

The Three Investigators and The Haunted Maze

By A.J. Goode

Chapter One: Into the Maze

"Welcome to the Grand Opening of the Francis Staroba Haunted Maze!"

A cheer rose up from the impatient crowd. Near the front, Bob Andrews grinned and glanced at his two friends. First Investigator Jupiter Jones was staring at the gate as though transfixed, his mind obviously already working its way through the maze. On the other side of him, Second Investigator Pete Crenshaw was looking around with a worried look on his face.

"We'll be opening the gates in a few minutes," the announcer called out. "Sorry about the delay, folks, but I promise we'll kick it off as soon as we can. While we're waiting, let me take a moment to say a few words about the man who originally created this maze: The late great Mr. Francis Staroba, one of Hollywood's greatest directors!"

Another cheer. The announcer continued talking about the famed director, going over the same information that Bob, the trio's Records and Research man, had researched over the past few days. Francis Staroba, who had directed some of the goriest and most well-known horror movies in Hollywood history, had recently passed away and left his entire estate to his oldest son, George. George had, in turn, restored the old mansion and grounds – including a maze that covered four square acres – and turned it into a tourist attraction.

Of course, the man with the microphone wasn't talking about *everything* Bob had learned, like the fact that Staroba's younger son had contested the will, declaring that he had seen a more recent copy that divided the estate between the two brothers. It was quickly becoming a huge scandal, which only served to attract a larger crowd to the Grand Opening.

Bob turned his attention back to the announcer, who was giving instructions. "There are numbered signs throughout the maze, with one horror movie trivia question on each sign. If you choose Answer A, you will turn left. Answer B means straight ahead and Answer C means a right turn. If you answer all questions correctly, you should be able find your way directly to the exit. The first person or group to finish the maze wins the \$500 cash prize!"

Bob glanced at his friends again. Jupiter was the one who had convinced them to join him here tonight. With Bob's recent research, Juve's knowledge of Hollywood trivia, and Pete's unerring sense of direction, they were the perfect team for a contest like this. Besides, the maze was going to be "haunted" with dozens of special effects and actors in spooky costumes. It promised to be a thrilling way to spend this Halloween night.

"Something is wrong," Jupiter said quietly.

"I'll tell you what's wrong," Pete announced. "We deal with enough scary and spooky stuff every time we handle a case as The Three Investigators. I can't believe we actually paid to come here and let someone scare us."

"George Staroba is supposed to be here," Jupe continued as though Pete hadn't spoken. "According to all of the publicity surrounding the opening, Staroba was going to make a speech about his father before officially opening the grounds to the public. Instead, someone else is speaking, and the opening has been delayed by nearly thirty minutes. Something must be wrong."

There was a commotion near the gates at the front of the maze. They were opening to allow groups and individuals through the three entrances at two-minute intervals.

As the boys neared the entrance, they saw a short, heavyset man set down the microphone and speak urgently into a cell phone. "George, it's Chad again," they heard the man say. "I don't know where you are, but you had better call me as soon as you get this message. You know I can't give away the prize without you here. Where the heck are you?"

"Curious," said Jupe. He hurried through the first gate, followed by his friends. "It would seem that the man who arranged all of this hasn't managed to show up for the big event."

"Yeah, yeah," Pete muttered. "Let's just get going. I don't like this."

Bob really couldn't blame him. The maze was dark, with ivy-covered walls of dark stone, and paths that were barely wide enough for the boys to move along in single file. The high walls blocked out the sound of the crowd outside and gave an eerie, warped echo to their steps and hushed voices. Lights placed at random intervals did more to create creepy shadows than to cast any helpful light; even the boys' flashlights did little to dispel the gloom.

"Okay, let's find the first sign," Jupe decided. He set off at a brisk pace, followed by Bob and then Pete. A few minutes in, they came upon a second path that crossed the one they were on. At the intersection of the two paths, there stood a wooden post with a bright red "1" painted on it.

"Question number one," Jupe read. "The German film *Wir Sind Die Nacht* is based on what classic vampire novel? Our choices are 'Twilight', 'Dracula' or 'Carmilla'."

"'Dracula'," Bob answered. "We know it's not 'Twilight', and I've never heard of 'Carmilla', so my guess is 'Dracula'."

"I admire your logic, but your answer is incorrect. The answer is 'Carmilla', which was arguably the first vampire novel published," Jupe told him.

"Who would know that?" Pete demanded. "Seriously, who knows things like that?"

