



# The Case of the Charley Cheetah Theft

Featuring: Nina Chase and Max Decker



The sky was dark and cloudy as Max and Nina left Carol Decker's car. They ran past the small artificial pond in Harborville Junior High's courtyard. Nina's science class had carefully arranged various coloured rocks beneath the water, but nobody sat admiring the design today. "What a gloomy afternoon!" Nina said as they ran up the steps.

Just as Max flung open the front door, the rain poured down. "Lucky thing we didn't get caught in that," Nina said. "My hair looks like a scouring pad when it's wet."

Max laughed. "You mean you don't have wash and wear hair?"

Before Nina could answer, loud voices echoed from the school media centre, the only other room leading from the corridor. The two cousins hurried over and peered in.

Ms. Purdy, the school librarian, was glaring at three students. "I know one of you took Charley," she said. She glanced over and beckoned Nina and Max inside. "Maybe you two can help. I left our school mascot on my desk when I went to the cafeteria to get coffee a few minutes ago. As I was walking back here, I saw these three students in the corridor outside my door. Charley Cheetah is gone."

"Well, I sure didn't take him," Jack Weins said. "And I had a good reason for being in the corridor." He pointed to the cast on his left arm. "My mom is taking me to the doctor today. I stepped outside, didn't see her car, but saw it was going to rain any minute. Ellen was on the steps, so we walked inside together. She'll tell you that. I don't have any reason for taking Charley Cheetah."

"Ha!" Bill Bateson blurted. "Maybe you're mad that you broke your arm and couldn't be on the team. Isn't that a good enough reason? And Ellen didn't make the cheerleading squad this year. Maybe she wanted to cause trouble because of that. But me-- I just came here to get a book. When I saw that Ms. Purdy wasn't in the room, I went out to the corridor to wait for her. I sure don't have any reason to--"

"Hey, you'd do just about anything to get a good story for the school paper," Ellen interrupted. "I was only in that corridor because I was coming back from lunch. And Jack saw me, just like he said. Bill might have taken Charley just so he could have a great headline: Charley Cheetah, School Mascot, Stolen from Media Centre."

"And I'd like to know where he is," Ms. Purdy said.

"Sounds like nobody had much time alone," Nina said, gesturing to the three suspects. "Maybe someone here still has Charley Cheetah right now. After all, he's just an eight inch iron figurine."

"You think it's in my purse?" Ellen angrily demanded. "Take a look." She dumped the contents on the desk. Only the usual things tumbled out. Nina reached for her hand to calm her and felt the soaking wet cuff of her sleeve.

"Well, it sure isn't in my book bag!" Bill declared, turning his canvas bag upside down. Nina noticed he had a school yearbook and two candy bars.

"And where would I hide it?" Jack asked.

Max stepped closer and Nina noticed Jack cringe. "Just how loose is that cast?" Max asked.

"Charley Cheetah isn't very big. Could you have-"

Jack laughed. "You can bet my cast isn't that loose! He moved his arm closer, and Nina saw that the plaster was peeling away from the edges.

Max glanced at Nina. "Could someone else have been in here and----"

"No." Nina shook her head. "One of these three took Charley. And I think I know who it was. And I think I know where Charley is right now."



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Can you solve the case?

- A) Who did Nina and Max suspect?  
\* Ellen Kringle | \* Jack Weins | \* Bill Bateson | \* Not sure
- B) Write down your answer. Motivate your answer using clues from the text.
- C) Choose 10 difficult words, translate them and describe them in English.

# KEY - The Case of the Charley Cheetah Theft

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\* Who did Nina and Max suspect?

> **Ellen Kringle** - Correct.

**Jack Weins** - Not Correct.

**Bill Bateson** - Not Correct.

\* Here's another clue:

The rain had not yet fallen when Nina and Max ran into the school, but Nina noticed something strange about one of the three suspects.

\* How did Nina & Max figure it out?

Nina noticed that Ellen Kringle's cuff was soaking wet. Since it hadn't been raining when Ellen came back to school, she had obviously put her hand and wrist into water. Ellen had taken Charley Cheetah and had put him into the bottom of the rock pond, making sure she placed him in a spot where he would not easily be seen. Angry that she hadn't been chosen as a cheerleader, she wanted to cause trouble for the team by temporarily hiding the mascot.

"If we'd failed to solve this case, it would have rocked the school," Max told Nina later. "The team's morale would have been at rock bottom."

"Right along with Charley Cheetah," Nina said, laughing.