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# **Ace Wonder: Message from a Dead Man**

By John Robert Moore

(THUNDER ROLLING)

James Morton will not be forgotten. He will forever be remembered... as a friend, a father and a faithful follower of his Lord.

May he rest in peace.

How are you, Jim?

Me? Fine.

And the rest of the family?

Well, they're good. Derek's the only one taking it hard.

He spent his summer with Dad a few years ago... and he wanted to come back, it just didn't work out.

It's probably for the best.

Your father

was a troubled man, Jim.

I was one of his closest friends, and more and more he pulled away. Just wasn't his old self.

Yeah.

(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)

( PHONE RINGING)

There's a lot of rooms in this house.

Wandered around today looking at them.

I kind of like living out in the country.

It's nice. Way better than all those honking cars.

(THUNDER CRASHING)

You didn't answer my calls.

Service is terrible out there.

Where were you?

The tree house.

You know, you've probably ruined your clothes.

Why were you at the tree house?

I was looking for something.

Looking? For what?

I'm not sure.

I found this at the funeral.

In Grandpa's casket.

(THUNDER ROLLING)

It's nothing. Probably a prank.

What?

I said, it's probably a prank,  
forget about it.

What if Grandpa's trying  
to tell me something?

He's not.

May I be excused?

Yes.

Look, I know this week's  
been hard on all of us...  
but in a few days, we can put  
this completely behind us.

I'm gonna be meeting with Marcus  
tomorrow about the house and I'd like you to come along.

(OMINOUS MUSIC PLAYING)

(THUNDER CRASHING)

GATOR MOORE (V.O.):

Still raining, still a thousand unanswered questions...  
and now a cloaked figure  
haunted the night.

A perfect recipe for mystery  
and danger.

But it was still missing  
one key ingredient: a world class investigator.

(THEME MUSIC PLAYING)

(SIGHS)

Log... this latest format  
isn't working out, either.

This makes my fourth attempt  
with no satisfactory results.

Road trips are a blast,  
I'll admit...

but it's not conducive  
to detective work.

No gun fire, no car chases,  
not even your run-of-the-mill homicide.

Dad, I need some help.

Okay, what's up?

It's my graphic novel.

Graphic novel?

A glorified comic book.

Ace Wonder isn't really  
a crime fighter.  
He solves mysteries,  
sort of like Sherlock Holmes.  
Okay, so where are you stuck?  
At the beginning... I can't  
seem to come up with a truly brilliant mystery.  
Everything is either boring  
or over-the-top.  
Well, you keep on thinking,  
you'll come up with something.  
That's what you said  
800 miles ago.  
Yeah, and it's still  
good advice.  
Um, hey, guys, none of this  
looks familiar to me.  
Um, where are we?

**JEFF (O.S.):**

GPS says we're on course...  
but we need to stop and  
get some fuel soon.  
Jim, are you sure you  
want to sell the place?  
Marcus, Denver's 1,000 miles  
away from here; my business eats up every minute of my time.  
I suppose.  
Look, I'll have a realtor  
take a look at it for you.  
It's a gorgeous piece  
of property. I'm sure it'll sell.  
In this economy?  
I don't know who'd buy it.  
Bed and breakfast  
in the middle of nowhere?  
Jim, how about selling  
the place to me?  
You serious?  
We'd keep the place  
exactly the way it is.  
You could come back whenever  
you're ready and go through your father's things.  
I don't know.

What do you mean,  
you don't know?  
You could stay there  
any time you want.  
It'd be ideal.  
And for me,  
it'd be an investment.  
Oh, hey, you want us  
to order something for you?  
Yeah, yeah, why don't you  
get me a cheeseburger.  
Cheeseburger, okay.  
Uh-huh.  
And uh, get me an order of those  
curly fries, if they have them.  
Okay.  
Thank you.  
I'll think it over.  
Thanks.  
I think your dad would have  
liked it this way.  
Howdy, folks. Get y'all  
something to drink before you order?  
Mr. DeWitt, how well  
did you know Grandpa?  
I guess I knew him about  
as well as anybody could.  
Why?  
Maybe you can help me.  
On the day of the funeral,  
I found this.  
Grandpa used to set up treasure  
hunts all the time.  
Well, this is the kind  
of thing he would do.  
He always thought  
of himself as mysterious.  
Derek, your granddad  
was a good man.  
He was, but he wasn't  
always stable.  
I don't believe that.  
I don't know what was  
meant by that note...

but I think it's just as  
well it was written in code.  
Keep in touch, Jim.  
And let me know what you decide.  
Look, if that note wasn't  
important, Grandpa wouldn't have wanted me to have it.  
Derek, drop it.

(MUSIC PLAYING)

Wait a second,  
what do you want to eat?  
Oh, um, ooh, do they have  
those little curly fries?  
No, they don't.

Oh, uh, whatever Jack's  
having will be fine.

(DRAMATIC MUSIC PLAYING)

( ENGINE TURNING OVER)

(MUSIC CONTINUES)

Sir? Sir, I was wondering,  
my friend may have come--  
Buzz off.

Certainly, I was just wondering,  
I'm looking for my friend, and if he came this way--  
Hey! I said leave me alone.  
Okay.

**Log:**

strangers don't prove to be very helpful.  
Hey, kid, that's a nice toy  
you got there.  
How about you give it to me  
and I'll tell you where your friend ran off to?  
That's okay,  
I think I'll find him.  
I don't think you understand.  
You see, this is my home.  
You walk here, you pay rent.  
Come here.

