

Finn Finity and the Great Christmas Maths Mystery

Prologue

The museum was buzzing with excitement as schoolchildren ran around, laughing and chatting. It was the end of term, and Finn Finity – the beloved Maths Week Scotland mascot – was hosting a special Christmas party just for them at the National Museum of Scotland. Hawthornden Court was looking festive, with decorations that had been put up especially for this afternoon: shimmering fairy lights, seasonal garlands of evergreens, and a little tinsel to add some sparkle. A lingering smell of gingerbread and hot chocolate wafted down from the museum's Balcony Café. Above the humdrum of noise, you could make out the string quartet in the background, tuning up for their performance. The centre piece of the party was the grand Christmas tree, with a pile of brightly wrapped presents stacked underneath.

Next to the tree, the party's host was getting ready for his welcome speech. Finn Finity was not looking his usual cheerful self. As he observed the crowd, he spotted a familiar face. "William! Over here!" he called out, waving at a boy across the room. William was Finn's best friend, from one of the local primary schools. He made his way through the crowd to where Finn was. "Is everything alright?" he asked. "I'm nervous about my speech" replied Finn, a strand of shiny tinsel that had caught on his glasses dangling as he spoke. "You'll be great!" William said reassuringly, giving his friend a quick hug. Finn immediately felt a lot calmer.

"Alright, everyone!" Finn called out, clapping his hands for attention. The children quietened down. "Welcome to our end of term, Maths Week Scotland Christmas party! We've got lots of fun planned—music, games, food, and of course, presents!" The children cheered, their eyes wide as they looked at the colourful stack of presents under the tree. "But before we get started," Finn continued, "I want to thank you all for..." A sudden loud crash at the back of the hall interrupted Finn's speech. Heads turned as a tray of snacks tumbled to the floor, scattering party food everywhere, and people rushed over to help. Amidst the chaos, no one noticed a shadowy figure slip behind the towering Christmas tree. With a swift motion, the culprit quietly grabbed the pile of presents and vanished from sight.

Once the spill had been cleaned up and order restored, Finn was about to continue with his speech when William pointed at the tree behind him. "Finn, look!" he called. As Finn turned around, the smile faded from his face when he realised the presents were missing. He scratched his head, the tinsel on his glasses bouncing slightly as he scanned the room. Finn checked behind the tree, and under the tables. No presents in sight. He asked the guests if they had noticed anything, but everyone had been distracted by the commotion around the dropped tray of food.

"What are we going to do now?" Finn asked his friend William. "You'll find the presents", William replied confidently, "I know you will!" Finn wasn't so sure. "I'm not a detective", he said, "and I've never solved a mystery before." He looked a little dejected, but William had an idea. "You have maths to help you!" he said. "Maths helps you solve problems. That's almost as good as being a detective." Finn brightened up. "You're absolutely right!" he smiled – and he set to work.

Chapter 1

Finn took a deep breath and addressed the crowd. "Everyone, I'm afraid there's been an incident. The presents are missing, and we need to find out what happened. Please don't leave until we sort this out." Murmurs spread across the room as Finn exchanged a glance with William, who gave him an encouraging nod.

Determined, Finn took out his notebook and jotted down everything he knew so far. The loud crash had been a distraction, and someone had used it to their advantage. Whoever took the presents must have been nearby. As he talked to the guests, gathering information, he started compiling a list of suspect names. There were quite a lot! But Finn could feel the gears turning in his mind. He knew logical deduction would lead him to the answer, and maths would help him narrow down the suspects until he found the thief. And the presents! Security was tight, so he knew the missing presents must still be somewhere inside the museum, hidden from sight. He gathered everything he would need to help him solve the mystery: his notebook and pencil, his mobile phone, a map of the museum, and a list of suspects.

Finn decided the best place to start with his deductions, was by examining the scene of the 'crime'. He walked in circles around the Christmas tree, his eyes glued to the floor. And then he spotted it. A scrap of paper, with a pattern of seasonal symbols on it. Could it be a piece of wrapping paper from one of the presents, that got torn off when the thief made their getaway?

He stared at the pattern, trying to make some sense out of it. There were eight different items in total, not including the stars. Then he had an idea. He would count all the items to see how many there were of each, and eliminate anyone who liked the item that appeared the most.

