

Mister Max: The Book of Lost Things Study Guide

**Mister Max: The Book of Lost Things by Cynthia
Voight**

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Plot Summary

Mister Max: The Book of Lost Things by Cynthia Voigt is the story of Max Starling who is the twelve-year-old son of William and Mary The Starlings are actors who own the Starling Theatrical Company. Max is their only child. Though his parents love him, they devote a lot of their time and energy to their theater. Sometimes Max feels a stab of pain over their lack of attention; but, he's learned a lot from them, things that other kids his age would never even imagine.

Max is a bright boy who has worked since he was eight-years old in his parents' theater. He has had an unorthodox upbringing. He does odd jobs for them and helps with scenery, costumes, and posters. He even helps actors learn their lines. He does well at school, well enough that he can go on the road with the company at times. He loves to watch his parents on stage and has learned the art of pretending and using words to make a point and convey an aura and personality. This ability proves to come in handy when he is faced with the biggest challenge of his twelve years.

Max's parents receive an invitation from the Maharajah of Kashmir. He is asking them to commit to staying with him in his country for several months for the express purpose of developing a theatrical troupe that will travel the country and entertain the people. A beautiful bejeweled brooch and two first-class tickets on a luxury liner accompany the invitation to entice the couple to accept. Max feels left out and asks, "What about me?" Of course, they can't leave him. They accept the invitation with the stipulation that another ticket is sent for Max. Max is thrilled!

However, there is a mix-up – either accidentally or intentionally – and his parents apparently set sail without him. He wasn't late for departure time. But when he asks the harbor master about the ship – The Flower of Kashmir – he learns that there was no such ship. He and his grandmother, whom he calls Grammie, are befuddled and worried about his parents. Grammie tries to calm things down. They will just have to be patient. His parents will contact them and explain everything.

Time marches on; and, there is no word. Max decides that since he's twelve, almost thirteen, he should stay in his house alone. Of course, Grammie disagrees. She wants him to move into her house. But, Max has a stubborn and independent streak and refuses. He can tough it out alone. He doesn't want to be a burden on Grammie, so he looks for work. To be truly independent he feels the need to support himself financially. Since he's only twelve, no one wants to hire him.

Max is the resourceful sort and thinks of rather unconventional ways to earn money. Most of the work he is asked to do involves finding missing things – such as a priceless piece of silverware, a dog, and periodicals from the library. He is bright and quick thinking and completes his jobs. The acting techniques of his parents which he has observed over the years come in handy in carrying out his duties as do the theater's many costumes. But, the lost treasures he would most like to find are beyond his reach. He'd give up anything to find his parents.



Prologue and Chapters 1 - 5

Summary

Prologue

A bellhop from the Hotel Excelsior delivered a small packet to the home of William and Mary Starling of the Starling Theatrical Company at 5 Thieves Alley. The Starlings have a son named Maximilian. The bellhop has no idea of what he has started.

Chapter 1: In Which a Surprising Invitation Arrives and Plans Are Made

William brought the packet into the dining room where Mary and Max were eating Sunday breakfast. William opened the packet and pulled out two envelopes. One of the messages said that a great adventure awaited them. Since the theatrical company had a full schedule through the middle of September, Mary pointed out that they had no time for adventures. William read the rest of the letter. They had been invited to spend several months with the Maharajah of Kashmir. The Maharajah wanted them to create a traveling, theatrical company for him. Max looked on as his parents read the letter, neither of them glanced at him.

Grammie always told Max to remember that his parents were actors. They had involved him in the theater from the age of eight. He missed a lot of school; but, he was bright enough that he never failed. He was proud of his parents' talents and loved the theater; however, he didn't want to be an actor. Max was twelve now and had always been told by his father that twelve was the age of independence. He worried that his parents would travel to India without him.

First-class tickets were included in the packet. They were to sail at noon in two weeks and three days. They would be paid in gold and jewels. They had to respond to the emissary immediately. A red silk bag with a beautiful brooch inside was also in the package. That sealed the deal for William and Mary. How could they resist the invitation? Max would stay with Grammie. But, Max's mother knew that neither she nor her husband would want to be separated from Max that long. They'd have to turn the invitation down. William said he would accept the invitation on the condition that they were given a third ticket for Max. Max was thrilled and envisioned all the sights he'd see.

A few days later, they received a response that the third ticket would be waiting for them on the boat, the Flower of Kashmir. Mary and William stood at the table and bowed although Max was their only audience. He loved seeing his parents perform and then take their bows at the end of the show. The next day they cancelled all their upcoming performances and notified the other members of the company about their plans. They posted a notice at the theater that they would be closed indefinitely as of April 15th. Their last performance would be "Adorable Arabella" which was Mary's most popular



role. William, who was a larger than life figure, was so excited about their adventure that he told everyone he encountered about it.

Grammie had her doubts about the adventure. Even the beautiful brooch didn't win her over. William accused her of raining on their parade. She mainly hated that Max was going. She'd be worried about him the whole time. William promised to keep her updated with postcards.

Chapter 2: In Which Max Loses His Parents

While Mary packed lightweight summer clothing for the family and several evening gowns for herself, Max was most concerned with packing his watercolor paints, brushes, and paper. He insisted on taking his art lesson on the morning of their departure. He planned to bring his bike on the trip and would ride it to the boat after his lesson. A carriage was scheduled to pick up his parents. They worked out the exact timing with Max for their departure. Max promised not to be late.

Grammie paid for his art lessons with Joachim, who was a gray and gloomy man. The art teacher was aloof, yet, he gifted Max with a bright red beret in their early lessons. When Max arrived for the last lesson before his departure, Joachim was in the midst of painting a hyacinth. He always painted what was growing in his garden. He complained to Max that he was growing old and might be losing his eyesight. Max was worried about Joachim and his eyesight and told him that he should go to the doctor. As the lesson concluded, the bell on the City Hall clock tower rang. Joachim said the bell indicated either ten or twelve. Max was sure he heard only ten rings. He grabbed his carpetbag and paints and headed out.

Max was a skillful biker. He sped down the streets and weaved in and out of the busy traffic. He was sure he'd be fine even if he had missed the 11:15 mark. That was the time when he was supposed to head for the dock. He rode down the dock past the ocean liners but didn't see the Flower of Kashmir. Max asked Captain Francis, a ferryboat captain whom he knew, where the Flower was docked. Captain Francis didn't know and told Max to ask the harbor master who worked in the little, brick building to which Captain Francis pointed.

Max asked the harbor master where the Flower of Kashmir was docked. The harbor master asked for the ship's country of registration. Max assumed that it was India. According to the ledger, there were no ships set to depart at noon. Three had left at 10:30 to catch a favorable tide, none of which were the Flower. Max's heart was sinking. Max told the harbor master he was supposed to sail on the Flower. Fenton, the harbor master's assistant, came forward and said that a message had been left for Max by a shifty man with funny ears. The letter said that he would not be part of their adventure and that he would stay with his grandmother. It was signed, "WS the lesser." There was a PS which said that Arabella was engaged to Banker Hermann. Though deeply disappointed, Max kept his composure and thanked the harbor master. Apparently, his parents had sailed without him. The harbor master and Fenton thought that something



mysterious was going on. They wrote down a description of Max for the police – just in case.

Chapter 3: In which Max and Grammie Wonder What Happened and What To Do About It

As soon as Max was out of the crowd, he had to stop riding. He pulled over and took a few deep breaths to try to recover. He felt hollow, frightened, and empty all at once. What had changed?! Maybe Grammie knew. He hurried to her house. Max told Grammie that they had left without him. But, someone had been lying all along. There wasn't a boat called the Flower of Kashmir. The bell tower sounded twelve tones which proved he'd been on time. Of course, he'd stay with her, she said. She told him to go back to the dock and find out everything he could. She tended to think it was his father that was behind the mix-up and not her daughter. She told Max to be back for supper.

Grammie made spaghetti for him that night, but it didn't cheer him up as it usually did. Max thought that his parents might have taken a ship to Porthaven and were returning by train. Being a librarian and former teacher, Grammie was on the bossy side. Max was twelve, almost thirteen. He decided that he should stay in his own home, alone. Grammie wouldn't hear of it. Max agreed to stay that night, but no longer. Grammie said they'd see about that. Grammie figured they'd just left without him; but, she did agree the note was strange. Max pointed out that Arabella and Banker Hermann were two characters that weren't even in the same play. There was a reference in the letter to "Eye hath not heard. . ." that Grammie recognized from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which was about illusions and love.

Grammie wanted to know exactly what the original invitation said. Max recited it to her word for word. Then, she asked where the other boats in the harbor were bound. Those boats were going to China, Australia, and South America. He told her that none were going to India. The ships to Australia and China could make a stop in India for refueling. Grammie thought that they were probably on one of those ships. Grammie said they'd just have to be patient and wait to hear from them. They couldn't both have amnesia. If they had been kidnapped, there would be a ransom note. In the meantime, Grammie would use her resources at the library to try to find passenger lists and itineraries. Max should watch the mail and keep an eye on the theater.

Later in front of the fire, Max caught Grammie up on what he'd found out on the dock that afternoon. Captain Francis had seen his parents get out of a closed carriage. He saw them go up a gangplank; but, he couldn't see the name of the ship. Grammie said since they didn't know what was going on they should keep this matter to themselves. Max didn't want his school told. It would be better if they thought he'd gone with them. Besides, Grammie made just enough money at the library to support herself. He'd have to earn some money to support himself. He could mow lawns and do janitorial and carpentry work. Grammie could keep him up on history and reading, but she couldn't help him with math. He'd need a math tutor.



Chapter 4: In Which Max Doesn't Want to Get Out of Bed, Grammie Is Bossy, and Madame Olenka Enters the Scene

The next morning, Max was awake. However, when his Grammie poked her head in, he pretended to still be asleep. His thoughts were focused on the day before. It had been quite a day. He would love to see his father and mother step into the room. He felt sorry for himself. He also felt that his father was wrong about a twelve-year-old being mature enough to be independent. He worried that his parents might be in danger and might never come back. Grammie left for the library and, sometime later, Max figured he'd better get out of bed before she returned. When Grammie came home, they were both a little down in the dumps. Max's idea about finding work had changed. Who would hire him? He was underage. He went to bed right after dinner. He felt worse about everything now than he had the day before.

When Grammie left for work the next day, she dropped two books off in his room to help him pass the time. They were *Treasure Island* and *Huckleberry Finn*. He'd read them before, but he scanned through them. He thought about the note his father left. He wondered why his mother hadn't written her own note. He knew the offer was real; he'd seen the tickets. He hated that he was left behind. They knew he had no friends. He couldn't understand how could they leave him. Grammie found out that day that the ships going to China and Australia were both stopping in India. The letter said they'd be met in Bombay. The Chinese ocean liner, the *Eastern Star*, would be making a stop in Bombay on May 10th. There were no "Starlings" on any of the ship manifests. There were no names of the characters they'd played.

Grammie didn't let Max sleep late on Saturday. If he wasn't going to try to find a job, he'd have to do some chores. After she left for a half-day at the library Max, angry at Grammie, packed up and went home. When he got home, it was eerie to be there alone without his parents. But, he'd made his decision and was determined to stay. He went through every room and opened the windows to let in fresh air. He searched everywhere for a clue but found nothing that pointed to any solution to the mystery. Max left for the store and brought home some groceries. He did a little weeding in the garden that his father hadn't finished doing before he left. As he worked, a bell rang at the gate.

Max ignored the bell, but it rang again. By the time he got to the gate, the woman – whom he didn't know – had let herself in. She introduced herself as Madame Olenka. He noticed her long silver earrings but then realized it was her earlobes that were extraordinarily long, not her earrings. She heard that the family had gone away and wanted to know if the house was for rent. He pretended he was a foreigner and couldn't speak English very well. He told her he worked and lived there. He didn't answer her when she asked who hired him. She was angry with him and said "Foreigners!" with much derision. She claimed she was going to report him to someone. He told her his name was "Mister." She glared at him and then left by the gate. There was something suspicious about her.

