

THE SECRET OF THE HIDDEN SCROLLS

BOOK ONE
THE BEGINNING



BY M. J. THOMAS

WORTHY
kids™

For my wonderful wife, Lori, and amazing sons, Payton and Peter. Thank you for your love and encouragement.

—M.J.T.

ISBN: 978-0-8249-5684-4

WorthyKids
Hachette Book Group
1290 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10104

Text copyright © 2017 by M. J. Thomas
Art copyright © 2017 by Worthy Media, Inc.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

WorthyKids is a registered trademark of Hachette Book Group, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Thomas, M. J., 1969- author.

Title: The beginning / by M.J. Thomas.

Description: Nashville, Tennessee : WorthyKids/Ideals, [2017] | Series: The secret of the hidden scrolls ; book 1 | Summary: A scroll Great-Uncle Solomon, an archaeologist, found near the Dead Sea send Peter, nine, and Mary, ten, to the first moment of Creation and to the Garden of Eden.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017020346 | ISBN 9780824956844 (pbk. : alk. paper)

Subjects: | CYAC: Time travel—Fiction. | Creation—Fiction. | God—Fiction.

| Adam (Biblical figure)—Fiction. | Eve (Biblical figure)—Fiction. |

Scrolls—Fiction. | Brothers and sisters—Fiction. | Dogs—Fiction.

Classification: LCC PZ7.1.T4654 Beg 2017 | DDC [Fic]—dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2017020346>

Cover illustration by Graham Howells

Interior illustrations by Lisa S. Reed

Designed by Georgina Chidlow-Irvin

Lexile® level 510L

Printed and bound in the U.S.A.

LSC-C

CONTENTS

1.	The Beginning	1
2.	An Amazing Discovery	10
3.	The Lion's Roar	21
4.	Let There Be Light	29
5.	A Mighty Friend	37
6.	One Starry Night	47
7.	Swimming with Dolphins	55
8.	Running with Rhinos	64
9.	A Slithery Snake	72
10.	The Karate Lesson	81
11.	Everything Is Very Good	88
12.	The Rest of the Story	96



THE BEGINNING

Peter waved as he watched his mom and dad drive away. Africa was a long way off, and a month was a long time. Especially when it meant staying with Great-Uncle Solomon.

“Ruff!” barked Peter’s dog.

“You can’t go, Hank,” said Peter. “You have to stay here with us.”

Hank whined. Peter wasn’t happy either, but he wasn’t going to show his sister, Mary, that he was trying not to cry. She never cried. She never even laughed much, come to think of it.

She was too smart and serious for that sort of thing.

Peter looked up at the huge house. Then he looked over at Mary. She shrugged and said, “We should go in now.”

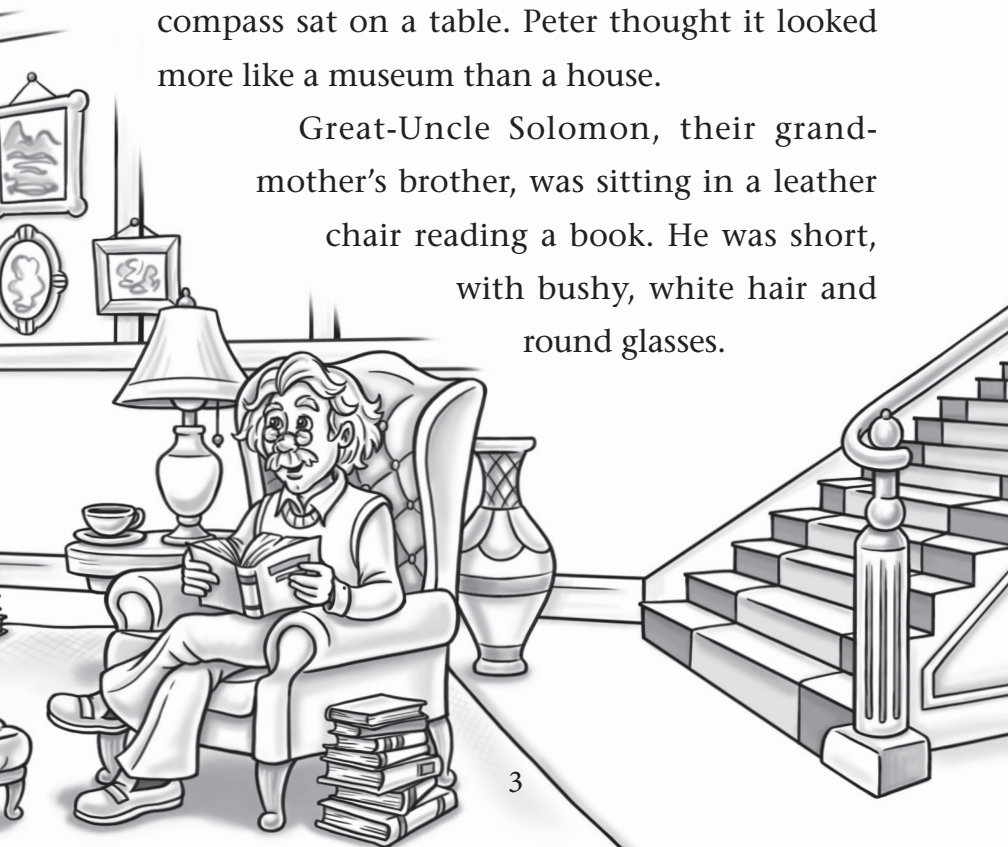
You would think she was five years older than him instead of just one.

