along. David, when was that basketball game, exactly?”

“I don’t know,” David replied. “Before I was born. Nineteen sixties, I think.”

Isabel looked it up on her smartphone. It only took a few seconds to get the answer.

“It was March 2, 1962,” she said. “The game took place at the Hershey Sports Arena in Hershey, Pennsylvania.”

“Thank you, Isabel,” said Miss Z. “David, would you mind going over there and standing in front of the Board, please?”

“What are you gonna do to me?” he asked nervously. “Zap me with laser beams?”

“No. I’m going to send you to the Hershey Sports Arena on March 2, 1962.”

“That’s nuts,” David insisted, still sitting in his chair.

“Well, if it’s nuts, then it won’t work, right?” asked Miss Z. “Nothing will happen. I’ll look like a fool. So you have nothing to lose. Would you just go stand

over there in front of the Board for a moment?”

“Go ahead,” Luke said. “Do it, dude. It’ll be funny.”

David got up reluctantly and stood in front of the Board.

“Closer, please,” said Miss Z. “Your body must be within two feet of the surface.”

“This is wack,” David said as he moved closer to the Board.

“Have fun, David!” said Isabel.

“Yeah, nice knowin’ you,” said Julia.

“Okay,” said Miss Z as she typed something on her computer. “Are you ready, David?”

“Yeah, ready for *nothing*,” he replied.

Miss Z typed a few more commands and hit the Enter key. There was a brief buzzing sound, and then the screen on the Board lit up. Five bands of color appeared, and after a few seconds they merged together to form one band of intense white light. It appeared to stretch out and away from the surface of the Board until it reached David. He put up one hand to shield his eyes.

“What’s going on?” he asked. “It’s so bright!”

“You’ll see in a moment,” said Miss Z. “Better close your eyes.”

“Is he okay?” asked Julia, frightened.

“We are circumventing the first commandment of relativity!” shouted an excited Miss Z. “The laws of physics now make it possible to warp the matter and energy of the observable universe! Light, time, and space are combined in a whirling magnetic field!”

There was an intense humming sound, a low frequency rumbling like a diesel engine idling.

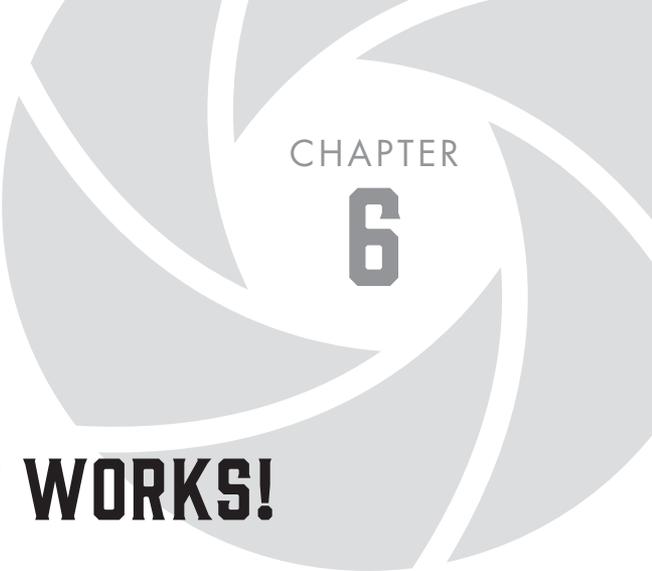
David appeared to be flickering, like the image on a television screen just before a power outage. He was clicking on and off.

“What’s happening to him?” asked Isabel, alarmed.

“Stop it!” shouted Julia. “Turn it off!”

“What the—”

And with that, David was gone.



CHAPTER

6

IT WORKS!

FOR A FEW SECONDS, LUKE, ISABEL, AND JULIA just sat there with startled looks on their faces.

“Where *is* he?” Isabel asked. “What happened to him?”

“I told you what happened to him,” said Miss Z. “He’s gone.”

“This isn’t funny,” said Julia.

“It’s a trick,” said Luke, getting up to investigate. “He’s hiding behind the Board.”

Luke looked behind the Board, then got down on his knees to check under the furniture. But David was nowhere to be seen.

“The trick was to warp space-time!” Miss Z said triumphantly. “David is exactly where he wanted to be.”

Miss Z was absolutely right. On March 2 in 1962, David opened his eyes and found himself standing on the steps outside the Hershey Sports Arena in Hershey, Pennsylvania.

TONIGHT, the sign read, NEW YORK KNICKS VS. PHILADELPHIA WARRIORS.

“Oh man!” David exclaimed. “You *gotta* be kidding me!”

It was dark outside the arena, and cold. A slight rain was falling. A roar could be heard inside, and David climbed the steps to follow the sound. There was a ticket booth, but nobody was in it. There was no need to sell tickets anymore. The game was almost over.

David pinched himself to make sure he was real. He walked around in a daze, almost bumping into a lone janitor sweeping the floor with a long broom.

“You okay, sonny?” the janitor asked.

“Yeah,” David mumbled. “Hey, what year is it?”

“Nineteen sixty-two, of course,” the man replied.

“You *sure* you’re okay? Need me to call a doctor?”