Max went to Grammie's for supper. He told her he was going to move on and had been at his house that day. He told her about Madame Olenka coming by. She didn't like the



sound of it. Grammie thought that Max looked older than he was and that the woman probably believed he was the gardener. Grammie had looked up the Maharajah of Kashmir in the encyclopedia. There was no such person. The invitation must have been a trick to lure them away. Grammie planned to take Monday off and stay at the Starling house with Max. She had a feeling the woman would be back. She found a math tutor for Max named Ari. Grammie also made a list of possible jobs that Max could get like delivering goods, walking dogs, or washing dishes. She told him that they may not be the most interesting or challenging jobs, but he should be open-minded about them. If he insisted on staying at his house, he had to be at her house at 6 p.m. every evening for dinner. That was non-negotiable.

Chapter 5: In Which Madame Olenka Returns with Reinforcements and Max Seeks Gainful Employment

On Monday, Grammie took off work and sat on the steps with a book while Max worked in the garden. It wasn't long before Madame Olenka showed up. She brought a police officer with her and pointed out Max to him. She was sure he was a wanted man and was up to something. Grammie knew the police officer, Sven Torson, and said good morning to him. He explained that Madame Olenka had concerns about the gardener. Grammie confirmed that "Mister" was taking care of the house while the family was away. She had known Mister for over twelve years and would vouch for him. Sven wondered why Madame Olenka was so interested in the house.

After their visitors left, Grammie and Max complimented each other on their good acting jobs. Max got ready to go out and look for work. He tried his best to look older like a poor university student. He admitted that he didn't feel safe being in his house alone. Grammie said they'd talk about it at supper. He spent the afternoon looking for work but didn't get hired. He tried a bakery and a restaurant, but he had no luck. Grammie had sent telegrams to her library contacts in Bombay, Colombo, and Caracas that afternoon. She asked to be told when the three ships – the Miss Koala, the Eastern Star, and the Simon Bolivar – landed. She asked her contacts to do a little research on the ships and their passengers. Max wanted to stay at Grammie's, but his pride wouldn't let him. It would finish him, drown him. Besides, he asked Grammie, how could he look for his father's famous fortune if he wasn't there? Grammie was famous for not believing in his father's great fortune.

Analysis

Prologue and Chapter 1

An adventure for the Starling family begins when a delivery is made to their house. The Prologue ends in a cliffhanger that indicates that something extraordinary is going to happen. The Starlings are invited on a trip by an important man in India. He wants them to develop a theater group there. It could be a legitimate offer; but, it seems too good to be true. The Starlings are both actors. Could whoever sent this invitation be counting on Mary and William having inflated, actors' egos that he could feed to get the results he



wanted? Twelve-year-old Max feels left out. They don't even mention him. He has to bring up the obvious himself: "What about me?" When they recover from the joy of having such good luck, they realize that they can't leave Max behind. He could stay with Grammie, but they would miss him too much. They love him so much that Robert accepts the invitation on the condition that they are given another ticket for Max.

Max is overjoyed that he will get to go with them. As a typical twelve-year-old, he is probably pleased that he'll be missing school. He's had a rather unorthodox childhood because his parents are both actors and have a theater company. He doesn't have any friends. Perhaps, that's because he's missed too much school and been overly involved in the theater where there are no other kids. Still, it is unusual that he has no friends. Besides working at the theater, when his parents go on the road, he goes with them sometimes. Although they didn't think of him when they first read the invitation, he must feel heartened that they would pass up such an opportunity because they wouldn't leave him behind. Grammie, the sensible one in the family, is concerned with a young child being gone that long.

Chapter 2

Max is taking art lessons and insists on taking one on the morning of their departure. He planned on taking his bike on the boat. So, after his lesson he rides it to the dock. Immediately, things don't smell right. No one knows of the Flower of Kashmir which is the boat that he and his family were to board for the trip to India. Even checking with the harbor master, there is no record of such a boat. Perhaps, they took a different boat. A message was left for him at the harbor master's office. It was presumably from his father. It said they were going without him and that he should stay with his grandmother. Why the change of heart? They had just been so emphatic about not going without him. The postscript at the end of the note referred to two characters from different plays becoming engaged. Max is disappointed and hurt. How could they have left without him?

Chapter 3

Grammie is immediately suspicious. Max points out that the two characters mentioned in his father's note are from different plays. Grammie notices a line from a *Midsummer Night's Dream* which is about illusion. Could these be hints that Max's father was using to get a message to Max? His parents might have met with foul play. Later, Grammie learns that there is no such person as the Maharajah of Kashmir. Max learns that Captain Francis saw his parents get out of their carriage and head up a gangplank, but he couldn't make out the name of the ship. Therefore, his parents got on a boat. However, the boat was not the Flower of Kashmir because it didn't exist. They were not going to see the Maharajah because he didn't exist either. Where were they? Who had lured them into this mystery? Why?

Chapter 4



Madame Olenka came to Max's house to inquire about renting it. Max pretended to be the gardener and a foreigner who couldn't speak English very well. It was the actor in him. Max had never seen this woman before. How did she know just after a few days that the family was gone? Why was she so intent on renting the Starling house? When Max told Grammie about it, she was very suspicious and decided to be with Max at the Starling house in case the woman showed up again.

Chapter 5

Sure enough the woman came back to the house. This time she brought a policeman which was rather extraordinary. Why was she making such a big to-do about the Starlings' house? The policeman who knew Grammie had the same thought. Madame Olenka left because Grammie confirmed that Max was the gardener and was watching the house while the family was gone. But, as persistent as she had been, it was probably likely that she'd be back. Max doesn't want to be bossed by Grammie. He wants to feel like an adult. He keeps insisting that he is going to stay at his house, alone. But, with the visits of this strange woman and his missing parents, it might be a little scary for him. He is only twelve.

Some references are made to William Starling's fortune. Grammie doesn't believe that it exists. She attributes it to her son-in-law's dramatics and tendency toward hyperbole. Whether the fortune actually exists or not makes no difference. If word had gotten around that he had a fortune, the wrong people could have gotten wind of it. One way to have a chance to look around the house without any problems would be to lure the family away. Madame Olenka showed up at the house not expecting anyone to be there and was surprised and even angry to find Max there. If his parents had been lured away by a bogus invitation, where did they go?

Discussion Question 1

If William Starling actually wrote the note to his son, why did he make a reference to two characters in two different plays?

Discussion Question 2

What was strange about Madame Olenka's visit to the Starling house?

Discussion Question 3

What could have drawn unsavory people to the Starling house?

Vocabulary

matinee, showcase, raj, troupe, ebullience, emissary, indulgent, indispensable, vividly, embark, extravagant, steward, dawdle, hyacinth, mercenaries, embossed, dismayed, wily, vellum, bellowed, imbroglio, dramatization, companionable, amnesia, contagious, ransom, squall, itineraries, gangplank, vehemently, periodical, icebox, manifest, bereft, charismatic, exasperation, scornfully, ferreting, gumption, marauders



Chapters 6 - 10

Summary

Chapter 6: In which Max Earns a Princely Sum

Max's luck in finding a job didn't improve. He went everywhere he could think of but couldn't find a job. He got hungry and bought a meat pie and sat on a bench in the park to eat it. He was people watching and got sleepy and drifted off. When he awoke, he was being stared at by a young boy. He asked the boy his name, but he didn't answer. Max looked around and didn't see a mother or nanny. He picked the boy up and sat him on the bench by him. He probably would have to stay there until his parent or guardian came for him. He told the child that his name was Max.

After awhile, he wondered if he should take the child to the police but they'd ask too many questions. Maybe he should take him to Grammie at the library. The little boy said something that sounded like "I" and tugged on Max. He wanted him to go with him. He told the kid he had to get his bike and that he could ride in the basket. He passed groups of women with children. No one stopped Max to claim the little boy. There was no sign of a frantic mother.

Riding out of the park with the little boy, Max noticed the shop signs. Perhaps, he could paint business signs to earn money. The little boy tried to climb out of the basket when he saw a big ice cream cone on an ice cream shop sign. Maybe things would get better after an ice cream cone. Max began to think that he should have stayed in the park with the kid.

The young woman behind the counter at the ice cream shop cried, "Angel! There you are!" She asked him where he'd been. The woman finally acknowledged Max and asked him to look for Angel's mother. She just left the shop. She was tall and was wearing a red hat with peacock feathers. Tell her that Gabrielle has him, she told Max. He rushed out and ran down the sidewalk. He saw a woman with a red hat just exiting a hotel. He told her that Gabrielle had Angel. She was relieved and took off running. Gabrielle told the woman that her thanks should be directed to Max. The woman was really a good mother Gabrielle said. But, Angel had the tendency to run off.

The woman insisted that Max sit down with her and have a bite to eat. She ordered two croissants and coffee. The woman was still shaking from the incident. Max told her his name although she didn't introduce herself. He noticed she had glittery rings on both hands and obviously expensive clothing. Max regretted that he told her his real name. She reached in her purse and passed a \$50 bill to him. She said she wished he could think of a way to keep Angel from running away. A leash... like a dog leash could keep him under control, Max offered. She said if he lived nearby and could use the work, she'd be happy to recommend him to her friends many of whom need handyman work. She intended to have a leash made like the one Max described.



Chapter 7: In Which We Meet Gabrielle Glompf and Max Acquires a Lodger

Max stood at the shop window and watched Angel and his mother walk down the street hand-in-hand. Gabrielle offered Max a slice of cake. She was glad to feed a starving university student. Besides she liked to show off her baking skills. He told her it was the best cake he ever ate. When she pressed him about his other name, he told her his name was Mister Max. It sounded to her like a name for a round person. Since her last name was Glompf she wouldn't comment on his. He told her he took math at school and worked part time. He asked why she wasn't a pastry chef's apprentice. Gabrielle explained that she had a black mark on her record which kept her from getting references. Not even her family would speak for her. She had shamed them. She had a life full of love and promise but things changed. She hoped that her family would forgive her someday and remember that she was not the type of person who would cheat and steal. Max asked if he could buy a piece of her cake for his grandmother. She boxed up the piece of cake and told him that she hoped he would come back sometime. Gabrielle said she sensed that Max had his own story. He did not respond.

As Max pedaled home, he felt a renewal. He had fifty dollars which would keep him in food and pay for his lessons for a week. He stopped by the library to see Grammie. She'd given it a lot of thought, and she had decided that it would be better if Max stayed with her. He showed her his \$50 and told her how he earned it. Grammie was impressed but thought he should stop by the bank and change the \$50 into coins. Grammie had to return to work. She told Max that they'd talk about everything at supper.

Max had an hour before Ari came for his math lesson, so he decided to start a painting of a stormy sky; but it didn't turn out the way he had envisioned it in his mind. He lost track of time until he heard a knock at the front door. He found Ari, a tall red-handed man, at his door. He looked like a university student and was handsome like a Greek god. Max made tea and set out bread and jam. Ari was hungry and dug in. Ari first tested out Max's knowledge of math functions and fractions and Max demonstrated his knowledge of them. Next they moved on to geometry. Geometry was Ari's favorite mathematical subject. He liked its logic and sense of purpose. He tested Max on geometrical definitions. After a review, Ari wrote down the words and had Max filled in the definitions.

Ari had a full load at school, two part-time jobs plus his tutoring jobs. His most costly expense was housing. He paid \$40 a week for a room near the university. He had to set aside a certain amount that he was saving for something and he couldn't lessen the number of classes he took because he had to have a degree. Ari told Max that he did well in his first lesson. Max asked what Ari was saving for and why he had to have a degree. A few years back he made a mistake and lost everything of value he had. He was a spoiled young man and he deserved what happened to him. The worst part was that someone else, a girl, lost everything, too. Ari didn't elaborate.

Max had a brilliant idea. Why didn't Ari live there at his house in exchange for the tutoring? Ari said it was quite a distance from the university, his other jobs, and the



library. Max had an extra bicycle that Ari could use. Ari asked how his grandmother would feel. Max responded that it was his house and his decision. Ari would save thirty dollars a week in the deal. They'd eat at his grandmother's house every night. She's a good cook, he told him. Ari said he knew another really good cook once. Ari would think about it. Max thought to himself that Grammie would like the deal. She wouldn't worry about him being alone. Ari would have to decide immediately because his weekly rent was due the next day. Max told him that he better pack up his things and move in.

