

The adventures of Willow, Anna, Emma and Sophia

Chapter 1 - The Secret Door

Rain, Rain and more rain.

"Let's go to the PLC!" said Willow. "It is nice and dry in there."

Willow, Anna and Emma all ran to the PLC and went up the steps.

"I can see Sophia!" shouted Anna.

They all waved to Sophia and shouted her name.

Sophia saw them. She came up the steps to meet them.

"I have just got to school," she said. Her coat was very wet!

The four girls went into the PLC. Mrs Ellsmore saw them.

"Girls, please will you leave your wet coats and bags just outside the door?" she said.

Mrs Ellsmore gave Sophia some paper towels to dry her hair off.

There were SO many children in the PLC! Some of them were reading. Some were on the computers.

"What shall we do?" asked Emma.

"Let's have a look at some books." said Willow.

The girls went over to the shelf by the desk. Lots of good books here. Not too long. Not too difficult to read. Anna put her head on the side, so she could see the name on the books.

"Look at this one!" she said (but not too loud, as they did not want Mrs Ellsmore to tell them off!) "It says 'Secret Door' on it."

Anna put her finger on the book, with a silver cover. She pulled it away quickly. "Ouch!" she said. "It's hot!"

"No way!" said Sophia. She put her finger on the book too. Sophia said a word that I can't write down!

"Let me have a go!" said Emma. She also stuck out her finger and tried to pull the book out. But it was too hot to touch!

"I know!" said Anna. She put her glove on and tugged at the silver spine of the book.

Suddenly the room went dark. There was a funny noise. The bookcase opened like a door!

The girls turned round, but the PLC was not there. Behind them they could see what looked like a fluffy cloud. In front of them was the open door...

Chapter 2 - Candy Floss



Sophia stepped through first. All four girls felt scared. But what else could they do?

"What can you see, Sophia?" called Emma, right behind her.

"It is all foggy", called back Sophia, "So I can't see much. But it feels warm and I think I am walking on sand!"

"Don't go without me!" shouted Willow, as she stepped through to door as well.

Anna looked behind her as she stepped through, just in time to see the door closing behind her.

BANG!

There was no handle on the inside of the door. No going back now!

All the girls could feel a warm breeze and even the sand under their feet felt warm. But all around them the air was warm and misty. They could not see anything but white mist ahead.

"Let's link arms," said Willow. "That way we won't lose each other."

All of a sudden, the four could hear a sound. They stopped and listened as hard as they could. As if from far away, they could hear a voice. A high voice.

"It's a lady's voice!" Emma said, surprised.

"Keep going," said Anna. "We need to get a bit nearer to hear what she is saying."

A few minutes later they stopped again to listen.

"I think she is saying 'Candy floss. Come and try my Candy Floss!'" Sophia suddenly said.

The others listened hard. Then Willow and Emma could hear it too.

"I can't hear it yet," said Anna. But after walking a bit more, she could hear what the voice was saying too.

Now they could smell candy floss!

A few minutes later they could see a dark shadow.

As they got nearer, the voice got louder and the smell of candy floss even stronger. They could now see a woman dressed in dark clothes. Around her there were lots of coloured blobs.

"Come here, my lovely girls!" called the woman. "Come and try some candy floss!"

"I think she is a witch," whispered Emma. "I'm scared."

"Candy floss smells nice!" said Willow, her tummy rumbling.

"You shouldn't trust a stranger," said Anna. "My Mum always tells me that."

But Sophia was already on her way.....

Chapter 3 - Is She a Witch?



When they reached the woman, the girls saw that she was sitting on a deck chair.

She was wearing a long black dress. She had no shoes on her feet. Her hair was long and not very tidy. Beside her was a big pot on a fire. Something was bubbling inside. Next to her was a beach umbrella. Pink, blue, green and yellow bags of candy floss hung on ribbons from the umbrella.

Emma noticed that the woman did not have a pointed hat, but she still thought she might be a witch!

Now the mist was moving away. All around them was just sand. Far away was the sea! Behind them was no sign of the door at all. Now they could hear the waves!

The woman spoke to Sophia first.

"Hello Sophia. So good to see you, my dear!"

Sophia nearly fell over in surprise. How did she know her name?

As the other girls came nearer, the woman spoke to them too.