"I do. That answer means we turn right. Let's move along."

Bob followed him, with Pete close behind. So close, in fact, that he kept stepping on Bob's heels. "Back off a few steps, Pete," he told his tall, nervous friend.

Pete grunted, but moved back a few inches.

Jupe and Bob decided the next few answers - Albin Grau, 1958 Chevrolet Fury, Griffin Dunne - with ease. They kept their voices low so as not give away any answers. From time to time, they glimpsed other contestants or costumed actors who tried to frighten them, but their progress was fairly uneventful. Pete, however, became more uneasy with every sound or moving shadow.

"Do you want to walk in the middle?" Bob asked.

"N-no. I just keep hearing something walking behind us. It's giving me the creeps."

"It's supposed to give you the creeps. It's a haunted maze, remember?"

Pete grunted again.

A sudden shriek rang out off to their left, followed by the sound of running footsteps pounding down the trail nearby.

"Watch out!" Pete shouted.

A shadowy figure lurched out of the gloom toward them. His skin was greenish and his tattered clothes were splattered with a dark substance that was disturbingly red in the dim light. Groaning, he dragged his left leg at an awkward angle while reaching for the boys with outstretched claw-like hands.

"Nice costume, but the blood should really be darker and the make-up is a bit too green," Jupe observed. "This is more of a Kelly green, bringing to mind leprechauns rather than decaying flesh."

The costumed "zombie" grinned and moved off down the dark path in search of easier prey.

"Great," Pete muttered. "Now I've got zombie leprechauns in my head."

Bob chuckled as Jupe turned to the next question.

"What 1960 Alfred Hitchcock film was based on real-life serial killer Ed Gein? Oh, that's too easy. The obvious answer is —"

"Hey!" Pete exclaimed. His friends whirled in time to see another man stagger out of the darkness and lunge toward him. The man's face was ghostly pale, with a dark streak of blood trickling out of his hair and into his eyes. He was breathing heavily and moving unsteadily as though he might fall at any moment.

He seized Pete's arms.

"Help me!" He moaned, and collapsed.

"Wow, he's *good!*" Bob gasped.

Pete struggled to free himself from the stranger's grasp. "G-guys," he stammered; "Guys, I don't think this is an actor! He's really hurt!"

"I think you're right!" The First Investigator cried, aiming his flashlight at the man's face. "That's no actor – It's George Staroba!"

Chapter Two: Turned Around

"How bad is he?" Bob asked.

"His pulse seems steady, but the fact that he is unconscious means that his injuries are somewhat serious," Jupe said. "He is in need of immediate medical attention. Pete, do you think you could retrace our steps back to the starting point?"

Pete nodded. "You want me to go get some help?" He asked.

"We are still closer to the entrance than to the end. I believe it will be faster to return there for help."

"Tell them we're at post number twelve," Bob told Pete.

"But we're only on our fifth question. How can we be at number twelve?" Pete asked.

"The signposts aren't numbered in order," The First Investigator explained. "That would make the challenge too easy."

Pete nodded again. He didn't like the idea of going off alone in the dark maze, but he knew that he was the only one of them who could find his way through the twists and turns and bring back help for the injured man. He tightened his grip on his flashlight and glanced at Staroba one more time

"Be careful," Jupe said.

"Oh, yeah." Pete turned and trotted off, back in the direction they had just come from.

He mentally retraced their steps as he moved along. He knew that they had gone right, left, straight and right again; his only real challenge would be in finding the strangely-numbered signposts again in the dark. That and remaining calm while reminding himself that any costumed creepers should be able to help him at this point, rather than scare him.

The walls of the maze seemed higher and darker now that he was alone. He fought off the impulse to panic as the light from his flashlight seemed awfully weak all of a sudden.

He found his first turn and veered left. As he did, someone moved ahead of him on the path.

"Wait!" Pete shouted. "My friends and I need help!"

The other person seemed to hesitate. He wore something dark with a large hood, and Pete couldn't see his face at all.

"There's a guy back there who's hurt. We think it's George Staroba," Pete told him.

"Staroba?" The stranger echoed.

"Yes, my friend recognized him. We need to get back to the start and get help for him."

"O-okay." The hooded man looked around and stepped closer to Pete. "Where are they?"

"Number Twelve."

"The entrance was locked after the last group started. There's no one there, but I know a quick way to the finish line. Follow me."

Pete followed the man at a brisk jog. They turned one way, and then another, seemingly going in circles. Even with his strong sense of direction, the Second Investigator was soon hopelessly turned around.

