



Chapter 16: Jewel's jail-break

The ride home was fast and furious. Both Jewel and Rock knew they hadn't a moment to spare as, according to Rock's watch, it was 10:53. Only seven minutes separated them from the end of "Envy Hallow" and room checks. The bike ride alone would take that much time and then they would still need to climb back up into their respective windows without making too much noise. Huffing and puffing, Jewel and Rock tried to discuss all that had happened.

"L.P. – that has to be Lundiva Pommegray, right? I mean no other teachers have those initials, right?" Jewel huffed.

"Not that I can think of. The lady who does morning announcements is Ms. Pickany but I don't know her first name, do you?" Rock could hardly keep up with Jewel, she was peddling so fast.

"Penelope."

"Penelope Pickany? Now that's a mouthful."

Jewel laughed despite her frenzied panic to get home. "Rock! We've got to stay focused. It must be Lundiva. She's new, she's odd and get this, I saw her speaking to Sloppy Joe in the cafeteria last week for a *long* time." She raised her eyebrows at Rock as if that sealed the deal.

"Really? All right, but what do you think they could be up to? I don't get how all the pieces of the puzzle fit together. They're all so... random." Rock's eyebrows furrowed together.

"Random is an understatement. They've been vandalizing Professor Fahid's math room with alien writing, stealing pickle juice, sugar, castor oil and lady bugs, throwing alchemy books around in the library, running around the campus grounds in a black hooded sweatshirt and just for fun, lining up balls and jump ropes like classrooms. I could never guess in a million years how they're all connected." Jewel

said.

"We don't have a million years! I told Jessop we'd go home tomorrow afternoon and I really want to know what in crow's nation knocked me off Rock's shoulder tonight," Charlie yelled over to Jewel. He was holding on with all his might as the wind force of the bicycle speed was comparable to a hurricane for him.

"That's the oddest part of the puzzle. How does a black hood fly through the air like that?" Jewel answered back.

A novel idea suddenly occurred to Rock. "Maybe Lundiva and Sloppy Joe aren't up to anything bad at all! Maybe they're trying to catch a ghost!" Rock spat out.

"Oh my gosh! I didn't think of that but it could be. I mean if anyone in the school is an expert in the paranormal, it would be Lundiva, she's so odd. How the sugar and pickle juice plays in, I have no idea, and why Sloppy Joe's involved is still a mystery—also, how do all those ropes and balls figure into the whole thing? And why all the secrecy? Why the black hoods? Why steal a lady bug? It just doesn't all fit together."

"I know. I don't get it either," Rock admitted. He was stumped.

They turned the corner onto Suchman Circle testing the outer limits of their tire tread. Everybody survived the G-force turn but the sight of their houses caused them to abruptly change subjects.

"Time?" Rock asked.

"10:59" Jewel replied. "I'm never going to make it."

"Think positively Jules. We'll get in, no problem."

"You will. You never get caught. I, on the other hand..." she trailed off in a sigh not finishing her sentence.

"Well, we don't have time to keep watch for each other. We've just got to go it on our own. Whatever you do don't panic. We'll meet as usual to ride to school together, okay?"

“Sure,” Jewel said, without any confidence at all. She didn’t even look at Rock, her attention was now focused on her home, as she tried to see if her parents were still in the front room by the T.V.. She turned off her flashlight and rode across her front lawn, right up to the living room window. Knowing that the lights inside would prohibit her parents from seeing out into the darkness, she quietly hopped off her bike and peeked up into the window.

To her amazement, her parents were still on the couch and deeply engrossed in conversation with each other. In fact Jewel, was so thrown by the site of her parents still sitting there, that she actually had to pop up again and take a second look. Jewel then ran as fast as she could with her bike around the side of the house, threw her bike in the bushes around back and started scaling the side wall back up to her bedroom window.

Every move she made seemed to reverberate in the night air. The tree she used to leverage her body weight up to the shutter shook louder than a mariachi band, the shutter creaked on its hinges, the air vent sounded like a giant symbol when she put her toe on it and the gutter actually “popped” when she pushed against it to hurl herself in the window.

It was the “pop” that sent her mom running up to Jewel’s room.

“Jewel?! Jewel?!” her mom yelled in a whisper as she came running up the stairs.

Jewel had no time to think. Just as she had imagined, her rear end was still half way out the window when she heard her mother start her way up the stairs. Jewel thudded onto the ground with the grace of a water buffalo causing her mother to abandon the stupid sounding whisper she had been using. “Jewel! Jewel! Are you alright?!” she screamed.