**BUM (O.S.):**

All right, come here.  
Let me see.  
Looks nice.  
I need that for my work.

Very fancy.

I order you in the name  
of justice. Give it back!

All right, that's enough.

Give it back.

Give what back?

I said, give it back!

Make me.

(DRAMATIC MUSIC FADES UP)

There you go.

Well, thanks.

Look out!

(MUSIC CONTINUES)

Dad, come here, quick!

(MUSIC CHANGES)

(SNICKERS)

Missed.

Are you all right?

What happened?

I-- I saw the whole thing  
and man, it was something.

Eddie-- Eddie's been needing  
someone to do that...

to him for a long time.

What?

Well, Eddie got to picking  
on your boy, and could have messed him up.

Then this guy shows up  
and bam, bam, bam!

Just like that,  
it was all over.

Look, y'all eat up,  
meals are on me today.

That's very generous,  
thank you.

No, it's nothing, really.

If there's anything I can do  
for you guys, just let me know.

Well, you wouldn't happen to  
know a good mechanic, would you?

Hm.

Bobby John Dolan, the best  
and only mechanic in town.

You work on big rigs?

I do today.

Yeah, that could be bad.

I've seen this before but,  
only in a book...

and it was a short book.

Hmm...

This big red thing in here

I believe is the engine...

Thank you...

for helping me out.

No problem.

When you were in the restaurant,

I overheard you talking about your grandfather...

and the clues he'd left you.

I'd like to interview you

and get some of the details of the story.

We don't have a lot of time, so,

if you'd open it up right away, that'd be really helpful.

We'll be leaving

in just a little bit...

so I wouldn't worry about it

too much, if I were you.

Why not?

Because you'd only

have half the story.

How frustrating would that be?

Mm, it's very considerate

of you.

Okay.

It's gonna take me all day

to find a starter for this.

All night to put her in

and probably a good part of tomorrow, too.

You folks are gonna

need a place to stay.

You wouldn't happen to own

the local motel, too, would you?

No, that's this guy over here.

He owns the local bed

and breakfast down the road.

Perfect.

(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)

**JEFF (O.S.):**



Thanks again, Jim, for taking us in on such short notice.

**JIM (O.S.):**

Yeah.. It's no problem.  
What is a problem is  
the water heater is down.  
I'll just have to get  
that fixed by tonight.

**JEFF (O.S.):**

Could we give you a hand? We'd love to help.

**JIM (O.S.):**

Yeah, sure, why not?  
(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)  
Okay, guys, upstairs to the  
left, every room is available.  
Follow me.  
Just take your bags  
here for now.  
We have three rooms  
available.  
This one, and the other  
two down the hall...  
so go ahead  
and take your pick.  
You still seem hesitant  
about my offer.  
I really do think  
I could help.  
You might consider my size  
to be a handicap...  
but I like to think  
of it as a good thing.  
Sort of fly under the radar,  
so to speak.  
I assure you, I'm as adept as  
any accredited professional.  
Hey, they're coach broke down.  
They're gonna be spending the night here.  
Bobby said he'd have it done  
first thing in the morning.  
A little warning  
might have been nice.

Isn't that what this is?  
We don't even have hot water.  
So we'll give them a discount.  
I've done a staggering amount  
of research on the topics of forensic investigation.  
And I rarely use Wikipedia,  
unless I've taken the time to write the article myself.  
Fine, knock yourself out.  
Hey, guys, did Derek tell you  
about the tree house?  
Tree house?  
Yeah, it's pretty cool.  
Mom, what are you doing?  
Derek, the house is already  
clean, I just want to keep it that way.  
Fine.  
You owe me one.  
This is awesome.  
So, who built it?  
It's one of Grandpa's projects.  
Oh, the one who died?  
So, when was it built?  
We built most of it  
when I came to visit.  
He added the roof, but  
otherwise, it's just like we left it.  
Does he build a lot of stuff  
like this?  
You name it, he built it.  
Cabinetry, furniture,  
decorative art.  
Half the house.  
Never stopped.  
Always onto something new.  
Wait, he sounds  
like a really cool guy.  
A man who, after his death,  
is still shrouded in mysteries.  
He was not shrouded  
in mystery, okay?  
He was just a normal guy,  
who lived a normal life...  
and made an awesome tree house.  
I'm sick of everyone trying to

turn him into some kind of--  
Kook? Loony? Wacko, weirdo,  
madman, crazy guy, crackpot-  
What is your problem?  
I should clarify, I don't  
think he was crazy...  
and you obviously don't  
think he was crazy...  
but apparently some people do.  
If anyone can set the record  
straight, it's you.  
If you'll help me write this  
book, together we can tell the true story of James Morton.  
Plus, we can do a 50-50 split  
of the profits when the book hits the market.  
It's definitely a code.  
There are repeating patterns  
throughout, but they don't make any English words.  
And what does it mean by you  
can use my Remington?  
Maybe wants you  
to shoot somebody?  
What's the other note say?  
It's all in my plans.  
What's in his plans?  
Have you tried finding  
the Remington?  
Yeah, but I don't know what  
it looks like or where he would have kept it.  
Maybe it's in here.  
I already looked there, guys.  
Cool.  
Theoretical Physics?  
Bio-electrical Impulse and Photon Transfer?  
Photon Mass and Charged Particle  
Manipulation?  
I thought your Grandpa  
was a woodworker.  
He was...  
Why would a woodworker want  
books like these?  
"Property of Virgil Logan,  
Willow Wood Library."  
I say we ask the librarian.