[PUZZLE No. 1]

Chapter 2

After eliminating all the suspects who liked candy canes best, Finn pondered where to go next. He decided to pay his pal Dolly a visit, the famous cloned sheep who lived in the *Explore* gallery next door. When they were alone together, she came to life and they would have a good old chin wag. But this time Finn was on a serious mission. He looked around to make sure no one else was watching, before approaching Dolly's rotating pedestal.

"Hey Finn, what's up?" asked Dolly. "I need advice," Finn whispered softly, keeping his voice low to avoid attracting attention. "The Christmas presents at the party have been stolen, and I'm trying to figure out who could have done it." Dolly's eyes widened. "Oh no, that's awful! But you're the cleverest problem-solver I know. I'm sure you'll work it out", she said with a smile. "You know, Finn, just before you came through, I saw someone loitering by the *Robot Explorer*. It caught my attention, because I thought everyone was at the party, listening to your speech. You might want to check it out."

Finn, who had been jogging around the moving pedestal, trying to keep up with Dolly, stopped in his tracks. *Robot Explorer* was an interactive exhibit which demonstrated simple programming commands. He hurried over to take a look.

The robot seemed to be running through its usual routine. Nothing out of place. “I don’t see anything suspicious,” Finn said, scratching his head. “But now that I’m here, maybe the exhibit can help me somehow.” As he watched the robot glide back and forth, observing its movements, an idea began to form.

Finn pulled out his notebook, flipping to the page with his interview notes. He realised that if he thought like a computer programmer, he could trace the paths of how each suspect made their way to the museum. He scribbled down a list of movements and modes of transport. If he could figure out the right sequence, he could eliminate some suspects from his enquiries.

[PUZZLE No. 2]

Chapter 3

With four more suspects eliminated, Finn contemplated his next move, when a faint trail of footprints leading away from the robot exhibit caught his attention. Curious, he followed the footprints through the museum to see where they would lead, and arrived at *Fashion & Style*.

The gallery was lined with display cases full of elegant dresses, vintage suits, and handcrafted knitwear, each telling its own story of craft and fashion history. As his gaze swept over the displays, something small but significant caught his eye - a flash of red lay on the tiled floor in front of a particularly stunning knitted dress.

After closer examination, he realised it was a strand of red wool. Rolling the piece of wool between his fingers, he thought “Could this be from the thief’s clothing?” The invitation to the party had encouraged guests to come dressed in their best festive jumpers.

Finn recalled that despite the nippy December air outside, it had gotten quite warm inside the museum with so many people crowded together. Not all guests had kept their jumpers on. Many had left them in the cloakroom, but a few suspects were still wearing theirs.

Pulling out his interview notes again, Finn reviewed the information he had gathered earlier. There were six suspects on the list, who had still been wearing their jumpers when he was taking witness statements. He needed to figure out whose jumper did **not** have a trace of red, so he could eliminate them from the list!

[PUZZLE No. 3]

Chapter 4

Success! Two more suspects crossed off the list. But there were still many other suspects who had checked their jumpers in to the cloakroom, Finn couldn’t rule any of them out just yet. He needed to find more clues - and fast!

His spotted another piece of red wool on the far side of the gallery, then another just outside the entrance. A final strand of red led him to *Imagine*. Finn smiled fondly - this gallery was one of his favourites, filled with fun maths challenges like shape sorting and creating patterns out of mosaic pieces.

"I mustn't get distracted," he muttered, shaking off the urge to play, and looked around for clues. Usually buzzing with laughter and chatter, the gallery now lay empty and still, its exhibits tidied and waiting for the next day's visitors. But what was that? A book had been left on the floor in the story corner.

As Finn picked it up, a crumpled page of newspaper peeked out from between its covers. Curious, he pulled out the page. It was the puzzle section - his favourite! But what was it doing in the book? And who had left it there? Perhaps solving the puzzle would help bring him closer to finding the thief.

Finn recognised the code printed across the top: the Pig Pen Cipher, one of their go-to puzzles during Maths Week Scotland. Excitedly, he jotted down the cipher key in his notebook, and soon his pencil was flying across the page, decoding each word.

[PUZZLE No. 4]

Finn paused, brow furrowed as he read the full decoded message.

*"Cross off the tallest, the shortest too;
Then look elsewhere for another clue.
Weight will define who is next off the list;
Seek out the hall that will help you with this."*

The first part of the message told him who to eliminate next, but the rest of the message was puzzling. The line about weight rang a bell. Wasn't there an exhibit somewhere that focused on weight? He drummed his fingers on the book cover, racking his brain, trying to remember.

