

MySTERY
RyDERS #5

A

Piece

of the

Moon

is

Missing



by
Criswell & Carli
Freeman

Sample Chapters

A

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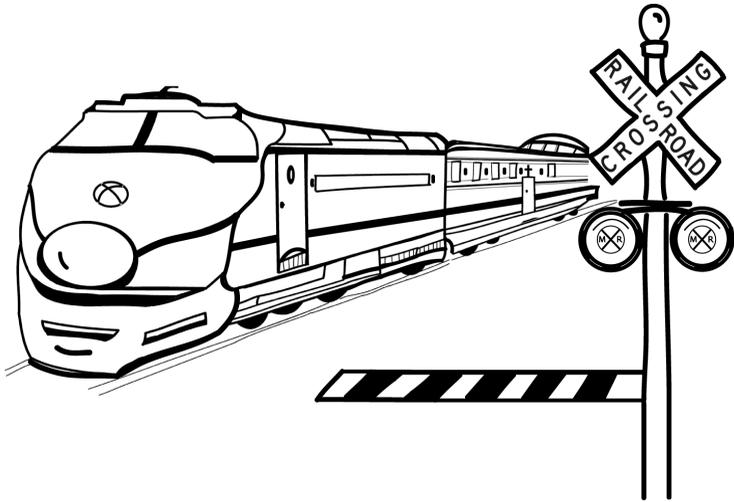
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CHAPTER ONE

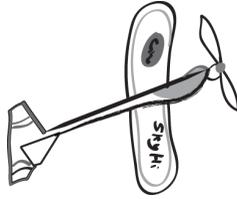
Planes, Trains, and Telescopes

“Duck!” screamed my little brother, who isn’t supposed to yell on our train but often does.

Usually, I don’t enjoy Quinn’s outbursts. But, this time, his warning came in handy because it gave me a chance to turn around and identify a flying object heading my way.

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

Puttering along, flying at eye-level with steady speed, was a small, propeller-powered airplane aimed directly at my nose.



I dropped to the ground just in time to watch the toy plane glide slowly over my head.

The plane's rubber-band engine provided plenty of power. As the little wooden airship wobbled down the hall of our train, it made a surprising turn and flew directly into the kitchen.

Then I heard a second scream, this time from my mother.

“Yiiiikes!” shouted Mom.

Upon hearing Mom's shriek, Quinn paused, thought things over for a moment, looked around, and then did what he usually does under similar circumstances.

He ran away and hid.

PLANES, TRAINS, AND TELESCOPES

I was standing alone in the hallway when my mother walked out of the kitchen. Mom was holding a big bowl of fresh fruit, with a wooden airplane planted nose-down in the middle of it.

Mom looked at me. I looked at her. We both said nothing. Finally I broke the silence.

“I’m not the person you’re looking for,” I said. “I’m innocent. Honest.”

“Okay,” she said. “Then who *am* I looking for?”

“I’d rather not name names,” I said. “He’s a relative of mine. I guess you’ll need to solve this one on your own.”

Mom gave me an understanding nod. Then, my mother spoke loudly enough to be heard over the rumbling of the train: “Quinn Ryder, I’d like to have a word with you. Right now.”

From inside Quinn’s bedroom, a small voice said, “I’m not here right now. Try again later.”

My mom shook her head and walked down the hall, fruit bowl still in hand, to have a mother-son chat about the dangers of flying rubber-band propeller planes inside a moving train car.

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

I turned and walked in the opposite direction, up to the observation deck, where I found my father and my older brother talking about telescopes.

“How big is their telescope at the O’Dell Observatory?” asked Hut.

“It’s almost twenty feet tall,” said Dad. “When it was built, about a hundred years ago, that telescope was the biggest one in the world. But, compared to newer ones, it’s not so big.”

“What will we be able to see when we get there?” asked Hut.

“If the weather’s clear, we’ll see thousands of stars, a few planets, and maybe a few galaxies,” said my father. “But, the main reason to go to the O’Dell Observatory is to see all the interesting things in their astronomy museum.”

“What’s in the museum?” I asked.

“Plenty,” said my dad. “They have interesting exhibits, several old telescopes, and even some real stuff from space.”