Chapter 8: In Which Max Is Offered a Job

Max thought his luck had changed after earning \$50 and solving his housing problem. He continued to go out every day to look for a job. He kept hearing "No." By the end of the week with no job and no word from his parents who had been gone eleven days, his spirits began to sink. He was distracted from his doldrums with his math and his reading assignments from Grammie and his painting. Grammie encouraged him not to give up on anything. His biggest worry was whether his parents were in danger. He hoped they were on a luxury liner on the ocean, but he feared they were captives.

After he finished his homework assignments, he went in the backyard to work on his sky scape. He was doing well until his hand jerked when the bell rung. It ruined his picture. He ran to the front expecting to see Madame Olenka. Instead, a man dressed in a business suit was standing at the front door. The man had a girl about nine years old with him. He asked Max if the address was Five Thieves Alley and if he was Mister Max. The man confirmed that Max was the same Mister Max who found the little boy. He wasn't the little boy's father, but he knew the family. The man was there to offer Max a job. He wanted to hire him to find his daughter's lost dog.

The man figured that Max was a beginner detective. Of course, Max didn't know he was a detective at all. Mrs. Henderson, Angel's mother, told the Baroness about Max finding her son and word got around. The Baroness was the old witch who lived in the castle on Lakeview. Max had heard of her. Max said he'd take the case -- \$25 now and \$25 when he found the dog. The man paid him immediately. The little girl's name was Clarissa. The dog was Princess Jonquilletta, a golden retriever. Clarissa swore she didn't lose her dog. Somebody untied her at the Hilliard School near the university. The students couldn't bring their pets inside the school. They had to tie them up across the street from the play yard. Max said he'd do his best. Being an actor, Max sensed that there was something insincere about Clarissa -- that she really wasn't that upset about losing her dog.

Max decided to wear a train conductor's costume from a play for the job. It seemed like a good uniform for a dog detective. He added a butterfly net to complete the costume. When Ari came home, he didn't recognize him at first.

Chapter 9: The Lost Dog, Act I

When Max rode up to Hilliard School, the gates were locked and no one was around. He looked at the spot across the street from the school where the dog had been tied. To



the right was the entrance to the university with a busy commercial area beyond it. To the left was single roadway that had residences on either side protected by tall brick and stone walls. He had never played a dog in any of the plays he was in, but he sensed that a dog would be attracted to the grass and trees of the residential area.

The first residence he came to was a sprawling mansion. He pulled the bell on the front door. A butler answered and told him to go to the service entrance around the back. A cook, a tall intimidating woman, answered the back door and assured him that there were no dogs on the property. He came to a stucco mansion next. He learned from his first experience to go to the service entry first. The cook, a short chubby man, answered. Max asked if he'd seen a dog running loose. The cook was suspicious of Max. He didn't believe he was a dogcatcher; he was sure he was a gypsy. Next, he came to a mansion with wrought iron fencing. Two elderly ladies answered the door. Max told them that he was the dogcatcher. Immediately one of the sisters blurted out that she had been sure someone would come to claim her. Max told the sisters that he was looking for a female golden retriever. One sister said the dog they found had a leash that had been chewed through. The dog wasn't far away. They had named her Sunny. They called to her.

Max walked down the driveway with a large brown-eyed golden retriever. He tied a rope to her collar although she didn't seem to want to run away. While Max went to Grammie's to have dinner, he left the dog in Joachim's garden. Grammie thought that Max was quite a detective, but Max said he was just a good actor. Ari had wanted to be a shepherd when he was young, live the simple life surrounded by mountains. Grammie felt that detective work was dangerous.

When Max and Ari arrived back home, there was an envelope on the floor by the mail slot. But it was Sunday. Someone must have hand-delivered it. "Mister Max" was written on the outside of the envelope. Ari had become curious about Max. He'd seen all the costumes and theatrical posters around the house. He had a grandmother that lived nearby but where were his parents? Ari didn't even know his last name or how old he was. When Ari asked Max who he was, Max simply said he couldn't say. The letter was from Baroness Barthold who asked that he come to her home on Monday at ten o'clock in the morning. She wanted to speak to him about employment. She cautioned him not to overcharge her just because she was wealthy.

Chapter 10: The Lost Spoon, Act I

For his meeting with the Baroness, Max wore a costume of one of the suitors in *Adorable Arabella*. She was bewildered by the person who arrived for the meeting. She couldn't tell how old he was. He wore a blue waistcoat and had a round pot belly. She told him that she was already having her doubts about him. He didn't look like much to her. Max told her that his performance would depend on what she wanted of him. Judging from the obvious opulence of the large castle, she was certainly wealthy. She wanted him to find the priceless Cellini Spoon that she had lost years before.



Benvenuto Cellini lived in Florence, Italy, in the 1500s. He was a greedy scoundrel, but he was also a gifted artist. The spoon he crafted and she lost was a large serving spoon. It was one of a set of two known as the Moses Spoons. The handle had the image of the infant Moses being discovered by the daughter of the Egyptian Pharaoh. The spoon was depicted in a portrait of her great-grandfather. The Moses Spoons were a gift from the Vatican to Napoleon. They were stolen when pirates attacked the ship they were being transported on. Later the pirate captain was captured and one of the spoons was in his treasure trove. The official who took possession of the booty was the Baroness' great-grandfather. After his death, her grandfather began exhibiting the spoon. The other spoon in the set wound up in the possession of the Grand Bey of Baghdad. Max reacted like a true inspector, as he had seen his father portray, asking all the right questions.

The Baroness pointed out the portrait of her great-grandfather with the Spoon. The Spoon had disappeared seven years before. It was stolen, and she knew who had taken it – the kitchen maid Martha. She was the only new maid the night it went missing. It had to be her. When the Baroness confronted her with the theft, she denied it. Her foolish great-nephew had fallen for Martha. Martha asked him to vouch for her, but he remained silent. Martha and her nephew were both gone the next morning. Her nephew left everything he had behind. She hadn't heard from him since. Another maid swore she had washed the Spoon that night.

Max asked that he be hired to work in the kitchen with her current maid named Zenobia. He needed to study the actual scene. She agreed to hire him as the scullery maid. After a few days of working in the castle, he may have some answers. He told her his fee was \$25 to start and \$25 if he was successful.

Analysis

Chapter 6

Max is down in the dumps because of several issues. First and foremost, he misses his parents. He fears that they are in danger and worries that he may never see them again. Secondly, he wants his independence from Grammie and part of that independence is earning his own money to support himself. But, he can't find a job. It's not for lack of trying but it isn't easy for a twelve-year-old to convince potential employers that he's able and mature enough to hire.

Chapter 7

When Max returned the little boy, Angel, to his mother he met the ice cream shop girl, Gabrielle. He found it easy to talk to her. She is a gifted baker and cook but can't get a better job because of something that occurred in her past. It had to do with love and scandal. She shamed her family and is struggling to recover her reputation.

Max has his first session with Ari, who is his new math tutor. Ari has some problems himself. He is working two jobs plus tutoring students and has a full load at the



university. He can't drop any of his subjects because he must get a degree. He also must save as much as he can for something – something that he does not explain. He was a spoiled young man and made a big mistake and lost everything. The worst part was that he caused a girl to lose everything.

The chances are very good that it was Ari whom Gabrielle was in love with and something happened that caused a scandal and ended their relationship. They are probably around the same age and live in the same small community. Gabrielle is trying to fight back and recover her family's trust. Ari is working hard for something that he doesn't identify. Perhaps he is saving money to make peace for Gabrielle.

Max shows his ability to think quickly and find solutions for his problems. He offers Ari a place to stay in exchange for his math lessons. This arrangement would help Ari save more money and it would get Grammie off Max's back because she wouldn't worry as much about him if Ari were staying in the house with him. Max is showing his resourcefulness in making money and solving his problems with the exception of his biggest problem – learning the whereabouts and fate of his parents. As busy as he is and as involved as he is with other things, the fate of his parents hovers over him like a black cloud.

Chapter 8

While Max is definitely unlucky in one sense, he is fortunate in another. Unexpectedly, he falls into a situation in which he becomes a hero by [accidentally] returning a lost boy to his mother. The mother pays him fifty dollars for returning her lost boy to her. She is apparently an influential woman and well known in the high society of the community. She tells everyone about her experience. Word gets around that Max has a gift for detective work.

A man comes to his house and wants to hire him as a detective to find his daughter's missing dog. Max doesn't consider himself to be a detective, but he's willing to go along with it. He'll make another \$50. Max's self-image has to be on the rise. Complete strangers have confidence in him and are willing, even eager, to pay well for his service. The more money he makes, the more independent from Grammie he will feel. He is driven by the need for independence.

Max's many years of working with his parents' theatrical company are paying off for him. He dons a train conductor's costume which he feels is appropriate for tracking down the dog. He assumed a foreign accent of someone who couldn't speak English well when Madame Olenka came by nosing around about his house. He has good instincts about how to portray himself in different situations. He is young and immature in some ways; but, in another sense, he is sophisticated and savvy.

Chapter 9

Max uses his intelligence, experience, and good instincts to trace down Clarissa's missing dog. He even impresses Grammie with his detective skills although he corrected her and said his success should really be attributed to his acting skills. His



reputation only grows. He gets another request for his detective services from none other than the wealthy Baroness who wants to hire him as a detective.

Chapter 10

To have an appropriate image for his meeting with the old Baroness, Max picks out another costume. This time he wants to look older so she won't think he's too young and inexperienced for the job. He dons a costume that includes a pot belly. Her eyesight isn't very good; so, she can't tell his age. However, she can probably make out the pot belly, which would make her think he's way older than twelve.

The Baroness is elderly and cantankerous, but Max plays it cool. He listens carefully to the tale of her missing, priceless Cellini Spoon. He asks pertinent questions convincing the skeptical old lady that he knows what he's doing – although he is just the king of making it up as he goes along. He relies on his memories of some of his parents' theater performances to make the desired impression.

After the Baroness tells the long, complicated story of her missing Cellini Spoon, Max realizes that he's facing quite a challenge. The Spoon has been missing for years. Although the Baroness thinks she knows who stole it, she could be all wrong. Max is going to work in the castle kitchen for a few days to get a feel for the place. Maybe, the spoon wasn't stolen. Perhaps, it was simply misplaced; and, he'll use his intuition and quick-thinking to find it somewhere in that huge castle. He may also stumble onto the answers to other mysteries.

Discussion Question 1

How are Gabrielle and Ari's story similar?

Discussion Question 2

What good things have resulted for Max from his returning Angel to his mother?

Discussion Question 3

How is Max applying his theatrical and acting experience to his real life situations?

Vocabulary

imbecile, frantic, ironmonger, blacksmith, impulsively, jangled, berating, lodger, apprenticed, emanated, headstrong, turbulent, consoled, subdued, relinquished, exasperation, irrelevant, brusque, stucco, swagger, gazebo, emphatic, philosophical, metaphorical, exorbitant, aristocrat, rascalion, imperturbable



Chapters 11 - 15

Summary

Chapter 11: The Lost Dog, Act II, Scene 1

Max was riding his bike from the Baroness' castle when he suddenly remembered that the dog was in Joachim's garden. How could he have forgotten?! The Baroness had been so all consuming that everything else escaped Max's mind. Oddly, Joachim's gate was locked. He ran around to the front of Joachim's house, and his front door was open. Something was strange. Joachim always locked his front door and never locked his backyard gate. Where was Joachim and where was the dog?

Max saw that some of Joachim's paintings both inside and outside had what looked like sweeping brush marks on them. Joachim was so proud of his precision paintings. Now they were blurred and smeared. They were ruined. It could break Joachim's spirit. He was sure that the dog had caused the destruction. He could envision the dog's wagging tail brushing up against the paintings. He tried to figure out where Joachim could have gone with the dog. Suddenly, they both burst back into the house. Max was surprised to see that Joachim was wearing glasses.

Joachim said the dog was trouble. He had to go get glasses to see the damage the dog did to the paintings. And he had to buy all new brushes. The dog chewed up all of his. Max took full blame for everything. Surprisingly, Joachim liked the effect of the dog's wagging tail brushing against his works. It had softened the images. Max asked if he would mind keeping the dog another day or two. Joachim had bought a new leash, a bowl, and food for her – so she better stay, he said. Joachim planned to develop a technique to duplicate the dog's tail wagging on his oils.