"Almost there," his guide panted, slowing. He hunched over, hands on his knees, trying to catch his breath. "Right . . . down there."

Pete hurried ahead of him down the dark corridor and found himself staring at ivy-covered walls on three sides. A dead end. As he turned to protest, he saw a quick flash of movement and then something struck him across the back, shoving him against the far wall.

He stumbled, trying to keep his balance as his assailant shoved him again. Pete body-slammed the wall and slid to the ground, seeing stars. The hooded man leaned over him and wrenched the flashlight out of his grasp before turning and disappearing.

Pete lay on the cold ground for several long minutes, waiting for the world to stop spinning. It was almost pitch-black here in this walled-in dead-end, and for once his famed sense of direction had failed him. He had no idea which way to go or how to get help for the injured man and his friends.

He groaned out loud as a thought occurred to him.

He had told the hooded man exactly where to find his friends, and there was nothing he could do to warn them.

Chapter Three: Where is Pete?

"He's starting to wake up," Jupiter observed.

Bob turned his flashlight toward the unconscious man on the ground and was relieved to see that Juve was right. Staroba was blinking and trying to speak.

"Take it easy, Sir," Bob told him. "Help is on the way."

"Wh—what happened?"

"We were hoping you could answer that question," Jupiter said. "You stumbled out of the maze and collapsed."

"The maze?" Staroba's eyes widened. "Are we in the maze? I have to – what time is it? Help me up!"

"You shouldn't—"

Staroba waved off Juve's words and struggled to sit up. Together, the boys helped him into a sitting position.

"I missed the opening?" He asked.

Bob nodded. "Do you remember what happened to you?"

"I was supposed to meet my brother here. I found . . . *something* . . . that I wanted to show him. I called him and asked him to meet me here, at the fountain in the center of the maze. It was the only place I could think of that would be absolutely private." Staroba searched his jacket pockets as he spoke, and then patted the ground around him. "It's gone," he said. "Did I have anything in my hands when you found me? An envelope? A white envelope?"

"You didn't have anything in your hands," Juve said. "You grabbed our friend with both hands just before you collapsed."

"That's it, then," Staroba sighed. "If you boys will help me up, we might as well head for the exit."

"Perhaps you shouldn't try to walk just yet, Mr. Staroba," Jupiter suggested. "Our friend returned to the starting gate for help and should return any time now."

Staroba shook his head. "No, the gates were supposed to be locked as soon as the last contestant entered. Your friend won't find anyone there."

Bob glanced at Juve, who was frowning.

"Do you think Pete got lost?" Bob asked.

"I doubt it. Pete rarely gets lost."

As if on cue, they heard footsteps pounding toward them on the path. But instead of their friend, they saw two men running toward them. Both wore dark clothes and hooded jackets, and Bob recognized the shorter one as the man who had led the opening ceremonies earlier that evening.

"George! What happened?" the man cried.

"Are you alright?" the other man demanded at the same time.

George Staroba waved aside their questions. "I'm fine," he told them. "Just a little bump on the melon. Guess you should have hit me a little harder, Eddie."

"What are you talking about?" The tall stranger asked. "Someone hit you?"

"Drop the act," George said. "You were the only one who knew I was going to be at the fountain with the letter. You really expect me to believe that someone *else* clocked me and stole the letter?"

"What letter?" the other man asked.

"It's gone?" Eddie echoed at the same time.

"Gentlemen, please," Jupiter said, holding up a hand to halt the flow of questions. "Perhaps we should start over again with some introductions to help us ascertain precisely what has transpired here." With his other hand, he held out an oversized white business card. The men aimed their flashlight beams at the card and read in silence for a moment.

*The Three Investigators
We Investigate Everything
???*
*First Investigator.....Jupiter Jones
Second Investigator...Pete Crenshaw
Records & Research...Bob Andrews
???*

"Three Investigators, eh?" Eddie asked. "There are only two of you."

"Pete went for help," Bob said.

"Well, you've certainly got a mess to investigate here," Staroba sighed. "You obviously know who I am. This is my brother Eddie, and that other man is my personal assistant, Chad Powers. I never could have put this whole event together without his help."

"I just helped with the details, George," the shorter man said modestly. "You're the real genius here."

Even in the darkness, Bob saw Eddie roll his eyes at Chad's words.

"Mr. Staroba—" Jupe began.

"Call me George."

"George, what can you tell us about the events leading up to your being hit at the fountain?"