(MUSIC PLAYING)

(MUSIC CHANGES)

Hello?

Sir?

Mr. Logan?

Mr. Logan!

Ssh.

I'm right here.

This is a library  
for heaven sake.

Hmm.

Oh, I'd be sleeping, too.

Yes, you'd be sleeping, too.

Don't think you wouldn't.

Now then, what would you  
lot be here for?

Or should I say, why?

Um... yeah, Grandpa borrowed  
some books from you a while ago. Do you remember a James Morton?

Well yes, yes. Of course,

I remember James Morton.

I still do have an excellent  
memory, you know.

Yeah, I'm sure you do.

Don't these seem like unusual  
topics for him to be studying?

Well, that all depends on what  
you mean by an 'unusual' topic, doesn't it? Hmmm?

Why would a woodworker be so  
interested in science?

B-- but-- but was James Morton  
primarily a woodworker?

Or was he perhaps, one of the  
foremost scientific minds of the 21st century, hmm?

You ever think of that?

His comprehension of the  
mysteries of energy and physics...

went far beyond anything

I've ever known.

His genius was unparalleled!

What do you mean?

There was no parallel  
to his genius.

A genius apparently

which was not passed on to his progeny.

(SNICKERS)

Do you have a list of

the books that he borrowed?

You know, I personally paid  
for every book on these shelves.

And the shelves themselves!

Custom made to my specifications.

Your grandfather made them,  
of course, he cut me a deal.

All these books were  
purchased according to your grandfather's requests.

You see this book?

I stocked this book on a  
Tuesday and by Thursday...

he had read it cover to cover  
and was intimately familiar with it's contents.

Well, he certainly didn't show  
that side of himself to me.

Don't be ridiculous.

Why would a grown man talk  
to a young boy about biochemical conduction?

Apparently, you've just  
scratched the surface...

of something you won't  
likely comprehend.

Let me know  
if you need anything.

Drop by anytime,  
take anything you need.

Tape.

Thanks.

Now this needed some attention  
quite some time ago.

Yeah, Dad was like that;  
he was rarely in the house.

Always tinkering with somethin'  
out there in the shop.

He passed away?

Yeah he died last week.

I'm sorry, I had no idea.

We weren't that close.

( PHONE RINGS)

Jim Morton.

Hey, Dad, this is Derek.  
I'm at the library, looking  
at the books Grandpa borrowed?  
Yeah, what's up?  
Well, they're pretty intense.  
It looks like he was studying  
solar radiation or some kind of advanced optics.  
Does any of that sound familiar?  
Doesn't ring a bell.  
So, you have no idea  
what he was up to?  
No, I don't.

**JIM (O.S.):**

Why are you at the library?  
I'm just returning some books  
Grandpa borrowed.  
Oh. Well, great, thanks.  
Man, it sure seems like  
there's a lot to keep track of these days.  
I know the feeling.  
Yeah. Take this place for  
instance; a huge, gorgeous home.  
Yup, thanks, Dad.  
But in reality, taxes and the  
upkeep make this place more trouble than it's worth.  
I'm sure that's not  
what he intended.  
I just don't remember him  
being much of a scientist.  
He was an artist.  
Here, check this out.  
What? He made that?  
That's really, really  
complicated.  
Yeah, he made tons  
of stuff like this.  
And back at his workshop,  
he's got these binders filled with designs.  
Wait, designs?  
Yeah, blueprints.  
As in his plans.  
Well, yeah,  
It's all in my plans.

It's a blue, three-ring binder,  
it's gotta be in here somewhere.

**DEREK (O.S.):**

Got it!  
So, what are we looking for?  
The answer is in Willow Wood.  
Beware of the pen.  
He is a treacherous friend.  
Look at this.  
According to this,  
there were five objects in the Willow series.  
Where are they?  
Three were given as gifts,  
the other two are unlisted.  
Okay. Who did he  
give 'em to?  
Kevin & Michelle Billings,  
Marcus DeWhitt, and Virgil Logan.  
It doesn't say what the items  
are, though.  
There are no designs for them.  
Okay, this is getting  
interesting.

**JACK (O.S.):**

So, what's next?  
We split up, collect the pieces,  
and get some answers.  
Hello?  
Mrs. Billings...  
Yes.  
um, I believe you  
knew my grandfather?  
Yes, I did. I'm very sorry  
for your loss.  
I think Grandpa wanted  
me to talk to you.  
Hello.  
Hi, there.  
I'm Jack Moore.  
This is my brother, David.  
We're friends of Derek Morton.  
He sent us over here to look

at a a willow wood piece his grandfather made.  
Something small.  
A clock, a bowl, maybe?  
Well, come on in.

**GATOR (O.S.):**

It's a code.  
Look, a code!  
Don't worry,  
it's just a simple code.  
It's a code.  
Stupid code.

**Log:**

Derek's trust.  
He took the coded message  
with him, leaving me here with absolutely nothing to do.  
I can't work with a client  
that doesn't trust me!  
( DEVICE BEEPS )  
( STEPS APPROACHING )  
( WHISTLING )  
Ah-ha!  
Hey, Peter.  
I'm sorry, I thought it  
was the guys coming back.  
Coming back?  
Where are they?  
On a mission.  
What you got in the basket?  
Some snacks, Mom suggested  
that we have a picnic.  
Oh, this is what  
you've been working on?  
Yep! What do you think?  
That's really neat!  
What is it?  
Umm that's sorta what  
I'm trying to figure out.  
I'm sorry, boys, I was unable  
to find anything that fits your description.  
Do you mind  
if I take a look around?  
Briefly.



