

Chapter one

Introduction

It was a bright sunny Saturday; I just woke up and found out. I look outside my *own* arched crimson window, my *own* bright magenta room.

I washed my face; change into jeans and a sweatshirt, and go down to eat breakfast. And whom did I meet at the bottom of the stairs... Wait did I introduce myself? Ok, I didn't, well, my name is Isabella, Isabella Anderson, call me Izzy. I am one of three triplets; the others are my brothers Duncan and Lucas. I am 13 years old as well as my brothers. There are only 3 of us, no other kids. Anyway, so I met my parents. Dad was wearing indigo jeans and a black sweatshirt, and Mom looked pretty in a sky cerulean blouse with black jeans, as usual. I figured I knew where they're going, probably to eat fast food out by themselves. They do it every month!

Chapter Two

The Incident

"Isabella!" called my brother, "Come here!" When I heard the tone of my brother Lucas, I knew that I was somewhere in the red zone, the zone of trouble. I also heard my full name, not my nickname. Oh, I forgot to mention, if someone calls me and uses my full name, "Isabella", that usually means that I am in trouble. But if someone calls me by my nickname, "Izzy", that fully means that I am in no trouble at all. Anyhow, I went back upstairs. As I reach his sapphire bedroom door, he shouted, "Why do you have to pair the socks exactly differently? One of them is navy blue and the other is dark black. You always do this. Isn't it your turn to do the laundry?"

I answered, "I didn't pair your socks like that. And it's not my turn to do the laundry, it's Duncan's turn, remember? So please don't shout at me like that. Even though I'm a minute younger than you, doesn't mean that you can be so rude to me." I knew that I am probably a little bit strict, but Lucas has no right to scream at me like that. And he should know. "Sorry" he says. "I'm sorry too", I said, "it doesn't matter."

Chapter Three

The First Cipher

After that incident, I went back downstairs to have breakfast, "Gosh, I'm starving!" I fixed myself a cereal bowl of Reese's Puffs. As I began to pour the milk I realized that I didn't say goodbye to my parents, "It's too late anyway", I think.

After breakfast, I started on my science project, homework from Friday. I collected all my supplies except my glue. Now where did the glue go? So I looked in my school supplies cubbyhole and find my glue with a paper on it that said:



*YAWEGASSAP*TERCES*EHT
,*KCIUQ*TI*EVLOS,*YERTSYM*A*FO*ELPMAXE*NA*SI
*OVER*THIS*HAND*S.P*DAD*AND*MOM*
*DO*TO*WHAT*KNOWS*HE*DUNCAN*TO*
*WITH*THIS*MESSAGE*

It was one of those word puzzles that Duncan could solve; he was good at these kinds of things. But the only thing that I could figure out was “Mom*and*Dad” & “Hand this over to Duncan. He knows what to do with this message.” So of course, the next thing I did was hand it over to Duncan. So, I walked to his room and handed him the cipher, “Call Lucas and we’ll meet in my closet, I’ll bring the flashlight and my secret notebook, we are on a case,” Duncan said. As you might or might not know, Duncan’s closet is where we all meet for secrets since we were 5. “Lucas!” I call, enough to hear my whole voice bouncing off the walls, “Okay, coming!” Lucas answered. I waited and waited 5 minutes later he came and met me at the top of the stairs. “Where do I need to go, and why are you calling my name so loud?” He asked.

“I’m calling your name because we all need to meet in our secret place; Duncan’s closet.” I reply.

Chapter Four Solving the First Cipher

So Lucas and I head into Duncan’s dim olive room and go in his emerald closet. “I just figured out the cipher that you gave me, Izzy,” Duncan announced proudly.

“Well what is it?” I asked.

“Uh, okay come closer guys, Izzy close the closet doors fully, and switch on the flashlight, Luke...”

“Wait a second, what is this all about?” interrupted Lucas.

