



**THE CASE OF THE
RUBY
SLIPPERS**



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To a few of my most dedicated fans:
Noah Belser, Jason Fontelieu, Emma Howard,
Jane Yant Kinney, Hannah Meyer-Winkler,
and the very first, Evan Cheney.

CHAPTER ONE



Thursday after school, a limousine pulled up to the back door of my house, along with three motorcycles and some police cars with flashing lights and sirens.

This happens.

Usually it means a king or a hero or a rock star is coming to visit.

But on Thursday it was a pair of shoes.

My little sister, Tessa, and I had been watching from the second floor.

“Cammie, come on!” Tessa grabbed my hand. “If we hurry, we can be down there in time to see them open the box.”

Like always when you’re rushing, the elevator took forever. Then, when it finally came, Mr. Jackson was in no hurry. “Hello, Cameron. Hello, Tessa. Going—”

“—*down, please!*” said Tessa.

“Yes, Miss Parks.” Mr. Jackson hasn’t been running the elevator for that long, but already he is used to

Tessa. He gave her a mini-salute then winked at me. I winked back.

On the ground floor, Tessa blasted through the elevator doors, and I was right behind her. A second later we had crossed the hall into the Diplomatic Reception Room, also known as the Dip Room. It's the first room you come to from the backyard, which in a regular house would be the mudroom, but ours has a fireplace and chandeliers and fancy antique wallpaper.

Inside were lots of grown-ups, including Secret Service agents, photographers, and a man in a black suit who I figured must be from the National Museum of American History. He was standing beside a big table in the middle, and with him was Mrs. Silver, my aunt's social secretary. Mrs. Silver's hand was on the lid of a plain white shoe box.

You probably guessed that a pair of shoes that gets driven around in a limousine with police cars is not a regular pair of shoes. In fact, next to Cinderella's, the ones in the plain white shoe box were about the most famous shoes ever: the ruby slippers from the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*.

Like all good Americans, Tessa and I love the movie, and we also love the book, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, by L. Frank Baum. It's super old-fashioned, but also full of action and fantastic characters.

Anyway, our Aunt Jen loves the story, too. This weekend is her birthday, and a new friend of hers had the idea of throwing a surprise (*shhh!*) Wizard of Oz party for her. We're having it at home because our fam-

ily and Aunt Jen all happen to live together in a house that's really good for parties—the White House.

Tessa pushed her way into the room, hollering: “Wait for us!”

And I trailed behind her, apologizing: “Sorry. Excuse us. Oops—didn’t see your foot. My sister’s kind of—”

“There you are, girls.” Mrs. Silver smiled. “Now, is everybody ready?”

“We are *so* ready!” Tessa told Mrs. Silver.

“All right then,” she answered, and—as cameras flashed, beeped and whirred—she lifted the lid.

Of course there was a layer of tissue on top. And another layer of tissue under that. Mrs. Silver smiled and unfolded tissue and smiled . . . till finally she got impatient and tugged out the whole wad . . . and then her smile disappeared.

The box was empty. The ruby slippers were gone.

CHAPTER TWO



Mrs. Silver took a breath and looked up at the man in the black suit. “There seems to have been a misunderstanding,” she said calmly.

The man in the black suit was not calm. He was hysterical. “There’s no misunderstanding! Someone has stolen the ruby slippers!”

After that everyone started talking at once, and it got really noisy till one sound rose above the rest, the sound of a dog howling: “*Aw-roohr!*”

Tessa looked at me. “Uh-oh.”

And in the same instant, someone by the door shouted, “*Gangway!*” and Hooligan, our big furry mutt, came charging in from the South Lawn. He was attached to one of those long retractable leashes, and our friend Mr. Bryant was way back at the other end, trying to put on the brakes.

“*Heel, Hooligan!*” Mr. Bryant called, “*Heel!*” but Hooligan just kept running. You can’t blame him. He’s

Tessa's and my dog; he was happy we were home from school.

Plus he had something in his mouth to show us.

Most of the people ahead of Hooligan managed to jump out of his way, but a pretty photographer didn't, and she got knocked into the arms of Malik, my second-favorite Secret Service agent. Meanwhile, Hooligan's leash was getting tangled in a zigzag of ankles, one of which belonged to the man in the black suit, only he didn't realize it and he tripped and fell, which I guess hurt, because he started saying some inappropriate words that Tessa, who is seven, is not supposed to know.

I don't even think Tessa heard, though. She was busy saying hi to Hooligan, who by then had dropped his prize and sat down so we could pat him and tell him he's such a good, good dog.

"What did you bring us, puppy?" Tessa picked up the object, which turned out to be a woman's red shoe covered in sequins. "Look, Cammie, do you think . . . ?"

"Yes, I think . . . *Charlotte!*" I took the shoe and waved it. "Look!"

Charlotte is my first favorite Secret Service agent. When she looked, so did everybody else in the Dip Room. Mrs. Silver said, "There's one, at least," but the man in the black suit squealed like he had seen a ghost. "*Wh-wh-wh-where* did that come from?"

"Hooligan brought it, didn't you, you good puppy?" Tessa answered.

"And where's the other one?" Malik asked. By then, he had set the photographer back on her own two feet.

“Come on, Cammie.” Tessa tugged my arm. “Before everybody else gets the same idea, let’s take Hooligan and find the other shoe.”

It might sound like bragging, but I’m going to say it anyway: Tessa and I are good at finding things.

Since our mom, Marilee Parks, got to be president in January, we—along with our cousin Nate and our granny—have already solved two mysteries. Nate, if you’re wondering, is Aunt Jen’s son. He and Aunt Jen and Granny all live with us here in the White House.

Was it possible a missing slipper was the start of another mystery?

Quickly, I handed the shoe to Charlotte, who took it to Mrs. Silver and the man in the black suit. Then, while everybody fussed over tooth marks and dog slobber, we headed outside with Mr. Bryant and Hooligan.