So, you were close

to Mr. Morton?

I was his attorney.

I wrote documents necessary

for him to start companies for technology development.

What kind of technologies?

Hm, I'm sorry, I'm afraid

I'm not in a position...

to disclose that information.

(CLOCK CHIMES)

Derek discovered something,

didn't he?

Maybe, I'm afraid I'm not

in a position to disclose that information to you.

(CHUCKLES)

Well... Mr. Morton may,

in fact...

have tried to leave a

message before he died.

And even if he did, the best

option for Jim and his family is to go on home.

And keep their memory of James

a pleasant one...

without all

the gruesome details.

Well, I couldn't find

anything, either.

I'll keep my eyes open.

Have fun boys, but be careful.

The Morton legacy

is a fragile one.

We knew him pretty well.

He'd come over and talk up his

ideas and projects with Kevin.

I remember when he started

building the bridge out to the house.

We all thought it was

ridiculous...

but your Grandma loved it!

He built it for her, so she

wouldn't have to walk up and down the hill all the time.

Do you know if Grandpa

was working on any special projects lately?

Anything out of the ordinary?

Not that I know of.  
He would have told you if he  
was, though, right? I mean, you knew him pretty well?  
Very well.  
He was like a father to us.  
We had some pretty hard times  
and he was always there for us.  
Of course,  
he had hard times, too.  
Like when you're  
Daddy left.  
What happened between them?  
I think you should ask  
your Dad...  
but from what we could tell,  
nothing happened.  
James was focused on his work...  
and your Dad just didn't see  
how he fit into those plans.  
Next time I saw them  
together was at the funeral.  
Did Grandpa give your husband  
a gift in the past few months?  
Yeah, it looks like  
the original bond was weak.  
Strange it took all these  
years to finally fall apart.  
Well, you'd only catch it if  
you're really paying attention.  
I noticed that the basement  
is a little bit older than the rest of the house.  
Yeah, that's a funny story.  
My great grand-dad was a German.  
He moved here at the turn  
of the century.  
He bought a piece of land,  
and started his family right here.  
He built this little shack  
and then moved everybody in, right here.  
Then his son tore it down and  
built something a little bit larger, and a little more solid.  
Then when Dad inherited it,  
he-- he expanded, the whole thing.  
Still got the same foundation,

though.

So why'd they turn it  
into a bed 'n breakfast?

Well, after I moved out,  
he and Mom had all this extra space...

I guess,

I really don't know why.

So are you gonna continue  
the tradition?

Nah, that's not for me.

The artistic stuff...

that was Dad's thing.

Is that it?

Not quite.

I still need that threaded  
coupler, and I gotta solder this one last fitting.

Okay, I'll head to the hardware  
store and grab that before they close.

Is this what you need?

It's a music box,

but it doesn't work.

Kevin could probably  
tell you why.

Where is he now?

He's at the station training  
his new deputy.

He's a cop?

That's how I got  
to know your father.

Can I borrow this for a while?

Sure.

Thank you.

I really appreciate this.

Anytime. I see a lot  
of your grandpa in you.

Thanks again.

Well, I actually brought Reagan  
up here to show her the old typewriter.

Oh... oh, oh, okay.

That's awesome.

Yeah, I don't think it works,  
though.

What?

What's wrong with it?

It's like the keys  
are all mixed up.  
That's too bad.  
Whoa, wait a minute.  
It's not broken.  
It's a code.

**Log:**

Model 2. I found it.  
Did you find anything?  
He said he didn't have anything  
that matched our description.  
All right, hop in.  
Next stop, Logan's library.  
Looks like they closed already.  
Well, we can come back  
tomorrow, right?  
Guys, I think I can see it.  
This building is fairly old.  
Hey! What are you  
guys doing?  
We need something  
and Mr. Logan has it.  
And why do you need it?  
I'm not sure.  
Come back tomorrow.  
I can see it,  
it's sitting right there.  
Come on, Derek,  
it's not that big a deal.  
In case you haven't noticed,  
to me, yeah, it is kind of a big deal.  
Derek, what's the problem here?  
No problem.  
I'll see you tonight.  
( ENGINE STARTS )  
(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)  
Hey, guys, come look at this.  
What's this?  
It's gibberish, de-gibberified.  
What?  
I know you've doubted my  
abilities in the past...  
but I think from now on...

you'll see things a little  
bit differently.  
Watch this.  
Gibberish. Now watch.  
The Remington.  
I'd like to try this out on your  
grandfather's first note...  
with your permission,  
of course.

(MUSIC CHANGES)

Secretary, a fresh sheet  
of paper, please?  
Thank you.  
This is gonna be good.  
The patriarch?  
It means father, grandfather,  
great grandfather and so on.  
Now, if you don't mind...  
The end.  
That's it?  
That's it.  
He had enemies,  
so he was in some sort of--  
Danger, distress, dilemma,  
predicament, turmoil, trouble?  
Log--

**Log:**

appreciate multiple choice.  
My point is, he had a problem.  
All right, we need to find  
the missing wood pieces.  
Oh, Derek, wait... take this.  
Could come in handy.  
If you find anything,  
let me know.  
GATOR (ON RADIO):  
Hello! Can you hear me?  
Yes, I can hear you!  
You have to answer me  
over the radio.  
Yes, I can hear you.  
Please limit the radio  
usage to emergencies.