"Come closer Willow, Emma and Anna. I have something for each of you."

"Where are we? And how do you know our names?" burst out Sophia.

"Some people call this Storyland," said the woman. "You can only enter by coming through a magic book".

She reached and pulled down a bag of bright green candy floss. It had Sophia's name on it!

"I know your names because this came out of my pot first."

She held it out to Sophia. But Sophia just stared at it and did not move.

"Then," the woman added, "These other ones came out next." She pointed to three more bags of candy floss hanging up.

Willow could see a pretty blue one with her name on. Emma's was baby pink and Anna's was yellow like a daffodil.

"Are you a witch?" asked Emma. She just could not help herself!

The woman laughed very loudly. Anna thought she was a bit rude.

"Well," said the woman at last, "What do you think? I don't cast spells and I haven't got a broom stick. Or a cat."

"What will happen to us if we eat our candy floss?" asked Willow.

"You each have a job to do," said the woman. "When you eat your candyfloss, it takes you to a new place. There is something you must do there before you can go back to your own world."

"But what if we don't eat it?" asked Sophia.

"Then you can stay here," the woman smiled.

But Sophia had more questions.

"What if we don't want to stay here? What if we want to go back home...or school....the PLC?"

"Can you see the door?"

"No!" said all the girls, turning around to look.

"Then you can't go back," said the woman. She turned to the pot and gave it a stir.

GLOOP! SLURP!

The stuff inside the pot bubbled.

"If we all eat the candy floss," said Willow, "Will we all go to the same place?"

"I'm not sure," said the woman. "Folk don't often come back to tell me where they go."

"Who are you?" asked Anna. She felt a little shy, but she really wanted to know.

"My name is - " and out of her mouth came a word that the girls did not understand. It was not English! It was like the sound you get when you hear the wind in the trees.

"But you can call me Pat."

The girls looked at each other. Willow looked across the sand and she nodded her head to the other three. Sophia nodded too. Together, without talking, they walked off along the sand.

When Pat was far behind, they spoke. What should they do?

Chapter 4 - A Disagreement



"If only we had our phones!" sighed Willow.

"I wonder what time it is?" asked Anna.

No one had a watch. They looked up in the sky to see where the sun was. How strange! There was a perfect blue sky, warm air, but no sun!

They had walked so far, that they couldn't even see Pat anymore. Just sand, sea and blue sky.

"Do you think the sea is real?" asked Emma. The girls walked over to the water. It looked real.

Sophia stopped, took off her shoes and stuck her toe in the water.

"It is water! And it is quite warm!"

Soon all four girls were walking along in the shallow water bare foot, school shoes in their hands. For a while, they forget they were lost in an unknown land.

Willow suddenly stopped.

"Don't you think it is strange," she began, "That we have been walking for ages and we don't seem to be tired, or thirsty?"

"Just a bit hungry," said Emma, thinking of the candy floss.

"I want to go home!" said Anna. She put her hand in her pocket to see if she had got a tissue.

"Well, we can't walk on for ever," said Sophia. "We are not even getting anywhere. Just sand, sand, more sand, and the sea. I'm bored. I think we should go back to the old woman."

But the girls could not agree.

Willow said that Sophia was being bossy. They should carry on to see if they found anything.

Emma said that she wanted to go with Willow and that Pat must be a witch.

Sophia said Willow and Emma were being stupid.

Anna said they were all being mean to her and leaving her out.

"Have it your own way!" shouted Sophia and started walking back along the beach towards the old woman.

"Wait!" shouted Anna, running after her.

Willow looked at Emma. Emma shrugged her shoulders. They carried on walking in the other direction.

Chapter 5 - Sophia and Anna

After walking for what felt like a long time, Sophia and Anna arrived back at the place where the woman - Pat - was sitting with her candy floss.

She said, "Hmm. Only two of you."

She reached up to the umbrella and handed Sophia the bag of green candy floss and Anna the yellow one.

"Well, go on then!" she said sharply.

Both girls were just standing there, looking at the fluffy floss.

"So..." asked Sophia slowly, "...We have to eat the candy floss, and it takes us somewhere. Then we have to do a job and then we can get back through a door to school?"

"And there is no other way of getting home?" Anna asked.

Pat nodded.

Sophia opened the bag.