“Okay,” said Peter.



He opened the tall wooden door and followed her into a large room. Peter looked up at the high ceiling. His eyes followed the stairs up to a landing leading to the second floor. Mary looked at a large map on the wall. It had red thumbtacks stuck into every continent. Small stacks of books were scattered around the room, and an old compass sat on a table. Peter thought it looked more like a museum than a house.

Great-Uncle Solomon, their grandmother's brother, was sitting in a leather chair reading a book. He was short, with bushy, white hair and round glasses.



“He looks like Einstein,” whispered Mary. “But he’s probably not as smart.”

All Peter knew was that his Great-Uncle Solomon didn’t know anything about kids. The last time they had seen him, four Christmases ago, he had given them each a new toothbrush.

Hank ran past Peter and barked at a tall, shiny suit of armor standing at the entrance to a long hallway. It held a shield in one hand and a long sword in the other.

“Your parents didn’t mention a dog,” said Great-Uncle Solomon.

“His name is Hank,” said Peter. “And he’s the world’s smartest dog.”

“Really? Can he tell time?” said Great-Uncle Solomon.

“He sure can,” answered Peter. “Hank, what time is it?”

Hank ran to the front window and looked at

the sun high in the sky. He ran back to Peter and barked four times.

Great-Uncle Solomon pulled out his pocket watch. "You are right, Hank. It is exactly four o'clock."

"He can also catch a Frisbee and play dead," said Peter.

"Impressive," said Great-Uncle Solomon. "Well, dinner will be served at five o'clock sharp. Hank, make sure they get to the kitchen on time. You kids can take a look around the house."

Hank ran over and barked at a scary wooden mask hanging on the wall. Peter picked up a rusty knife with a leather handle and a few coins with strange images on them.

Mary unfolded a dusty old map on a table. "Why do you have so many old things around your house?"

"Because I'm an archaeologist," Great-Uncle

Solomon said. "Do you two know what an archaeologist is?"

"Is it someone who decorates their house with old, breakable things, like my grandmother does?" said Peter.

"Not exactly," said Great-Uncle Solomon. "Mary, do you know?"

"Of course I do." Mary put her hands on her hips. "I'm ten years old. It's someone who travels to faraway places to dig up ancient artifacts and solve mysteries from the past."

"You're right," said Great-Uncle Solomon.

"That's what I meant," mumbled Peter. Of course Mary was right. She was always right.