David waved him off and pulled open the door that led inside the arena. The roar grew tenfold. The

crowd was on its feet, so he couldn't see what the people were so excited about. But he could make a pretty good guess.

“Wilt! Wilt! Wilt!” people were chanting.

The Hershey Arena was small. It still is. It holds about eight thousand fans, and it was half full on this night. There were plenty of empty seats. As David made his way down the steps toward the court, he wondered why two NBA teams would be playing in such a rinky-dink arena.

In fact, the league was only in its sixteenth season that year. Professional basketball was not a major sport at the time, and the NBA would play occasional games outside of big cities to attract new fans. There were no TV cameras around the court, no giant video screens overhead. The game wasn't televised.

David instantly noticed another big difference in the game—only a few of the players on the court were black. In 1962, there were only thirty-seven black players in the whole league.

“Give it to Wilt!” the crowd chanted. “Give it to Wilt!”

David spotted an open seat ten rows up from the court and slipped into that row, trying to be inconspicuous in case the security guards might be checking

for tickets. Standing next to him was a boy, about ten years old, wearing a Philadelphia jacket. He was holding a program in one hand and a pencil in the other. The program had a photo of Wilt Chamberlain on the cover.

“How many points does Chamberlain have?” David asked.

“Ninety-one!” the boy shouted over the crowd noise. Then he showed David what he had written in his program. “Wilt had twenty-three points in the first quarter, forty-one at half time, and sixty-nine at the end of the third quarter. Did you ever see anything like this in your whole life?”

“Not me,” David replied. “That’s for sure.”

Down on the court, Wilt Chamberlain was standing at the foul line. He was a huge man—seven feet one inch tall, weighing 280 pounds. And this was in an era when basketball players were smaller than they are today.

A little background, reader. Wilton Norman Chamberlain was called “Wilt the Stilt,” or sometimes “The Big Dipper.” He wore number thirteen. David knew that Wilt played for the Philadelphia Warriors before they moved to California. In 1963, the Philadelphia 76ers were born.

The referee flipped Wilt the ball. He was one of the few players who shot free throws underhand, and he was also notoriously *bad* at it, averaging about 50 percent over his career. But not on this night. When all was said and done, he would sink twenty-eight foul shots in thirty-two attempts.

Wilt took a deep breath and made the shot, bouncing it off the backboard and into the net.

“Ninety-two!” shouted the boy next to David, along with about a thousand other fans.

David watched, enthralled, as the Knicks dribbled the ball downcourt. He wasn’t thinking about how he got there, or how he was going to get back home. All he was thinking about was that there were two minutes and twelve seconds left on the clock, and Wilt had eight more points to score. How was he going to pull *that* off?

“A hundred! A hundred!” the crowd began to chant, urging Wilt on.

“He’s gonna do it,” David said to the boy next to him. “It’s a lock.”

“No way!” the boy replied. “Eight points in two minutes? It’s impossible.”

“Wanna bet?” David asked holding out his hand. “If Wilt *doesn’t* score a hundred, I’ll give you ten bucks.”

“And what if he *does* score a hundred?” the boy asked. “What do I have to give *you*?”

“How about you give me your program?” David said.

“You got a bet!” the boy replied, and they shook on it.

The Knicks were passing the ball back and forth as they moved slowly downcourt, trying to burn seconds off the clock. They knew what was going on. No team wants to be known for giving up a hundred points to one guy, so they were doing their best to stall for time.

Finally, one of the Warriors intentionally fouled the Knick with the ball. The guy made the shot, but the score didn’t matter anymore. The Warriors were ahead by over twenty points. All that mattered was getting the ball back, and getting it to Wilt so he could put up another shot.

Wilt was double- and triple-teamed as the Warriors took possession, but nobody could stop him. Somehow, Wilt’s teammates got the ball to him close to the basket. He dribbled twice, spun around with those big elbows pushing the Knicks out of his way, and launched a fadeaway that dropped gently into the net without touching the rim.

“Ninety-four!” four thousand people screamed.

There were less than two minutes left on the clock now. Wilt looked exhausted as he backpedaled down-court. The Knicks were trying to run out the clock again, but one of them got sloppy and a Warrior stole the ball from him. He could have taken an easy lay-up himself, but he didn't. He slowed things down, waiting for Wilt to get into position under the basket. Defenders were all over the big man, but he had a height advantage over them. The Warrior with the ball lofted up a lob pass. Wilt leaped to grab it, came down, and then jumped up again to jam the ball through the hoop.

“Ninety-six!” four thousand people screamed.

“It's a Dipper Dunk!” shouted the boy next to David as they both jumped up and down.

Wilt was also fouled on the play, so he got two free throws.

“Ninety-seven!” four thousand people screamed when he made the first one.

“Ninety-eight!” four thousand people screamed when he made the second one.

Now there was a minute left in the game. The clock seemed to be ticking down faster, and the fans started counting it down.

“Fifty-nine! Fifty-eight! Fifty-seven . . .”

Wilt needed just one more basket. The Knicks had the ball, but one of the Warriors committed a foul right away to get possession back.

After the missed foul shot, the Warriors brought the ball downcourt again.

“Forty-nine! Forty-eight! Forty-seven . . .”