Chapter 12: The Lost Dog Act II, Scene 2

The teachers at Hilliard didn't notice Max's presence during noon time recess. He looked like a university student. When they did spot him entering the playground by a side door, they assumed he was a substitute teacher. Madame Celestine, the French mistress, approached the young man who introduced himself as Lorenzo Apiedi. Max was dressed as the tragic young hero of A Patriot's Story. Madame Celestine told Max that the students were good boys and girls, but some had yet to learn to control their tempers. They were all from good families. She urged him to be patient with them and not get discouraged. It would get better.

Earlier, Max had inspected the dogs and cats tied to the railing across the street. From the playground he could see the row of dogs patiently waiting for their kids. He spotted a group of kids gathered around a girl sitting on a bench. He recognized the girl as Clarissa. She wore mourning black. Max observed two boys talking who continually glanced at the pet enclosure. A fight soon broke out between the two boys with shouts



of anger and flailing arms. Someone called to him to break it up. But when he came closer, he saw that a girl was in the midst of the melee. Madame Celestine pulled the girl, Pia, from the fracas. Madame Celestine told Max to take Pia while she marched the two boys inside. The head mistress said that they all owed the school and students an apology.

As he stood there looking at this young girl, memories of his parents flooded his thoughts. He wished they hadn't left him behind. But, he had to recover and continuing his act as a teacher. He asked her about her behavior. Her name was Pia but the boys called her "Pee Pee." No one liked her, especially the girls. She had no friends. Max could relate. It was her third year at the school and she had never made a friend. She never really wanted to make a friend. She had her brothers and her father. The boys had teased her about her name, her father, and her ideas. Her father was a brewer and a successful businessman. The other kids' fathers were lawyers and doctors. The other girls would all be debutantes. Her father made his fortune in beer which wasn't good enough for the other kids. He asked her what they didn't like about her ideas. She pointed to the pets. She thought it was cruel to tie them up all day. The kids brought them there to show them off. They all want to have the cutest pet. Pia pointed to Clarissa. She really wasn't upset about her dog, Pia said. It was all a pretense. Clarissa and the others were hypocrites – they pretended to love their animals yet they abused them.

Pia asked Max what he was doing there; he wasn't a teacher. Pia told Max that he'd better leave. They had probably figured out that he wasn't a teacher. She told him she'd create a diversion. She started shouting angrily at him that she wasn't sorry and then ran out the gate. He let her get a short distance away before he hollered after her to come back. He ran after her and then passed her by. After Madame Celestine caught up with Pia, the substitute teacher had disappeared.

Chapter 13: In Which Max and Joachim Discuss Thorny topics and Grammie Has a Strange Encounter

Max agreed with Pia. Celeste didn't really care about her dog. The dog was a prop, a way to get attention. He was having misgivings about returning the dog to her. The dog would face day after day of being tied up in a small enclosure again. He felt guilty – how could he consider turning Sunny back over to be abused as a success? He decided to stop by to see how Joachim and Sunny were doing. He found Joachim trying to duplicate the feathering technique created by Sunny's tail. Sunny was lying at his feet. Max left them alone and made lunch.

Max finally explained to Joachim that his parents had left without him. Joachim was afraid that the authorities would send him to an orphanage. His grandmother was too old to get custody of him. The authorities could sell his house and the theater and keep the money to cover Max's care. Joachim advised him not to let anyone know his true situation until he turned sixteen. Joachim gave Sunny the last of his lunch. After filling Joachim in about Sunny and Clarissa, Joachim declared he would not give Sunny up. Joachim told Max that he would not allow him to take Sunny back to her original owners



if they had abused her. Joachim would give Max free lessons or lend him money; he didn't need to collect the rest of his fee from Clarissa's father. But, Max pointed out that the dog was legally Clarissa's. Wouldn't it be stealing to keep her, he asked. He'd get a bad reputation and no one would hire him. Max decided to ask Grammie and Ari what do about Sunny.

Grammie had some disturbing news that day and a very strange visitor at the library. Grammie decided to fill Ari in on the mystery about her daughter and son-in-law. Ari was sympathetic and understood how badly Grammie and Max must feel. Grammie had heard from a contact in Cape Town. The Miss Koala had hit stormy seas and was driven off course. The ship would be delayed two full days. Max panicked and thought "shipwreck."

Late that morning just before they closed for lunch, a man in line tried to check out a reference book; reference books couldn't be checked out. As Grammie explained this to him, he leaned closer to her and said he heard there was a good theatrical company in the city. He had very long earlobes like Madame Olenka had. Ari agreed that long earlobes were not a common characteristic. He asked her if the theater was ever going to reopen. He knew that the name of the theater was "The Starling," and he knew that Max's parents were out of town. She attributed his knowledge to William's tendency to talk too much. The man also said that Starling was a wealthy man. Was this man connected to the phony Maharajah?

Chapter 14: The Lost Spoon, Act II

Zenobia wasn't very bright. She knew about cooking; but, that was about it. She had a tendency to babble to herself about times gone by. The Baroness had always been there for her. For his stint as a scullery maid, Max dressed in the costume his father wore in *The Caliph's Doctor* – baggy blue silky trousers and an equally baggy yellow shirt. He covered his head with a red bandanna to hide his boy's haircut. Max got right to work and asked Zenobia about the dinner when the Cellini Spoon went missing. She told him that she thought a senator was there that night. Max looked around the kitchen which was the last place the spoon had been seen. The kitchen was in the basement and fully equipped – every cooking tool imaginable was in that kitchen. There was no dumbwaiter like Max thought there would be. But, there were several pantries and iceboxes.

The Baroness called all her maids "Martha" except for Zenobia. Zenobia called Max Martha and told him he had work to do. He went into the pantry to polish the silver. He looked all around in all the drawers and cabinets. There were scores of spoons – dessert spoons, tea spoons, and demitasse spoons among them. Zenobia got a large bowl to help set up Max for his silver polishing task. She told him that the laundress would wash any soiled towels or uniforms. Max wondered to himself if the missing Spoon could have been left in a pocket and then stolen by the laundress.

Max continued to polish silver and thought of Joachim and Sunny. He couldn't imagine returning the dog to live a life of being tied up. The dog obeyed Joachim and seemed to



be happy with him. Max still didn't know how he was going to handle the Sunny case. Max had quite a challenge ahead of him at the castle. There were so many drawers and cabinets; it would take him forever to go through them. After he washed off the polish from the silverware, he accidentally knocked a couple pieces into a small space between the drain board and the brick wall. Max went around to the end of the drain board and reached his hand in the small space. He pulled out an oval spoon and reached in again and pulled out an old fork – nothing that he had dropped in. The Cellini Spoon was the fourth utensil that he pulled out from the space. It was filthy and dusty. He cleaned it with the silver polish. Soon the images that the Baroness had described began to emerge. It was incredibly beautiful.

Chapter 15: The Lost Spoon, Act III

With the Cellini Spoon in hand, Max ran across the kitchen. Zenobia was yelling “No” and following behind him. The servants weren't allowed in the dining room while the Baroness was eating. But, Max was too fast for Zenobia. The Baroness was annoyed that Max had come into the dining room until she saw what was in his hand. The Baroness soothed Zenobia's concerns about “Martha” barging in on her. She told Zenobia she would deal with her. All the while, the Baroness could not take her eyes off the Spoon. Max told her where he found it. It had not been stolen. She acknowledged that she was wrong to blame Martha. She hesitantly thanked him and was annoyed when he asked for the rest of his fee. She paid him the other \$25. Max left the room wondering if he really had succeeded in his job. Had he really succeeded in any of his jobs? He had found Angel and the Spoon by accident. He wondered why the Baroness wasn't more satisfied. What more did she expect from him? He rode his bike home trying to put all his adult problems out of his mind. He just wanted to be a boy riding his bike.

As he was nearing his house, he was astonished to see his front door fly open. A man, who wasn't Ari, leaped down the steps, burst through the gate and ran off. Why was the man running from his house? A girl riding a bike appeared on the other end of the street. The girl came closer and seemed as though she was trying to run the man down, but he dodged her. Max didn't stop to close his gate or door which he knew were wide open. He wanted to catch the man. The man looked over his shoulder at Max and picked up his speed. The girl aimed her bike right at him. The man shoved her and knocked her off her bike. Max had to choose between following the man and stopping to help the girl. He skidded to a stop by the girl. It was Pia. She recognized Max from school and knew that Clarissa and her father had hired him to find her dog.

Analysis

Chapter 11

What could have been a complete disaster turns out well. Sunny brushed his tail against some of Joachim's oil paintings that were still drying and smeared parts of them. He had always prided himself of having perfect, precision paintings. When Max saw the damage



that the dog had done, he braced himself for a tirade from Joachim. But to his surprise, Joachim liked the feathering effect created by Sunny's tail. In fact, he planned to try to duplicate the technique. The perfect paintings that Joachim painted mirrored his life that had always been structured and predictable. When Sunny bounded into his life his life, an imperfect and unexpected element was added to his life. But he liked it. And he liked more than what it did for his paintings. Sunny was companionship for him and had a positive impact on him. It even made him take better care of himself – he got glasses so he could study the technique created by Sunny's tale. Just like his life, Joachim's paintings would no longer be predictable and "perfect."

Chapter 12

When Max first met Clarissa and her father, he had a sense that she wasn't as upset as she seemed to be. Max grew up with actors, so he was adept at spotting someone acting or pretending. His instincts seem to be right. She goes over the top wearing mourning clothes at school. When Max spots her she is surrounded by the other kids who are offering their sympathy to her. To Clarissa, her dog's disappearance was more about Clarissa than it was about her dog. Pia confirms his suspicions when she tells him that the upper-crust kids at her school bring their dogs and cats to school not because they want to be near to them, but they want to show them off and compete for whose pet is the cutest. Could Pia be a suspect in the caper? She was outspoken in her belief that the pets were being abused by tying them up all day. She thought it was animal abuse. She could have released Clarissa's dog and let it escape. Another suspect is Clarissa. To get the attention that she seems to need, she could have released her dog and let it run away so that the other kids would feel sorry for her. Pia is smarter than the school's head mistress. She sees right away that Max is not a substitute teacher.

Chapter 13

Joachim puts the fear in Max that he could be placed in an orphanage. But, Joachim is a worry wart and negative. Grammie would never let that happen. But, it's just another adult-sized problem for Max to worry about. Joachim doesn't want to return Sunny to Clarissa because he is sure the dog was abused. That puts Max in a spot because the dog legally belongs to Clarissa, and he had taken on the job of finding and returning the dog. But, he doesn't want to put the dog back in jeopardy. That wouldn't be a "success" to him. It seems that Sunny has found the right home with Joachim and the dog is just what Joachim needs. But, Max hasn't made a final decision about the fate of the dog.

A mysterious man was asking Grammie about the Starling Theater. The man knew that the Starlings were gone. She was largely able to avoid him but she noticed that he had the same long earlobes as Madame Olenka. Could they be linked? Was the man Madame Olenka's son or brother? Are they both connected to the disappearance of Max's parents? A man with "funny ears" had left a message with the harbor master on the day of departure.

Chapters 14 and 15



As Max works as a scullery maid in the Baroness' large kitchen, he feels more certain that he can't return Sunny to Clarissa. Max once again has great luck in that he stumbles on to the missing Cellini Spoon. It wasn't, just lost in the kitchen. The Baroness' bitterness was directed at an innocent who had stolen nothing from her.

Max finds the missing Cellini Spoon for the Baroness. He is disappointed even hurt that she didn't seem pleased with his finding it. But, Max is immature and doesn't understand the complexity of the situation. Firstly, the Baroness isn't pleased by very much in life. Secondly, she was harboring hatred for the maid who she accused of taking it. Now, she has to admit that she was wrong and that she hurt the girl and her great-nephew who had fallen in love with her. By Max destroying the symbol of her hatred and dispelling her belief that the girl who had stolen her nephew's heart had also stolen the Spoon, she is stripped of a reason to continue to harbor the bitterness that she has held onto for seven years. Maybe she wasn't looking for the spoon as much as she was trying to find the loved one that the incident drove away. The Baroness' attitude makes Max have doubt about his abilities.

The chapter ends in a cliffhanger. Max saw a man running from his house. Pia is in the chase, too. Who was the man and why is Pia there?