Flipping the newspaper over in frustration, Finn's eyes widened. "Oh look!" he said aloud, a grin spreading across his face. "It's me!" And sure enough, the headline on the other side was about his Christmas party at the museum.

But then he frowned. Something wasn't quite right with the article. The letters were all wrong. Pencil in hand, he circled the letters that jumped out at him, searching for a pattern.

[NEWSPAPER PUZZLE]

Finn pulled out his museum map, to compare his findings with the gallery names. And then he saw it. His eyes lit up as everything clicked into place. "I know exactly where to go next!"

Chapter 5

Finn hurried through the halls of the museum, his footsteps echoing off the marble floors as he made his way to *Animal World*, a gallery filled with animal displays from around the world, from the Arctic to Australia. Amongst the displays was the *Animal Weigh-in*, a giant scale where visitors could

weigh themselves and see how they measured up against the weight of different animals. Cautiously Finn stepped on to the scale, curious to see which animal **he** measured up to.

But nothing happened. Briefly confused, it quickly dawned on him. "I'm probably not heavy enough for the scale to react," he exclaimed, studying the name of the lightest animal featured. "That means I must weigh less than a Goliath Frog!"

But before he could step off, something caught his eye. Wedged beside the scale was a small piece of paper, barely noticeable. He leaned down and gently tugged it free. It was a handwritten note, with different animal names. Alongside the names were some clues. This was clearly another puzzle!

Finn scanned the list of animals. "Why would someone leave this here?" he wondered aloud, turning the note over to see if there were any more hints. Nothing. Finn rubbed his chin thoughtfully. Glancing from the paper to the animal displays around him, he had an idea - what if he tried sorting the animals by weight, just like the animals featured on the Weigh-in!

[PUZZLE No. 5]

Finn stared at the notebook in his hands, where he had written out the solution to the puzzle. One by one, he had jotted down the names of the seven animals in a neat list, from heaviest to lightest. "What now?" he thought.

Just then, the soft chime of his phone startled him. Finn pulled it from his pocket and read the message:

*"The middle creature holds the key,
To what the next eliminations should be."*

The sender's number was unknown. Finn's eyes widened, and his fingers flew across the screen as he typed back:
"Who is this?"

A moment passed. Then his phone chimed again:
"A friend."

Finn frowned, glancing around the gallery to check if there was anyone hiding nearby. But there was no one in sight. He re-read the initial message, trying to piece together its meaning. "The middle creature..." he murmured, comparing the list of animals with his list of suspects.

And suddenly he understood that he could eliminate the two suspects who shared part of their name with the name of the middle creature on the list of sorted animals.

Finn felt a shiver of excitement. Whoever this mysterious "friend" was, they were helping him, nudging him along.

Chapter 6

With renewed focus, Finn surveyed his surroundings. He had combed through all the galleries on Level 1 and eliminated several suspects, but the mystery was far from over. He needed more clues, and his instincts told him it was time to head to the upper levels. With determination, he climbed the staircase to Level 3.

The *Restless Earth* gallery was filled with displays showcasing the power and beauty of the natural world: fossils, precious stones, and minerals glittered under the soft museum lights. Finn's eyes wandered over the exhibits until something shiny caught his attention - a cluster of pyrite crystals. He paused, momentarily lost in admiration. The near perfect cubes of the crystals spoke to Finn's love for mathematics.

But as he marvelled at the pyrite's geometry, something caught his eye near the base of the display. A crumpled piece of paper had been dropped on the floor. "That's strange" Finn thought, "The cleaners have already done their rounds." Curious, Finn bent down and picked it up, carefully unfolding the note.

The message was scrawled hastily, a jumble of letters and numbers, alongside a cryptic clue: "*Find order in chaos - coordinate your thoughts to get the right answer.*"

This was no ordinary scrap of paper. It was a clue, left here for him to find. He squinted at the note, its numbers and letters forming what looked like coordinates. Realising it might be a grid-based puzzle, he took out his notebook and sketched out a blank grid. Then he carefully plotted the letters and numbers from the note, shading in squares one by one as indicated. Slowly, a single letter emerged on the page. He grinned—another piece of the puzzle! Now, he could cross off any suspects with that letter in their name, narrowing down the list.