Wilt set up in the post. Everybody knew what was going to happen next. The Warriors would try to get the ball to Wilt so he could take one last shot. There were Knicks all over him. They weren’t guarding any of the other Warriors.

Miraculously, a bounce pass found its way into Wilt’s hands. He didn’t risk a dribble that might be stolen. He leaped up and shot.

Miss. The ball bounced hard off the rim. One of the Warriors got the rebound. The crowd was going crazy. The calmest person in the arena was David, because he was the only one who knew what was going to happen.

Wilt got the pass again and took another shot.

He missed *again!* Forty-four seconds left now.

Once again, the Warriors rebounded.

They passed it to Wilt a *third* time.

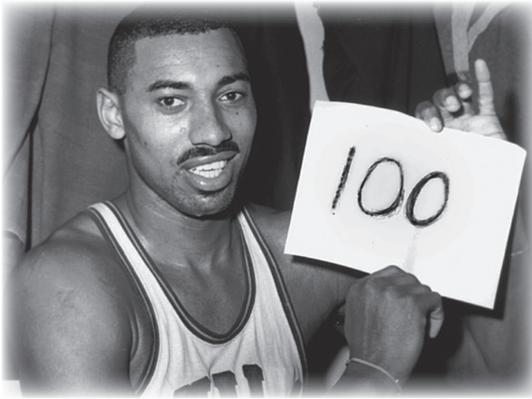
There were five Knicks sticking their hands in his face and trying to strip the ball from him.

Wilt muscled away from them, took one step, and jumped.

He shoots. He scores!

“A hundred!” four thousand people screamed.

For the first time in history—and the *only* time in history—a player had scored a hundred points in an NBA game. And it hadn’t even gone into overtime.



The crowd, needless to say, went wild. People were throwing papers up in the air and storming the court. Grown-ups wanted to shake Wilt Chamberlain’s hand. Kids wanted to clap him on the back, or simply touch him.

“I *told* you it was a lock,” David said to the boy next to him.

“You were right,” the boy replied, handing David his program. Giving it away didn’t bother him very

much. He had witnessed an historic moment that he would never forget, something he could tell his children and grandchildren about someday. David rolled up the program and stuck it in his back pocket.

There was just one problem. There were still twenty seconds left on the clock. Unless you play forty-eight full minutes, it's not an official game.

The referees cleared the spectators off the court and resumed play. The Warriors tried to get the ball to Wilt again, but he didn't want it. He stood at mid-court, shaking his head, with a big smile on his face. He didn't want to score any more. Wilt knew very well that "a hundred points" sounded a lot better than "a hundred and two points."

The buzzer rang. The final score was 169–147.

"Okay, I think that should be enough time," Miss Z said as she fiddled with her computer.

She typed a few more commands on the keyboard and hit the Enter key. There was a brief buzzing sound, and then the screen on the Board lit up. The five bands of color appeared. After a few seconds they merged together to form one band of intense white light. Julia, Isabel, and Luke shielded their eyes but didn't dare look away.

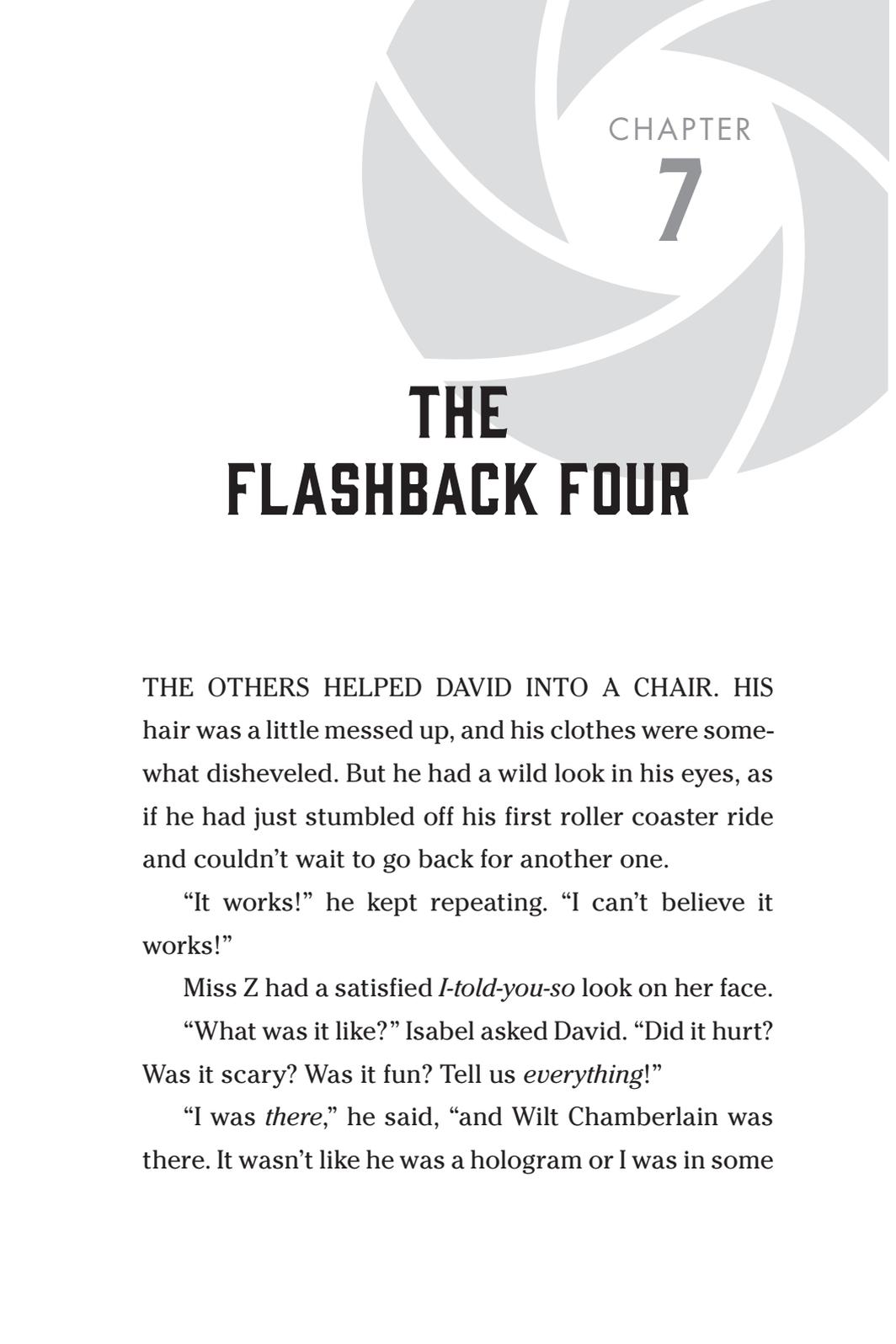
The light seemed to stretch out and away from the surface of the Board until coming to a point about three feet in front of it. There was that humming sound, and then there was an image, almost like a hologram. It was flickering at first, and then it solidified.