Discussion Question 1

How is Sunny a positive presence in Joachim's life?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Max feel like a failure after he is successful in finding the missing Cellini Spoon?

Discussion Question 3

What indications are there that Clarissa may not be worried about her missing dog?

Vocabulary

ruination, turpentine, ruckus, combatant, debutante, hypocrites, diversion, brougham, prophecy, dismal, goulash, escapade, fraudulent, greengrocer, demitasse, imperious, extricate, mongrel



Chapters 16 - 20

Summary

Chapter 16: In Which the Long-ears Reappear

Max and Pia walked through his house. Someone had wrecked the place. There were overturned chairs and strewn books and posters. Worst of all, Ari was unconscious lying face down on the dining room table. Max rolled him over. There was blood on his cheek. Ari started to come to. Max told Pia to run to his grandmother's house to get some ice. Ari tried to stand, but he was woozy. He touched his head and said it was pretty tender. Max could see the goose egg forming on his head. The front parlor was untouched, but the kitchen was a mess with everything in disarray. Pia told them that Grammie was on her way over.

Grammie came in and demanded to know what had happened. She rushed over to Ari to assess his injuries. She brought hot tea for everyone from the kitchen as Max and Pia started to straighten the mess up. As Max focused on Ari, he realized where he'd seen his face before. He resembled the portraits he'd seen in the Barthold mansion.

Max and Pia helped Ari over to Grammie's house while she went to get the doctor. She returned a short time later and said the doctor would be over within the hour. Ari told them what happened. He had been studying when he dozed off. Loud crashing and swearing coming from downstairs woke him. A man was tearing the dining room apart. The man had dark hair and was of medium height and had long earlobes. Ari told him to stop, but the man hit him and knocked him out. Ari wanted to go to work, but Grammie wouldn't let him. She told Max to think of something to tell Ari's employer. Pia said if Max didn't, she would think of something.

Chapter 17: In Which Pia Is Irritating

Max and Pia went to the Hotel Iris where Ari worked as a night clerk. They told the manager that Ari was sick. The manager said that if Ari didn't come in, he would fire him. Pia said she'd tell Ari to come right away. His fever had gotten worse all week. They didn't think it was typhoid, although his mother died of it last month, Pia added. The manager suddenly had a change of heart and said he'd cover the shift himself. He would hold the job open for Ari while he recovered. Max thanked Pia for helping him out. He offered to buy her an ice cream or a pastry.

At the ice cream shop, Pia talked about family and loved ones and how one person to love is enough. The words touched Max because his parents, the ones he loved the most, were missing. They had left two weeks ago and still there was no word. Gabrielle was happy to see Max again. Pia ordered a pastry and Max ordered a piece of cake. Pia told Max she was riding her bike over to see him because she knew he was a



detective. He interrupted and said that he wasn't a detective. She wanted to tell Max that Clarissa shouldn't have a pet.

Pia enjoyed the pastry and then ordered a piece of cake. She said that Gabrielle should have her own place. Max whispered that Gabrielle couldn't get any recommendations; but, he didn't know why. Pia said that since he was a detective, he should find out. She wanted to be his assistant. He didn't want an assistant he told her. Pia was sure she could find out what had happened to Gabrielle. She went up to the counter and talked to her for a short while. After they left, Pia wanted to go to the park. She didn't find out that much about Gabrielle only that she'd never go into private service again. She told Pia to never fall in love if she could help it. Pia was confident that her father could help Gabrielle. Pia was worried about the man who had broken in and assaulted Ari. What did the man want? He could have killed Ari. She was afraid that Max was in danger. She offered to come by and help with the clean up. If he didn't want her for an assistant, she'd be his partner.

Chapter 18: In Which Mister Max Plies His Trade, Whatever That Might Be

As he pedaled home, he thought about Pia. She really got under his skin. He had enough to worry about what with the break in, his parents' whereabouts, his independence, and his jobs. It was none of Pia's business what he did about Clarissa's dog. Grammie kept a watchful eye on Ari. She was proud of Pia and how resourceful she had been with the hotel manager about Ari's absence.

Max slept fitfully. Ari had already gone to class when he got up the next morning but left a note reminding him that they had a lesson that afternoon. After Max cleaned up the kitchen, he caught up on his homework after which he went in the garden with his watercolors and started a new painting. Although he'd been irritated with Pia, she did ask the kind of questions that made him discover his own ideas. Max made a purchase at a pet store and then rode over to Joachim's. He asked him if he wanted to keep Sunny. After being pressed a bit, Joachim said that he did. Max said he needed to borrow her for a few hours on Sunday.

At home, he wrote a note to Clarissa's father stating that the investigation was completed and asked him to bring his daughter to his house on Sunday. He wrote a note to the Baroness. He simply wrote, "How often are we given second chances?" (544) He didn't sign the note and figured he could persuade Ari to deliver it after he realized that his "Martha" had been cleared of stealing the Cellini Spoon. But, Max was wrong about Ari. He was angry that Max would think he'd take the letter to the Baroness. He thought she hired Max to hunt him down. Ari hated himself for not taking up for his Martha that night. His aunt accused her of stealing him and then stealing the Cellini Spoon. Martha thought he believed his aunt and saw how weak he was. He just had never seen his aunt so cruel. He was stunned and couldn't talk. Max pointed out that he could make it up to Martha. But, Ari didn't even know her real name and she was probably married with children. Had he taken up for her, he could have married her. Max continued to encourage him to deliver the letter. Ari said he would think about it.



At dinner Grammie showed Max and Ari a postcard with the photo of an ocean liner. There was a quote attributed to Shakespeare, “The rich oft underestimate beauty’s lasting embrace,” but the quote wasn’t accurate. Also, “Our dear Arabella has riches and beauty both now” and “The adventure is on the way!” (554) There were no signatures. The postmark was smudged. They couldn’t read the place from where it was sent.

Chapter 19: In Which Pia Has Her Uses

Max had nightmares that night. He woke and realized it was because of the postcard. It made him feel better knowing they landed, but he questioned how his father could misquote Shakespeare. He began to get an idea of what long-ears wanted. He wanted Max’s father’s alleged fortune. He remembered how his father had publicly boasted about his “fortune.” Before Ari left for school, he told Max that he might quit his two jobs now that Max had found the Spoon. Finding the Cellini Spoon had improved Ari’s life but hadn’t improved Max’s. He still had so many questions about his parents and where they were.

Max decided to look for his father’s fortune. The intruder was interrupted before he got to the top bookshelf; so Max decided to start there. Pia came in with a box of croissants from Gabrielle’s shop. She came to help with clean-up. Max told Pia that he decided to call what he does a “finder” rather than a detective. Pia asked, “What about Finder of Lost Things?” Pia chattered the whole time she was rehangng the posters. Max continued to look for his father’s fortune. Pia’s father offered Gabrielle a job, but she didn’t want to work for wealthy families because they don’t care about truth or justice. However, she would consider working for him if he opened a restaurant.

Pia noticed an ant farm sitting in the kitchen window. It occurred to her that Max was going to give it to Clarissa instead of the dog. Pia said that was good detecting. Max said it was solving a problem. That was what he was – a solver or a solutioneer. He reminded Pia that he didn’t need a partner. Pia asked Max why he only painted sky scapes. Grammie stopped by with a plate of cookies. She had talked to Officer Torson that morning. She found out where Madame Olenka lived – Graffon Landing where there was also a father and brother with long ears. None of them worked other than Madame Olenka who earned money from telling fortunes. The police were keeping an eye on them.

Max told Grammie that he was almost certain that someone overheard his father boasting about his fortune. He’d been checking all the books to see if the “fortune” was hidden in the books. He really didn’t think there was a fortune to be found but how could they convince the long-ears. Max had an idea and asked for Pia’s address. Max told Grammie that he had an idea that would get rid of Madame Olenka and the rest of the long-ears.

Chapter 20: The Lost Dog, Act III

On Sunday morning, Max walked over to Joachim’s house. He and Sunny were in the garden. Max had to borrow her for a short time. When Clarissa and her father arrived,



Max was outside painting with Sunny who acted up when she saw them. When the dog jumped on Clarissa she screamed and pushed her away. The dog paid no attention to her protests. Immediately, Clarissa questioned whether Sunny was her dog. Her dog was quiet and well-behaved, she claimed. Max learned that their maid fed the dog because the family was too busy. Clarissa noticed the ant farm sitting nearby and starting tapping on the glass. Clarissa announced that the dog wasn't hers. She asked where she could get an ant farm. Max said he bought the last one that was available in the entire city.

Clarissa's father thought that taking care of an ant farm would be a lot less trouble than taking care of a dog. Max pointed out that if Clarissa had an ant farm, she would probably be the only one at school to have one. Her father said they could travel to another town in a few weeks and get her an ant farm there. She pouted and said she wanted one right away. Max told her father that he wouldn't collect the rest of his fee. Her father offered to buy Max's ant farm for \$25 plus another \$10 because he won't be able to buy another one. Max "reluctantly" took the deal.

Riding back to Joachim's with Sunny running along at his side, Max thought about how he had helped to improve lives including those of Joachim, Sunny, Clarissa, and Ari. After dropping Sunny off, he rode over to Pia's house. He told the servant who answered the door to tell Pia that the solutioneer was there to see her.

That evening at dinner, Ari told Max that he had quit both his jobs. Since he'd have more free time, he planned to take more classes and get his degree sooner. He had taken the note to the Baroness who apologized for the way she had treated him. She also admitted she was wrong about Martha. She wanted him to move back to the castle, but he planned to stay with Max. Ari had a note from the Baroness for Max which stated she would give him a recommendation if he needed it. Max told Ari that what he wanted was to find Martha. Ari could only nod. Max knew where to find her, but this was something Ari needed to do himself. Ari had a big problem. The Baroness called all her maids "Martha." He didn't know the real name of the girl with whom he had fallen in love.

Analysis

Chapter 16

Grammie was proven right that Max would be in danger if he stayed by himself. A twelve-year-old should listen to his grandmother. Again the intruder has the odd characteristic of being long-lobed. He tore the dining room and kitchen apart until Ari surprised him and interrupted his plans.

Max recognizes Ari. He resembles the portraits in the Baroness' castle. Ari didn't say what his last name was but did say he was wealthy and spoiled and had lost everything. He felt the worst about the harm that had been brought on a girl who lost more than he did. Perhaps Ari is the Baroness' missing great-nephew. Could "Martha" be Gabrielle?



Had Gabrielle been a cook's assistant at the Baroness' castle and was she accused by the Baroness of stealing the Cellini Spoon? That would explain why she had been shamed and couldn't get an employee recommendation and why she wanted to convince her family that she didn't lie and steal. The incident destroyed the budding relationship between Ari and Gabrielle.

Chapter 17

Pia is proving herself to be resourceful and quick-thinking. Her father is a very successful businessman and perhaps she inherited her skills from him. Pia and Max have a lot in common. They are both bright and have strong characters and convictions. Neither one has many friends. Pia tells Max that one good friend is enough. She wants him for a friend but Max isn't quite there yet. He has too many other problems at the time to take on the friendship of a chatty eleven-year-old. When she tells him she wants to be his assistant or his partner it is a way of saying "friend" but he tells her he doesn't need either. But of course he does need a good friend but is too proud to admit it.

Chapter 18

Ari would like to make amends with "Martha" who was accused of stealing his aunt's Spoon. But, he doesn't know her real name. He figures that she is married and has children by now. He laments that it could have been him, but he was cowardly and didn't stick up for her when his aunt accused her of being a thief. Ari has suffered all this time over his behavior that night. He is working two jobs and saving his money to repay his aunt and to clear Martha's name. A post card and a strange message presumably from William Starling shed absolutely no light on where Max's parents are and what happened to them. The fact that he misquoted Shakespeare may be a clue that he was trying to send to Max and Grammie.

Chapter 19

Max has come to the conclusion that he is not a detective; rather, he is a finder. Pia suggests that he call himself The Finder of Lost Things. Max intuits that his father's public boasting about his fortune is what brought on the intruder and perhaps the bogus invitation from the Maharajah. To confirm his suspicions that there is no fortune, he searches for it himself but comes up empty. The entire incident and all that followed were only made possible by his father's tendency to boast and exaggerate.