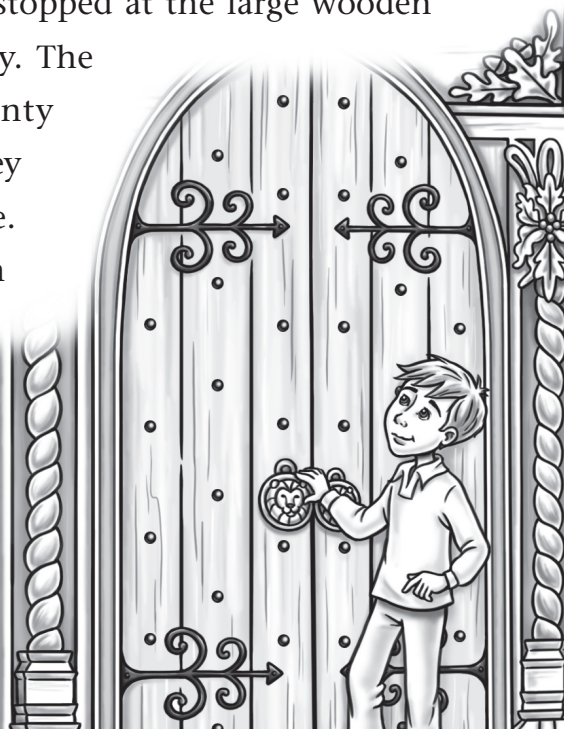
Great-Uncle Solomon walked over to the large map on the wall and pointed at the red thumbtacks. "I have been all around the world and made many amazing discoveries." He pointed at one red thumbtack poked into China and

looked toward Mary. “Like the one your parents made when they traveled to China and brought you home.”

Mary gave Peter a look that said, *You heard that, right?* Then she said to Great-Uncle Solomon, “Where do you keep your discoveries?”

“I keep a few around the house, but the most important ones are in the library—down the hallway.”

Peter ran down the long hallway past the suit of armor and stopped at the large wooden doors of the library. The doors looked twenty feet tall and like they were from a castle. Peter tried to open



one, but he couldn't turn the large handle that was shaped like a lion's head. Hank barked and scratched at the doors.

"Not yet," said Great-Uncle Solomon.

"Why not?" asked Mary.

Great-Uncle Solomon shook his head. "I don't think you are ready."

"Ready for what?" Peter stood straight and tall. "I'm nine years old, and I can read."

"I'm sure you can," Great-Uncle Solomon said. "But there is much more than books in the library. Amazing things. Things you could only dream about." He paused and looked into space for so long that Peter thought he might have fallen asleep. "Well, enough about the library for now. I have to go make dinner." He turned and walked down the long hallway toward the kitchen.

Peter stood there and stared at the old library

doors. "One month stuck in a house filled with old stuff."

Hank kept barking.

"I hope he has a television around here somewhere," said Mary.

"I forgot to tell you, I don't have a television," Great-Uncle Solomon shouted down the hall.

"What have we gotten ourselves into?" said Mary.

"I just hope he's a good cook, because I'm starving." Peter headed off to find his bedroom.



AN AMAZING DISCOVERY

Peter put his last pair of socks in the drawer and his suitcase in the closet. Then he lay down on the bed to test it out. As he stared at the ceiling, his stomach growled and his mind searched for something to do.

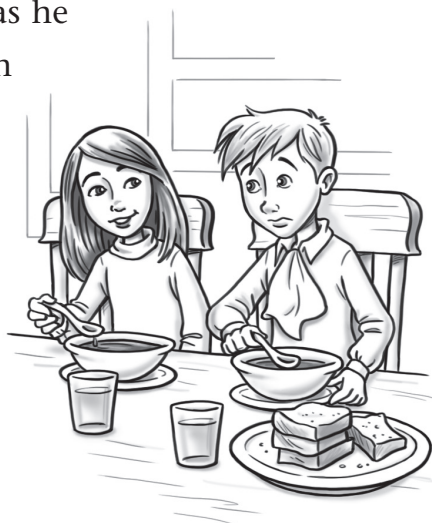
He heard Hank running down the long hallway, barking. “*Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof. Woof.*”

Mary poked her head out of her bedroom. “It must be five o’clock.”

“Good.” Peter slid off the bed and joined her. “All this boring stuff is making me hungry.”

“It’s not boring! It’s very interesting.” Mary led the way down the hall.

Peter rolled his eyes as he walked behind her. When they walked into the kitchen, they saw Great-Uncle Solomon pouring soup into three large bowls.



“Have a seat,” said Great-Uncle Solomon. “We have lots of things to talk about.”