David was back.

He fell to his knees, panting and gasping for breath. The others rushed over to him.

“Are you okay, dude?” Luke asked David, putting his beefy arm around him. “Where were you?”

“It works!” David replied. “It really works!”



CHAPTER

7

THE FLASHBACK FOUR

THE OTHERS HELPED DAVID INTO A CHAIR. HIS hair was a little messed up, and his clothes were somewhat disheveled. But he had a wild look in his eyes, as if he had just stumbled off his first roller coaster ride and couldn't wait to go back for another one.

"It works!" he kept repeating. "I can't believe it works!"

Miss Z had a satisfied *I-told-you-so* look on her face.

"What was it like?" Isabel asked David. "Did it hurt? Was it scary? Was it fun? Tell us *everything!*"

"I was *there*," he said, "and Wilt Chamberlain was there. It wasn't like he was a hologram or I was in some

kind of virtual reality simulator. I was right there, a few rows up from the court, watching the game. Wilt scored a hundred points, and I saw it happen. Everybody was going nuts. It's hard to describe what it felt like. It was scary, but it didn't hurt. It was *awesome*. I pinched myself to make sure it was real."

"I always thought time travel was impossible," Luke said, shaking his head. "That's what my teacher told us in science class. And she's an expert."

"I used to think that too, Luke," said Miss Z. "You know, before the Wright brothers got off the ground at Kitty Hawk in 1903, the experts thought human flight was impossible. It couldn't be done. But these two ordinary bicycle mechanics did it. Before a guy named Roger Bannister came along in 1954, the experts thought it was impossible for a human being to run a mile in less than four minutes. But he did it. And before I built the Board, the experts thought time travel was an impossibility. But I did it."

"Did you figure it out all by yourself?" asked Isabel.

"Oh no. I have a team of techs who helped me," she admitted. "I drove them hard to solve this problem. Worked them like dogs to finish as quickly as possible. And I paid them handsomely. But my firm—Pasture Company—owns the technology."



“Why do you call it Pasture Company?” asked Isabel.

“It’s my little in-joke,” replied Miss Z. “I can’t take you to the future . . . but I can take you to the *pasture*.”

David suddenly remembered the souvenir he had brought back with him from 1962. He took the rolled-up game program out of his back pocket and passed it around for the others to see.

“Check it out,” he said. “See, it’s even got the date on it.”

“Did you find that on the ground at the Hershey Arena?” asked Miss Z.

“Nah, I made a bet with some kid that Wilt was going to score a hundred points,” David told him. “I won, of course, so he had to give me his program.”

David was pretty proud of himself, but Miss Z shook her head in disapproval.

“I don’t know how I feel about that,” she told David. “Taking artifacts from the past is risky business. You might remove some little thing that turns out to be important, and change the course of history.”

“Sorry,” David said. “I wasn’t thinking about that.”

Luke, Isabel, and Julia admired the program. They hadn’t asked to see any physical proof that David had actually traveled through time, but now they had it.

“If I were you, I’d sell that thing on eBay,” Julia told him. “I bet a lot of basketball fans would want the program from the only game in history when somebody scored a hundred points. It may be a one-of-a-kind. You could make a lot of money.”

“Sell it?” David said, taking it back. “No way. I’m keeping it forever. Seeing Wilt score a hundred points was the most exciting moment of my life.”