"After three," she said.

Anna opened hers too.

"One, two, three..."

The floss melted in the mouth. It was sweet, then chewy. It tasted of sunshine, flowers, the wind....

Chapter 5 - Willow and Emma

Willow and Emma walked for what felt like a long time.

All they could see around them was just the same: the sea, the sand, the blue sky. No sun and no clouds. They were not too hot. They were not too cold. They did not feel tired or thirsty.

But they did feel bored!

"I think we should go back," Emma said finally.

"OK," agreed Willow. She had been thinking the same thing.

The girls thought they would never find Pat and the candy floss again, when at last they could see a dark shape in the distance. As they got nearer, they could smell the lovely, sweet smell of the candy floss.

But when they finally got to Pat sitting under her umbrella, there was no sign of Sophia or Anna!

They looked at Pat, but she did not say anything. She seemed to be waiting for them to speak first.

"Where are Sophia and Anna?" asked Willow.

Emma then noticed that the bags of green and yellow candy floss were missing.

"Well, dear. I am not too sure," said Pat. "They will be somewhere by now. That's the only thing I can be sure of."

"Did they eat the candy floss?" asked Emma.

"Of course!"

Pat reached up and took down the bags of blue and pink candy floss. She held them out to the girls.

Emma took hers first. Willow followed. The woman nodded at them.

Emma opened her bag and pulled out a bit of pink floss. She held it to her nose.

"It smells really nice!" she said to Willow.

"OK," said Willow, "We eat it together, right?"

"OK," said Emma.

"One, two, three..."

The floss melted in the mouth. It was sweet, then chewy. It tasted of sunshine, flowers, the wind....

Chapter 6 - Toad in the Hole (Anna's story)

The mist cleared. Anna looked but she could not see Sophia.

"Sophia?" she shouted.

Anna could see she was in a kitchen. She had a white coat on. And a white hat! She took it off her head to have a look at it.

"This is a hat for a chef!" thought Anna.

There was a clock on the wall. It went "Dong, dong, dong...." Ten dongs!

Suddenly the door opened. In came a woman.

"Right," said the woman. She was dressed in a very smart white shirt and a black skirt. "The King wants toad in the hole for his dinner."

The woman looked at the clock.

"He wants it for 1 o' clock."

"Oh," thought Anna. "So I am a chef and I have to cook for the king!"

"I can't do that!"

Anna sat down and felt very sad. She got her tissue out of her pocket. Sniff, sniff.

The kitchen went all misty. Now Anna could feel sand under her feet.

"So, you are back!" said Pat.

Anna was now standing by the woman with the candyfloss.

"No need to cry!" Pat handed her a new tissue. "What is your job?"

"I have to cook for the king!" sniffed Anna. "I have to make...something with a toad in it!"

"Ah," said Pat. "Then you need to find a cook book."

"But I am not good at reading," sniffed Anna.

"You can do more than you think!"

Pat gave her another bag of yellow candy floss.

"What can I do?" asked Anna.

"You can stay here. But if you want to go back home, you must do your job. You have to cook for the King!"

The candy floss melted in her mouth.

Now Anna was back in the kitchen.

The clock gave ten dongs. The woman came in...

"Right," said the woman. "The King wants toad in the hole for his dinner."

She looked at the clock.

"He wants it for 1 o' clock."

"So," thought Anna, "It must be ten o' clock."

She looked at her fingers.

"Eleven o' clock, twelve o' clock, one o' clock. I have three hours!"

"But what is 'toad in the hole'?" thought Anna.

Chapter 6 - Popcorn (Sophia's story)

The mist cleared. Sophia looked but she could not see Anna.

She was sitting in a chair. There were lots of chairs round her.

What was that smell? It was a nice smell. But Sophia could not think what it was.

"Popcorn!" she said suddenly.

She could see a box next to her. It was full of popcorn!

In front of her was a big black screen.

The screen was going up.

A film was about to start!

Sophia had some popcorn.

A song played. Then Sophia could see a girl standing in a park. Some older girls came over to her and gave her a packet and some money.

Sophia watched as the girl took the packet home. She opened it. There were white pills inside.

The girl went out again. She was back in the park by the swings. Some children came to her. The girl gave them some pills and they gave her some money.