Peter swallowed a big spoonful of the soup. It tasted like soggy cardboard and warm pond water.

“How does your soup taste?” asked Great-Uncle Solomon.

“It’s good . . . I guess,” said Peter.

Mary kicked him under the table and gave him a look. Peter reached down and rubbed his shin. Mary's karate training was really working.

Great-Uncle Solomon ate without saying anything. That seemed strange for somebody who had a lot to talk about. Finally, when Mary's bowl was empty, she asked, "What do you want to tell us about?"

"Come with me." Great-Uncle Solomon pushed himself back from the table and led them into the living room.

Peter could almost hear the old man's bones creaking. Mary and Peter sat on the big leather couch, and Hank lay down in front of the fireplace. Peter tried not to groan. This wasn't going to be fun.

"I have spent my life traveling around the world, and I've discovered many artifacts that prove the stories in the Bible are true," said

Great-Uncle Solomon. "But none of those discoveries compare to what I found one year ago on this very night."

"What was it?" Mary scooted closer.

"I haven't told anyone about this discovery yet," said Great-Uncle Solomon. "But I am getting old, and I think someone needs to know."

Peter sat up straighter. Maybe this wasn't going to be so boring after all. "You can tell us."

Great-Uncle Solomon stood up and quickly looked around the room. He checked under the pillows and behind the curtains like he was making sure no one else was in there.

"Who are you looking for?" said Peter. Who else could there possibly be?

"I think we're safe," said Great-Uncle Solomon.

"From what?" Mary looked behind the couch.

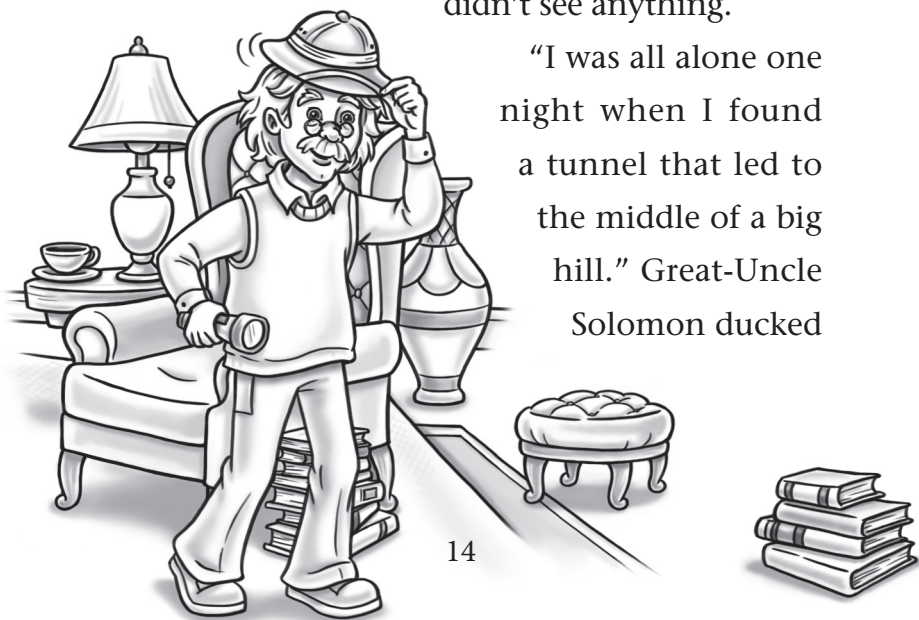
"Please don't interrupt," said Great-Uncle Solomon. He grabbed a safari hat and flashlight

and sat down. "I was on a dig in the desert beside the Dead Sea in Israel. Did you know that anyone can float on the Dead Sea? You can lie right on top of the water like a boat. You can even roll on top of the water like a log."

"Was that your *amazing* discovery?" asked Peter. Okay, back to being boring.

"No, of course not." Great-Uncle Solomon stood up and put on his safari hat. He slowly walked across the room, looking ahead as if he was seeing something. Peter looked, too, but he didn't see anything.

"I was all alone one night when I found a tunnel that led to the middle of a big hill." Great-Uncle Solomon ducked



his head and took two more steps. "It was very dark."