“See what I mean?” Miss Z told them. “That’s exactly what I was telling you. I sent David back to see Wilt Chamberlain score a hundred points in a game. But I could have sent him *anywhere*, to *any* time. Imagine sitting in the boat next to George Washington as he crossed the Delaware River on Christmas Day in 1776. Imagine watching the Wright brothers taking off on their first flight at Kitty Hawk. Imagine seeing Michelangelo working on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel or Leonardo da Vinci painting the *Mona Lisa*. The possibilities are *endless*! You four could work as a team.”

The four kids, who had been skeptical and even dismissive of Miss Z earlier, were now convinced that she was the real deal. She had promised them the adventure of a lifetime, and she was obviously capable of delivering it.

Each of them was anxious to go on a trip, for



their own special reason. Isabel was thinking about her future. She was sure she wanted to go to college someday and study history, maybe to become a history teacher when she grew up. She imagined how awesome it would be to go back in time and witness history with her own eyes, and be able to tell her students about it one day. It would be the best research imaginable.

Luke didn't care much about history, but seeing the look on David's face when he came back made Luke want to experience the same kind of excitement. Lately he had come to admit to himself what his parents had been telling him for a long time—playing video games all the time is boring. Staring at a screen for hours on end is deadening. He was craving something in the real world that couldn't be duplicated in two dimensions.

Julia had a similar feeling. Shopping and buying things for yourself is always fun, of course, but there's something hollow about it. You reach a point where you have more than enough stuff, and getting even *more* of it doesn't bring you happiness. Your brain cries out for some other kind of fulfillment.

And David, well, after his experience going back to watch Wilt Chamberlain, he was ready for just about

anything. It was like he'd just tasted ice cream for the first time. He wanted more.

"So what will *our* adventure be?" Isabel asked anxiously.

"Can I assume all four of you are on board?" asked Miss Z.

"Yeah!" they replied as a group.

"Good!" Miss Z said. "Before we get to your adventure, there's one more order of business. We need to give you a name."

"What do we need a name for?" asked David. "We already have names."

"I can't constantly be calling you David, Luke, Isabel, and Julia," said Miss Z. "You need a group name. Something punchy."

"How about the Time Team?" suggested Isabel. "Because we travel through time, and we're a team."

"That's lame," said Julia.

"How about the Awesome Avengers?" suggested Luke. "Because we're awesome, and we avenge stuff."

"Oh please," groaned Isabel.

"There are four of us," said David. "It could be the something Four. A word that begins with the letter *F*. Funny. Fearless. Fantastic."

"There's already a Fantastic Four," said Luke. "It

was a comic book and a movie.”

“Furry,” said David, thinking out loud. “Flying . . . forever . . . flashing. *Flashback!* How about the Flashback Four?”

“That sounds cool,” said Luke. “The Flashback Four.”

“I like the sound of that,” Miss Z said. “Ladies?”

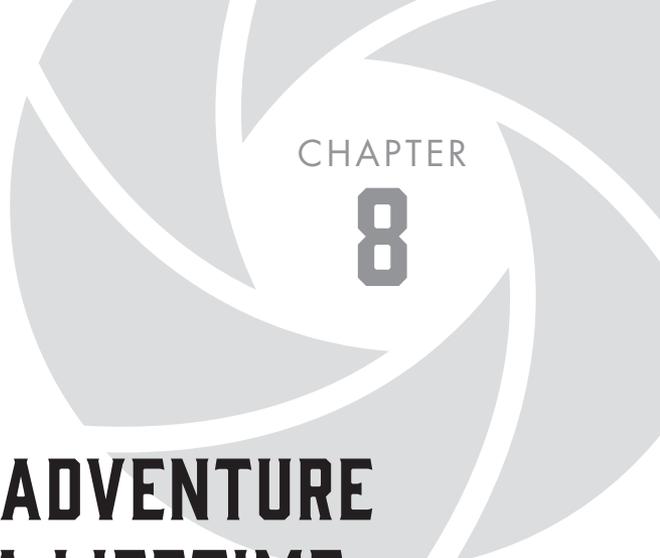
“It works for me,” replied Isabel.

“It’s better than the Awesome Avengers,” said Julia.

“Then it’s agreed,” said Miss Z as she took some papers out of her desk drawer. “From now on you are the Flashback Four.”

“So where are we going?” asked Isabel.

“You’re going home, for now,” Miss Z replied, handing each of them a sheet. “Get a good night’s rest, and get these permission slips signed by a parent. I’ll see you here right after school lets out tomorrow.”



CHAPTER

8

THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING, READER. NO parent in their right mind would give permission to let their son or daughter get zapped through time by some experimental smartboard and sent on a mysterious "field trip" to who-knows-where.

That's true. But the next day, precisely at three thirty, all four members of the Flashback Four returned to the Hancock Tower with their permission slips signed and dated.

To get his parents to agree, Luke told them his class would be taking a tour of Fenway Park, and he needed permission. As a diehard Sox fan, his father

signed the form without hesitation. He never looked at it to see what he was signing.

David, on the other hand, was totally honest with his parents. He simply said, “Some rich white lady invented this magical smartboard and she wants to send me and some other kids back in time with it.”