[PUZZLE No. 6]

Chapter 7

No sooner had Finn finished updating his list of suspects, than he heard a faint melody floating through the museum from a nearby gallery. But it didn't sound like the string quartet that had been playing at the party. Puzzled, Finn followed the sound to *Performances & Lives*, a gallery celebrating the diversity of music, dance and costume around the world.

The melody had stopped, the gallery lay empty and still again. Finn's eyes swept over the room, catching sight of a piece of paper pinned above a large xylophone. He stepped closer and recognised it was sheet music.

Unfortunately he had never learned to read music, but he knew just the person to help him. He flipped through his interview notes, and found the phone number of Fergus Fiddlesticks, one of the string quartet musicians. Fergus hadn't been crossed off the list of suspects yet, so there was still a chance he could be the thief, but it was a chance he had to take. Finn pulled out his phone to give him a brief call, and a few minutes later Fergus came bounding up the stairs.

Fergus looked at the sheet music and frowned. "This doesn't look right," he said, shaking his head. "The notes don't make sense, they're all in a straight line. I don't know what this is, but it's definitely

not a recognisable tune.” Finn looked thoughtful. “Can you show me how notes are supposed to work?” he asked Fergus.

With a nod, the musician started to explain. “This squashed circle is a whole note, and this one with a line is a half note. Two half notes make a whole note. The filled-in circle with a line is a quarter note. Two quarter notes make a half note, and four quarter notes make a whole note.

Finn scribbled hastily along, his eyes growing bigger and bigger as Fergus spoke. “Halves and quarters!” he exclaimed, “That sounds just like maths!” The musician chuckled, “Yes, there are a lot of similarities between music and maths. The value of the notes are like fractions.” Finn mulled over everything that Fergus had said. “Of course! Music is just another form of patterns and numbers. Could this be another clue?” Fergus gave a shrug. “That’s more your area of expertise. If you don’t need me any more, I’m going to head back to the party.” And off he went.

As Fergus disappeared down the stairs again, Finn was left holding the piece of sheet music. His mind raced. There were four lines of notes in different colours. If he thought of the notes as fractions, and added all the fractions of each colour together, then he could work out the total value for each line of notes.

[PUZZLE No. 7]

Finn had managed to add each line of notes together, which had given him four separate numbers. But what next? Just then, his phone chimed, signaling a new text message. It was from his anonymous ‘friend’:

*“If the numbers are in the right position,
it eliminates someone from suspicion.”*

Finn sighed. Who was this mysterious helper sending the cryptic messages? And could they be trusted? He read the message again, then looked at the numbers from the puzzle and his list of suspects. He realised he could use the colours as a guide to help him put the numbers in the right order. Finn stared at the final four digit number. It looked like the date of a year. Suddenly it all fell in to place, and he knew which suspect to score off the list next.

Chapter 8

Finn’s stomach grumbled, reminding him that he had missed out on the party treats in all the excitement. He wondered if the Balcony Café was still open for business or had shut up shop for the day, and sauntered over to check.

He was in luck, they were still serving. Finn ordered a tea and a pastry, collecting a napkin with a festive design from the counter.

Sitting down at a small table, Finn took a sip of his drink. When he unfolded the napkin to wipe his mouth, something caught his eye.

On the back of the napkin, someone had scrawled a series of numbers and clues. Intrigued, he leaned closer. It was a number puzzle!

[PUZZLE No. 8]

Within minutes, Finn had solved the puzzle and arrived at a three-digit code. He wondered what the code could signify. Just then, a breeze caused a piece of paper to flutter to the floor next to his table. It was his receipt. "I better keep that!", he thought.

Finn picked up the receipt and glanced at it. Something about it made him pause: it didn't match his order. Finn looked confused. It must be a different receipt, left there by someone else. Looking at it more closely, he noticed the code he'd just solved matched the price of an item that appeared in his interview notes.

Finn's mind raced, piecing together the details. "Wait a second," he muttered, looking at the timestamp of the receipt. It was during the very moment the presents disappeared. Finn's pulse quickened. If someone had been at the café at that time, they couldn't have been in Hawthornden Court when the theft took place. This was it - an alibi that could eliminate any suspects who liked the matching item the most.

Finn compared the item on the receipt to what he knew about the party guests. With this, he crossed off a few more names from his suspect list.

