

## **How The Misadventures Began...**

On Jake Moustachio's eleventh birthday his grandmother gave him a very special, magical magnifying glass that had once belonged to his beloved grandfather, the great Inspector Buck Moustachio. Being a would-be detective himself, Jake, accompanied by his eight-year-old sister, Alexa (a.k.a. Inspector Girl), immediately took the magnifying glass and combed their house for clues in an attempt to solve their first mystery: the whereabouts of their missing cat, Rex. When the two sleuths finally ended their search in the Moustachio's attic, they found their pesky pet and a whole lot more than they bargained for!

To their amazement, they were unexpectedly contacted through the magnifying glass by Delbert, The Keeper of Time, and the children and their cat soon realized that their grandpa's seemingly ordinary magnifying glass was the portal to worlds of fantastic misadventures and mysteries to be solved.

Delbert, it seemed, was in desperate need of their help to solve a perplexing case. A mystical Egyptian stone that controls all time had been stolen!

With a little help from their new mentor, Jake and Alexa were able to figure out how to travel through the magnifying glass and were quickly transported to the Museum of Time, a strange and spooky castle once owned by the famous archaeologist Lord Grimthorpe.

To find out who snatched the Egyptian artifact, Jake, Alexa, and their crazy cat, Rex, were able to use their keen detective skills to gather clues, while encountering a collection of the most dangerous suspects and curious talking animals.

After successfully solving the case, Jake discovered that he is the descendant of a long line of famous detectives and that he is next in line to control that magnifying glass and all its mystical powers. The one that is purest of heart and of thought who comes to possess a magnifying glass of good will be able to unlock all the mysteries of the universe! And that, Jake had been told, is him!

But the Moustachio children must be very careful because they also learned that there is an evil baron who will stop at nothing to get his maniacal hands on the purest of all magnifying glasses in order to rule the universe.

Jake, Alexa, Rex, and an unforeseen member of the Moustachio family, who had stowed away for the journey, cautiously took a new case to solve, aware that the Baron Von Snodgrass lurked beyond the glass, craving his revenge on their family.

They were drawn into a western world of deception and intrigue when they were called upon by Big Daddy, the biggest cow rancher there was and will ever be, to find a kidnapped cow with an ancient map painted on its hide that revealed the truth to a baffling, historical mystery.

But the Baron Von Snodgrass had set a trap for the young sleuths that led to a wild western showdown, which ended up with Jake coming into possession of a mysterious journal that Snodgrass had stolen from Jake's grandfather. With Grandpa Buck's secret book in hand, the Moustachio children returned home with the mission of decoding the Pig Latin-encrypted book in order to find out the hidden mysteries to the glass, who is sending them on all these misadventures, and, most important all, what fate has in store for them on the other side of Grandpa Moustachio's mystical magnifying glass.

And now, get ready to read the next swashbuckling installment in

**The Misadventures of Inspector Moustachio:**  
***THE CURSE OF \$HIPWRECK BOTTOM!***

## *CHAPTER ONE*

# **Grandma's Cottage**

“Help! Help!” cried out Alexa as she and Rex frantically ran down the beach chasing after her runaway kite with the ever-so-pink ribbons dangling from its tail.

The unexpected stormy sky over her head turned a deep, dark, ominous grey as the wind howled off the surf. The white, salty foam flew from the huge, breaking waves of the ocean as they came crashing down onto the sandy beach.

Jake, with his magnifying glass in hand, was lying all snuggled into the sand dunes off of Grandma Moustachio's deck, trying to unravel the secret code of Grandpa Buck's mysterious, brown, leather book. Jake and Alexa were spending the weekend at Grandma's beach cottage down the shore.

Jake had an annoyed look on his face as he looked up at the spectacle of his furry cat, Rex, scampering shamelessly after his sister's kite. “Rex,” he shouted, “grab the string, you fur ball, not the ribbons. You're going to get all tangled up!”

“Jake, come help us!” begged Alexa, running in and out of the surf.

Jake sprang up from the sand and bolted down the dunes to Alexa's side, and they both raced after their crazy cat, who was still chasing after the renegade kite.

“How are you doing decoding Grandpa's journal?” Alexa asked Jake as they made foot prints sprinting in the sand. “Have you figured out any new commands to work the magnifying glass yet?”



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“Well, it’s definitely written in some kind of Pig Latin,” he answered. “And I have figured out a couple of the phrases to work the magnifying glass better! But there is something else encoded in there that I can’t quite figure out yet.”

“Oooh, that’s mysterious!” she exclaimed.

“We’ll definitely be ready the next time Baron Von Snodgrass comes out of hiding looking for us. He’s never going to get his boney hands on my magnifying glass or on this book as long as I’m around!”

“Well, I hope you’re going to be around for a while,” Alexa proclaimed with a worrisome tone while slushing in the tide.

“During my battle with Snodgrass at Comanche Canyon,” recalled Jake, “I wasn’t too sure about that. Snodgrass is very powerful, and he’s had years to figure out how to work his own magnifying glass.”