“Very funny,” his mother replied, taking the permission slip and signing it. She never read the form either.

Isabel had a long conversation with her parents, who were still learning English. She explained that she needed their permission to go on an educational field trip that could very possibly help her get into college and help her career someday. As soon as he heard the word *college*, Isabel’s father was reaching for a pen.

Julia’s parents were both out of the country on separate business trips, so she couldn’t ask them to sign the permission slip. She just signed it herself, forging her mother’s signature, as she had done many times before when her parents weren’t around.

When the Flashback Four arrived together on the twenty-third floor, Mrs. Vader took their permission slips and ushered them into the office. Miss Z was not there yet.

“The boss is running a bit late,” Mrs. Vader told

the kids. “Can I offer you some tea and cookies while you’re waiting?”

“That would be lovely,” Isabel said, using her best manners.

Mrs. Vader wheeled in a cart and poured a cup for each of them.

“Do you know where Miss Z is going to send us?” Julia asked.

“I have no idea.”

“Have you been on one of these trips yourself?” asked Isabel.

“Oh, goodness no,” replied Mrs. Vader. “I’m just Miss Zandergoth’s secretary.”

“Do you mind my asking what happened to her?” Luke asked.

“I believe she’s stuck in traffic,” said Mrs. Vader.

“No, I mean, why is she in a wheelchair?”

“It’s . . . rather personal,” Mrs. Vader replied, after thinking it over for a moment. “I’d rather not get into it.”

Isabel noticed that Mrs. Vader’s eyes suddenly appeared watery. A single tear slid onto her cheek, and she quickly wiped it away with her sleeve.

“Does she have a disease or something?” asked David.

Mrs. Vader just nodded her head and replied simply, “ALS.”

“That’s Lou Gehrig’s disease,” Luke said. “My uncle had it. Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. There’s no cure. My uncle died like a year after he got the bad news.”

“Is Miss Z going to die?” asked Isabel.

“I’ve said too much already,” Mrs. Vader replied, wheeling the cart out of the room.

There was an awkward silence as Luke, Julia, Isabel, and David thought about what they had just heard, and wondered if Miss Z’s illness was the reason why they had been recruited in the first place.

“I bet that’s why she was in such a big rush to finish building the Board,” Luke commented.

At that moment, the door opened and Miss Z rolled into the room.

“Sorry I’m late!” she said cheerfully. “Are you kids excited?”

“Yeah!” all four replied.

“Exactly where and when are we going?” asked Luke.

“Well,” said Miss Z, “when I say ‘Four score and seven years ago,’ what does that mean to you?”

“The score of a ball game?” asked David.

“Are you kidding me?” Miss Z said, rolling her eyes.

“Don’t they teach you kids *anything* in social studies these days?”

“Four score and seven years ago has something to do with the Gettysburg Address,” Isabel said.

“Right,” Miss Z replied. “And what do you know about the Gettysburg Address?”

“Not much,” Isabel admitted. “I think I was absent the day we studied that.”

“Wasn’t the Gettysburg Address where Abraham Lincoln lived in Gettysburg?” asked Julia.

“No!” Miss Z shouted, slapping her forehead. “Lincoln never lived in Gettysburg!”

“Then why did he have a Gettysburg address?” Julia asked.

Luke rolled his eyes. “The Gettysburg Address was a speech he gave, in Gettysburg,” he said quietly.

“*Thank you!*” said Miss Z.

She rolled closer so she could more easily command their attention.

“July first, 1863,” she said. “The Battle of Gettysburg was the turning point of the Civil War, and its bloodiest battle. Fifty *thousand* casualties. Do you know how many men that is? Imagine Fenway Park filled to capacity. Now add another thirteen thousand soldiers.”

“Wow,” David said.

“Four months later, President Lincoln came to the battlefield to dedicate the cemetery where many of those soldiers were buried,” Miss Z continued. “That’s when he delivered the Gettysburg Address. It’s probably the most famous speech in American history.”

“So you’re going to send us there?” asked David.

“Yes,” Miss Z replied. “I’m going to send you to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863.”

“What for? So we can *see* it?” Julia asked. “Do you need us to be eyewitnesses or something?”

“In a way, yes,” replied Miss Z. “Actually, I have a job for you to do there.”

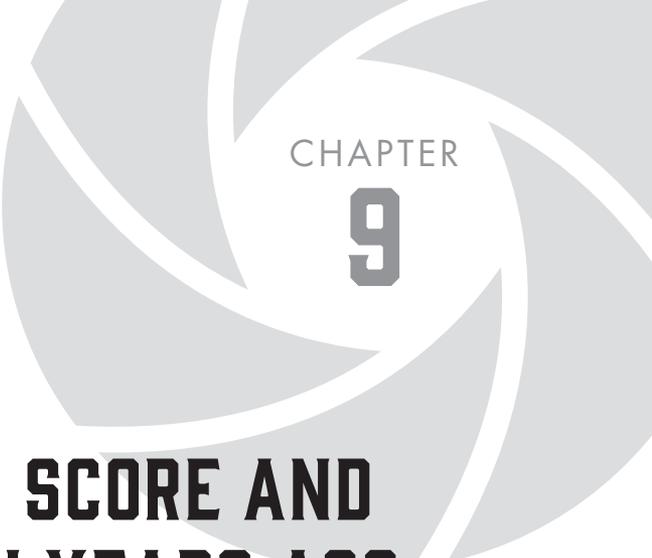
“Aha, here’s the catch,” David said. “It’s about time, right? I knew there would be a catch.”