Great-Uncle Solomon ran to the wall and turned off the lights.

"My flashlight was losing power." He flicked his flashlight off and on.

"Why didn't you have one of those torches that don't go out?" asked Mary.

"That's only in the movies," said Great-Uncle Solomon.

Peter grinned. Maybe Mary didn't know everything after all.

Great-Uncle Solomon slowly walked across the room, pointing his flashlight straight ahead. "I could just barely see a door at the end of the tunnel. It had a large handle in the shape of a lion's head."

"You mean like the one on the library door that I couldn't open?" asked Peter.

“Yes. In fact, it was exactly the same,” said Great-Uncle Solomon. “And just then, my flashlight went out and I was left standing in the dark.”

“*Woof,*” barked Hank.

“No. *Dark,* not *bark.*” Great-Uncle Solomon turned off his flashlight. “I reached into the darkness, grabbed the lion’s head, and turned it. I pulled the door open and saw the most amazing thing.”

“How could you see in the dark?” asked Peter.

“There was a large clay pot in the middle of the room, and it was glowing as bright as a full moon on a clear October night.”

“What did you do?” Mary asked.

“I picked up the glowing pot, covered it with a blanket from my backpack, and ran back to my tent. There I discovered that the most amazing part wasn’t the glowing clay pot. It was what was inside the pot.”

“A pile of gold?” asked Peter.

“No, better,” said Great-Uncle Solomon. “I found several ancient scrolls.”

Peter crossed his arms and sat back. “How are scrolls better than a pile of gold?”

“After years of searching, I had finally found the Hidden Scrolls!” said Great-Uncle Solomon.

“Why were you searching for them?” Mary leaned so far forward that she almost fell off the couch.

“I spent many years in Israel and the Middle East digging and searching for artifacts to prove the events in the Bible are true. In my research, I discovered the Legend of the Hidden Scrolls. I knew I must find them.”



“Why are they so important?” asked Mary.

“They are very powerful!” said Great-Uncle Solomon. “They can unlock the secrets of the past and prove the Bible is true.”

“How?” asked Peter.

“Listen to the Legend of the Hidden Scrolls,” Great-Uncle Solomon said. He cleared his throat and began:



THE SCROLLS CONTAIN THE TRUTH YOU SEEK.

BREAK THE SEAL.

UNROLL THE SCROLL.

AND YOU WILL SEE THE PAST UNFOLD.

AMAZING ADVENTURES ARE IN STORE

FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW THE LION'S ROAR!



“What does that mean?” asked Peter. This was starting to get very interesting.

“The legend means that whoever opens the scrolls will travel back in time to the events of the Bible,” Great-Uncle Solomon said.

“Why?” asked Peter. “What is in the scrolls?”

“I don’t know. Each scroll has a red wax seal holding it together. Each seal has a different image pressed into it. I wasn’t able to break the seals to open the scrolls.”

Mary tilted her head. “Why not?”

“The legend of the scrolls goes on to say that only the chosen ones can open the scrolls. I guess I’m not one of the chosen ones.” Great-Uncle Solomon took off his safari hat and slumped down on the couch.

“Let me try!” Peter shouted. “Maybe I’m one of the chosen ones.”

Mary shook her head and rolled her eyes.

“I don’t know,” said Great-Uncle Solomon. “Only the lion will know.”

“Who is the lion?” asked Mary.

“You will have to figure that out on your own,” said Great-Uncle Solomon. “But right now, it is time to go to bed.”

What? Go to bed with the scrolls hidden somewhere in the house? Peter was sure he’d never fall asleep.



THE LION'S ROAR

Peter awoke at midnight to what sounded like a lion's roar in the hallway. He shook his head. He must have been dreaming.

But Hank was barking in the hallway. Peter ran out to stop him before he woke everyone in the house.

Mary opened her bedroom door and rubbed the sleep out of her eyes. "What's going on out here?"

"I don't know. Hank won't stop barking," said Peter.

Mary looked across the hall and pointed. Peter followed her gaze. One of the doors to the library was cracked open just a little bit.

“Let’s go in,” said Peter.

“It’s late, and we should be in bed,” Mary whispered.

Peter walked toward the door. “Are you kidding? Don’t you want to see all the amazing things in the library?”