Chapter 9

Just as Finn was leaving the café, he heard a faint, rhythmic tapping sound close by. It was coming from the *Communicate* gallery. Intrigued, Finn followed the noise. The gallery was filled with antique telegraphs, early radios, and old-fashioned telephones.

The tapping continued. Finn's eyes darted around until they settled on an interactive exhibit about Morse code, the source of the tapping sound. This was no random noise, it was another clue!

Finn pulled out his notebook and began to jot down the strings of dots and dashes, careful not to miss a beat. Then he opened his phone and searched for a Morse code chart to help him decipher the message.

Using the chart as a guide, he matched the sequences of dots and dashes to letters. Bit by bit, the letters formed words, and soon he had decoded a few complete sentences. It was a riddle!

[PUZZLE No. 9]

Finn raised an eyebrow as he read over what he had written. The cryptic riddle pointed him towards a connection between the suspects and how they arrived at the museum.

His mind raced as he flipped through his interview notes. Some suspects had cycled, others had taken the bus, and a few had come by car. If he could match the mode of transport to the clue, he'd be able to cross more names off his list. He would be one step closer to cracking the case!

Chapter 10

Finn needed to clear his head. The pressure of the investigation and the sheer volume of clues were piling up - so many suspects, so many clues. He decided to take a break and get some fresh air. The

rooftop terrace would be the perfect spot for a quiet moment to think. But as he made his way through the museum, he realised he'd taken a wrong turn. Instead of the terrace, he found himself in *Making & Creating*, a gallery which explored the techniques and inspirations behind the work of artists, makers, and designers.

He was about to turn back when something caught his attention. A new artwork, nestled between two beautiful scarlet wall hangings, stood out to him. But as Finn took a closer look, his heart skipped a beat - it wasn't an artwork at all. It was a printed picture of a maze, filled with tiny letters. He was sure it hadn't been there during his last visit. It had to be another clue!

Carefully, so as not to touch the genuine artworks around it, Finn plucked the sheet of paper off the wall. He ran a finger along the possible routes of the maze, tracing the letters as he went, and noticed that words began to form.

"This is an easy one," he thought, "all I need to do is find the correct path from the start of the maze to the exit, and it will spell out a hint who to eliminate next!"

[PUZZLE No. 10]

Finn felt another rush of excitement as he updated his suspect list. He felt like he was getting closer with every clue. The investigation was picking up speed, and Finn could sense that the mystery was slowly, but surely, beginning to unravel.

But a new question started to form in his mind. Who was leaving these clues? And why were they helping him?

Chapter 11

Finn stepped out onto the rooftop terrace, feeling the cool, crisp air as it hit his face. The city of Edinburgh stretched out before him, its historic buildings bathed in the soft glow of streetlights. A light dusting of snow had begun to fall. It was the perfect moment to clear his mind, far from the bustle of the museum and the weight of the mystery pressing on him.

Reaching into his bag, Finn pulled out the profiles of the remaining twelve suspects. He skimmed through their occupations, personalities, and possible motives. There had been 34 suspects to begin with, but now the list had narrowed down, and these twelve were the ones still under consideration. Finn knew he needed to pay careful attention - who had the most compelling motive?

Finn leaned against the stone wall, taking in the skyline. The castle loomed in the distance, its silhouette sharp against the darkening sky. Finn's thoughts drifted. As he looked into the distance, suddenly, a thought struck him. What if the answer to the next clue wasn't in the galleries or the museum's exhibits? What if it was in something as simple as distance?

Finn started pacing as he gathered his thoughts. The remaining suspects were all locals, but how local? He had been trying to piece together the timing of the theft, but he hadn't considered one key factor - how far each of the suspects lived from the museum.

The more he thought about it, the clearer the answer became. If he could figure out who lived **furthest** away, they would have had the least chance of getting to the museum in time to plan the theft. They could be ruled out.

He grabbed his phone and opened his map app, checking the addresses in his notes. As he plugged the locations into his phone, his mind raced with calculations, comparing distances and figuring out who lived the furthest. The snow continued to fall softly around him, and the cold air sharpened his focus. Suddenly, the mystery seemed just a little more solvable.

[PUZZLE No. 11]

Chapter 12

Finn pushed open the heavy rooftop door and stepped back into the warmth of the museum, his fingers tingling from the cold. The lift had given up, lights flickering in protest as he pressed the button, so with a sigh he took the stairs, feeling the ache in his legs by the time he reached Level 4.