Chapter 20

Pia is getting under Max's skin because she asks so many questions. But he has to admit to himself that she stimulates his thinking and makes him focus on problems and come up with solutions. Max does a bit of acting when Clarissa and her father come over to see the dog that he found. Sunny does belong to Clarissa but Max's instincts were right that she is less than thrilled to be a dog owner. She shoves the dog away from her when he jumps on her. If she loved her dog, she would run and hug him. Clarissa knows that the dog is hers but doesn't want her back. Her father comments



that she was a lot of trouble although the family maid fed the dog because they were too busy.

Max has the ant farm that he bought at the pet store displayed so that Clarissa can see it. He had bet that she would be intrigued by it. The ant farm would require virtually no care and, the selling point for Clarissa, is that no one else at her school would have one. Max doesn't charge her father for his final fee but he makes out when her father offers to buy his ant farm because, to make the deal more enticing, he had told Clarissa and her father that he had bought the last one in town.

Although Max considers himself a solver, he realizes that he can't solve everything for everybody. If Ari is to find "Martha," it may be something he has to do himself – with perhaps a few clues from Max. He also realizes that it was Ari that the Baroness had wanted him to find more than the spoon which explains why she seemed disappointed when Max found the missing spoon.

Discussion Question 1

Why are the long-lobes referred to in the story an important clue?

Discussion Question 2

Why doesn't Ari know the real name of the girl he fell in love with?

Discussion Question 3

In what incidents does Pia demonstrate that she is bright and resourceful?

Vocabulary

scornful, shards, infusion, exotic, eavesdropping, barrage, haunches, grandiloquent, bequeath, debarked, pestilence, dressage, foreboding, finery, stealthy, connoisseur, commonplace, terrarium, edifice



Chapters 21 - 25

Summary

Chapter 21: In Which Madame Olenka Is Dealt With

Captain Francis watched as the young couple crossed the gangplank of The Water Rat onto the dock at Graffon Landing. She was lovely and exotic and was wearing a purple cloak and gloves. But, the man with her seemed like a dubious character and someone he should keep his eye on. They had no luggage; but, they had round-trip tickets. The woman seemed like a titled lady. But, the man, although expensively attired, did not seem like he held any title. He couldn't imagine what they wanted in the little lakefront community. The man who wore a long coat, slouched hat, and white scarf reminded the captain of someone. But, he couldn't quite put his finger on it.

Max and Pia walked to town. She told Max to wait outside while she entered the town's only store. Max was wearing the long coat, slouched hat, and white scarf of the royal spy in The Queen's Man. Pia was dressed in Arabella's costume. They walked to the large house that Madame Olenka had rented and rang the bell. Pia told the maid who answered that she was there to see Madame Olenka and that she would profit from what she had to tell her. Pia and Max were allowed inside and waited in the parlor. Soon, Madame Olenka entered and thought that Pia had come for a reading. But, she did not come for a consultation or a reading. Madame Olenka took her hand in hers and said that she sensed it was a matter of the heart, a conflict, a fear of the future. She would not tell her more without a fee.

Pia responded that it was she who had something for her. After hearing her pathetic prediction it confirmed to her that Madame Olenka did indeed need her help. The room was filled with lies and deceit; Pia preferred to talk to her outside on the porch. After they sat on the porch, Pia told Max, whom she identified as her biographer, to take notes. Pia told Madame Olenka that she was a fraud and cheated people out of money with her fortune telling. Pia's issue with her was that she had disrupted her sleep. She had repeatedly dreamed of her in a dungeon or prison with cries of despair surrounding her. Pia saw a journey and a white city in the desert. Madame Olenka was not impressed; telling fortunes was her stock in trade. Pia said she could discount it all if she wanted to. She had only come to try to rid her sleep of the nightmares about her.

Madame Olenka asked if Pia could see her past. Pia described a small house with flowers and the letter "M." Madame Olenka's expression told Pia that she had scored. She accused Pia of trying to scare her out of the area so she could take over the fortune telling market. Pia said that, perhaps, the man taking notes was really a policeman. Madame Olenka was unnerved when Max read an earlier page of notes about this woman and her long ears and that there were other relatives in the dark places of her dreams with her. Max looked slightly familiar to her, but she was too upset to think about



that. Pia stressed that her dreams were very unpleasant and that she would not wish to be her.

After they left, Pia let Max open the package she picked up in the store. It was a wooden sign with brass hooks and gold lettering that read, "Mister Max, Solutioneer." Pia left on her bike while Max admired his sign. He had a sign, he had references, and he had his independence.

Chapter 22: The Library Job, Act I

Max hit a dry spell when nothing happened and no one contacted him for a new case. It had been more than three weeks since his parents left and almost a week since they received that strange post card. Mr. Solutioneer had not been offered any new work. He kept up his school work with Grammie and Ari. Ari had dinner with the Baroness one evening. He asked her and Zenobia for clues as to "Martha's" true identity, but they could remember nothing. Pia stopped by regularly with treats from Gabrielle's shop. She was always hopeful that he would have a new case. Her father was looking for the right location for his restaurant. Grammie knew that Max was down in the dumps but Ari was too wrapped up in his quest to find his "Martha" to notice.

Grammie enjoyed Ari's description of the castle and all its rooms. Ari pointed out that it wasn't all great. He was upset to see the attic room where his Martha was forced to live. Grammie pointed out that one day he would be the Baron Barthold. But Ari wasn't looking forward to it. Being a Baroness or Baron was a lot of work. There were so many properties, businesses and employees that had to be overseen. And so many records had to be maintained. Then it occurred to him that maybe Martha's real name was in one of those books. Ari planned to look through the records that afternoon.

Grammie told Max to let her know if he ran out of money. She knew he hadn't gotten any new jobs. But, she had a job for him at the library. She would pay him \$10 to take it on. Copies of the children's weekly magazine, *The Toy Chest*, were disappearing. Max would use a disguise and begin observations immediately.

Early the next morning Max, dressed as a businessman, ran up the steps to the library. He was wearing the suit his father wore in a play and sitting in the reading room pretending to read periodicals. He read the news and was dismayed to learn about all the fighting going on in the world. While reading, Max kept his eye on the other people in the reading room. He noticed one young woman dressed in shabby clothes who selected fashion magazines for her reading. After lunch, most of the visitors in the reading room were city clerks and students who came with their mothers.

When Max returned home, there was a note from Ari. He had found some of the real names of his aunt's maids and was going to investigate them. Pia came by with some tarts. She told him her father might hire him to find a good location for his restaurant.

Chapter 23: The Library Job, Act II



On Saturday morning, Max was back in the library wearing his disguise. It was difficult to stay awake then he saw the same young woman dressed in the same shabby clothes enter the reading room. She read the same magazines as the day before. He saw that she didn't take anything we she left but he followed her anyway. He followed her along the boulevards and avenues of New Town and then into the streets of the old city. She was unaware of Max and seemed fearful as though something bad had happened to her. She walked down River Way to the boatyards and warehouses and Max followed. She entered a wooden gate and stepped into a courtyard with several low buildings then he lost her. A large sign on the building read, "Charitable Workhouse for the Elderly and Infirm."

On Sunday, he decided to start on a new painting of the sky. Grammie attended a concert and heard the news that the Miss Koala had sunk. Only the captain, cook and one officer had survived and were brought to Portugal. Grammie and Max assured one another that his parents weren't on that boat but they each had their silent doubts. On Monday, the young woman in the shabby clothing returned to the reading room. This time she was reading The Toy Chest. Max was dressed in his dog catcher's uniform minus the net. He stopped the woman to have a word with her. She immediately began crying, denying she had done anything wrong. Her name was Nance. She thought she was sixteen and had lived in the workhouse for two years. She had to get back or they'd get angry. He told her she'd been accused of taking magazines from the library. But, that was what the library was for, she responded. There was a big sign in the reading room that nothing could be removed. But, Nance couldn't read. She promised to never take anything out of the library again. He offered to buy her ice cream.

Chapter 24: The Library Job, Act III

Grammie paid Max for solving the library problem. Grammie had noticed the young woman in question. He had seen the inside of the workhouse. Words could not express how sad and lifeless it was. Nance wasn't unhappy, just defeated. Nance grew up in the orphanage. She had been left there as a baby. She worked as a helper at the workhouse. She did all the cooking and cleaning. She took the magazines to look at the pictures because she couldn't read. The rooms for her and the other workers were like prison cells with no electricity. She had never had ice cream before. She was afraid to leave the workhouse because she feared the cops would throw her in prison. Max wanted to help her but he didn't know how. Grammie said he'd think of something.

When Max awoke the next morning, he counted his blessings. Compared to the life Nance had, he realized how fortunate he was. Max, dressed as a plump, seedy man with a blue waistcoat, delivered an envelope for Pia's father at his residence. Next he stopped by the castle. The Baroness needed someone to complain to. She had lost her heir. Max told her that he'd found her a scullery maid. The Baroness ignored his comment and went on to complain about Ari's refusing to move back into the castle. He didn't even want his title. Max encouraged the Baroness to consider the girl he found. She was young and strong while the Baroness and Zenobia were old and weak. But Ari did come by to visit and seemed willing to forgive her. She had Zenobia and two Marthas. Why would she want another maid? He responded that it might impress her



nephew to demonstrate her charitable nature. The Baroness would not pay a finding fee for her. Max told her that the girl's name was Nance.

The next afternoon Max wore the town official's uniform to claim Nance away from the workhouse. In his meeting with the matron, he found the contract Nance had signed with an "X" to be bogus. He was sure the matron wouldn't want that to come to anyone's attention. The matron told him to take the girl. Nance packed her few belongings and left with Max. He took her to the castle and introduced her to Zenobia who showed her to her room. Nance was elated that she would be living in such a grand place. Max was pleased that he was able to help Nance. He thought maybe Pia could teach her to read.

With no jobs in sight, Max was worried. He only had fifteen dollars left. Pia stopped by with an envelope for Mister Max. Inside was a note and \$25 "for services rendered" signed by Pia's father. Max had suggested using the land where an old folk's home was. The people would be moved to a new place with nicer facilities all paid for by the city. Ari came in looking exhausted. He hadn't found his Martha yet. He had found his Martha's family, the Glompfs. They were more unyielding than the Baroness. They claimed they had been so hurt by the scandal that they'd never recover even though their daughter had been cleared of the theft. They had not seen her since the incident and didn't know where she was. He did learn that her first name is Gabrielle. Max grabbed Pia's hand so she wouldn't say anything. After Ari left the room, he simply told Pia that he knew what he was doing.

Ari came downstairs dressed in nicer clothes. He looked wealthy. Pia asked him if it was right for her to try to teach a simple-minded person to read. Ari thought Pia might be too immature. Suddenly, Pia changed her mind. She would show Ari that she wasn't too young or too spoiled to do a good job. Ari had some of the tarts that Pia brought. He thought they were delicious. Pia told him where she got them and who made them. Ari said it had to be her! He forgot all about Max's lesson and tore out of the house.

Chapter 25: In Which What Was Lost Is – In a Way – Found

The next morning Max was painting a couple of new sky scapes in the backyard. Ari came out and sat on the steps. Gabrielle was glad to see that Ari was alive and well. She forgave him. He stayed in the shop until it closed and walked her home. Ari recognized that Max did the right thing by letting Ari figure out things for himself. Gabrielle wasn't surprised that the spoon was found because she knew she hadn't stolen it. But she was surprised that Max was the one who found it. He planned to tell his aunt that if she couldn't accept both of them in her life, she wouldn't be seeing him.

After Ari left, Max thought about the long-ears. He was glad they cleared out of town, but did they leave behind a mystery? Max's mind turned to his father's "fortune". Could it be a priceless book or poster? Could he have saved much over the years? The Starling Theater Company played to sold-out audiences. Some of the poster frames were ornate and intricate but were they priceless?! He wished his father wouldn't have been so vocal about the fortune if it did exist. He took some of the posters with heavy frames off the wall. In the first one, a leather bag with gold coins was hidden in a narrow space. It had



five gold coins in it. He tried another and found another small leather bag. In all, he found twelve bags of gold coins. It was more than enough to allow Max to live comfortably for years.