( ENGINE STARTS )

It's getting dark. I think  
we're gonna head back, too.  
Don't stay out here too late.  
Yeah, thanks.

( OMINOUS MUSIC PLAYING )

Isn't that DeWhitt's car?  
What's he doing here?  
Oh, there you are! You need to  
get packed. We're leaving first thing in the morning.  
What?! Where?

We're going home!

Who's going to take care  
of the bed 'n breakfast?

Marcus made an offer on the  
property...

and he said we can leave  
everything as it is until we get back.

Anyway, we're leaving at 8:00.

What about the Moores? Are we  
just gonna leave them here?

Bobby John's already got the rig  
fixed. We can get an early start in the morning.

Now if you see anything  
in there that you'd like to have changed...

we can have it revised  
right away.

No, no, this looks fine.

Wait! Don't sign that!

What?

I said don't sign that.

Don't don't sign anything.

You mind giving us  
some kind of explanation?

Look, I'm too close to figuring  
this out. We can not leave yet.

Well, you better get to figuring  
it out, because you don't have much time--

Dad!

You're not listening to me.

Hey!

( RUSTLING )

( RUSTLING CONTINUES )

Hello?

(DRAMATIC MUSIC PLAYING)

Agh!

What is your problem?

Dad, we deciphered

the gibberish clue...

and one of Grandpa's friends

called The Pen, betrayed him.

The Pen?

It's a code name.

The Pen was part

of Grandpa's secret project.

Derek, can you hear

yourself right now?

You are completely obsessed

with this thing, and that's a problem!

And you're not...

and that's a problem!

Look! Look, I care

more than you think...

but I got responsibilities...

and they're not here.

Dad, you can't sign

these--

It's not your call, Derek!

Now go get packed and get

some sleep. You need it.

Jim, if you'd like to take some

more time to think this over--

No, I'm doing this now.

Thank you, Jim,

It's been a pleasure.

I've got a message

for you, boy.

Now you listen to me,

and you listen well...

you-- you little detective

person, you!

Just call me Ace.

Ace? Well then, Ace...

I've come to warn you.

You stay away from James

Morton's treasure!

Yeah, you've been poking your

little nose too deep...

into places where your little  
nose is most unwelcome!  
You see, this treasure has  
a purpose far beyond your ability to understand.  
I mean, do you understand?  
I think so.  
Excellent. Excellent.  
So do you want me to deliver  
this message to Derek as well?  
No! No, no, no! No one must  
know that we-- we have spoken!  
This--this is supposed  
to be our little secret!  
You see, if... if... if my  
identity were revealed, it would, well, it could...  
it might...  
ruin everything, and--  
Why am I having this  
conversation, with--  
I mean, how old are you? Nine?  
Ten, actually.  
Mm, yeah.  
Now you be careful now you  
don't blunder around, yes?  
And make things any more  
difficult for me than they already are? Hey? Yes..  
GATOR (ON RADIO):  
Derek, you awake? Derek?  
Yeah, I'm here.  
Ah ha! I knew these would come  
in handy. Look! I know the secret identity of The Pen!  
Yeah, I know. I tried to stop  
it, but I was too late.  
Yeah. wait, what?  
DeWhitt, he bought the house.  
We're leaving in the morning.  
This whole thing is over.  
Oh, this is great!  
Look, Logan stopped me in the  
woods to warn me to keep away from the treasure.  
what if he's the Pen?!Logan?  
So, DeWhitt's The Pocket.  
No, it could be either



of them.  
we can't afford  
to rule anyone out.  
If I could get online,  
I could dig up some information on the both of them.  
Can't sleep?  
Something like that.  
You okay?  
Yeah, it's just this  
thing with Derek.  
It seems like he's on  
a self-destruct mission.  
He's heading down a bad road.  
Have you talked to him  
about it?  
He won't listen.  
It's worth a try.  
Derek?  
Hey, um, I just want to talk  
with you. I know it's been a little tough on you this week...  
and, well,  
I just want to talk.  
Derek?  
(OMINOUS MUSIC FADES UP)  
(DRAMATIC MUSIC PLAYING)  
(GLASS BULB SMASHES)  
(DRAMATIC MUSIC FADES UP)  
( POLICE SIRENS APPROACHING)  
Hey, hey, hey!  
I said stop!  
I have permission  
from the owner.  
Right, that's why you broke  
through the window and ran when I said stop.  
Come on, let's go.  
You don't understand.  
(CELL DOOR SLAMS)  
(STEPS APPROACHING)  
Your dad'll be here in a few  
minutes to pick you up.  
Said he'll cover the damages.  
Michelle tells me you stopped by  
the house earlier today.  
Said you seem like a good kid.

I used to know your dad  
pretty well.  
Haven't talked to him  
in... years.  
You remind me of him.  
(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)

**Log:**

what is James Morton's secret?  
What is the treasure? What  
is he afraid of The Pen finding?  
You gonna stay awake all night?  
This is my first real case.  
I don't really want to launch  
my career as a failure.  
You Jim Morton?  
Yeah.  
Deputy Billings.  
Uh, it's Sheriff now.  
Good to see you, Jim.  
I'm sorry about this.  
Uh, it looks like he's  
a chip off the old block.  
Get in the car.  
Good night, Sheriff.  
Jim... just don't forget  
about those nights that you spent here.  
It's all I can think about.  
Good night.  
( ENGINE STARTS)  
Long night?  
Yeah, you could say that.  
What time is your flight  
in the morning?

