



## Chapter 13: The writing on the wall

Charlie climbed down the wall and perched himself back on Rock's shoulder. Jewel turned off the lights and then peaked out into the hallway.

No one was around. She signaled to Rock to follow her and they crossed over to the other side of the hallway so that they could have a look down the corridor leading to Professor Fahid's room. It was empty and DARK.

"This is creepy" Jewel admitted in a whisper. "I'm glad we're not looking for a ghost anymore."

"Me too," whispered Charlie. He had never been too keen on looking for a ghost in the first place.

"There could still be a ghost," Rock argued. "Just because we saw that hooded figure doesn't mean there's not a ghost at Fiercedale. Don't forget all of Nurse Weatherbottom's castor oil is still missing." Rock liked the idea of finding a ghost.

"Yeah-yeah. I'll admit that's weird but I just don't think it's a ghost. I want to find out more about that hooded... sneaky figure."

"Hooded sneaky person?" Rock teased Jewel.

Jewel flashed the light up at Rock. He had his big charming, disarming grin on his face. "OK smarty," Jewel laughed. "You name the hooded person."

"I think we should call him..."

"Or her!" Jewel interjected.

"Or her, um, let's see... exercise dude?"

“The dark flash?”

“Ball boy?”

“Jump girl?”

“Running man?”

“The escape artist?”

“How about ‘Ladybug snatcher?’” Charlie suggested.

This totally caught Rock and Jewel off guard. They both just stared at Charlie as they had never had anyone else play their game before.

“Charlie wins. ‘Ladybug snatcher’ it is,” Rock conceded since they had both had gone silent hearing his suggestion. Charlie beamed as he thought this meant that his name was the best. He didn’t realize that hesitation determined the outcome, not the best name. If that had been the case, Rock would have won with “Super galactic booger-fetcher from red star 5” for the substitute teacher who had picked his nose in front of the entire class. Instead, Jewel had won with, “Hungry man” because Rock had said “Eww” at the thought of the teacher eating his boogers.

Jewel peaked back around the corner. “Guys, we’d better go now. It’s getting late. Come on.”

They raced across the corridor and hurried into the math room. It was pitch-dark inside.

They scanned the room with their flashlights. The beams fell across empty desks and chairs before Jewel’s light hit the blackboard on the far wall. Rock and Jewel’s mouths dropped open.

All over the board in orange chalk (which made it look even more bizarre) were what looked like equations but they were written in some odd, illegible script. Parts were scribbled out, other parts were underlined. It all appeared quite scientific, or at least very ancient. The main script, minus the scratchings, looked like this:

u ml πιγκλε φυιχε ο ι ml + πι ml συγαρ ν

+ ι μλ χαστορ οιλ  
+ .ιιι μλ δριεδ γρουνδ οψστερσ  
+ .π μλ δοπε φεατηερσ  
+ .ιι μλ χλωπεσ  
+.ι μλ φυνιπερ βερριεσ λεαπεσ  
πινχη οφ λοπεδ οβφεχτ

γιπε ωιτη ωορδσ :  
Ύψου το με, υντο τηε τρεεσ,  
α φεω λεαπεσ, α φεω λοπεσ  
ωε αρε βουνδ λικε τηε δοπεσ.  
φορ τηε δαψ ανδ ιι ηουρσ  
ψουρ λοπε βλοομοσ λικε α φλωερ,  
ανδ ωην ατ λαστ τιμε ισ γονε  
ψου ωιλλ φεελ νοτηινγ ωρογγ

2 ξ 117= 234 6 ξ 117= 702 234 .4 ξ 117 = 46.8 117 ξ .5 = 58.523.4 11.7

“What in the world?” Jewel whispered under her breath.

“Let’s get a closer look,” said Rock. “This is *so* unreal. No wonder Professor Fahid was in such a lather.”

Rock and Jewel made their way to the far wall never taking their eyes off the blackboard. As they got closer it, the orange chalk started to glow under their lights making it all seem like some form of alien hieroglyphics.

They stopped so that the blackboard was in front of them and the Professor’s desk was behind them. They leaned up against it while trying to make out the symbols.