Staroba hesitated, and then shrugged. "What the heck, it's common knowledge these days," he said with a sigh. "I assume you boys know all about my father's will, and about how he left everything to me, right? I've searched high and low, over every inch of the estate, trying to find any indication that there was another will that was more fair to my brother. Chad has been helping me, because he was also my

father's assistant during the last year of Dad's life and I thought he might have some idea of where Dad might have hidden it."

"Today, I was cataloguing some of Dad's movie scripts and memorabilia, and I found an envelope addressed to Eddie and me, in Dad's handwriting."

"What was in it?" Chad demanded.

"I didn't open it. It was addressed to *both* of us. I called Eddie and told him about it, and asked him to meet me at the fountain just before the Grand Opening. I wanted to be fair about it, but I guess he didn't feel the same way."

"I didn't hit you! George, you're my big brother; I'd never hurt you."

"You have no problem taking me to court over Dad's will."

"That's different and you know it." Eddie shined his flashlight at his brother's injury. "Whoever it was, they hit you pretty hard. I couldn't do that. I was running late because I got turned around trying to get to the fountain. When you didn't show up, I just assumed you had stood me up for some reason. I was on my way out when I ran into Chad and he told me you were missing."

"I was part of the crew that drove around to set up at the maze's exit," Chad told them. "I knew you wanted to walk through the maze one last time just before the opening, and I thought maybe you were hurt or something, so I just decided to do my own walk through just in case. I got pretty worried when I saw Eddie, and then we saw you all huddled on the ground here."

"It sounds as though you all three know your way through the maze" Jupe observed.

"We grew up together," Eddie said. "Chad was our neighbor, and we were like the Three Musketeers. The three of us know every inch of this maze."

"Except that you got turned around on your way to the fountain tonight."

Eddie smiled at Jupe. "It's been a few years; I guess I forgot a few turns."

"Speaking of finding our way through the maze, we need to get moving," George announced. "We can worry about Dad's letter later. Right now, I need to get to the finish line before the first contestants find their way through. Will somebody please help me get up off the ground?"

"Here, hold this." Eddie shoved his flashlight into Jupe's hands and grabbed his brother's arm. Chad took his other arm, and between them they hauled Staroba to his feet. He staggered unsteadily for a moment and then regained his balance.

"Should we go with them or wait here for Pete?" Bob asked his friend.

"Your friend is probably lost," George said. "Don't worry; we're sending through a 'rescue team' after a while to help any stragglers. One way or another, he'll make it to the end."

"I'm not so sure about that," Jupiter said slowly. He was staring at the flashlight he had just been given, shining his own light at the handle.

"What are you talking about?" Bob leaned in to see what Jupe was looking at. He saw nothing unusual at first, but a closer look showed him a tiny detail that made his heart race.

Three tiny letters were engraved in the handle.

P.A.C.

Peter A. Crenshaw.

Chapter Four: Questions and More Questions

"Where did you get this flashlight?" Jupiter asked.

Eddie Staroba shrugged. "Chad handed it to me. The batteries died in mine, so he gave me his extra one. Does it matter?"

"Yes, it matters. It belongs to our missing friend," Jupiter told him.

"What did you do to him?" Bob demanded.

"Nothing! I swear –"

"Bad enough you hit your own brother, but now you go around hitting kids and stealing their flashlights? Geez, Eddie, how low can you get?" Chad shook his head in disgust.

"I haven't hit *anybody*!"

"Mr. Staroba." Jupiter turned to the elder Staroba brother. "How long will it take us to get to the exit from here?"

"Ten minutes, tops."

"I suggest we go there immediately in order to obtain medical attention for you. When we get there, you can arrange for the search crew to re-enter the maze and find our friend."

"George, you can't stop the contest!" Chad protested. "Think about the bad publicity. We've worked too hard to just throw it all away."

"No, he's right." George touched the wound on his forehead and winced. "I don't want anyone to be hurt. Besides, no publicity is bad publicity, as long as it keeps us in the news."

"Just ask *Eddie* where he left the boy and we can go find him ourselves."

"Shut up, Chad," Eddie growled. He slipped an arm around his brother and helped him take a few tentative steps. Chad heaved an exaggerated sigh and hurried to the injured man's other side.

Their progress was painstakingly slow. They had to stop twice for Chad and Eddie to argue about the proper direction to take at two confusing intersections. Both times, George sided with his brother. Bob itched to hurry them along, but he followed quietly at the slow pace and glanced occasionally at the First Investigator. Jupiter was unusually quiet, pinching his lower lip between his thumb and forefinger, a sure sign that he was in deep thought.