**Check in is 9:**

to roll out of here about 8:00.  
Okay, we can be out  
of your hair by 6:30.  
Na, there's no rush. You guys  
take all the time you need.  
Marcus is pretty relaxed,  
he won't mind.  
You know, I don't even feel like

I sold the place, with Marcus taking care of it.  
I just don't see why Derek  
is so opposed to it.  
Dad was like that.  
Latch on to an idea like  
a pit bull and never let go.  
Maybe Derek's afraid he's losing  
his connection to the past.  
You know, first his grandfather,  
and then this home.  
There's a lot of history  
in these walls.  
You know, I'm a good dad...  
I am.  
It's just... you know, when I  
look in Derek's eyes, I-- I--  
I--I don't see hate there,  
I just don't see love.  
What does he see when  
he looks in your eyes?  
He never looks.  
Well, goodnight, Jim.  
I'll see you in the morning.  
(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)  
Jim, thanks for your  
hospitality.  
You guys have a safe flight.  
We will.  
Um, sorry you never got  
to finish your story.  
That's okay, nowadays, I  
wouldn't have a realistic chance of getting it published anyways.  
Come on, Gator,  
let's go, honey.  
I haven't given up. If I find  
anything, I'll let you know.  
(ENGINE STARTS)  
Mary, you and Audrey finish up  
breakfast.  
Derek and I will grab the bags,  
and be right back.  
(SOFT MUSIC FADES UP)  
You ready?  
Not really.

Yeah.

Derek, we need to talk.

I know the last couple days  
have been pretty hard on you.  
Honestly, I don't know what  
to make of it.

Dad, I'm sorry.

I know how disappointed  
you must be.

I just should have  
talked to you.

It's my fault. I really didn't  
give you much of a chance.

I want to make this right.

I'll pay Logan back  
for the library.

This whole thing was  
just stupid.

Must have seemed crazy.

A little.

I think being back here  
has brought back a lot of memories...  
feelings... history I really  
don't want repeated.

It's a history

I want to know about.

Sheriff Billings was talking  
about you last night...  
and it was like hearing  
about a complete stranger.

I really don't know  
anything about you.

There's not much worth knowing.

But it is worth knowing.

I'm starting to think that's why  
Grandpa set up this whole thing.

So I could learn about my--  
Heritage?

Yeah.

And I want you to know that...

I'm proud to be your son.

I just don't want to go through  
life and move out someday...  
never to see you again,

until it's too late, and then--  
Not even care when you die.  
Derek, I care  
more than you know.  
Come here.  
Let's make sure  
that never happens.  
Whatever I need to do,  
I just want to make this right.  
Sorry, we should just  
probably get out of here.  
You know,  
we got a little time.  
I think if Dad were here, he'd  
want me to help you with this.  
And I guess I want  
to make this right, too.  
(DRAMATIC MUSIC FADES UP)  
All right, we need to start  
by collecting the five wooden clues.  
I've only got one so far.  
Dad's projector...  
where'd you find that?  
Ah, up at the tree house,  
in Grandpa's battle chest.  
And this is the first clue.  
It's called The Poem.  
But it doesn't work.  
Tune spool's missing.  
It's a little piece about the size of your thumb.  
The clue says, "the patriarch  
must restore the poem's voice...  
"and the patriarch must learn  
the poem's song".  
Patriarch means 'father', right?  
Yeah, or grandfather,  
great-grandfather and so on.  
I know what we're looking for.  
(DRAMATIC MUSIC FADES UP)

**Log:**

Morton's inventions has led me to discover 'Solara'...  
a major research corporation,  
and one of Morton's major competitors.

**Log:**

James Morton recorded the completion...  
of his fiber optics technology  
code named 'Tango'.

Two days later, Solara Corp  
announced the same technology.

Log! On April 27th, 2009,  
James Morton completed project 'Synergy'...  
an electroluminescent  
chlorophyll modification.

On April 28th, Solara Corp  
announced their discovery of the same exact process!

Dad! Listen,  
this just got big!

(MUSIC BOXPLAYING)

(MUSIC BOX  
CONTINUES PLAYING)

Wait, what was the song?

It's a hymn. We used to sing it  
in church. I remember it being one of Dad's favorites.

What's it about?

I don't remember.

So where are we going?

To church, we can look up the  
lyrics in one of the hymnals.

Gator, what are you  
trying to say?

I'm saying we have a case  
of industrial espini-age.

What?

Es-- espini-age.

I think he means espionage...

John, would you check that out  
and tell me what you think?

For the last six years, Morton  
has worked as an inventor.

Virgil Logan and Marcus DeWhitt  
were both founding members of the corporation.

Are you absolutely sure  
about that?

He's right, Dad!

Somebody's been stealing  
Morton's breakthrough designs...

and selling them to a Russian corporation called 'Solara'. It has to be Logan or DeWhitt. They're the only two that would have access.

( BRAKES SQUEALING,  
AIR BRAKES HISSING)

What are we doing?

We're going back.

If we hurry, we can get there before they get to the airport.

(OMINOUS MUSIC FADES UP)

Hello?

( PHONE RINGING)

(MUSIC CHANGES)

(GROWLS)

Did you find it?

Yeah, the chorus is...

"The cross, at the cross,  
where I first saw the light."

I don't see anything.

(EERIE MUSIC PLAYING)

When do you think  
this was built?

I don't know, why?

We're at the wrong church.