Rock was at a loss. He had a sneaky suspicion that if anyone he knew could figure it out, it would be Jewel. “What do you think?”

“I don’t know. It’s fascinating though. I can see some patterns but I can’t make out the meaning of anything,” Jewel’s eyes kept scanning the wall.

“Patterns? You see patterns? Like where?” Rock was already impressed.

“Right there,” Jewel pointed up at the board. “Every plus sign, and who knows if that’s what the plus signs mean, but every plus sign is shortly followed by that funky U and teepee like symbol, see?”

“Oh yeah.”

“And the numbers at the bottom that follow the equals sign, are a multiplication of the two numbers proceeding it.”

“That’s so cool! How did you figure that all at so quickly?”

Jewel looked down and blushed. “Well, actually, I haven’t figured it all out at all Rock. Not all those numbers follow equal signs and who even knows what the significance of the number 117 is. Every number is a factor of 117 but the question is why? And what the heck does everything else above it mean?”

Rock was now absolutely positive that Jewel was the smartest person at school. They had only been standing there for maybe twenty seconds and Jewel had put together the ‘factor of 117’ thing.

“I just don’t know. I don’t recognize any of these symbols,” Jewel said.

“Well neither do I, that’s for sure.” Rock said.

There was a moment of silence.

Charlie cleared his throat. “Uh, actually guys I think I do.”

“What?” Jewel spun around to look at Charlie on Rock’s shoulder. “How? Where? Can you read it?”

“No. No. It’s just that I have the same sense I had in the gym that I’ve seen this before. It’s vaguely familiar. I just can’t place it, but I know I have seen this before.”

“Where Charlie? Where? You’ve got to think,” Rock was terribly excited by Charlie’s declaration.

However, the disappointment that Charlie couldn’t place it showed in Jewel’s face and Charlie was

almost sorry he'd said anything. He rubbed his head with his front leg. "I know it will come to me, just like the ropes and balls thing did, but I just can't seem to get it right now."

Well, I think we should copy it down. That way we can work on it at home and Charlie can keep trying to jog his memory," Rock turned and opened the drawer of Professor Fahid's desk. He pulled out a blank sheet of paper and rummaged around for a pen or pencil. There was nothing but the tiniest stubs of pencils with the erasers entirely worn down beyond use. He picked out the most useable one, which really was quite pathetic to even be called a pencil, and handed it to Jewel.

"Here, you copy it Jules. You're better at stuff like that than me."

Jules didn't hesitate to take the pencil (or what was left of it) and paper from Rock. She began copying the blackboard immediately.

Jewel was about half way though writing when suddenly all three of them heard footsteps. Jewel stopped and they all turned around to look at the door. They all came to the same conclusion right away— the footsteps were close, and worse yet, getting closer. Frozen in fear, they could sense that whoever it was, he or she was just about outside the math room door.

Charlie saved the day, or at least the moment. "Quick, under the desk!" he shouted at Rock and Jewel. Without thinking, they obeyed and squashed themselves into the small chair space under the desk. They pulled the chair in as far as they could, and turned off their flashlights, when they heard the math room door open.

Footsteps entered the room, heavy plodding footsteps, and the lights flicked on. Charlie, Rock and Jewel held their breath. Perhaps it was the ladybug snatcher coming back to find them. But actually, they all knew, that no matter who it was, if they got caught they were in a lot of trouble. Quite a lot.

The footsteps stopped and so did Rock, Jewel and Charlie's hearts.

"Caww!!!"

"Yeah, Scraggs, I know." Janitor Jinkin paused and heaved a huge breath. "I'm just gonna bleaker the bloke whose been doing this. Five times Scraggs, I've cleaned this picklin' mess—five times—and now its back again." Janitor Jinkin took a bucket of water from his cart and carried it down the aisle towards the board.

The bucket of water landed in front of them, slightly to the right. Jinkin plunged a large sponge into the water and the desk occupants watched as his big powerful hands squeezed out the excess water.

They all kept as silent and as still as possible, until Jewel realized that Jinkin was washing the board. Washing away what she was trying to copy. She glanced down at her paper, she had only a little over half of it completed.