Breathless, he leaned against the wall near the large steam locomotive that towered over the gallery. The area was quiet, the distant murmurs of visitors and the faint creaks of the building the only sounds. Finn glanced at the seats by the locomotive and noticed a folded museum map lying abandoned.

Curiously, he picked it up. It looked different from the map tucked in his bag. He pulled his own map out to compare and, sure enough, they were not the same. The other map was marked with a grid overlay, and in the margins, there were numbers. Finn stared at the grid, the neat lines and numbers reminding him of something. Then, it clicked - coordinates! Finn realised it was yet another clue. The pieces of the mystery were falling into place faster now.

He sat down and smoothed out the found map on his lap. With his pencil, he plotted each set of coordinates, marking them carefully with a dot on the grid. At first, it seemed random, but then shapes began to form as he connected the dots.

Finn felt elated as he recognised the answer was pointing to a specific gallery in the museum—a gallery he hadn't considered before. This was where the presents were hidden! Finn tucked both maps back into his bag. He was close, so close to solving this mystery. In all his excitement, he failed to see a shadow silently slipping away.

[PUZZLE No. 12]

Chapter 13

Now that he knew where he was going, he took the fastest route to his destination, cutting straight through the *Design for Living* gallery on Level 5, where the stories of innovation and creativity spanned decades. Finn's gaze drifted over the displays he passed, until an intricately carved cabinet stopped him in his tracks.

Although he had no time to waste, he just could not resist stopping to have a closer look at the sharp lines and repeating circle of the geometric patterns. And that's when he saw it - a small piece

of folded paper, tucked behind the display label. Reaching out to retrieve it, Finn unfolded the piece of paper to reveal one more puzzle.

It was a series of number related questions. Finn answered each question in turn, then added, subtracted, multiplied and divided the individual numbers with each other as directed. His brow furrowed in concentration as his pencil flew across the page. Every second counted as he worked, each number he placed taking him one step closer to solving the case. And soon enough, a final number emerged.

[PUZZLE No. 13]

Just as Finn was staring at the number, reflecting on what it could mean, his phone chimed in his pocket. A new text message had arrived, with another cryptic riddle:

*"Your number is solved, but there's one more clue,
In Roman form, find its letter true.
Those with that letter in their name,
need no longer be part of the game."*

Finn smiled as he read the riddle, the phrase 'In Roman form, find its letter true' could only mean one thing. It was referring to Roman numerals - he remembered a Maths Week Scotland puzzle where he'd learned that Roman numerals were represented by letters. He sketched them out in his notebook to remind himself, matching the solved number to its corresponding letter.

The answer was clear. All that was left to do now was eliminate anyone with that letter in their name, narrowing the suspects even further. With each name he crossed off his list, he was getting closer to the truth. He knew in which gallery the presents were hidden - he had figured that out already - but the question of who had taken them and who was guiding him through the clues was still unresolved. He was beginning to wonder if they were one and the same person...

Chapter 14

Finn's heart raced as he hurried through the museum, the anticipation of finally cracking the case pushing him forward. As he passed by the Ancient Egypt gallery, a faint beeping sound caught his attention. He paused, peering inside. The gallery was dimly lit, designed to preserve the ancient artefacts. The sound was coming from one of the interactive touch screens. Curious, Finn approached, immediately noticing that something was off. Instead of the usual game, the display showed a cryptic riddle:

*"Osiris and Horus will show you the path;
count the symbols and reveal the maths.
Combine their wisdom, but beware the last;
subtract the queen and solve this fast."*

Finn glanced around the gallery, his eyes landing on a case filled with statues of Egyptian gods. Among them he saw Osiris, king of the afterlife, and Horus, his son in the form of a falcon. The names matched the riddle. It couldn't be a coincidence.

At the base of the case, a few scraps of paper lay scattered, as if dropped in haste. As Finn bent down to gather them, he noticed some familiar hieroglyphs printed on the scraps. The museum's Egyptian Maths activities had a similar chart.

Finn pulled out his phone and found the right web page. The hieroglyphs on the paper scraps matched those on the chart. He now had all the information he needed to solve the riddle.

[PUZZLE No. 14]

Following the riddle's clues, Finn figured out what to do:

"Count the symbols" meant adding up the values of the number hieroglyphs on each scrap of paper.