“I don’t think we’re allowed to go in,” said Mary.

“Great-Uncle Solomon never said we couldn’t go in,” said Peter. “He just said he didn’t think we were ready, and something about a lion.”

“I guess.” Mary twirled a piece of hair around with her finger. “I *would* like to see what’s in there.”

Hank barked at the library doors again. Then he scratched at the cracked door, and it swung

all the way open. Hank ran in before Peter could stop him.

Peter took off after Hank, with Mary on his heels. When he reached the middle of the library, he froze like a popsicle. Mary ran into him from behind. Peter rubbed his eyes. He couldn't believe what he was seeing.

The library was huge. Tall bookshelves went from floor to ceiling on every wall. He had never seen so many books in his life.

"Look at all these books," said Mary. "It's amazing."

"It's a lot of books," said Peter. "But where are all the cool things that Great-Uncle Solomon discovered? He said we would see amazing things that we could only dream about. The only things I see are books, and that's not a very good dream."

"Well," said Mary, "maybe he was just trying to make it fun for us."

“Or maybe he’s not just old.” Peter grinned.
“Maybe he’s old and crazy.”

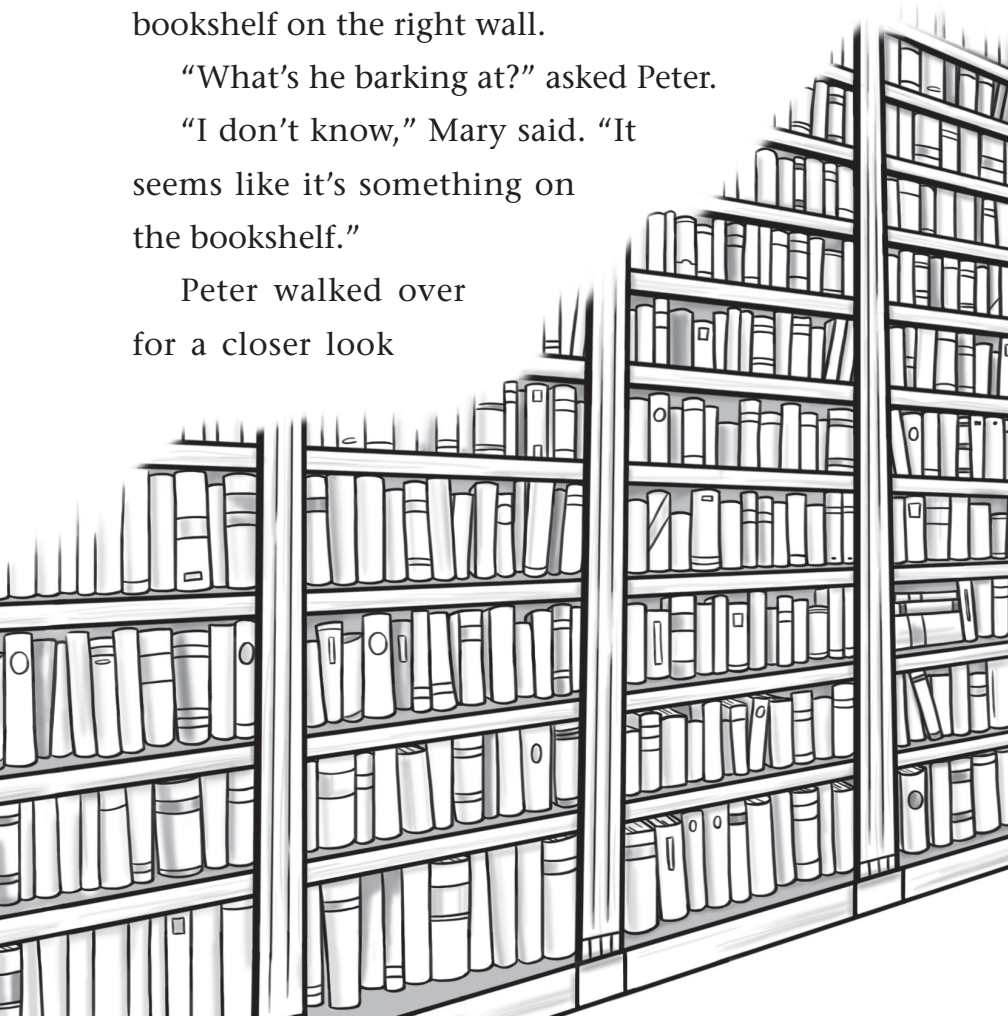
“I don’t think so,” said Mary. “Mom and Dad wouldn’t have left us with a crazy person.”