“What kind of stuff?” asked Hut.

PLANES, TRAINS, AND TELESCOPES

“They’ve got a big meteorite,” said Dad. “That thing weighs over a hundred pounds. But, best of all, they have a real piece of the moon on display.”

“How on Earth did they get a piece of the moon?” I asked.

“When America sent men to the moon many years ago,” said Dad, “our astronauts picked up some rocks and brought them back. One of those rocks ended up at O’Dell Observatory.”

“How big is it?” Hut asked.

“Not very big,” said my father. “I think it weighs about an ounce, maybe two.”

Dad had done his homework.

“No offense, Dad,” I said, “but do you really think it’s worth going out of our way just to see an undersized moon pebble that probably looks like any other rock you might pick up on the side of the road?”

“Oh, it’s not very far out of our way,” said Dad. “The observatory is in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, which isn’t too far from Chicago.”

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

“And since we have to be in Chicago in a few days anyway,” said Hut, “Mom and Dad decided to stop in Oshkosh first and learn about astronomy.”

“Right,” said my father. “Besides, an old friend of mine runs the observatory. His name is Rocky Rogers. He grew up in Spring Valley.”

“Is he the man Aunt Edna told me about?” I asked.

“Probably,” said Dad. “Edna’s known Rocky for many years. What’d she tell you about him?”

“Aunt Edna said that when Rocky was a boy, he built rockets in his basement and launched them from the football field,” I said.

“Yep, Rocky was always building something,” said my father. “One week he might build a do-it-yourself telescope, and the next week he might invent some kind of homemade rocket.”

“Sounds like an interesting man,” said Hut. “This trip should be worth it after all.”

“Oh, it’ll be great,” said Dad.

With that, my father stood up and walked toward the kitchen in search of a snack.

I glanced over at the small television my father had muted but failed to turn off when he left. On the screen was a headline that caught my eye:

Stay tuned for...

BIG NEWS from the ***LITTLE TOWN***
of Oshkosh

“Hey, Hut, what’s the name of that town we’re going to?” I asked.

“It’s a place called Oshkosh,” said my brother, who, as usual, had ignored the television. “Why do you ask?”

“Because I just saw ‘Oshkosh’ on the TV screen,” I said. “Do you think they’re talking about the same place?”

“Yeah, it’s probably Oshkosh, Wisconsin. But it could be Oshkosh, Nebraska,” said Hut, who somehow knows about such things.

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

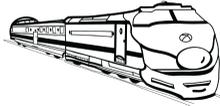
“Well,” I said, “after this commercial, we’re going to find out some big news from whichever town it is.”

I turned up the volume and began watching a funny commercial about a flimsy-looking vegetable chopper. Just when I thought the commercial was over, I heard those dreaded words: “*But wait, there’s more!*”

So, I waited through another sales pitch, this time about a “free” salad spinner. Turns out this salad spinner was “free” *if* I ordered an entire set of plastic kitchen gadgets before midnight. I wasn’t buying it.

Thankfully, the commercial finally ended, and a voice said, “*Channel 5 News* takes you to a high hill above Oshkosh, Wisconsin where a small piece of space history—one that might be worth an *astronomical* amount of money—has just been stolen!”

CHAPTER TWO



Welcome to Our Train!

Hello. My name is Mary Catharine Ryder, but you can call me May. I'm twelve, and I live on a train, at least some of the time. The rest of the time, I live with my family and my dog at 4722 Bluefield Court in Spring Valley, Missouri.

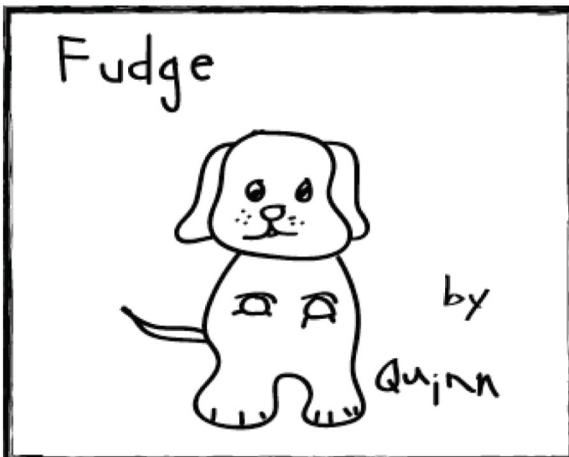
THE MYSTERY RYDERS

My older brother, Hutson, is fourteen. Hut is very smart and very tall for his age.