“But remember what our friend, Delbert, The Keeper of Time, said,” Alexa shouted with complete confidence. “You’re the Great Inspector Moustachio, the one with the purest of heart and thought. It is your destiny to defeat the evil Snodgrass and gain control of his magnifying glass. Once you have that...”

“I know,” uttered Jake. “ ‘...With both magnifying glasses in your possession, the mysteries of the universe will await you!’ But for now,” he continued as he saw Rex all tangled up into a knotted fuzzy ball, “we need to figure out a way to get that pesky pet untangled from all that kite string and ribbon.”

“And we better do that fast!” announced Alexa. “It looks like a terrible storm is about to come blasting in from the ocean.”

“Yeah,” added Jake, “I heard on the news this storm is going to have a name starting with the letter **J**.”

“Why do they name tropical storms and hurricanes, anyway?” his sister asked.

“I think it’s so meteorologists can track them as they move across the ocean. Remember, there can be more than one storm at a time. So by naming each one, it’s less confusing keeping them all straight,” he meticulously explained.

“So because this new storm’s name starts with the letter **J**, the tenth letter in the alphabet, it means that this is the tenth storm that formed out in the sea this year—right?” Alexa asked.

“Right you are, Inspector Girl!” he declared.

Jake and Alexa darted down the beach, finally reaching Rex. “Well, was it really necessary to jump on the tail and drag the kite down?” scolded Jake with an annoyed wrinkle in his brow.

“*Meow*,” snapped Rex, “yes,” as he rolled enjoyably around in the sand.

The children proceeded to untangle the matted mess, pulling the kite string ever-so-carefully out from the ribbon tangled up in Rex’s rusty, golden, furry paws and tail.

“Hold still, REXY Cat!” scolded Alexa, tugging and pulling away.

“Jake! Alexa!” shouted Grandma from the top of the dunes. The wind started to blow furiously, kicking up swirls of sand funnels across the tan-speckled, colored beach. Grandma looked very nervously at the tumultuous ocean as she held tightly onto Alexa’s guinea pig, Sandy, caressing her trembling, light-brown, short fur gently. Grandma’s crazy, salt and pepper-colored hair blew wildly in the wind as her

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hairpins shot out spontaneously into the sand beneath her toes. “Come quickly, you three! There’s a horrible tropical storm coming in from the sea. The news just said it might turn into a hurricane any minute!”

The children quickly scooped up Rex and what was left of Alexa’s kite and ran as fast as they could back to Grandma. “Coming!” they shouted against the wind.

Jake grabbed his magnifying glass and the brown, leather book from atop the dune and headed for the house. They all ran for their lives down the cedar deck to the back door of the cottage. The navy-blue shutters banged violently against the crisp, white, linen house from the force of the ocean breeze. Grandma’s favorite lilac bush danced back and forth, trying to stay firmly planted in the sand. One by one the petals flew off of the purple, fragrant flowers, shooting straight into the blustery wind.

“Wow!” exclaimed Grandma. “That is quite a storm brewing out there. Someone must be very angry in the sea!” she kidded. “Why, I can’t recall ever seeing a storm come across the ocean that fast in all the years your grandpa and I have lived down here.”

“And that’s been a long time, huh Grandma?” asked Alexa.

“Longer than you can imagine, sweetheart,” she replied with a warm smile, remembering the past. “Your grandpa and I met a few miles just down the road, many, many years ago. I was just a young girl. My friends and I used to spend the summers down here working at the Krenville Inn waiting tables. It was so much fun. Grandpa Buck spent his summers working on a fishing boat, so he said. I never was quite sure what he was actually up to. Anyway, one day I was

strolling along the boardwalk, taking in the beautiful view of the ocean, and there he was unloading a crate of the most unusual seashells I had ever seen.”

“Tell us more, Grandma,” begged Alexa with anticipation.

“Well—he handed me, of course, the largest and most beautiful shell of them all,” she explained, pointing to it on the mantel of the fireplace. “Oh, how I just love that shell. It holds the sweetest of memories. Your grandpa used to say that ‘inside each and every seashell lies a secret, mysterious world of the sea, filled with creatures and sorts, just waiting to be discovered.’ ”

Grandma then took the seashell off the mantel and raised it up to the children’s ears for a listen and said, “See, you can hear the ocean echoing inside the shell.”

Jake and Alexa each gave a listen. The ocean waves vibrated and sang from each chamber of the magnificent, pink and white, pearly conch shell.

Jake’s eyes lit up with excitement. “Maybe this shell holds the lost city of Atlantis or a trapped sea monster!”

“*Meow!*” bellowed Rex, wanting to find what was inside.

Alexa’s nose crinkled as she closed one eye, trying to look deep inside the shell. “I can’t see anything!” she exclaimed. “How would all the people, houses, and seahorses fit in there, anyway?”

With a look of exasperation showing on his face, Jake snapped, “Lexy, I was kidding! There are no lost cities or sea monsters in there! It’s just a shell! The only thing that ever lived in there was probably a big, old, nasty crab!”