(DRAMATIC MUSIC PLAYING)

Still no answer.

Have you tried Jim's cell?

The only number I have  
is the bed 'n breakfast.

Well, keep trying it.

( RINGING)

( PHONE RINGING)

Hello, Marcus Dewhitt.

Um, hi, is Derek available?

I'm afraid not, the Mortons  
aren't here right now.

Is there something

I can do for you?

Um, do you know when Derek  
will be available next?

I'm afraid not,  
can I take a message?

(WHISPERING)

It's DeWhitt! He's there and the  
Morton's aren't in the house.

Ask him where the Morton's are.

What's he doing there?

ANDREA (ON PHONE):

I don't know. Ask him if they've already flown out.

What if he's the Pen???

Hello?

Um, yeah, Mr. DeWhitt,  
you can take a message.

And the message is...

justice will be served.

Mr. DeWhitt, yes, this is

Andrea, Gator's mother.

Uh-huh, thank you, yes.

Um, do you happen to have

Jim Morton's cell number?

Yes. Okay, thank you.

You, too.

What?

(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)

This is the place.

There!

Pictures.

All right, Dad, what  
did you want us to see?

We're gonna need a key  
to open this.

Or a hammer. Let's go.

( PHONE RINGING)

Jim Morton.

( DIALING, RINGING)

(TIRES SQUEALING)

Come on, get in, quick.

Was that the Moores?

Yes, now get in,

I'll explain later.

Oh, no, no, you don't know what  
you are doing and you have no right to do this.

I know my rights!

What's your badge number?

I'm going to report you!

I know my rights! You didn't



even read me my Miranda.  
Miranda, where are you  
when I need you?  
What's goin' on, Sheriff?  
Sheriff! You need to place  
that man under arrest!  
He's been stealing Morton's  
work and selling it overseas.  
I'm afraid  
you're making a mistake.  
Oh, no, you don't, we know all  
about Solara Corporation!  
Well, you're right about the  
theft of James' plans...  
but it's all been taken  
care of, because of you.  
How so?  
Well, James knew that it  
was either Logan or me behind all this...  
but he couldn't pin it  
on either one of us.  
So he began working on  
his last project in secret.  
It was code named SunDial,  
after his death.  
I began doing some  
investigating...  
and I found some curious  
discrepancies in the Sundial accounts.  
Meanwhile, all of this treasure  
hunt business had convinced Logan...  
that there was a final  
invention.  
And he made one last  
effort to find it.  
Luckily, I happened to be here.  
So you were  
The Pocket all along?  
But why were you so eager  
to buy the property?  
Well, I didn't want James  
to sell it to just anybody.  
I needed more information  
on Logan...

and I figured it would be  
here if it was anywhere.  
I'm really sorry for  
doubting your character.  
Though, I'm sure  
you understand.  
That's okay, young man.  
What do you got there?  
You know,  
I don't really know.  
It's something Dad  
wanted me to have.  
Hey, Marcus, you suppose that's  
what that key's for?  
Key.  
James gave me this.  
( METAL CLANKS )  
(WHISTLES)  
The projector!  
Well, I'm afraid the Sheriff  
needs me down at the station...  
to help with some  
reports on all this.  
Well, thanks again, Marcus.  
Anything for your dad, Jim.  
Well, what now?  
Let's watch a movie.  
I wonder what's on there.  
Home movies.  
No, don't be ridiculous.  
It's probably a microfilm  
series of the blueprints for his inventions.  
(SOFT MUSIC PLAYING)  
Here we go.  
What is it?  
It's a letter... from Dad.  
Dear son, it's been a while.  
I have so much I want to say;  
so much to tell you.  
I wish we could talk face to  
face, but it doesn't look like that's going to happen.  
Your mother is already gone  
ahead of me, and soon I'll be following her.  
It seems only yesterday

that Carol and I were the young couple...  
filled with joy at your birth.  
Our hearts were tied to you  
from the moment you arrived.  
Sadly, we didn't tie  
your heart to ours.  
I blinked my eyes  
and you were gone.  
It happened in stages and  
I didn't see it clearly until it was too late.  
At first, we were your  
whole world...  
our home and your toys  
were enough for you.  
When you went off to school,  
you discovered a whole new world and new friends.  
We blamed their influence  
on you...  
but the truth is, that although  
you had our hearts, we did not have yours.  
We were losing you,  
and I didn't know what to do.  
So I just ignored the problem.  
We surrendered your heart without a fight.  
May God forgive me...  
Now at the end of my life,  
I recognize how much I was like my father and his before him.  
And now the purpose of my letter  
is to beg you...  
to break that cycle, and to  
learn from my mistakes.  
I leave you my journal, filled  
with my thoughts, my hopes, and my vision for the future.  
I hope that it will serve you,  
and help guide you through life.  
I pray that you will be that man  
for your son, that I was unable to be for you.  
With love, Dad.  
Hey, Derek, look. Logan must  
have left his pen here.  
You should keep it.  
p.s. I hope you found the  
Three Kings and will continue my work with them.  
Three Kings?