"Osiris and Horus will show you the path... Combine their wisdom" – he had to add together the values for Osiris and Horus.

Using the exhibit label, Finn matched the scraps to the appropriate gods. The last scrap, he realised, matched the statue of Isis.

The label explained that Osiris was king, and Isis, his wife, was the queen. "Subtract the queen!"

The last piece of the puzzle. He subtracted her value and arrived at a final number.

Right on cue, his phone chimed again, lighting up with another text message. A short riddle that hinted at what to do with the number he had just found.

*"Eliminate those who stand taller than this;
cross them off and shorten your list."*

Chapter 15

Leaving the Ancient Egypt gallery behind him, Finn hurried along to his final destination – Adventure Planet, filled with interactive exhibits that explored the wonders of the natural world.

Finn pushed aside thoughts of the remaining suspects, finding the presents took priority. Where could they be? He looked around the gallery for potential hiding spots, when he noticed a rolled-up scroll sticking out of one of the feely boxes in the sea life exhibit.

He ran over and carefully pulled it out. It was a Sudoku puzzle – only this one used pictures instead of numbers.

He sat down on a bench, spreading the puzzle on his lap, and began filling in the blanks, ensuring each row, column, and box contained the same set of pictures without repetition.

[PUZZLE No. 15]

One section of the completed grid was highlighted, showing the image of a tree. That had to be it! There was a life-size model of a tree in the gallery, hollow inside and perfect for hiding - an ideal place for stashing the presents.

Finn jumped up from the bench and hurried over, excitement bubbling inside him as he peered inside the hollow trunk. Sure enough, there a pile of brightly wrapped presents sat neatly stacked. A broad grin spread across his face. He had done it – he had found the missing presents!

But there was still one thing left to do. The presents were found, but Finn couldn't leave the mystery unsolved. The puzzles had taken him on an exciting adventure around the museum, but now it was time to confront the final six suspects.

He dialed Sam Shield, the security guard, who had been ruled out as a suspect earlier. "Sam, I found the presents," Finn said, his voice steady but urgent. "I need the final six suspects brought up to Adventure Planet. Can you get them here quickly?" Sam's reply was firm and reassuring. "On it, Finn. Give me a few minutes."

Soon, footsteps and voices echoed up the stairwell. The suspects entered the gallery, their expressions a mix of confusion and curiosity. Finn took a deep breath. It was time for the final reveal.

"I need to go over your statements one last time," Finn said, pulling out his notebook. He questioned each suspect, listening closely. One statement stood out - it didn't add up. One of them was lying. It had to be the thief!

Epilogue

Finn's jaw dropped as he checked his notes. It couldn't be - or could it? Then he chuckled, everything falling into place. "It was you!" he said, pointing at Matilda Morse, the curator. Gasps rippled through the group. Before anyone could protest, Finn continued, "But there was no crime."

Confused murmurs spread until Finn raised his hand for silence. "You set this up, Dr. Morse. It wasn't a crime at all, but a brilliantly planned quest. A challenge to test my maths skills. It was you who took the presents and hid them here in Adventure Planet. But it was **also** you helping me this whole time. You knew that if you placed the clues near exhibits with maths connection, I would find them. Everyone knows I can't resist when there's maths involved!"

Dr Morse nodded at Finn with a smile. "Well done," she congratulated him. "You're right. This was never a crime. It was a quest to see how well you could solve each puzzle, and to show you how much maths there is around us – including in the museum!"

As the group broke into excited chatter, Finn couldn't help but grin. He clapped his hands for attention. "Right, everyone! We have some very eager children waiting for their Christmas presents." He glanced at the gifts. "Sam, will you help carry these back to the party?" he said, turning to the security guard. "Of course," Sam replied. "Wouldn't want the kids to miss their surprise."

As they made their way back downstairs with the presents, the noise of the party grew louder. Finn spotted William weaving through the crowd, his eyes lighting up when he saw the brightly wrapped gifts. "You did it, Finn! I knew you would!" he called out. "Couldn't have done it without a bit of luck - and a lot of maths," Finn said with a wink, handing William a present.

Cheers erupted as the children realised the presents had returned. As Finn stood back, watching the scene with satisfaction, Dr Morse turned to him.

“Next time, Finn, maybe I’ll make it harder.” Finn laughed, meeting her gaze. “I’ll be ready!”

THE END