

The Mystery at the
BOSTON
MARATHON



by
Carole Marsh

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C O N T E N T S

1	What in the World is a BM, Anyway?	1
2	Hop on the Plane to Hopkinton	7
3	Bahstan Hahbah	9
4	A Lulu of a Lobster!	17
5	Heading to Hopkinton	23
6	It's Greek to Me!	31
7	Optical Illusion	41
8	Kidnapped!	45
9	Marathon Madness	51
10	Tater Peeler and Kitchen Rats!	59
11	Red Herrings	63
12	This is No Tea Party!	73
13	One If By Land, Two If By Sea	83
14	Time Is Running Out!	93
15	Not Till You See the Whites of Their Eyes!	103
16	Boston Common	107
17	Make Way for the Kids	111
18	Well, I Swan!	115
19	No Time to Waste!	121
20	The Finish Line	125
About The Author		133
Glossary		134
Scavenger Hunt		136
Excerpt from <i>The Mystery of Biltmore House</i>		138
Excerpt from <i>The Mystery of Blackbeard the Pirate</i>		143

1 WHAT IN THE WORLD IS A BM, ANYWAY?

“Boston is a long way from Georgia,” Christina mused as she read the curious white note with the red lining once again. “I guess we’d have to take an airplane.”

Christina Yother, 9, a fourth-grader in Peachtree City, Georgia, her brother, Grant, 7, and their Grandmother Mimi stood around the bright red mailbox. They ignored the bills, advertisements, and the little box of free detergent stuffed in the mailbox to concentrate on the invitation to visit Boston. The invitation read:

Mimi,

You and your two delightful grandchildren are invited to visit us during the big BM! Cousins



Derian and C.F. will enjoy showing the kids Bean Town! Let me know ASAP. Patriots' Day is coming soon, you know!

Love,
Emma

Mimi tapped the note with her bright red fingernail. "I guess Patriots' Day *is* coming soon. Today is the last day of March. She could have given us a little more notice."

Of course, Christina knew that didn't really matter to her Grandmother Mimi. She was not like most grandmothers. She wasn't really like a grandmother at all. She had bright blond hair, wore all the latest sparkly clothes, was the CEO of her own company, and took off for parts unknown at a moment's notice.

"Aunt Emma sure likes exclamation points," observed Christina. "Just like you, Mimi!"

"You bet!" said Mimi, giving her granddaughter's silky, chestnut-colored hair a tousle. "I'm the Exclamation Mark Queen!" She looked down at Grant who was fingering the corner of the invitation. He



looked very serious. “What’s wrong, Grant?” asked Mimi.

Even standing on the curb, Grant was small. His blue eyes seemed the biggest part of him. He looked up at his grandmother. “Well, for one thing, Aunt Emma sure uses a lot of letters instead of words. What does ASAP stand for?”

Christina knew that one. (Of course, she always did!) “It means As Soon As Possible—right, Mimi?”

“That’s right,” said Mimi. “You can say A-S-A-P, or say it like a word—asap.”

“Then I hate to be a sap and ask the next question,” said Grant with a sigh.

“What’s that?” asked Mimi. “There are no dumb questions, you know.”

Grant slid off the curb, looking littler than ever. “It’s not the question that bothers me . . . it’s the possible answer. I mean what *is* a big BM?”

Mimi laughed. “Not what you apparently think it means! The BM is the Boston Marathon. It’s the biggest deal in Boston each year. People come from all over the world to run in this race.”

“Oh,” Grant said with a grin. He look relieved, and so did his sister. “So it’s like the Peachtree Road Race



on the 4th of July?”

“Sort of,” said Mimi, folding the note and stuffing it back in its envelope. “Only the Boston Marathon is the oldest marathon in America, so it’s really special. It has an incredible history!”

Christina and Grant grabbed one another and groaned. Oh, no! When Mimi said the word *history*, they knew they would be in for a big, long tale of everything about everything. But not this time. She ignored her grandkids’ dramatic groaning and headed up the driveway for the house.

Christina chased her, running beneath the overhang of magnolia limbs over the azalea-lined path of pink and purple blooms. “Are we going?”

Grant chased Christina. “Wait up, you two!” he pleaded. He took a shortcut across the wide green lawn, weaving (against Mimi’s rules) through the forest of pampas grass spewing fountains of white, feathery spikes. “Are we going?” he begged.

On the front porch, Mimi plopped down in the big, white Victorian rocking chair. She pulled out her cell phone from her jacket pocket. Grant and Christina piled into the rocker beside her. “Are we? Are we?!” they hissed, as Mimi dialed the number. They held



their breath until they heard her say, “Emma? We’re coming to the Big BM!”

After Mimi hung up the phone, she jiggled the other rocking chair, causing the two kids to giggle. “What’s wrong, Grant?” she asked. “You still don’t look happy!”

Grant looked at his grandmother thoughtfully. “If we go to Boston, do we get to eat anything beside beans?”