Max's father wanted him to find them. That was the secret in the two messages he sent. His parents must have wanted to take care of him in case they couldn't. But, Max was the Solutioneer. He had to work to be independent. He decided to keep the fortune a secret and not even tell Grammie. The next day he got two letters in the mail requesting his solutioneering skills. Just as he was trying to figure out how he could help the writers, Grammie burst in with a newspaper. She laid it down on the table in front of him. The newspaper photo was fuzzy but he recognized the smiles of his parents. His mother was wearing a tiara and his father was wearing a military style jacket with dozens of medals across his chest. The caption said that they were the new King and Queen of Andesia a small country in South America. The Andesian royal house had been a terrible monarchy and the people revolted. The royal family fled to another country and was eventually tracked down and murdered. General Balcor emerged as a leader and the people of Andesia wanted him to be their king but he declined.

The general learned that that there was a distant cousin in another land who was officially heir to the throne. That was it –his parents were tricked! General Balcor needed them alive and well. But Max knew that despite their smiles, they were in trouble and were just acting. Max didn't know what they could do, at least right away. The General needed to think that he was getting away with this ploy. Max tried to figure out how he could get a message to his parents. Max and Grammie looked at each other. They were in this together, Max said. Grammie responded that at least they had the Solutioneer on their side.

Analysis

Chapter 21

Max uses his acting experience and Pia uses her natural wiliness to trick Madame Olenka and her long-lobed relatives into leaving town and abandoning their plans to steal the Starling fortune. Pia played on Madame Olenka's belief in fortune telling to convince her that Pia's dreams of her and her relatives in a horrible dungeon were an omen. Pia turns the tables on her and out-visions the visionary. So without violence or calling in the police into the matter, these two smart kids are able to rid the town of these thieves and hooligans. Max and Pia are a lot alike which is why they get along so well. They bring out the best in each other and they seem to be fearless. Ordering the special sign that says "Solutioneer" was a gesture of friendship on Pia's support and demonstrates her support of Max in his endeavors.

Chapter 22

Although Max has had many successes, he hits a dry spell. Being a freelance solutioneer, he will have to be prepared for the ups and downs of an unpredictable need



for his services. He will have to save for that rainy day because as he is learning, those rainy days do come. Ari is making progress in his quest to find his Martha but hasn't found her yet. Although Max is tempted to tell him where she is, he knows that he must do this himself. Ari will feel a great deal of satisfaction if he solves his own problem. And if he does a little struggling along the way, he'll feel like he fought the good fight to win his love back.

Max gets his next job from Grammie – another “lost” case. Some of the periodicals are missing from the reading room and Grammie wants Max to figure out why. This caper leads Max in a slightly different direction than his other cases. Max learns of another way to make a finder's fee. Pia mentions that his father can't find the right property to locate his new restaurant. As soon as he hears this, his wheels start turning.

Chapter 23

Max's instincts are right when he follows a shabbily dressed young woman who he sees several times in the reading room. He learns that she has some connection with the workhouse. The next day he pulls her aside and tells her she can't take periodicals from the library. The woman is frightened and starts crying. She thought that you could take things from a library. Max realizes that the young woman can't read and begins to feel very sorry for her.

Although Grammie and Max both agree that his parents couldn't have been on the boat that sank but the reality that there is a slim possibility that they were on it gives Max something else to worry about. He is solving the problems of so many people which he would surely trade to solve the problem of his missing parents.

Chapter 24

Max feels real empathy for Nance, the young woman who has no family and leads a horrible life. In this case, Max is not concerned with making a fee. He wants to make life better for Nance. Grammie shows her confidence in Max when she tells him that he'll figure something out. His experience with Nance makes him count his blessings and realize how lucky he is to have a good education and two parents who wanted and loved him. He can't get Nance and her horrible living conditions out of his mind. He applies a little pressure that convinces the workhouse matron to release her. They were holding her captive with a contract that she didn't know the terms of because she can't read. Max talks the Baroness into taking her a part of her household staff. She is upset that Ari won't move back in with her and that he doesn't even want his title. What seals the deal is when Max suggests that Ari would think highly of her if she took in a girl like Nance and gave her a chance.

A little reverse psychology works on Pia when she first refuses to teach Nance how to read. When Ari agrees that she shouldn't take on the task because she's too immature, Pia gets hot under the collar and reverses her decision. She will show Ari that she is mature enough to tutor Nance in reading and do a good job at it. Since Pia agreed to help Nance, Max happily allows her to reveal where his Martha is.



Chapter 25

Ari has reconciled with both the Baroness and his former love, Gabrielle. He is more mature now and ready to stand up to his domineering aunt. If she doesn't accept Gabrielle, she won't be seeing him. The fortune that Max's father boasted about is still a mystery. Was it real or was it hyperbole? But Max recalls the first message about the engagement between two characters from different plays; he takes the posters of the two plays off the wall and finds the fortune. His parents were sending him a coded message so that he'd have enough money to support himself in case they couldn't return.

The mystery is solved about the whereabouts of Max's parents. They had been tricked into taking a ship to South America where a calculating army general of a small country is using them as figure head monarchs of the country. Max and Grammie are greatly relieved to know they are alive. But they are in danger. Max is not sure what they can do but Grammie has every confidence in him because he's the solutioneer.

Discussion Question 1

Why did Nance think she could take reading material from the library?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Pia change her mind about helping to teach Nance to read?

Discussion Question 3

How is General Balcor using Max's parents and why are they in danger?

Vocabulary

flounces, kohl, dubious, bohemian, deign, interval, consultation, emanating, paltry, brocade, dinghies, jasmine, domiciled, pitiably, malfeasance, imperious, metaphorical, lithographer, flamboyantly



Characters

Max

Max Starling is the twelve-year-old son and only child of William and Mary Starling. He hasn't any friends his age because he has spent most of his young years in the company of adults. His parents own and operate a theatrical company. Max has worked at the theater since he was eight. He helps the actors with their lines and assists with the props and costumes. He loves the theater and he loves to see his mother and father act.

The family of three has been invited to develop a theater troupe for the Maharajah of Kashmir. They have received first-class tickets on a luxury liner and will be paid handsomely in gold and jewels. It sounds too good to be true... and it is. Although Max is not late for departure time, he can't find his ship, the Flower of Kashmir. After checking with the harbor master, he is bewildered. No such ship exists! But his parents are gone. A port captain he knows saw them board a boat but didn't see her name. Although Max is disappointed, he worried more than anything else.

Max and his Grammie put their heads together to try to figure things out. She is worried but says they just have to be patient. His parents will contact them and explain everything. In the meantime, Max doesn't want to be a financial burden on his grandmother and decides to stay alone in his house and earn enough to support himself. He and Grammie go round and round about this, but Max is stubborn and determined to be independent and make it on his own.

Max is a bright, resourceful youngster. He is able to use the acting techniques and costumes used by his parents in the theater to present himself appropriately for a number of rather unorthodox gigs that he is hired for. Most of his jobs fall into one category: finding lost things.

Grammie

Grammie is Mary Starling's mother and Max's grandmother. She is a widow and lives just across the way from Max and his parents. She adores her grandson and when his parents leave on a trip she insists that twelve-year-old Max move in with her. But, Max is stubborn and independent – much like Grammie. He insists on staying by himself. Grammie is upset that her daughter and son-in-law are in parts unknown but she tries to stay calm so that Max isn't upset any more than he already is.

Grammie does what she can to help her grandson while his parents are away. She tells him to let her know if he runs out of food or money. She allows him to stay out of school after his parents go missing and she tutors him in reading and history. She expects him to come to her house every night for dinner at 6pm and she won't take no for an answer.



Grammie is protective of her young grandson. When Grammie learns that a strange woman, Madame Olenka, had been questioning Max about his house, she takes the next day off from work so that she is there when this woman returns. While working in the library, a mysterious man asks Grammie about the Starling Theater Company. She evades the man's questions and avoids him as much as she can; but, she does notice that he has long earlobes like Madame Olenka.

Ari

Ari is a university student and Max's math tutor. He winds up living at Max's house. He was a spoiled, wealthy young man who made a big mistake and is working hard to overcome his past.

Pia

Pia is an eleven-year-old who Max meets when he is posing as a substitute teacher. She gets into a physical fight with two boys. She is bright and resourceful and helps Max out on some of his cases.

William and Mary Starling

William and Mary Starling are actors and own the Starling Theater Company. Their only child is Max. They are invited to spend time in an exotic land to set up a theater troupe but get off course and go missing.

Joachim

Joachim is Max's art teacher. He is cantankerous and worried that his fading eyesight will end his career. Joachim has renewed energy when Sunny, a golden retriever, unexpectedly becomes part of his life.

Clarissa

Clarissa is a spoiled, rich girl who likes to be the center of attention. When her dog goes missing, her father hires Max to find it. But, in reality, the girl only used the dog as a way of getting noticed and really doesn't want the dog back.

Madame Olenka

Madame Olenka is a fortune teller and is a member of a band of thieves and gypsies that is trying to steal the Starling fortune.



The Baroness

The Baroness is the wealthiest woman in town. She lives in a castle and is lonely and bitter because her great-nephew and heir has abandoned her and because her priceless serving spoon has been stolen from her.

Gabrielle

Gabrielle works in an ice cream shop. She is a counter girl but is a pastry chef who bakes mouthwatering delicious pies and cakes. She can't get a better job because of an old scandal that has ruined her reputation.



Symbols and Symbolism

The Invitation

The Starlings are invited by the Maharajah of Kashmir to spend several months in his country while they develop a theatrical troupe for his nation.

The Brooch

In order to entice the Starlings to come to Kashmir, a beautiful bejeweled brooch is included with the invitation.

Sunny

Sunny is a golden retriever that has run away and is found by Max. Instead of returning Sunny to its former owners, Max makes an executive decision and finds a better home for her.

Skyscapes

Max is a painter and paints with water colors. All his paintings are of sky scapes – some sunny and some gloomy – depending on his current mood.

The Cellini Spoon

The Baroness hires Max to find a priceless serving spoon that was stolen seven years before. It was crafted by an artisan in Italy in the 1500s and depicts Moses as a baby in a basket on the Nile being discovered by the Pharaoh's daughter.

Costumes

Max is able to pull off the different identities he uses to solve problems by borrowing costumes from his parents' theater company.

Long Earlobes

Max and Grammie are able to connect a few strange characters that have been invading their world by a common characteristic – long earlobes. Ari agrees that such earlobes are rare.



The Post Cards

Max and Grammie receive only two postcards from his parents while they are away on their mysterious trip. Max is able to detect a code in one of them, and he finds something important that is hidden in the house.

The Starling Fortune

William Starling has boasted publicly about a fortune he has hidden in his house. When William and Mary Starling are away, a band of thieves attempt to find and steal the fortune.

The Periodicals

Grammie works at the library. She hires her grandson Max, to find out who is stealing periodicals from the library's reading room.



Settings

The Starling Theater Company

William and Mary Starling are actors and own the Starling Theatre Company. Their son, Max, has grown up in the theater and uses the acting techniques he learned from his parents and their many costumes in the capers he becomes involved in.

The Flower of Kashmir

Max and his parents are prepared to set sail for India on the Flower of Kashmir. But when Max arrives at the dock, he can't locate the luxury liner only to discover that such a ship never existed.

Max's House

Max stays by himself in his house while his parents are away. Eventually his tutor stays with him and is attacked when an intruder breaks in to hunt for the Starling fortune which is presumable hidden in Max's house.

The Baroness' Castle

Max is hired by the Baroness who lives in a huge castle on the lake. Max works undercover as a scullery maid in the kitchen of the castle which is in the basement and has several pantries and a number of iceboxes and scores of cabinets and drawers.

Andesia

Max's parents have the acting job of their lives when they are lured away on the pretense of establishing a new theater troupe but are forced into becoming the king and queen of a small nation in South America called Andesia.



Themes and Motifs

Independence

When Max Starling's parents are in parts unknown and he and his grandmother are not sure where they are or if they are in danger, his grandmother wants him to move in with her. But he has a different take on the unexpected situation. He is only twelve and his father always told him that a boy becomes a man and independent when he is twelve. His father may have been engaging in a little hyperbole but Max is naïve and takes his father's advice seriously. He refuses his Grammie's repeated invitations to move in. She argues that he is only twelve and shouldn't be staying by himself at night in his big house. But Max's pride and his desire to live up to his father's standards keep him from caving to his Grammie's insistence that he stay with her.