"Jupe, do you think Pete's okay?" Bob whispered.

"I don't know." Jupe frowned. "But we can't help him if we can't find him, and I don't believe we will find him without help from one of these men. No one knows this maze as well as they do."

Chad stopped suddenly. "I think George should rest for a few minutes," he announced.

"Chad, we can't wait. We're almost to the exit now."

Jupiter spoke up suddenly. "Mr. Powers, you accused Eddie of hitting our friend and taking his flashlight. Do you believe that Eddie is capable of taking such action?"

"Of course! He knocked his own brother out cold, didn't he?"

"It would appear so, although that has yet to be determined. Eddie, can you please tell me why the three of you are dressed alike?"

Eddie glanced down at his clothes and looked over at Chad. "Everyone who is working here tonight is dressed like this," he explained. "Dark pants and shoes, black hoodie sweatshirt jacket so they wouldn't be easy to see in the maze."

"But you don't work here," Bob pointed out.

"No, I don't," Eddie agreed. "But when George called and told me to meet him here, he told me to dress like an employee. He didn't want anyone to stop me at the entrance."

George made an impatient sound. "Can't we have this discussion later?" he demanded. "I really don't want a lawsuit if your friend is badly hurt."

"Of course you don't." Jupiter's frown deepened. "Although you said yourself that no publicity is bad publicity. This will be quite a news story, won't it? Not only has the fight over Francis Staroba's will become physical between you brothers, it seems that the Haunted Maze itself has claimed a victim as well. You can't *buy* that kind of publicity."

"I don't like what you're implying, young man."

"Bob, your research into Francis Staroba indicated that the inheritance was rather substantial in terms of property, correct?"

"Correct."

"But there was very little actual money in the estate?"

Bob nodded again.

"So George Staroba really needs the maze tours and all future tourist attractions on the site to be a success in order to truly benefit financially from his inheritance. Success which has been virtually guaranteed by the publicity surrounding the dispute over his father's will."

"That-that's . . .ridiculous!" George sputtered.

"I believe that Francis Staroba really did leave his estate to both of his sons," Jupiter continued as though George hadn't spoken. "The brothers planted the forged will so they could fabricate a family dispute to keep themselves in the public spotlight, and they planned to 'reveal' the real will tonight in front of all of these witnesses. But something went wrong with their plan."

Eddie snorted. "Are you suggesting my brother hit himself?"

"No, the assault was real. There was an unexpected player in your game. Mr. Powers, you weren't in on their plan, were you?"

Chad said nothing. He crossed his arms and scowled at George and Eddie.

"Chad? *You* hit me?" George demanded. "I know we argued when I told you about meeting Eddie at the fountain, but I never thought you would take it that far."

"I think I can piece together what happened," Jupiter said. "Chad wanted to stop you from opening that envelope and sharing it with your brother. When he couldn't dissuade you from going to the meeting, he hurried ahead of you and waited for you to arrive. I believe he intended to hit you and take the envelope, hoping that one of the contestants would find you and Eddie together and assume that Eddie had assaulted you. He could accomplish two things at once by disposing of the real will and framing Eddie."

"But he didn't count on your waking up and wandering off before Eddie found you. So he started searching for either one of you, and I assume that it was at this point that he encountered Pete and somehow ended up with his flashlight." Jupiter sounded cool and detached, but Bob knew his friend well enough to see the concern on his face at the mention of the Second Investigator. "I don't think Chad planned to frame Eddie for whatever happened to Pete, but he jumped at the opportunity when Eddie's flashlight stopped working."

In the silence that followed, all eyes turned to Chad Powers, who was still glaring at the Starobas.

"Mr. Powers, where is Pete?" Bob ventured after a moment.

Chad seemed to shrink before their eyes. He slumped over, wrapping his arms around himself. "I never wanted to hurt anyone," he murmured, his voice barely above a whisper. "I took him down into the Key

and took his flashlight so he would be lost at least long enough for me to find George. George, I . . . am so sorry. I didn't want to hit you, but you just wouldn't listen to reason. I couldn't let you hand half of everything over to Eddie. Not after all of our hard work. Why didn't you just *tell* me you were working together?"

"What's the Key?" Bob asked.

"It's the most complicated part of the maze," Eddie explained. "It's full of twists and turns and dead-ends. Your friend will never find his way out of there, but we can tell the search crew where to look for him."

