

# NOW YOU SEE ME ...

by Jane B. Mason &  
Sarah Hines Stephens



**SCHOLASTIC INC.**

New York Toronto London Auckland  
Sydney Mexico City New Delhi Hong Kong

If you purchased this book without a cover, you should be aware that this book is stolen property. It was reported as “unsold and destroyed” to the publisher, and neither the authors nor the publisher has received any payment for this “stripped book.”

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., Attention: Permissions Department, 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

ISBN 978-0-545-21513-8

Copyright © 2010 by Jane B. Mason and Sarah Hines Stephens  
All rights reserved. Published by Scholastic Inc.  
SCHOLASTIC, POISON APPLE, and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

10 11 12 13 14 15/0

Printed in the U.S.A.  
First printing, November 2010

40

# CHAPTER ONE

“No way!” Lena Giff exclaimed. She couldn’t believe her eyes. There — right in front of her — was the thing she’d been trying to find for almost six months. She was so surprised, she thought she might be imagining the small gray box sitting on the dusty shelf. “Abby! Abby, get over here!” Lena called. She waved her best friend toward the dark corner of the store.

On the other side of the thrift shop, Abigail Starling’s micro-braided curls appeared above the edge of an enormous basket of neckties. She’d been rummaging through, looking for a few that would make good headbands. And from the look of it, she’d struck gold. She had several silk ties draped around

her neck, and clutched two more paisley-patterned strips in her hand.

“What’s up?” Abby called back. Dropping the ties, she began to pick her way through the cluttered store to see what kind of treasure Lena had unearthed. Abby was an experienced thrifter and could practically smell a good find.

While Abby stepped gingerly past broken candelabras and spindle-leg chairs, Lena reached beyond the stack of dusty *National Geographic* magazines to retrieve the find of all finds. When she felt the smooth plastic under her fingertips, she sucked in her breath.

Just a few days ago she had considered giving up on her quest. It had been feeling fruitless, all the searching through junk shops and flea markets for something so specific. And since she and Abby had a “no eBay” rule about treasure hunting, there had been a lot of legwork involved. But now (could it be?!), the search was over. The very item she’d been looking for was being rescued from a shelf next to a cast-off yellow duffel bag. . . .

“The Impulse!” Abby squealed when she saw the Polaroid camera. “I can’t believe it!”

Lena couldn't believe it either, even though she was holding it in her own two hands. It was lighter than expected, and smaller.

"Does it work?" Abby asked excitedly. Her hands were balled into fists and her arms were clamped tightly across her body, as if her excitement might actually leap out of her chest.

All Lena could do was nod. It was the one, all right — the exact model she'd been looking for since March. Cautiously, she pushed the button on the top that turned the camera on and popped up the flash. She peered through the viewfinder, then opened the little door in the front where you inserted the film cartridge.

The good news: The camera wasn't loaded with a corroded film and battery cartridge that had gone gooey and mucked up the works. The bad news: There was no way to know for sure if the camera was functional. Lena would have to trust her luck, buy it, and test the camera out when she got home.

"It looks okay," Lena said in a near whisper, turning the rectangular contraption over. She was so excited, her fingertips were tingling and the hair on her arms was standing up. She'd made some good

junk finds before, but this took the cake. And judging by the look on her best friend's face, Abby, the undisputed Queen of Secondhand Scores, thought so, too.

Abby threw up her hands. "Unbelievable. First the lunch box." She waved her tin treasure in the air. "Then the skirt, and now *this*. We are talking serious pay dirt here. I mean, this day could go down in thrift history!"

"Thriftstory?" Lena said with a grin, her green eyes twinkling. Taking a breath, she lifted the camera's strap over her strawberry-blond head. The small box felt surprisingly comfortable hanging around her neck—like it belonged there. The square eye of the viewfinder looked up at her almost expectantly, and Lena felt a sudden urge to get out of the store and get home with her treasure. They hadn't looked through all the store's rooms yet, but the feeling was insistent. Like if she didn't go soon some magic clock might strike midnight, and the camera would turn into a pumpkin and she would be left sitting all alone with one shoe. Or something.

"Let's cash out," Abby suggested before Lena could say anything. It was not like her to propose

leaving a secondhand shop before every stone (or used suitcase) had been turned. But it *was* just like her to read Lena's mind. The two girls had been best friends since third grade and spent a ton of time together. They even finished each other's sentences. "I just need to gather my haul."

While Lena clutched the camera and fidgeted nervously, Abby darted into another room of the old house-turned-store and emerged with the fashionable finds she had stashed in a corner. Trailing neckties, she ambled across the room and plunked everything down on a large rolltop desk. A gray-haired woman wearing a housecoat looked up from a tattered novel.

"We're ready to check out," Abby said cheerfully.

