

“Oft, in the stilly night,
Ere slumber’s chain
has bound me,
Fond memory
brings the light
Of other days
around me . . .”

THOMAS MOORE (1779–1852),
IRISH POET, COMPOSER, AND MUSICIAN.



CHAPTER 1

THE MAGIC PICTURE FRAME ✦



I walked on the moon with Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. I played baseball with Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth. I flew from New York to Paris with Charles Lindbergh. I saw brave soldiers storm the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. I watched proud and weary marines raise the American Flag on Iwo Jima. I heard the first words to come out of Thomas Edison’s talking machine. I saw the glow of Edison’s first electric lamp. I heard Abraham Lincoln speak on the battlefield at Gettysburg and knelt on the ground where brothers from the North and South died fighting each other. I saw Doctor Jonas Salk conquer polio and counted the dimes that made it possible. I crouched in the trenches during World War I. I stood on a breadline during the Great Depression. I crossed the Atlantic Ocean on a steamship one hundred years ago, when my great-grandfather first came to America. And I walked with him through the doors to America on Ellis Island.

I did it all by stepping through the Picture Frame on my bedroom wall.

My name is Anthony and I am 12 years old.¹

This is my story.

I don't exactly know where the Picture Frame came from. It's hung on my bedroom wall as long as I can remember. My father told me that his grandfather gave him the Picture Frame with specific instructions to pass it down to me. My great-grandfather, my father said, insisted on that. But where did it come from? My father could only tell me that my great-grandfather got the Picture Frame as a gift when he was young. Someone traveling through town gave it to him.

I don't really know how the Picture Frame works, but I know how to use it. Someday, scientists will figure out the physics behind it, I guess. I just place a photograph into the Picture Frame and wait. In a little while, the photograph becomes three-dimensional—almost real—like a scene on the other side of an open window. Then, beams of light from the Picture Frame pour into my room, like the sunbeams on a summer evening that make everything in my room glow. I step through the Picture Frame as if it really was an open window in the summertime, and I follow the beams of light into the world of the photograph—the world of the past. I've done it a lot. And when I want to come home, I just step back through the Picture Frame from the other side.

It's simple. Except that's not how it happened the first time. I mean, who would ever think of putting a photograph into a picture frame and then stepping through it? Not me. I only tried it because of what happened the first time. That night, the Picture Frame had its own plan. I didn't choose where or when to go, and I didn't even get to decide when to come home. Everyone knows about my later trips because I took them in the daytime and showed up in pictures in history books. But nobody knows the story of my first trip through the Picture Frame.

It was late at night and I was in my bed and sound asleep. I woke up and saw that a bright white light took over my whole room. At first, I thought that I was dreaming that the sun was rising in my room! But the light stung my eyes and I knew that I was awake. I squinted and I saw that it was coming from the Picture Frame on my bedroom wall.

And then the light came alive! Beams of the light moved around my room as if they were searching for something.

The light is searching for me!

I pulled the covers over my head. But the light beams found me. They bored through my blankets until the last bit of darkness disappeared.

I have to put out that light! Or . . . run!

From under my blankets, I slipped my hand to the floor and grabbed my football. Then I jumped up, threw my blankets off, and hurled my football at the Picture Frame. I wanted to knock it from the wall and put out that weird light. I expected a crash.

But the sound never came. My football flew right through the center of the Picture Frame and disappeared into the light.

Whoa!

Somehow, I got some courage, or maybe I just got so curious that I forgot that I was scared. I didn't run away. I climbed out of my bed and tiptoed toward the Picture Frame. I took some books and stacked them near the Picture Frame and then I climbed up. Then, I held my hands in front of my eyes to block out some of the light and looked into the Picture Frame.

There was another world on the other side! It had steep white and gray mountains, deep and dark craters, and sharp-edged jagged rocks. The sky was the blackest black I had ever seen. There were stars in the sky, but they didn't twinkle. The stars just hung in the black sky like tiny white Christmas tree lights. And the whole place was quiet—so quiet that I could actually hear my heart beat.

It can't be! But, it looks like . . .

I saw my football a few feet below me. It was at rest in the gray soil.

Then, I saw the Earth—my home—rise above the horizon.

I know this place!

I wasn't afraid anymore. I climbed through the Picture Frame to get my football.

RIGHT:
A HUGE BOULDER ON THE MOON SITUATED NEAR THE APOLLO 17 TAURUS-LITTROW VALLEY LANDING SITE. Date: 12/13/1972. VIEW OF THE EARTH FROM APOLLO 11 WHILE IN LUNAR ORBIT PRIOR TO LANDING. Date: 7/20/1969.
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