"Chad, where is the will now?" George demanded.

Powers hugged himself more tightly and didn't answer.

Eddie took a menacing step toward his brother's assistant. The smaller man squawked backed away, flattening himself against the wall.

"Where. Is. It." Staroba ground out.

Chad reached inside his jacket with trembling hands and slowly drew out a crumpled white envelope. Eddie reached for it.

Just then, the sound of pounding footsteps echoed around them, and a small group of people turned the corner behind them. "There's the exit!" one of them shouted.

"We did it!" Another one yelled.

"*Run!*" a third bellowed.

They thundered past, so intent on winning the cash prize that they didn't even realize how close they came to trampling George Staroba himself. Bob stumbled backward and would have fallen if Eddie hadn't reached out to steady him.

When he looked up, Chad was gone.

"He's gone back into the maze!" George cried.

"Let him go, George. We'll never find him now, not in the dark."

"But Eddie, he's got the will. The *real* will."

"I don't think so." Eddie grinned and held up the envelope, displaying it in the beam of his flashlight.

Chapter Five: Bad Publicity?

Pete was mortified at having to be "rescued" from the maze. "I could have found my way out on my own!" he protested after reuniting with his friends and returning to their Headquarters.

"There's no need to be embarrassed," Jupe told him. "Mazes are intended to be confusing. I'd say your getting lost reflects more on the maze designer's skill than on any lack of skill on your part."

"Even though Jupe and I didn't need any help," Bob couldn't resist adding, earning a glare from the tall Second Investigator.

"Next time, you can go off by yourself in the dark, creepy maze," Pete muttered. He rubbed his aching shoulder that had slammed into the stone wall. "I feel like I just played a rough game of football, only I was the ball instead of the quarterback."

"At least he didn't hit you as hard as he hit George Staroba. George has to spend the night in the hospital for his head injury," Jupe said.

"What's going to happen to him after that?" Pete wondered.

"Well, he and Eddie both committed fraud with the false will. They will both be charged with that, and possibly with Perjury as well. I don't know if they will have to serve any jail time, but I would assume that any profits they make from the Haunted Maze tours will have to go toward their legal defense."

"What about Chad? What's going to happen to him?"

"Excellent question, Pete. Chad is going to be charged with Assault for his attacks on you and George. If the police ever find him, that is."

Pete nodded, but his frown didn't fade.

"What's wrong, Second?" Jupiter asked.

"I'm not sure I understand it all," he said. "I get that George and Eddie planted the fake will and went to court for publicity for their Haunted Maze. But I don't understand why they didn't tell Chad what they were doing. If not for him, no one would have gotten hurt and they would have gotten away with everything."

"I think I can answer that." Bob spoke up. "Chad was Francis Staroba's personal assistant before he went to work for George. Even though the three of them were childhood friends, I think they had reason to question his loyalty."

Jupiter glanced at his watch and reached across the desk to turn on the small television set. "It's time for the news," he explained. "Let's see how much *more* publicity the Staroba brothers got tonight."

The attack on George Staroba was one of the top news stories of the evening, although the reporter made no mention of the disputed will. As the camera panned across the crowded parking lot to a shot of the ambulance driving away, the reporter told of "unconfirmed reports" of another assault inside the maze.

"Uh-oh," Bob breathed.

"Police are not releasing the name of the other victim." she announced. "What we do know is that he is part of a group of teenaged detectives calling themselves The Three Investigators. Police are currently looking into their involvement in this case."

"My parents just saw that," Pete sighed. "They always watch the news."

"Mine, too." Bob leaped to his feet and grabbed for his jacket. "I bet Mom just officially went into Panic Mode."

"*Jupiter Jones!*" All three boys winced as Jupiter's Aunt Mathilda bellowed his name across the Jones Salvage Yard.

"Apparently, my Aunt and Uncle watch the evening news as well," Jupe said. "It would seem that some types of publicity truly *are* bad publicity."

The End

This story was inspired by my family's annual trips to Crane's Haunted Corn Maze in Fennville, Michigan. Year after year, my children and I need to be "rescued" after becoming hopelessly lost, but it is no fun whatsoever bringing my husband along. Like Pete, he has an "unerring sense of direction" and can hustle right on through without ever looking at the questions; his sense of direction takes him straight to the exit in under fifteen minutes.

I started wondering how Pete would do in this type of challenge, and this story was born. Thanks to all for reading it and a special thanks to Jeff and Jenny for being my T3I buddies when I was a kid.