Jewel quickly closed the window, ejected her sweater from her waist were she had tied it for the ride home, threw her pajamas on right over her t-shirt and hurled herself under the covers, sneakers and all, precisely at the moment her mother came peeling through the door.

“Jewel Dervin! You are in big trouble young lady!” her mother scowled at her. “Don’t you pretend to be sleeping! I know you’re awake! And I know precisely what you have been up to! Do you have anything to say for yourself? Huh?”

Jewel couldn’t even breathe. Her mouth was pasted dry and it took all of her courage to open one eye to look at her mother. She’d been busted and she couldn’t fathom what her mother was going to do,

although she knew it was going to be worse than anything she could possibly imagine. She'd have bars and locks on her windows now until she was 43. Her face screwed up in fear, Jewel shook her head in a pathetic "No."

Jewel's mother was furious. She marched right over to Jewel's bed and bent down. Jewel closed her eyes expecting her mother to either slap her (which she had never done before) or yank her forcefully from her bed.

"I said, 'What do you have to say for yourself? Have we not talked about *this* before? Hmm?"

Jewel did not know what to say. How do you explain to the director of the Center of Missing Children that you just slipped out of the house for two hours with a talking ant to go search for a ghost? How she really shouldn't be so upset?

"Mom, I, uh, " Jewel began as she looked up tentatively at her mother. But what she saw, stopped her from uttering another word.

Her mom was standing right over her, one hand on her hip, and the other hand holding out Jewel's biology book that had been laying on the floor by her bed. Jewel had been paging through it, trying to find out more about ants, when she was waiting for Rock's signal.

"Haven't we been over this a zillion times young lady? That when the lights are out, the lights are out. There is no reading in bed. If you need to study more, you do it during the day, not at bedtime."

Jewel's mouth fell open. "Mom, I..." she tried to spit something out, but her incredible good fortune was overwhelming her ability to speak.

"Don't even try to tell me that you weren't reading. I heard noises and then the loud 'thud' when you dropped the book on the ground. You can't cover it up Jewel," her mom was still fuming over her bed.

Jewel dropped her head face first into her pillow to hide the enormous smile that was spreading over her face. "You're right mom. I'm sorry. I just, I just really wanted to do well in science this year," she faked a desperate voice.

Jewel's mother softened hearing her daughter's "sadness" and sat down gently on the edge of the bed. She stroked Jewel's hair. "Sweetheart, you can not put so much pressure on yourself. You are

exceptionally smart and you will do fine no matter what.”

“I know. I know, mom. I just want you both to be proud of me that’s all,” Jewel sniffled.

“Jewel we’re so proud of you. But not when you go sneaking around at night reading books when you are supposed to be sleeping.”

Jewel recovered control of the muscles in her face and looked up at her mother sadly. “I’m sorry mom. I know I shouldn’t have done it.”

“Well, I don’t know what I am going to do. You can not be reading at night and so I do think you deserve some sort of punishment, but I’m afraid that if I ground you for it, you may only spend your time doing more homework. So let’s see...,” her mother broke off thinking to herself. “I think that we will have to monitor your book use, Jewel. For the next two weeks, before you go to bed, you will have to leave all your study materials by the side door in the kitchen so that we can be sure you are not reading them at night. Your books will be ‘jailed’ from 9:00 until dawn. You can retrieve them in the morning on your way to school.”

“But mom...,” Jewel whined. She didn’t finish her sentence simply for the simple fact that she couldn’t think of a single thing to say other than “excellent!”

“I’m sorry, Jewel, but that’s the way it is going to be for the next few weeks. You have to learn that there are other things in life besides getting good grades. I think maybe you need to spend some more time with your friends, honey. Maybe hang out with Rockville a little bit more, he is such a nice young man.” Her mother stood up to go. “Now you get some sleep. It’s way too late.” Mrs. Dervin bent down once again, gave Jewel a kiss on her forehead and then shut Jewel’s door behind her, taking, of course, the science book with her.

Jewel’s head fell back onto her pillow with the most enormous smile covering her face. She was so happy, she fell asleep with her sneakers on.

*

Meanwhile, Rock and Charlie surveyed the latticework that now hung half way off the house. “That’s not going to work, now is it?” Rock whispered to Charlie.

“Not for you,” Charlie answered back, thinking about how easily he could scale the wall back into the window and snuggle up in his matchbox bed.

“OK, then onto plan two,” Rock started to walk around back.

“What’s plan two?”