“*Woof, woof,*” barked Hank. He ran to a tall bookshelf on the right wall.

“What’s he barking at?” asked Peter.

“I don’t know,” Mary said. “It seems like it’s something on the bookshelf.”

Peter walked over
for a closer look



at the book Hank was barking at. It was a large book with a red cover. It didn't have a title, but a lion's head was painted in gold on the cover.

"Maybe this is the lion Great-Uncle Solomon talked about," said Mary.

"Hey," Peter said, "did you hear something that sounded like a lion's roar in the hallway a few minutes ago?"

"I did," said Mary. "But I didn't say anything because I thought I was dreaming."

Peter pinched his arm. "Ouch!"

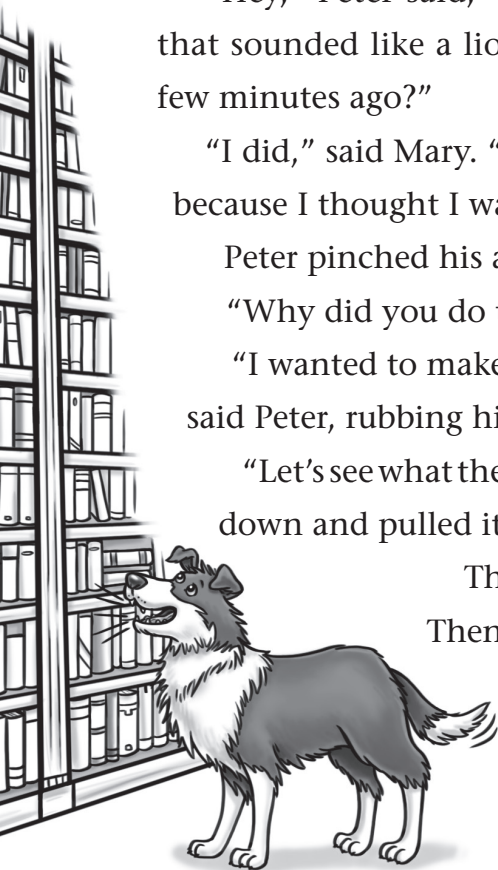
"Why did you do that?" asked Mary.

"I wanted to make sure I wasn't dreaming," said Peter, rubbing his arm.

"Let's see what the book says." Mary reached down and pulled it from the shelf.

The tall bookshelf rumbled.

Then it moved. It slid open to reveal a hidden room.



The room was dark except for a glowing clay pot sitting in the center.

Peter's jaw dropped. "I guess Great-Uncle Solomon isn't crazy after all," he said. "Let's go in."

Mary hung back. "I don't know about this."

Hank ran into the secret room, straight toward the pot.

"Hank, stop!" shouted Peter.

Hank dug his claws into the floor, but it was no use. He slid all the way across the floor and knocked the pot over. The scrolls fell out and rolled everywhere.



Mary gasped. “We better clean this up and get out of here before we break something.”

Peter picked up one of the scrolls and looked at the red wax seal. It had a picture of a tree pressed into it.

“Hurry! We need to put them away before Great-Uncle Solomon finds us,” said Mary.

As Peter went to put the scroll back in the clay pot, he tripped over Hank. He almost fell face first into the pot, but Mary grabbed it out of the way. Peter landed on the floor with a thud.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

“I am. But I’m not sure about the scroll.”

Peter held up the scroll. The red wax seal was broken. Suddenly, the walls shook, books fell off the shelves, and the floor quaked.

Peter’s heart pounded so hard he could almost hear it. When he looked at Mary, her eyes were round as soccer balls.

“Mary!” shouted Peter. He held the scroll in one hand and grabbed Mary’s hand with the other. The library began to crumble around them. Then everything was dark . . . completely dark.