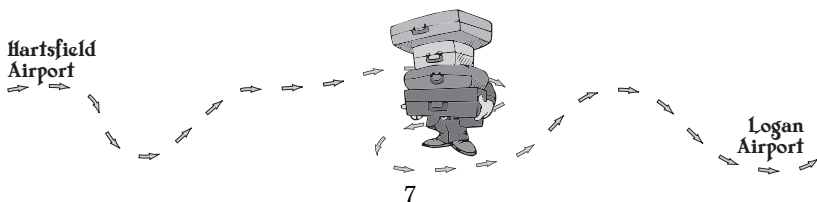


2 HOP ON THE PLANE TO HOPKINTON

By Saturday morning, Mimi, Papa, Christina, and Grant were speeding toward Atlanta's Hartsfield International airport, the busiest in the nation. Uncle Michael was taking them so they didn't have to leave their car there and "pay through the nose," as Papa, their grandfather, always said.

Grant always tried to picture how someone could pay a parking bill through their nose, but he just couldn't imagine it. Not even an elephant. Of course, Papa was always saying things that Grant didn't understand yet. His grandfather had lots of opinions. He had opinions on everything, even opinions.

"In my opinion," Papa suddenly said, "we should stop at the terminal here and use the curbside check-in, so we don't have to carry all these bags." Grant knew what that



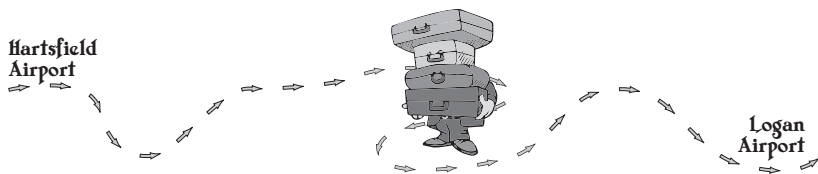
meant: Uncle Michael was supposed to stop the car right now, and Mimi had brought way too much stuff.

After a lot of slobbery hugs and kisses (Grant's opinion), and Papa grumbling about "paying through the nose" for airline tickets, they marched into the terminal. Mimi and Christina led the way, toward the newsstand to get magazines, peanut-butter crackers, Junior Mints, and all that essential airline survival stuff.

As Grant followed Papa through the door, Uncle Michael grabbed him. "Stick this in your pocket," he said. "It might come in handy." Grant felt a hand slide something into his back jean's pocket. Uncle Michael was always giving Grant weird, neat stuff that "might come in handy." This was a small pen flashlight.

But Grant didn't have time to try it out; Papa was disappearing in the crowd, and Grant hurried after him. "Thanks, Uncle Michael!" he called back over his shoulder. "I'm sure it will," he cried, as he raced after the others.

"All aboard for Bean Town!" Papa said in his deep voice as everyone scrambled aboard the aircraft.

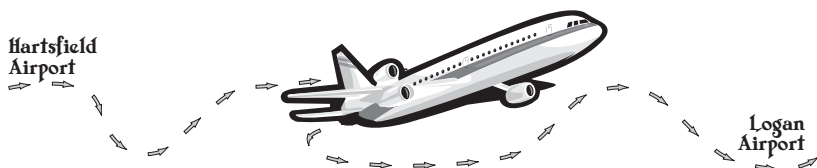


3 BAHSTAN HABBAH

It was a great flight. Both Grant and Christina had window seats and got a good look when the pilot pointed out the Statue of Liberty as they flew over Manhattan Island and New York City. As the plane began its final approach to Logan International, the Boston airport, Christina began to get fidgety. “Why are we going to land on the ocean?” she asked nervously.

Papa laughed. “We’re not,” he assured her. “The airport runway just ends almost all the way to the bay.” Just as he finished answering her, the airplane set down with a thud, and the engines whined as the plane slowed to a stop.

Soon they were in the terminal, and there was Aunt Emma and more slobbery hugging and kissing, and “Look how big they’ve grown,” and all that other



meeting and greeting stuff.

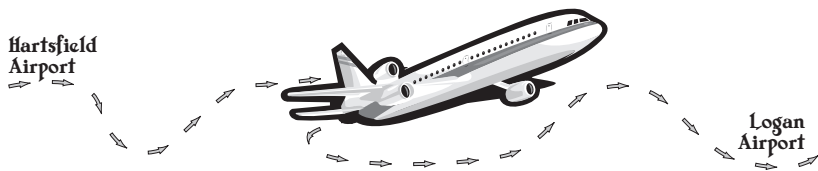
“Where are our cousins?” asked Christina shyly. She wasn’t sure she was going to like spending time with her little brother and two other guys. Why couldn’t she have a *girl* cousin her own age?

“They’re down at the harbor (she said it HAHBAH) with your Uncle Fritz,” said Aunt Emma. “But we are meeting them there for lunch.”

“The harbor?” asked Grant. He loved boats and water. So did Papa. Mimi said a boat was a hole in the water that you poured money into. Nonetheless, she loved the boat they kept in Savannah. It was named *My Girl* after her. She used it for research and photography. Papa used it for napping.