Max takes being independent seriously and doesn't look at it as a one-dimensional state of being. Independence to him is taking care of himself completely including financially supporting himself. But he is only twelve and though he goes out every day looking for work, no one will hire him. But that doesn't make him give up his quest for independence. He is a bright and resourceful boy and is able to think outside the box in order to make enough money to buy food and pay for his tutors.

Max's independence isn't just limited to his own desire to attain maturity and to present a strong and confident self-image. Grammie works every day at the library and doesn't earn a big salary. Max doesn't want to put more stress on her and is determined not to be a burden on her. When some coded messages from his father leads him to the hiding place of the Starling fortune, he finds enough gold to support him for years. But he has become a problem-solver and a finder of lost things. He doesn't want to lose his skills or give up that persona and live off his father's fortune. He wants to maintain his independence; so, he re-hides the gold and doesn't tell anyone, including Grammie, that he found the fortune.

Resourcefulness

Max Starling has had an unorthodox childhood. From a very young age, he has spent most of his free time at his parents' theater company. He has helped with costumes and props and has worked with actors learning their lines. He admired his parents' acting skills and loved watching them on stage. He is very bright and does well enough at school that he is able to go on the road with the theater company and therefore has missed a lot of school. But, he had an education at the theater company – perhaps an unconventional one – that he relied on when he faced adult-sized problems after his parents unintentionally left the country without him.

Max has a difficult time finding a job. Nobody wants to hire an inexperienced twelve-year-old. But, Max wants to maintain his independence and not be a financial burden on



his grandmother who doesn't earn much at her job at the library. So, Max much use his brains and cleverness and draw from his experiences in the theater to come up with a way to support himself. His career as a "finder" or "solutioneer" is launched when he unwittingly returns a missing toddler to his frantic mother. Word spreads fast that Max is a super detective who can find lost things.

For the cases he is hired to investigate, he wears costumes from the theater company to disguise himself. He learns to use the acting skills he gleaned from his parent's performances in order to discover clues and pursue suspects. In one case, he even employs an accent to convince a suspicious person that he is the Starling's gardener instead of their son.

Max had an unusual upbringing, but what he learned became invaluable to him. He is a bright and resourceful boy who strives to be independent and make his own way.

Empathy

Max is a savvy and sophisticated compared to other kids his age. This can be attributed to his unconventional childhood. However, Max demonstrates that he has an innate sense of fairness and a genuine and profound empathy for others. There are many examples of Max's charitable and empathetic character during his adventures in "Mister Max – The Book of Lost Things" by Cynthia Voigt.

After his parents unintentionally leave the country without him, he has the choice of living by himself at home or staying with Grammie. Although Grammie repeatedly hounds him to stay with her because she is worried about him, he chooses to stay home alone. Ostensibly he wants to be independent and support himself. In reality he doesn't want to over burden his grandmother who is a widow and has a limited income from her job at the library.

Max takes art lessons from Joachim, an elderly artist who fears he is losing his sight. Max encourages him to go to the eye doctor but Joachim is afraid of what the doctor might find. In one of his cases, he finds a lost dog that he keeps temporarily in Joachim's garden until he can decide what to do with her. Max feels certain that the original owners don't really want the dog back and may have mistreated it. The dog, Sunny, breathes new life into Joachim existence. Her presence even leads him to get glasses. In the end Max entices the original owners of the dog with another "pet" so that Joachim can keep the dog that he has grown to love. Max also knows that the dog will have a good home with Joachim.

In another case, Max discovers that a young woman is taking periodicals from the library. He confronts her about it and learns that she took the periodicals because she can't read; she couldn't read the sign that said that nothing could be taken from the reading room. When he learns that she was a neglected orphan and now has a dismal existence as a servant in a workhouse, he secures a better job and place to live for her.



He also arranges for a friend to teach the girl to read. He earned no money for helping the girl out. He acted out of the kindness of his heart.

As resourceful and enterprising as Max is, his feelings and empathy for others trump everything else.



Styles

Point of View

“Mister Max – The Book of Lost Things” by Cynthia Voigt is written in the third person limited omniscient. Writing the narrative from this perspective reveals the thoughts, fears, intentions and motivations of the main characters, particularly Max Starling the protagonist. The reader learns that twelve-year-old Max, who most of the time manages to put up a brave front, has the usual fears and doubts and naiveté as any child his age which is understandable due to the huge problems he is presented with.

Max becomes a junior detective or “Solutioneer” a solver of problems and a finder of lost things. Although he appears to be sure of himself and his abilities, the reader knows from his private thoughts how uncertain and vulnerable he is. And as much as he strives to be independent, the adult-sized problems that face him nearly overwhelm him and compel him to seek the safety of his grandmother’s care. But he largely resists relying on her and remains mostly independent and as a result learns more about himself and others than had he stayed in the protective zone of his grandmother. Writing from Max’s point of view also allows the reader the ability to see how this resourceful and clever boy’s mind works and how he sometimes figures things out and sometimes stumbles onto the solutions he seeks.

Author Voigt is adept at writing from the perspective of youngsters. She has written many books for young readers and has won many awards for outstanding literature for young adults.

Language and Meaning

The arts finds their way into the story of a young boy who finds missing things. There are many references to theatrical plays in “Mister Max – The Book of Lost Things” by Cynthia Voigt. Max’s parents are the owners of the Starling Theatre Company. His parents are actors and Max has been exposed to playing acting his entire life. He has worked backstage and he has observed his parents acting in numerous plays. In his capers, he often wears a costume of one of the characters of a play his parents presented in order to disguise himself. There are also references to artwork. Max takes art lessons from Joachim. Max only paints with watercolors and only paints what he refers to as skylscapes – images of the sky. These skylscapes often reflect his mood whether sunny or gloomy. Sunny, a friendly golden retriever, teaches Joachim a new painting technique when her wagging tail brushes up against his still wet oil paintings.

A metaphor is used in the episode about the Baroness and the missing spoon. The baroness hires Max to find a priceless serving spoon that she claims was stolen by a maid seven years before. She raves about the artistry of the spoon that was crafted in the 1500s. But when Max appears before her with the spoon that he found behind a



cabinet, the Baroness does not seem happy which confuses Max. In reality, what the Baroness feels was stolen from her was her great-nephew and heir. She really wanted Max to find and return her great-nephew to her who she hadn't seen in seven years when the incident occurred. By Max finding the spoon, it dispelled her theory that the girl that her nephew had fallen in love with was a thief making her admit that she drove him away.

There is also a name mix-up in the segment about the Baroness and the missing spoon. The Baroness is a wealthy elitist and is too important to know the names of all her maids and therefore calls them all "Martha". When her great-nephew tries to find the "Martha" he fell in love with, his task is made much more difficult because he doesn't know her real name.

Max is a twelve-year-old who is trying to establish his identity and striving to find out who he is and what part he plays in society. Since he is adept at finding lost things and solving problems, he plays with a few new ways to identify himself. He doesn't like the term "detective" but considers "solver" and "finder" but finally coins a new word and settles on "solutioneer". For all of Max's success in finding lost items, he is helpless in finding what he most cherishes and has lost – his parents.

Structure

Mister Max – The Book of Lost Things was written by Cynthia Voigt and illustrated by Iacopo Bruno. The book is separated into twenty-five chapters. Each of the chapters is numbered and titled.

The chapter titles are unconventional, yet descriptive of what to expect. For example, the title of Chapter 3 is "In which Max and Grammie wonder what happened, and what to do about it." Several of the chapters are connected by their titles and are in keeping with the theatrical element of the story. The title of Chapter 9 is "The Lost Dog, Act I"; Chapter 11 is titled "The Lost Dog Act II, scene 2;" and, Chapter 12 is titled "The Lost dog, Act II, scene 2.

The story is preceded by a map of the town where the story takes place. Following the last chapter is an excerpt from the author's next book, Mister Max: The Book of Secrets. The last entry in the book is a brief bio of the author.

Beautiful illustrations by Bruno are interspersed throughout the book. The pictures depict the adventures of Mister Max and the challenges that face him.



Quotes

We have a full schedule of performances from now until I believe the middle of September with no time for adventures.

-- Mary (Chapter 1 paragraph Page 18)

Importance: Mary points out that they have no time for adventures after they receive a mysterious letter telling them that they would be having a great adventure.

If you think you're going to lie around wallowing in self-pity another day, in my house? You have another think coming.

-- Grammie (Chapter 3 paragraph Page 127)

Importance: Grammie wasn't going to let Max feel sorry for himself about not being with his parents on their trip to India.

Geometry's my favorite part of math. Everything makes sense; everything can be proved everything has a place and a purpose. Unlike the world we live in.

-- Ari (Chapter 7 paragraph Page 240)

Importance: This is a philosophical comment by Ari, the math tutor, who finds more sense in the world of math than in the world in general.

Older people wanted things to stay the same... with themselves being more powerful and important than younger people who hadn't yet done anything significant or really difficult. Younger people wanted the older people to step aside, get out of the way, so they could have room to make all the changes they wanted and improve things.

-- Max (Chapter 8 paragraph Page 256)

Importance: This quote captures the generation gap and describes Max's relationship problems with his Grammie.

I do not, as anyone can tell you, have a warm heart hidden within this imposing exterior, but I am a good mistress to those who serve me well.

-- The Baroness (Chapter 10 paragraph Page 352)

Importance: The wealthy Baroness hires Max to find a priceless, missing spoon. She cautions Max that she will be fair with him but to not expect her to be easy on him.

In the background, the excited voices of the younger children filled the air, like cries from flocks of small, busy birds, nuthatches or sparrows. Clarissa's grief stood out all the more in contrast to this happy background.

-- Narrator (Chapter 11 paragraph Page 380)

Importance: In the middle of Max's investigation of the dog-napping of Clarissa's dog, Max observes Clarissa at school. She is dressed in mourning black and is surrounded



by her sympathetic friends at school. Something about the image of the little girl in grief over her dog was over the top.

He wishes they would be waiting for him at home even if that meant they'd lay claim to his time and energy for their own uses. He wished he was not a boy alone. That wishing and longing, and the sadness it dragged along behind it like a huge, heavy chain, made Max shiver, despite the sunshiny warmth of the day.

-- Narrator (Chapter 12 paragraph Page 386)

Importance: This passage captures the pain and misery that Max experienced after his parents left him behind. As independent as he wanted and pretended to be, when he allowed his true emotions to surface they were filled with sadness and desolation.

What's done is done. What's lost is lost. Time flows in one direction only and thus what's past is gone.

-- The Baroness (Chapter 15 paragraph Page 472)

Importance: Max finds the missing Cellini Spoon for the Baroness. She had made a grave misjudgment when she blamed a maid for taking it seven years before. But she is philosophical about it – what's done is done.

One of the things you learn if you get to live a long life is how important people are to you. The people you care about, I mean. My mother's grandmother told her there don't even have to be that many of them. She said just one can be enough.

-- Pia (Chapter 17 paragraph Page 523)

Importance: Neither Max nor Pia has many friends. Pia's words have an impact on Max particularly because his parents are missing and may be in danger. His mother and father are the two people he loves the most.

Grammie went off right away, leaving Max alone with his ideas, plans, hopes, and possible solutions. Although he had no idea what to do about Pia and didn't dare think about his parents, he no longer felt so helpless, so trapped in a nightmare.

-- Narrator (Chapter 19 paragraph Page 594)

Importance: This quote captures a pivotal moment when Max is going to take charge of the situation involving his missing parents and take action.

Sometimes it's better for people to solve their own problems, if they can; sometimes it's best if they work out their own solutions. Part of a solutioneer's job, he thought, might be to recognize those times and keep his own cleverness to himself.

-- Max (Chapter 20 paragraph Page 623)

Importance: Max has been solving problems for others. It has been a maturing process for him. He is beginning to realize that he can't solve everyone's problems and sometimes it's better to not interfere.



He reminded himself that not only were his parents alive but also they had been located. That had to be good news. It was good news, mostly. Because if you know where someone is, you know where you have to go to get them out of whatever trouble they're in. You might not know just what, precisely, the trouble is, but how to discover that was Max's next job.

-- Narrator (Chapter 25 paragraph Page 759)

Importance: Max and Grammie have learned where his missing parents are but that they are in danger. Max is the Solutioneer and he will have to figure out what his next move is... probably in a sequel.