She started writing at warp speed. She had to get everything down before Jinkin erased it all. It was going to be close. Jinkin's long arms moved in big sweeps across the board, knocking out large portions in single swipes. Jewel was at a large disadvantage. She wasn't copying the alphabet. She had to constantly keep looking up to reference the symbols and draw them correctly on the page. Plus, Professor Fahid's sorry excuse for a pencil wasn't making matters any better for her.

Rock and Charlie peered over Jewel's shoulder, then eyed the blackboard. They could see it was going to be a close race and their hearts starting pounding just from watching the speed at which Jewel wrote.

Towards the end, the tension was mounting. Jewel was writing as fast as humanly possible. Every squeeze in the water bought a little more time but ultimately Jinkin's long arms and strong hands were winning.

"Come on Jules, come on..." Rock silently willed Jewel on. "Almost there..."

Then with a final "swoosh!" Jinkin finished his task. Jewel dropped her pencil and Rock and Charlie looked at her. She shook her head. She hadn't gotten it all. Jinkin had been too fast and she had missed the last line of numbers. She was obviously not happy.

"Done. If I have to clean this board again," Jinkin grumbled and shook his head. "Come on, Scraggs let's get out of here. Believe it or not we 'ave more work to do."

Jinkin grabbed the bucket and walked back towards the door.

"Caww!" screeched Scraggs.

"Time for auditorium. I 'ave lots to set up for tomorrow," Jinkin sighed as he turned off the lights.

Jewel, Rock and Charlie were left in total darkness. Ten long seconds passed where none of them moved or whispered a word. Then, without warning, Rock pressed his flashlight up to his chin and snapped the power on, lighting up his face like an eerie Halloween character.

“I am the orange hieroglyphics writer,” Rock said in a vampire voice.

Jewel started to laugh and placed her flashlight up to her chin. She crossed her eyes and then turned on the light. “I am the Ancient Egyptian mess maker.”

“The Tanzanian Symbol Swami,” Rock moved his hand across his face like a snake.

“The Guru of Nonsense,” Jewel held her flashlight in between her hands in a prayer position.

“The Master of Messes.”

“The Blackboard Bomber.”

“The Hieroglyphics Guru.”

“The Plague of Professor Fahid.”

“The Grim Reaper of Writing”

“The... Ah! I can't think!” Jewel laughed.

Rock and Charlie started laughing too. “So the Grim Reaper of Writing it is.”

“Personally, I thought the Tanzanian Symbol Swami took the prize.”

“Yeah, I liked that one too, but the last one always wins. Once you hesitate or can't think of anything, that's it,” Jewel explained. Charlie furrowed his eyebrows. He suddenly realized that his earlier “win” of “the ladybug snatcher” had just been because he had surprised them, not because it had been particularly brilliant.

“You did a great job, Jules. I'm sure we'll be able to figure this out from what you got,” Rock said.

Jewel glanced down at her paper. "I hope so. I am so bummed I didn't get it all and we certainly don't have time to figure it out now. We've got to make our way back to the science lab and get home," Jewel said as she folded up the paper and placed it in the back pocket of her jeans. "Let's go, no time to spare."

**Discussion Questions:** *Take time to read through all the questions first to find out which ones you feel will be right for you and your family. Not all will be suitable for all families since these questions were made to appeal to many different ages. And, of course, they are simply suggestions. Feel free to ask any questions that come to your mind and don't forget to get CURIOUS about the answers your children give! Ask questions related to their answers if you can.*

1. Would you want to go ghost hunting or visit a haunted house? If you went, who would you want with you? What would you bring with you?
2. What name would you give the dark-hooded figure in Rock and Jewels name game?  
#CTANameTheHoodedThingy
3. Rock uses the expression "in such a lather" to describe Professor Fahid's emotional state. What does that mean? Have you ever been "in a lather?" If so, why?
4. Have you ever had the experience of seeing something you have seen before but not knowing when or where ((like and actor/actress in one show that has been in something else)? Does it make you feel frustrated? Excited? Both? Name the feeling or make up a name for it!
5. What are hieroglyphics? Have you ever had a language with someone that no one else could understand?
6. Challenge: If possible, grab some flashlights tonight and hold one up under your chin while making a scary face. Have someone take a picture. #CTAFlashlightMadness