It's part of the clue.  
The pictures will shine  
in the darkness and you will see the Three Kings.  
( EMPTY PROJECTOR RATTLES )  
(DRAMATIC MUSIC FADES UP )  
Now that's more like it.  
Pictures will shine  
in the darkness.  
The Three Kings...  
Derek, these three trees!  
I know where this is.  
(AIR HISSING)  
Huh.  
I can't find an "on" switch.  
(SOMBER MUSIC FADES UP)  
( DEVICE BEEPING )  
( ELECTRONIC CRACKLING )  
( ELECTRONIC HUMMING )  
(DRAMATIC MUSIC PLAYING)  
(MUSIC CONTINUES)  
Rad, Derek!  
He really was a scientist!  
Oh, the pen!  
( ELECTRICITY CRACKLING )  
( ELECTRICITY  
WHIRRING DOWN )

**AUTOMATED VOICE:**

Diagnostics pass complete.  
Whoa.  
Hello.

**MARCUS (O.S.):**

Sheriff... yes, I have an intruder in my home.  
He's tearing the place up,  
looking for something.  
So, Grandpa invented the world's  
coolest night light?  
No. No, these are measuring  
electrical inputs.  
He's harvesting solar energy.  
He felt that other options  
were ugly and inefficient.  
He used to talk about it

all the time when I was a kid.  
How one day he'd use creation to  
transform the power of the sun.  
I can't believe  
he actually did it.

**Log:**

Everything he said about Logan is a lie.

Trust me.

I'm telling you, the prints  
are in that house somewhere.

As soon as I get the family out  
of there, I'll find them.

The blueprints!

Hello?

(EERIE MUSIC PLAYING)

Forgot my briefcase.

(ENGINE STARTS)

Hey, guys, follow me,  
we gotta get to the blueprints.

Where's he going?

(DRAMATIC MUSIC PLAYING)

(PHONE BEEPS, DIALING)

I've got the blueprints.

It's a done deal.

So, call off your dogs  
and have the money ready.

(CAR APPROACHING)

Look out!

Here you go, take this!

I'm gonna hit you!

(GUN FIRES)

(SOMBER MUSIC PLAYING)

(DRAMATIC MUSIC PLAYING)

(STEPS THUMPING)

Give me that case.

Now!

That's a good boy.

(TRIUMPHANT MUSIC PLAYING)

That's from Dad... with love.

Whoa, that was-- I mean--

Spectacular, amazing,

fantastic, phenomenal?

You're trespassing on my

property and none of this is gonna stick in court.  
You were shooting at my son!  
In self-defense,  
he was trying to kill me!  
We know all about your  
dealings with Solara.  
Try to prove it in court.  
You've stolen several  
of Morton's inventions in the past...  
But the theft  
is a little too clean.  
Never leave a paper trail,  
right?  
He needed proof, so,  
he gave you a gift.  
A Trojan horse.  
That's right. This thing,  
it's been recording for months.  
Everything you've spoken, just  
think about every crime you committed, it's all right here.  
That's not admissible in court.  
You recorded it  
without my permission.  
Actually, I think you'll find  
that the laws vary state by state.  
In the great state of Tennessee,  
this serves as a legal record for your crimes.  
Oh, by the way, it's still  
recording.  
How old are you? Nine?  
Ten... actually.  
Unbelievable, kid.  
Hey, thanks again for coming  
back, Jeff.  
Come see us sometime in Texas,  
will you?  
You know I will, I got business  
in Texas, so you might see us sooner than you think.  
Okay.  
Here.  
Thought you might want  
to have this.  
It should sell.  
Murder mysteries always do.

Murder mystery?

Gator, Grandpa died  
of a heart attack.

(SNICKERS)

Right.

Wait, seriously?

He wasn't murdered?

How did we not discuss the fact  
that he wasn't murdered?

Well, I didn't think that--

Great, now how am I supposed  
to get this thing published?

(CLEARING THROAT)

I just happen to have a number  
of well-connected friends in the industry...  
and with a little persuasion  
I could possibly procure  
a rather substantial contract on your behalf.

What--what, really?

Well, thanks, Mr. Logan.

It's business, not charity.

I think Ace Wonder has a  
wonderful future ahead of him.

**JEFF (O.S.):**

Come on, Gator!

I don't know what to say.

Say goodbye and get  
along with you.

Thanks, Mr. Logan.

I'm really sorry that I thought  
you were a lying thief.

Apology accepted.

Of course.

Bye!

Very strange little boy.

He does have a point, though.

We should have never  
doubted you.

Oh, don't worry about it,  
there were times I doubted you.

How so?

Your father had me deliver  
the messages to Derek.

He was so secretive, even I  
didn't know what they contained.  
And the next thing I know, you  
two are showing the clues to every jackanapes in Willow Wood.  
It was a huge gamble.  
Neither of you could find the  
treasure on your own.  
If you didn't work together,  
all would have been lost.  
Fortunately, it paid off.  
Your father had significantly  
more faith in you than he should have had in my opinion.  
You know, for a genius, he did  
the dumbest things sometimes.  
Oh, I'm out of here.  
Bye-bye.  
Arrivederci.  
Hey, Dad, um, Sheriff Billings,  
when we were talking...  
he said something about you  
spending time in jail when you were a kid...  
but he wouldn't tell me  
what you did.  
I mean, you know, in a small  
town like this, way back when, um... what was it?  
Well, I, uh, assaulted  
the mayor's son.  
He and I were up to no  
good and got caught.  
I took all the blame, and he got  
off the hook, because he was the mayor's son.  
Ironically, we became good  
friends, but I left Willow and he stayed behind...  
and became the sheriff.  
Wait, Sheriff Billings?  
I want to hear  
stories like that.  
Well, then, I guess we  
got a lot to talk about.  
(SOFT MUSIC CONTINUES)  
( PHONE RINGING)  
(MUSIC CHANGES)