“Boston Harbor,” said Aunt Emma. (Actually, she said BAHSTAN HAHBAH, which made Christina and Grant giggle.) “Oh, c’mon you landlocked landlubbers! You’ll see!”

As they had reached the baggage terminal, there was a flurry of arms and hands as luggage was grabbed off the creaking and groaning conveyer belt and piled onto a cart. Christina gave Grant a squinty-eyed “don’t even think about it look!” when she saw him contemplating a hop on the carousel for a quick ride along with the



suitcases. Grant jumped on the front of the luggage cart instead and got a ride through the automatic doors to the sidewalk outdoors.

Soon they were squashed into a taxi, speeding toward the city. It was a wild ride. There were tunnels and bridges and underpasses and overpasses and detours galore. “What’s going on here?” asked Papa. He pointed to a mountain of dirt beside the highway.

“It’s the Big Dig,” Aunt Emma explained. “For years they’ve been digging up half of Boston to build another tunnel and more roads to help improve the traffic flow. So far, billions of dollars have been spent, and all we have to show for it is *this*.”

She pointed to a multitude of very large holes in the ground filled with construction cranes and workers in bright yellow hardhats.

Grant was fascinated and had questions about everything he saw. Christina enjoyed watching the parks, fountains, and sparkly buildings speed by. She especially liked all the pretty early spring flowers. The sky was Boston blue, she decided, and the taxicab chrysanthemum yellow.

Suddenly Christina spied something that really caught her eye—a giant red lobster! The taxi stopped,



and everyone piled out in front of a big restaurant.

“This is the place!” exclaimed Aunt Emma. Mimi wrote in exclamation points, but Aunt Emma talked in them. Nothing she said ever seemed to end in a period, but always in an exclamation point!

“Legal Sea Foods! The best place to eat in Boston!” proclaimed Aunt Emma.

“You mean some places sell *illegal* seafood?” Grant asked. He was a hamburger and French fries kind of guy, himself.

Aunt Emma laughed. “No, this restaurant just says if the fish isn’t fresh, it’s not legal!” Mimi and Papa laughed. Christina and Grant just stared at each other. Maybe you had to be an adult to think that was funny, Christina thought to herself. Adults can be so weird sometimes.

Papa opened the giant doors, complete with golden lobster handles, and they all went inside. Grant spied a really neat fish tank filled with lots of colorful tropical fish. Mimi had an aquarium, but it was only filled with paper fish. She said she didn’t have time to mess with 55 gallons of problems.

But what really got their attention was an excited passel of arms waving from a balcony above. Uncle



Fritz flagged them down with both hands. "Here we are!" he cried. "Up here!"

Christina and Grant looked up to see their uncle and his two sons hanging precariously over the mezzanine railing like a bunch of monkeys.

"That's C.F.," Christina told Grant, knowing he would not remember since he was so little the last time they saw their cousins. She pointed up to a red-headed boy who was loaded with freckles. "He looks just like Aunt Emma."

"He looks like a lobster," Grant said, waving at the boy.

"He looks like an eleven-year-old acting like a two-year-old," Christina added. "And that's Derian. He's fourteen." She wanted to add that he was cute too, but she didn't think her brother would care. Since he might share her observation, she wisely kept it to herself.

Both boys waved animatedly to their younger cousins on the floor below. The restaurant was such a lively, noisy place that the boys' shenanigans did not even attract a raised eyebrow—not even when they both slid down the metal railing to greet the newcomers!

"Hi!" the boys said simultaneously, landing with a thud at the bottom of the staircase.



"We're up here," added C.F.

"No you're not. You're down here," Grant corrected him.

"This munchkin must be Grant," Derian said, sticking out his hand. Grant was impressed. He took the large hand with his small one and shook it mightily.

Christina was not impressed. "He's *not* a munchkin. He's my little brother."

Derian laughed. "Excuse me, princess!" he said with a grin.

Christina blushed.

"I'm C.F.," said the red-head.

"What's a C.F.? Is it anything like a BM?" Grant asked. His big blue eyes always had an earnest, serious look. To his sister's perpetual dismay, he didn't mind asking any question of anyone, even an embarrassing one. "Mom always says there's no dumb question," he would assert when Christina criticized him for his habit.

"A C.F. is a Clarence Ford," C.F. said proudly. "I'm named after Clarence DeMar and Timothy Ford, two early winners of the Boston Marathon."

"Wow!" said Grant. He wasn't sure how long a marathon was yet, but he was impressed with everything about the Boston one already, since as near



as he could figure it was a B.D.–a Big Deal.

Before they could continue their conversation, Papa and Uncle Fritz hung their heads over the balcony. “Get up here, you guys!” they called together.

“I’m not a guy,” Christina muttered to herself. The boys scampered up the steps with Grant dangling in the middle as they carted him upwards, his feet never touching the ground. Christina followed behind slowly. “Oh brother,” she said to herself. “What a long week this is gonna be. I’d rather be back home reading a good mystery book.”

Of course, what Christina didn’t know is that soon she would be living in a mystery of her very own!