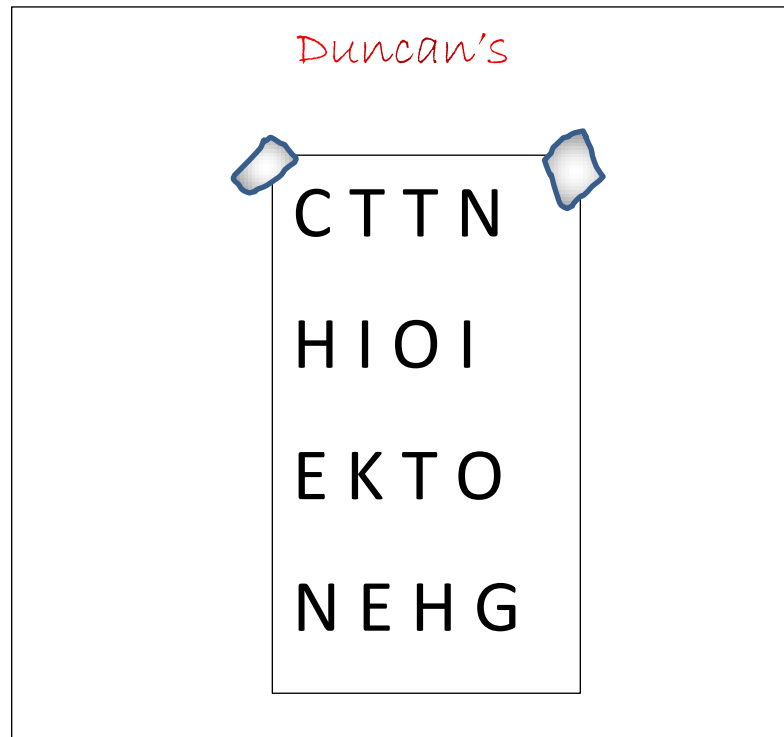
“Okay so basically, this morning I found a cipher in my room, all I know is that it said that it was from Mom and Dad and it said to hand it over to Duncan,” I told Lucas.

“Anyway, so the message was only backward it was really easy; you could’ve figured it out, Izzy, if you look closely, the asterisks were like periods, so the sentence reads, ‘The secret passageway is an example of a mystery. Solve it quick,’” informed Duncan.

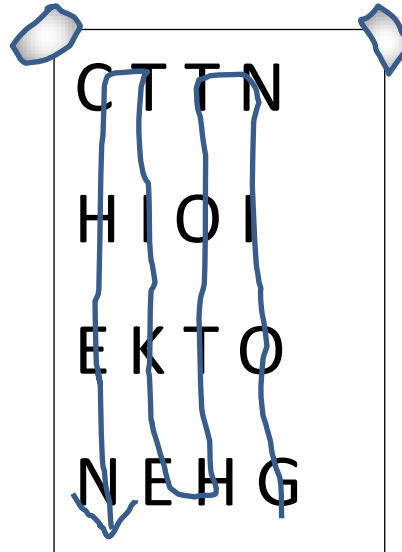
Chapter Five

The Second Cipher

"I also saw one stuck to the cover of my notebook yesterday, look."



He held up his notebook for all of us to see, and then said, "I did a quick search on the Internet and figured out that this is a twisted path cipher. The deal is, you have to start from the letter G and go up like this."



Again he held up his notebook. "So the answer, after I solved it, is, 'Go into the kitchen,'" said Duncan. As he was double-checking his solution, he said, "So all I know is that there's some mystery about the secret passageway and it's in the kitchen."

"But why are they sending ciphers to us? I mean, what are we supposed to do?" I asked.

"One of the possibilities is that they need us somewhere, right? I learned in Mr. Roy's class at school that ciphers are sometimes messages for fun or if someone needs you somewhere, ASAP" said Lucas.

"Well, I'm assuming that if Mom and Dad needed us somewhere, they wouldn't do it for fun? It's just a complete waste of time, with no necessary objective." agreed Duncan.

"Anyway, if anyone finds something suspicious, like another cipher, just come to me. We'll break the code, and bring everyone to meet again, O.K.?" said Duncan.

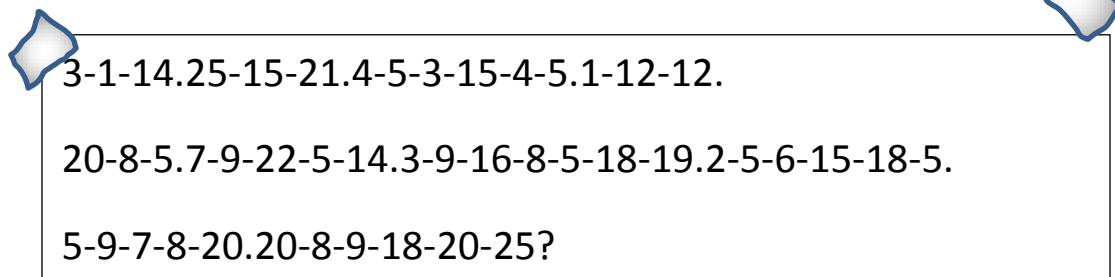
"O.K." Luke and I said together.