Miss Z rolled over to her office wall filled with photos depicting great moments in history.

“I have been accumulating these pictures my entire adult life,” she said, sighing.

Then she pointed to the one spot on the wall that was empty.

“See that space? My goal is to fill it. I need a picture of Abraham Lincoln delivering the Gettysburg Address. And I need *you* kids to shoot that picture.”



CHAPTER

9

FOUR SCORE AND SEVEN YEARS AGO

READER, I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING. THERE are plenty of photos of Abraham Lincoln. You've probably seen lots of them. In fact, the Library of Congress has about 7,000 photos taken during the Civil War, and 130 of them show Lincoln. There's just one problem. Read on.

"Now, let me get this straight," Luke said to Miss Z. "Your plan is to send the four of us to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in the year 1863 so we can take a picture of Abraham Lincoln giving the Gettysburg Address. Do I have that right?"

"Exactly!" Miss Z replied. "You see, Luke,

photography is a form of time travel, when you think about it. We snap a picture and we capture that moment in time. Forever. It becomes ours. With that photo, we bring the past to us. It could be a hundred years in the past, or five minutes. Either way, we get to step inside that memory. A photo allows *all* of us to travel through time.”

“I don’t get it,” Isabel said. “Why do you need another picture of Abraham Lincoln?”

“You must understand that photography was a very young art form in Lincoln’s time,” Miss Z told the group. “The first photograph in history was taken in 1826, when Lincoln was a teenager. Pictures were still a novelty during the Civil War. The average person didn’t own a camera. They were very big, expensive, and hard to use.”

Miss Z rolled herself over to her desk and took a folder out of one of the drawers. The children gathered around to peer over her shoulder.

“Look at this,” she said, opening the folder. “There are only *three* existing photographs taken at Gettysburg on November 19, 1863. None of them are close-ups, and none of them show Lincoln actually giving the speech. This is one of the photos.”



“It’s blurry,” Julia commented. “Which one of those guys is Abraham Lincoln?”

Miss Z took a magnifying glass out of her drawer and moved it slowly across the sea of faces in the wide crowd shot.

“It’s the guy on horseback,” Luke said. “See? He’s wearing one of those stovepipe hats. And it looks like he’s saluting the troops. It must be the president.”

“That’s what everybody thought for a long time,” Miss Z said. “But if you blow this photo up really big, you’ll see that the guy on horseback has longer hair than Lincoln, and his beard is fuller. Lincoln’s beard was kind of wispy, and he had a slight gap between his

beard and his sideburns. This guy doesn't have that."

"It's the stovepipe hat that throws you off," David noted. "There are a bunch of guys in the picture wearing those hats."

"Also, the guy on the horse has epaulets on his shoulders," Miss Z told them. "We know that Lincoln was wearing a plain black overcoat that day. And by the way, presidents didn't start saluting the troops until Ronald Reagan did it in 1981."

"So who's the guy with the stovepipe hat?" asked Julia.

"He's probably just some local official," replied Miss Z.

"Then where's Abraham Lincoln?" asked Isabel.

"Over *here*," Miss Z said, moving the magnifying glass slightly to the left of the man with the hat. "He was in front of the speaker's stand, about to climb up onto the stage."

"It's hard to see that," said Luke.



“Yes, that’s the problem,” Miss Z said. “In any case, all the pictures are fuzzy and none of them shows Lincoln actually delivering the Gettysburg Address. And if we don’t have a photo of an event, it’s almost like the event didn’t happen.”

“If I go to a party and I don’t shoot a selfie with my friends,” Julia said, “I kinda feel like I wasn’t even at the party.”

The others rolled their eyes.

“Sometimes I feel like stuff we learn about in history is made up,” Luke noted. “It doesn’t seem real. Like Christopher Columbus arriving in America. Did that ever really happen?”

“Yes, but if you saw a photo of Columbus landing on the beach, you’d believe it, right?” asked Miss Z. “A photo brings a moment of time into our consciousness.”

“Sometimes even *that’s* not enough,” Isabel said. “This girl I know told me she thinks we never landed on the moon. She says all those pictures of the astronauts are fakes. She thinks the whole space program was a hoax.”

“That’s ridiculous!” said Luke.

“I have a question,” Isabel said. “If there were photographers at Gettysburg taking pictures, how come none of them got a shot of Lincoln giving his speech?”

He was the president of the United States. You'd think the photographers would be all over him."

"Good question," Miss Z said. "Here's my guess—the Gettysburg Address is just ten sentences long. It only lasted about two minutes. By the time the photographers set up their primitive cameras with those big glass plate negatives, the speech was over. *That's* why I need to send you kids back to Gettysburg—to get the shot that those photographers missed."

"I can use my cell phone," Julia said, pulling it out of her purse. "Hey, maybe Abraham Lincoln will pose for a selfie with me! That would be cool to post on Instagram!"