The woman didn't return her smile, and didn't speak. She simply nodded wearily, picked up a pencil, and switched on the register.

"You first." Abby nudged Lena forward. "You've been waiting a long time for this."

Lena stumbled up to the desk and reached up to remove the camera strap from around her neck. The camera felt heavier now, and though she placed the Impulse on the desk, she didn't let go right away. When she did, she realized that her palms were

sweating. She felt as if she were getting a tooth filled or waiting for a shot in the doctor's office.

*Probably just excitement*, she told herself. Was this what it felt like to win the lottery? *Maybe it's adrenaline. Or shock.* Finding the camera certainly seemed too good to be true. . . .

"Where'd you get this?" the woman at the register spoke for the first time, and Lena flinched, wishing she hadn't. Her voice was loud and harsh. She squinted at Lena and gave the camera a poke with her pen like it was some sort of poisonous insect.

Lena felt her excitement begin to slip away. "I . . . I . . ." she stammered, feeling foolish. She took a step back, bumping into Abby.

Abby's arm collided with the pile of loot on the desk, and half of it slid to the floor.

The woman ignored the fallen items. "Where did you get it?" she screeched. Her steely eyes were narrowed behind her reading glasses and aimed, laserlike, right at Lena.

Lena pointed toward the shelf in the back room where the Impulse had been waiting. "Right over there," she replied. She looked nervously from the back room to the camera, and then to the front door.



She felt sick. She desperately wanted the camera. What if she didn't get it?

*Take it and run*, a voice in her head told her. *There's no way she could keep up*. But Lena was not a thief! She might drive a hard bargain (not as hard as Abby), but she didn't steal.

While Abby picked her treasures up off the floor, Lena tried to calm herself down. Everything was going to be fine. She'd seen shopkeepers act weird before — they did all kinds of things to convince you your items were worth more than you wanted to pay. *That's all that's happening here*, she thought. She braced herself for a ridiculously high price and wiped her clammy palms on her shorts.

The woman's sharp gaze rested on the camera for several long moments. Then, out of the blue, her face softened. She looked almost . . . sad. But in a flash, her expression changed again. A gnarled hand reached out with alarming speed. "Well, it's not for sale!" she growled, snatching the camera and shoving it under the desk.

Lena felt as though she'd gotten the wind knocked out of her. Finding the Impulse really *was* too good to be true! She wanted to protest, but couldn't. Her bubble had burst. She couldn't speak.

Or move. Or do anything. She might have just stood there deflating for the rest of the day if Abby hadn't piped up behind her.

As usual, Lena's best friend had her back . . . and (in this case) a boatload of potential purchases. "It was *on* the shelf," the bolder girl pointed out.

"Well, that was a mistake," the woman snapped. She obviously didn't appreciate being questioned.

Abby didn't flinch. "Well, I guess these are mistakes, too," she replied calmly. With a flourish, she whisked the 50s dress, huge square-dance crinoline, suspenders, Boy Scout uniform, 'NSYNC lunch box, five ties, and the stack of CDs she had amassed off the rolltop and set them on a rickety table nearby. Half a second later she was arranging the dress on a hanger, prepping it to go back on the rack.

Lena almost smiled. The girl was unflappable. Abby had no intention of leaving her finds behind, Lena knew. And if her stomach wasn't still in a knot, she might have enjoyed the showdown. After all, it appeared to be a pretty even match. The old woman looked fierce, but Abby was a contender.

The woman's steely eyes followed Abby as she started to walk the merchandise back to where she'd found it. Then, with a heavy sigh, she looked around

the crowded, dusty shop. Shaking her head with resignation, she reached back into the desk for the camera.

“You really want this old thing?” she asked. She caught Lena’s eye and held her gaze. Her voice was gentler now, and Lena noticed laugh lines around her eyes. Maybe the old bat wasn’t always this cranky. Maybe she was just having a bad day.

“Yes, I really do,” Lena replied with an emphatic nod.

“Well, all right,” the old woman breathed. “I’ll let you have it for five dollars. Maybe it’ll be good to be rid of it.”

The woman smoothed a few wild gray hairs toward the knot at the back of her head while Lena dug into her pocket and swallowed a victory cry.

*Five dollars! I guess I’m stealing after all!* She handed over a five-dollar bill and bit back a smile. She would have gladly emptied her whole wallet for the camera if she had to. But she knew it was never good to let the seller see how much you want something. She should simply consider the five-dollar price tag a bonus and keep her excitement to herself.

The moment the bill left Lena’s fingers, she

grabbed the camera and slipped the strap back around her neck. She let the Impulse rest against her side. The weight, though nothing like her digital camera, was at once familiar and comforting. She breathed a sigh of relief. It was hers. The Impulse was finally hers!