“*Meow!*” added Rex as he stuck his paw into the shell, trying to find a little, crabby snack to eat.

“Well, how do you know there’s not a city or monster in

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there?” she argued.

“Because there’s not!” he replied.

“Says who?”

“Says me!”

“Then how do you explain the ocean sounds every time you listen to a shell?” Alexa asked in an accusatory tone. “HMMMM—Jake?”

“The ocean sounds come from background noise bouncing off of the configuration of the seashell structure!” he declared. “Everybody knows that! It’s not really the ocean you hear in there.”

“**Really!**” she protested with strong determination in her voice. “Do you want to bet your magnifying glass on that one? Need I remind you, Inspector, that I was right about strawberry milk coming from pink cows!”

“**MEOW!**” shouted out Rex, reminding Jake that they did, after all, find pink cows on their last misadventure.

“Traitor!” snapped Jake, glaring in disapproval at Rex for taking Alexa’s side. “Grandma, help me out here!” begged Jake.

“Oh, no,” she said as she put the shell back up onto the mantel. “I know when not to get in the middle of an argument with you two. You each can believe in whatever you want to.”

“What do you believe, Grandma?” Alexa asked.

“Well, my darlings, I like to think there are endless possibilities in the universe just waiting for us!” As Grandma’s right dimple grew into a suspicious half-grin she made with her orangey-red lips, she gave Jake a wink, fluttering the long, flowing eyelashes of her right eye. Her beautiful, crystal clear, green eyes sparkled as she

asked in a mysterious tone, “Wouldn’t you agree, Inspector Moustachio?”

As he fiddled with the handle of his grandpa’s mystical magnifying glass, which was sticking out of his back pocket, Jake smiled, remembering all the strange places, crazy characters, and cases he solved traveling through it. He remembered Mrs. Smythe, the crazy, poisoning cook from the museum who stole The Bell of Time, and wondered where the evil Baron Von Snodgrass had hidden her. And he would never forget Big Daddy’s missing cow with the treasure map painted on its hide at Comanche Canyon and the treasure that awaited them. “Well, I guess you guys are right. Maybe there are endless possibilities in the universe just waiting for us! After all, we’ve seen stranger things than an undiscovered, mysterious, undersea world living inside a conch shell. Now, haven’t we?”

“**You have?**” questioned Grandma, startled, as her thick glasses slipped further down her nose.

The children’s faces turned a beet-red color as they tried to figure out what to say to dampen Grandma’s suspicions of their mysterious misadventures.

“Oh—he means we’ve thought of stranger things than that when we are making up stories!” exclaimed Alexa, giving her brother the evil eye. “**Don’t you, Jake?**”

“Y–Yeah,” he stuttered, “when we’re making up—uh—stories!”

“Well, that makes more sense,” said Grandma. “You had me worried there for a second! Your grandpa had a wild imagination of his own.”

Suddenly, a roar of thunder exploded over the cottage as they all trembled in fear.

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“Oh, dear,” uttered Grandma. “The storm is really kicking up out there. I don’t think we’ll be going back outside any time soon.” She thought for a minute about what they could do to have fun inside. “Now, let me see...how about a game of cards?”

Alexa started to jump up and down in a frenzy of excitement. She loved playing cards with Grandma Moustachio. Grandma was the state bridge champion seven years in a row. “I’ll get the cards. They’re in my Inspector Girl backpack,” she screamed, dashing down the hallway.

“I’ll get the fishy crackers!” Jake exclaimed excitedly as he headed for the kitchen with Rex trailing closely behind. “We can use them to bet with. Besides, you can’t play cards on an empty stomach.”

“**Meow!**” Rex agreed.

“Don’t get the pizza ones, Jake. They give Rex gas,” echoed Alexa from the other side of the house.

“Oh, dear!” professed Grandma. “We wouldn’t want that.” Grandma started to toddle over to her favorite, white, beaded-board cabinet and started searching for some candles to light just in case the storm blew out the electricity. She placed her favorite sea ship with the three blue candles in the center right in the middle of the knotty, pine dining room table and then lit them. The glow from the candles made the room look warm and toasty on such a grey, stormy day. She placed Sandy to her right as she sat down at the head of the table, adjusting the hairpins in her hair just so.

Alexa came bolting into the room with her backpack in hand, rummaging for her favorite Inspector Girl Go Fish cards.

Jake followed with two bags of their favorite, cheddar

fishy crackers, which he spread all over the table, dividing them equally among the players. “Where’s Rex?”

“Rexy Cat, where are you?” called out Alexa. “We’re about to start the game!”

Rex came happily running into the room with a big bag of pizza fishy crackers dangling from his mouth.

Jake looked down at him with disapproval. “What do you think you’re doing, you crazy cat. You know you can’t eat those.”

“**Meow!**” Rex growled, jumping up to take his place at the table, reluctantly dropping the bag of pizza fishy crackers.

Grandma got a competitive smile across her face as she started to deal the cards out. “Why, sometimes I think that cat actually understands everything we’re saying!”

“**Meow!**” he shouted in a Rexy Cat “yes.”