Miss Z snorted.

"Cell phone?" she said, opening up another drawer on her desk. "No, if you're going to go back to 1863, you're going to do it *right*."

She reached into her drawer and pulled out a very expensive Nikon digital single-lens reflex camera with a zoom lens.

"Nice," Luke said, examining the camera closely. "And you're gonna show us how to use this thing? It looks pretty complicated."

"Of course."

"So I guess you're gonna sell the picture we take

and make millions of dollars from it, eh?” asked Julia.

“Is that all you think about, money?” asked Isabel.

“No,” Julia replied, shooting an angry look at Isabel.

“I’m not going to sell it at *all*,” Miss Z said. “I already told you—I want to put the photo up on my wall. And eventually, down the line, I hope to build a museum filled with these photos of great moments in history. But of course, that won’t be for a long time.”

The Flashback Four shot nervous glances at one another. They knew that Miss Z would probably not be around to see the opening of her museum. But Miss Z didn’t know they knew that.

During the discussion about Gettysburg, David had been sitting and listening without saying much, but looking increasingly uncomfortable.

“I’ve got a problem with all this,” he finally announced.

“What is it, David?” asked Miss Z.

“Well, in case you haven’t noticed, my skin is a little darker than everybody else’s here,” he said pointedly. “And you’re planning to send the four of us back to 1863.”

“Yeah, so?” asked Julia, not quite putting two and two together.

“There was this little thing called *slavery* going on



back then,” David told them. “You may have heard of it. If I go back to 1863, they might try to make me into a slave.”

“Gettysburg is in Pennsylvania,” Luke pointed out. “It was a Northern state. They didn’t have slavery there.”

“So what?” David said, his voice rising a bit. “I saw that movie *Twelve Years a Slave*. The guy was in New York when he got kidnapped. I’m not about to get myself sold into slavery just so we can take a picture.”

All eyes turned to Miss Z.

“I’m glad you brought that issue up, David,” she said. “You know, it was no coincidence that Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his ‘I Have a Dream’ speech in front of the Lincoln Memorial. The Gettysburg Address is engraved on the wall there. Here, let me show you something.”

She opened the middle drawer of her desk and fished around until she found a faded, yellowed piece of paper.

“Lincoln was wrong about one thing,” Miss Z told the group. “In the Gettysburg Address, he wrote, ‘The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here.’ As it turned out, what he said there would be remembered for a long time.”

“Wow,” Isabel said, putting out a hand to touch the paper. “Is that the real thing?”

“Oh, I wish it was,” Miss Z said, chuckling. “There are only five known drafts of the Gettysburg Address in Lincoln’s handwriting. This is just a copy. But I’ve studied it, analyzed it. Do any of you know what ‘four score and seven years ago’ refers to?”

David, Isabel, and Julia shook their heads.

“One score means twenty,” Luke finally said. “So four score is eighty. Four score and seven years ago means eighty-seven years ago.”

“That’s right!” Miss Z said. “And do you know what year was eighty-seven years before 1863?”

Julia pulled out her cell phone. The others did the math in their heads. David came up with the answer first.

“Seventeen seventy-six,” he said.

“Correct,” said Miss Z. “When Lincoln wrote ‘our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation,’ he wasn’t talking about 1787, the year the Constitution was written and the United States became a country. He was talking about 1776, the year Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence.”

“Your point?” asked Luke.

“There’s a big difference between the Declaration

and the Constitution,” Miss Z explained. “The Declaration said *all men are created equal*. The Constitution didn’t say all men were created equal. In the Constitution, some men were more equal than others. Slavery was considered a part of life, in at least some parts of the country. The Constitution left it up to each state to decide on slavery. In fact, in the Constitution, a slave was counted as three-fifths of a person. At the time, one out of every eight Americans was a slave.”

“So in the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln was talking about 1776, when we declared our independence from England,” said Isabel.

“So in the Gettysburg Address, he was sort of hitting the Reset button on America, right?” asked Luke.

“Exactly!” said Miss Z. “It was almost like we became born again as a nation. That’s why those ten sentences are so important.”

“Why do you need four of us?” he asked next. “Obviously, only one of us is going to take the picture.”

“I want to take it!” David shouted.

“I want to take it!” Isabel shouted.

“I want to take it!” Julia shouted.

“I need *all* of you to go,” Miss Z told them, “and I need you to work as a team. The Civil War was still going on in 1863, remember. This could be dangerous.

You may encounter trouble along the way. You'll need to work together and watch each other's backs. I know the four of you can. That's why I chose you. You're the Flashback Four."

David, Luke, Julia, and Isabel nodded. In the last hour they had gone from being four disinterested seventh graders to being a team with a mission to accomplish.

"We'll be witnessing history," Isabel said quietly. "And making it, too."

"That's right," Miss Z agreed, rolling herself over to look at the lone empty space on the wall once again. "History is like a big jigsaw puzzle, with some of the pieces missing. Every so often, we're lucky enough to stumble upon one of those pieces and figure out what happened in that time period. The Board will just make it a little easier to find those pieces."

David got up from his chair and went over to the Board.

"Let's do this thing," he said.