“I’ve no idea,” Rock answered.

“Good, good,” quipped Charlie, “That way we both don’t have any brilliant ideas in our heads.”

“Nope,” Rock confirmed as he peered into the back window of his house. “Well, that’s not very good.”

“What? What’s not good?” Charlie asked. He hadn’t been able to see into the window from his vantage point.

“My parents just got up and are now headed up the stairs,” Rock said very matter-of-factly.

“What are we going to do?”

“Only one thing to do, Charlie,” Rock said as he stepped up onto the back porch and slid open the sliding doors that his father had, thankfully, forgotten to re-lock. “Time to go eat some ice cream.”

Rock slid quickly into the house and tip-toed his way into the kitchen where he worked at lightening speed to scoop out ice cream into a bowl. He was just putting the tub back into the freezer when he heard his mom yell his name from upstairs. He shoved a big spoonful of java berry surprise into his mouth and then gurgled, “I’m in the kitchen” as he plunked himself into a chair at the table and mashed up his ice cream as if he’d been eating it for awhile.

He heard his mother’s footsteps come back down the stairs. Charlie looked at her dreamily as she entered the kitchen and put her hands on her hips. “I know you are up to something, Mr. Virgo. How on earth did you get down here and why do you have all your clothes on?”

Rock stuffed another big spoonful of ice cream into his mouth to buy some time. He had forgotten that she would be expecting to see him in his pajamas. He took a deep breath and then came out with the only thing he could think of, “I climbed out my window, almost fell off the trellis and then snuck in through

the sliding glass doors.”

“You liar,” she smiled at him.

“Nope. Go check out the latticework. It pretty much came off the house on my way down. You’ll need to get it fixed. I’d suggest making it a little more secure next time. I really could have hurt myself.”

“Well, I guess that explains why you have your clothes back on, but why in the name of Mars did you feel you had to sneak down the side of the house rather than use the stairs?”

“I think it was Neptune in my house,” Rock flashed his mom a big smile.

Mrs. Turner tilted her head and raised an eyebrow at Rock, signaling she was not overly amused.

“I don’t know,” Rock shrugged his shoulders as he played with his ice cream hoping that his risky half-lie would work. “I just had this urge to see if I could do it.”

“Rock, that was totally irresponsible and dangerous, and I’m not sure you are telling me the whole truth. But,” she sighed, sliding into a seat at the table next to him, “I knew you were up to no good today— Neptune *was* rising. But next time use your common sense, okay? Just use the stairs, that way, I can ask you to grab me some ice cream too.” Mrs. Turner sighed, took Rock’s spoon from his hand and ate the ice cream he was about to put into his mouth.

“Hey!” Rock whined.

“Hey, yourself! You should be in bed. Go back upstairs and brush your teeth and get to sleep. You have school in the morning, in case you forgot, and it’s way past your bedtime.”

Rock pretended to go be reluctant to go. Back upstairs in his room, he let out a huge sigh of relief as he guided Charlie back into his matchbox bed.

“Pretty good plan two,” Charlie said as he fluffed up his cotton ball. “You really do have a knack for getting out of trouble. That’s like the fifth time today you almost got caught and didn’t.”

Rock chuckled, running his hand through his hair. “You know, I think you’re right. I can’t believe she didn’t get mad.” He flopped down on the side of the bed and started to put his space hero jammies back

on.

Just then Rock's dad, peeked in the door. "Hey pal, just checking to see if you're okay. Mom said you climbed out your window for a bowl of ice cream."

"Yeah, I'm afraid I knocked the lattice work off the side of the house though. Sorry." He looked up bashfully at his father.

"I noticed the latticework off the side of the house when I checked outside the house oh... at about 9:10. Must have been a mighty big bowl of ice cream you had," Rock's father winked at him, smiled and shut the door.

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. Fiercedale Middle School has morning announcements. When your school is in session, does it have regular morning announcements? What type of announcements are made? See if you can imitate the voice and content of the announcements now!
2. The wind on the bike ride home was like a hurricane for Charlie. Have you ever experienced a hurricane? If so, describe that experience. Do you know how hurricanes form?
3. Why do you think Rock advises Jewel not to “panic?” What happens when someone panics? What skills does a person lose?
4. When Jewel was climbing back into her window, the tree branch “shook like a mariachi band.” What is that? What culture is it from?
5. Rock’s mom tells him to go brush his teeth since he had been eating ice cream. Describe the process of brushing your teeth as if you were teaching it to a younger sibling who was about to brush his/her teeth for the first time.