Chapter Six The Third Cipher

Five minutes later as I was writing something for my science project, Luke approached me to tell me that he had found another cipher taped to the inside of his blue polo shirt, "I noticed it because it was tickling my back. Get ready; we need to have our second meeting," he said.

"Lemme see the cipher?" Duncan asks as Luke explained how he found the cipher.

"Here it is," says Luke, he held up a paper.



3-1-14.25-15-21.4-5-3-15-4-5.1-12-12.
20-8-5.7-9-22-5-14.3-9-16-8-5-18-19.2-5-6-15-18-5.
5-9-7-8-20.20-8-9-18-20-25?

"Wait, isn't that one of those ABC codes kind of stuff or something? If so, then I'll solve it," I offered.

"Could I use your notebook, Duncan?" I asked.

"Hmmm. yeah, whatever," Duncan replied in his *stop-bothering-me, I'm-thinking-way*.

I opened his notebook and wrote the whole alphabet down with the numbers beneath the letters.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
K									
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11									
L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	
12	13	14	15	16	17				
18	19	20				U	V	W	

Shortly, I had figured out the cipher. “Can you decode all the given ciphers before eight thirty?” I informed Duncan and Luke.

“That means that Mom and Dad are doing it for fun.” Duncan said, “But still there is no clear objective.”

“When are Mom and Dad going to come back? It’s 6:35,” asked Luke.

“Well, if this cipher says, before eight thirty...”

Duncan was saying, “Then they’re going to come around that time,” I finished.

“Oh,” said Luke.

Chapter Seven

The Fourth and Last Cipher

As I was holding the alphabet cipher, Duncan asked, “Wait is there another cipher on the back or somethin’? Cuz I can see something written.”

I flipped the paper and sure enough there was another cipher on the back, it looked difficult. Even Duncan and Luke said so.

“This is sure going to take us a long time,” said Duncan, “which means that all three of us have to be working on it.”

“Besides its 7:10,” I added.

Five minutes later, 7:15, I took out my purple notebook and wrote down all that I knew about these ciphers. Duncan opened his laptop, logged in and started researching on the net. Lucas went down to our library, which is as big as 4 rooms stuck together and looked up the letter C for ciphers. I looked at the cipher that was on the back of the third cipher paper for the third time and try to think how to solve it. I hadn’t made any progress, but it was soon 7:40! Somebody had to solve this cipher! I picked up the cipher again,

Y	O	U	S	O	L
J	O	B	F	R	V
D	.	.	M	O	E
O	O	G	T	I	D

but the only words that I could see were *You* and *Job*. Time passed...

7:50...

8:00...

8:10...

Time is seriously flying away!

8:15...

8:20...

10 minutes left!

8:25...

Chapter Eight

Solving the Last Cipher

"I solved it!" screamed Lucas, he ran and stomped upstairs at the same time. It sounded like an elephant gone mad.

"REALLY?" Duncan and I asked together.

"Yes, okay, so this cipher is a clockwise box code written in shape of a box, it starts in the top left corner and ends when you wind your way to the middle. So you start from the letter Y and end at the letter M. Solved, it reads, "You solved it good job from...", said Luke but he did not have any time to finish because.....

Chapter Nine

The Truth of All Ciphers

"Were home!" screamed Mom and Dad. It was *exactly* eight thirty and we had solved all the ciphers, thanks to Luke!

"Where are you guys?" asked Dad.

"We're upstairs in Duncan's room." Luke responded. Two minutes later Mom and Dad came in Duncan's room and sat down on his couch.

“Why were you guys sending us ciphers?” I asked. Mom and Dad looked at each other and smiled, then Mom said, “Well, we wanted you to be in next week’s cipher competition, all three of you grouped in a team...”

“We were just testing you, because the competition doesn’t have any study guides or study sessions, so we made up one for you, a fun one, and in next month’s competition, if you win first place, we will go to Cedar Point.” Finished Dad.

“So are you guys in, or not?” asked Mom, with a smile forming on her face.

“Yes, we’re in!” replied Duncan, Luke, and I altogether. I am so happy; Cedar Point has been our dream since we were ten!

A WEEK LATER...

Today was the cipher competition. We all tried our best, but it wasn’t easy, not at all!

A MONTH LATER...

The ceremony has finally come I was waiting for so long, dreaming about Cedar Point—all the rides, the cotton candy, everything.

So we went to New York City, not too far from New York, which is where we live. Ten minutes after we entered the building, the host announced the winners, “For the 3rd place... Sara, Alexandra, and Andrea Davidson. 2nd place... Todd, Paul, and Justin Chapman. Last, but not least, congratulations for 1st place....