Quinn is my younger brother. He's six and quite cute for his age. Perhaps Quinn will eventually turn out to be highly intelligent, just like his big brother. But, given the information I have so far, I can't make any promises.

Fudge is our sweet dog who, unlike Quinn, has already proven himself to be a genius. Our cocker spaniel is only two years old, which is younger than Quinn. But since Fudge is already fourteen in dog years, I can say for sure that he is very clever—for a dog—and lots of fun.

Fudge loves to play with Quinn, and Quinn loves to draw Fudge. See what I mean?



WELCOME TO OUR TRAIN!

My mom's name is Catharine, and she still calls my dad John. But most people call him Jonathan.

Dad happens to be a best-selling mystery writer who travels around the world with his family (us) in a private train car (thanks to his publisher).

Whenever Dad leaves Spring Valley to give an interview, or to sign books, or to make a speech, he takes Mom, Hut, Quinn, Fudge, and me along for the ride.

During our train travels, Hut and I are always on the lookout for real-life mysteries. And that's exactly what we found in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

This adventure started when Dad was scheduled to visit several cities, with a final stop in Chicago.

But, before we got to Chicago, Dad wanted to stop in Oshkosh, home of the historic O'Dell Observatory.

A few hours before we were to arrive, Hut and I heard some very bad news.

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

The observatory's most valuable possession, a real piece of the moon—hauled home by the first astronauts who ever landed there—had been stolen!

Here's how it happened...

CHAPTER THREE



A Piece of the Moon Is Missing

Hut and I were watching the small TV when the news came in from Oshkosh.

“Hello, I’m Steve Simon reporting from the famous O’Dell Observatory,” said a man holding a microphone, “and I’ve got breaking news. A few minutes ago, a valuable moon rock was stolen!”

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

“That guy looks excited,” said Hut.

“It’s no wonder he’s so excited,” I said. “This might be the biggest thing that’s ever happened in Oshkosh.”

As the camera zoomed in, Steve Simon’s face filled our small TV screen.

“Moon rocks are incredibly rare,” said the newsman. “That’s why workers here at the observatory almost never take their moon rock out of its four-inch-thick, super-secure glass case.”

“Why would they take it out today?” I wondered aloud.

I didn’t wonder long because the newsman quickly told me.

“Today, the tiny moon rock was removed from its display case,” said the reporter, “so that ten high-school seniors—winners of the Wisconsin Science Olympiad—could be photographed with this treasure.”

“Must be some smart seniors,” said Hut.

“I’m more interested in the moon rock than the students,” I said.

A PIECE OF THE MOON IS MISSING

The newsman continued: “While the rock was out of its case, someone pulled the fire alarm, forcing everyone to exit the observatory.”

“Why do some kids like to pull fire alarms?” I asked.

“Who says a kid pulled it?” asked Hut.

“You make a good point,” I said. “Maybe a grown-up did it on purpose.”

The newsman paused for a moment and looked down at his notes.

“During the confusion caused by the fire alarm, someone in the crowd stole the moon rock,” said Steve Simon. “I’m told that the missing rock is inside a small, clear, plastic container—not much bigger than an ice cube—so it will be very difficult to find.”

The newsman took a deep breath.

“I’ll be staying here to bring you updates as this story unfolds,” he said.

The reporter then looked into the camera and said, “I’m Steve Simon with news you can use from Channel 5.”

THE MYSTERY RYDERS

“Looks like we’re rolling right into another mystery,” said Hut. “After all, we’re on a train headed straight for Oshkosh.”

“Now I’m *really* excited about going to that observatory!” I said.

“Me, too,” said Hut. “Star-watching is fun, but crook-catching is even better.”

That’s The End of This Sample

Congratulations! You’ve made it to the end of this Mystery Ryders sample. If you liked the first few chapters, you can purchase the entire book at:

MysteryRydersStore.com

