

NIGHT AT THE MUSEUM

BATTLE OF THE SMITHSONIAN

CHAPTER 1

Changes at the museum

Larry Daley was sitting in his office. He was watching the television. The man on the television shouted at the camera, 'Say it with me! It's new! It's fantastic! It's Larry's Magic Torch!' Larry laughed happily and shouted the words, too.

Life was good for Larry. Only a few years ago, he was just an ordinary man with a dream. But at that time, he also had a lot of problems. He didn't have a job and he didn't have any money. Then he started work at the Museum of Natural History in New York, and his life changed. Today he was a very rich businessman. Life couldn't be better! Or that's what he thought.

One of Larry's workers, Ed, came into the office. His eyes were shining. 'Fantastic news, boss!' he said excitedly. 'We've got that big meeting with the guys from Los Angeles. It's in three days!'

Larry didn't look up. He was busy reading an email on his phone. 'For the next three days, we work lunchtimes and evenings,' he said. 'This is important.'

Ed wasn't happy. They were always working these days. 'Of course, boss,' he said. 'But can't we just be happy for a moment?'



Larry started to walk to the door. He looked at another message on his phone. 'I don't have a moment, Ed. Time is money.'

Larry got into his car outside. 'Take me to the Museum of Natural History,' he told his driver. Then he got out his phone again and started to answer his messages.

Larry often went to the museum to see his old friends, but this was his first visit for a long time. When he got to the entrance, he had a surprise. There was a sign on the door, 'Closed for building work.'

Dr McPhee, the head of the museum, opened the door for Larry.

'Oh look!' Dr McPhee gave Larry a thin smile. 'It's Mr Big Business. Mr I'm-Too-Good-For-Eleven-Fifty-Dollars-An-Hour!' He didn't like Larry very much.

Larry looked round the museum. It was usually empty and quiet, but today it was full of activity. There were people and boxes everywhere.

‘What’s happening?’ he asked. He was worried. Something was wrong.

Dr McPhee smiled. ‘It’s the future, Mr Daley! Look at this!’ He took Larry to the statue of President Theodore Roosevelt on his horse. He touched something on the floor and suddenly a strange light appeared. The light was full of different colours. It danced and changed. Then they could see the form of a person. It got clearer and clearer. It was Theodore Roosevelt! But *this* Theodore Roosevelt moved like a real living person.

Larry couldn’t believe it. ‘It’s a hologram!’ he cried.

The hologram smiled at Larry and spoke. ‘And what is your question?’

‘Hmm ... where were you born?’

‘In New York,’ said the hologram. ‘Twentieth Street. In the year ...’

McPhee turned off the hologram. ‘So this is the future. These new interactive exhibits bring the past to life!’

But Larry wasn’t happy. ‘What’s going to happen to all the old exhibits?’ he asked.

‘Oh, they’re no use now. We’re sending them to the Smithsonian Museum in Washington. They’ll keep them in boxes there.’

Dr McPhee took his coat and walked to the door. Larry hurried after him. He had to stop this.

‘But people love these exhibits,’ he shouted.

McPhee stopped and looked at him. His little eyes were hard. ‘People love new things, Mr Daley. Things change. I’m sure you can understand that. You left us, remember?’ He put on his coat. ‘We can’t find another night guard

who will stay in the job. My night guards all tell terrible stories! “Oooh, Dr McPhee – the T-Rex* comes alive every night!” Can you believe it?’ He opened the door.

Larry tried again. ‘But you can’t send the exhibits away!’

‘Oh yes, I can,’ said Dr McPhee coldly. ‘They’re going tomorrow morning! Goodbye, Mr Daley!’

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The museum was quiet. The workers were all gone but Larry stayed. He sat on the floor by the big T-Rex and tried to think. What could he do? How could he save the exhibits?

* T-Rex = Tyrannosaurus Rex. It was a very big animal. It lived about 67,000,000 years ago.

The Museum of Natural History was a very special place for Larry. Only Larry, his son and a few other people knew the secret of the museum. Inside the building there was a pharaoh called Ahkmenrah and his magic tablet. After dark, the Tablet of Ahkmenrah gave life to all the exhibits in the museum. They were all Larry's friends and he loved them.

It was now quite late and the sun was setting through the large museum windows. Larry felt T-Rex's head against his back.

'Hey, boy,' he said quietly.

Slowly boxes started to open. Attila the Hun* came out of one box and Sacajawea** got out of another.

Theodore Roosevelt rode up on his horse. 'Larry, my boy! It's good to see you!' Then his face went dark. 'A lot has changed here!'

'Hey, Teddy,' said Larry. He was feeling terrible. 'I didn't know about this!' Then his phone buzzed and he read the message.

'You haven't been here. That's why,' said a small voice. Larry looked down. A little cowboy was sitting on the edge of one of the boxes. 'There's no one to speak for us.'

'It'll be OK, Jedediah,' Larry tried to smile. 'The Smithsonian is a great museum!'

'It won't be home!'

'Listen, everyone!' said Teddy loudly. 'It's our last night. We must enjoy it!' And he and the other exhibits took one last walk round the museum together.

Usually Larry had a good time with his friends at the museum, but tonight was different. The place was sad and

* Attila the Hun (406–453 AD) was the leader of a large part of Asia.

** Sacajawea (c.1788–1812) was a Native American woman.

quiet. When the sun started to come up, all the exhibits climbed back into their boxes. Except Teddy.

He looked sadly at Larry. 'I'm not going. Some of us are staying here.'

Larry didn't know what to say. Then Teddy lifted his head. 'Sometimes change is good. Look at you! You have everything you ever wanted, don't you?'

'I guess,' said Larry. He didn't sound very sure.

Teddy smiled. 'Let me tell you something, boy! The secret of being happy – truly happy – is ...'



At that moment, Larry's phone buzzed again. 'Sorry, Teddy. Just a moment.' He read another message. Then he turned to Teddy. 'What were you saying? The secret of being happy is ...'

But now the first sunlight was coming through the window and Teddy couldn't tell him. He was quiet again.