The film ended. The black screen came down.

"What shall I do now?" Sophia asked. But there was no one in the room with her. She ate some more popcorn.

But then the screen went up again.

A new film started.

Sophia could see it was the same girl. But she was older.

The girl was in a room with a baby. The baby yelled. A man came in. He was not very old. He hit the girl. He shouted. Then he went out and banged the door. The girl looked very upset. All the time the baby yelled.

Soon the film ended.

This time Sophia looked for the next film. It soon came on.

A happy song. She saw the same girl. She looked about 16 or 17 years old. She was in some kind of school, but not a normal classroom. She was washing someone's hair. Sophia watched as the girl next cut the hair, then gave it a colour. Next, she used a hair dryer. It looked fab! The girl was smiling.

Now the girl was putting on her coat. Outside a boy, about the same age, came up and put his arm round her.

"Want some chips?" he said.

"Mmm, yes please!" said the girl and the two went off into the town.

The film ended.

Sophia waited. No more films. She got up and saw a door at the back of the room.

Chapter 6 - The Witch in the Woods (Willow's story)

The mist cleared. Willow could not see Emma. She was in a hut.

A boy sat by a fire. It was not very light. Willow could see he was cooking.

The boy turned round and saw her. He spoke. It was not English.

"Habari!" The boy smiled.

Willow put her hand to her mouth and laughed out loud. It was not English but she could understand!

"Hello!" she said, smiling back.

But the word that came out of her mouth was not English!

"Umetoka wapi?" asked the boy.

Willow told him about being in school, the magic book, the door to the place with just sand and sea, Pat the old woman, the candy floss...

All the time she was speaking to him, it was not English. But Willow knew what she was saying. And, when the boy spoke, Willow could understand him too.

Willow found out she was in Uganda, in Africa. The boy's name was Akiki.

They were talking Swahili.*

Akiki said it was time for his granny to have her food.

For the first time, Willow saw a mat at the side of the hut. A very old woman lay on the mat, under a rug.

Akiki slid over to his granny using his hands and his bottom.

"Granny, wake up!" said the Akiki in Swahili.

He helped the old woman to sit up. She only had one tooth.

"She must be 100 years old!" said Willow to herself.

Very slowly and carefully, Akiki gave spoons of soup from the pot to his granny.

"Asante," said Granny. Willow understood this was 'thank you'. Then Granny lay down to rest.

Willow and Akiki ate some soup too.

Then Akiki told Willow his story.

A long time ago all the people in the village were very happy. The children helped fetch water and work on the farm. When the work was done, they loved to play.

One day a boy went to play in the woods. He met a witch. She had lots of sweets. The witch sent him to fetch all the children from the village, so they could have sweets too. But the children never came back. The witch locked them up.

When the mothers and fathers went to see the witch, she used magic to keep them away.

"You will only break my magic if you can tell me what this number is!" said the witch.

Akiki drew some pictures in the sand. It looked like maths to Willow!

"I am the only child left in the village," said Akiki.

"I could not go with them to the woods because my legs are not good."

"You can't walk?" gasped Willow.

"No," said Akiki sadly, "But I did not mind when I had my friends to play with me."

Willow knew she had to help him...she had to find the number to stop the witch's magic!

*Sounds like this: swa / hee / lee

Chapter 6 - The Black Cat (Emma's story)

The mist cleared. Emma looked around her. She was in a classroom.

She could see two girls from school, Mel and Leah. But when Emma tried to talk to them, she could not say anything.

A funny noise came out of her!

She looked down at her feet...but she saw something else!

She had paws...and a tail!

She jumped off the chair she had been sitting on and went over to the window.

She could see herself in the window.

She was a cat! A black cat!

"Why is there a cat in here?" Mel asked Leah.

"I have no idea!" said Leah. "Puss, Puss! Come here!"

Emma, the black cat, walked slowly over to Leah.

"Prrrr. Prrrr," was all she could say.

Mel and Leah stroked her. Then they went on talking.

They had their phones out.

"Look at this picture of me!" said Mel.

"That is so cute. Love your hair. Send it to me!" said Leah.

They sat for a long time looking at pictures on their phones. Laughing about some of the other girls' pictures, they said some quite unkind things. One of the photos was of Emma!

"I'm gonna go to get a cookie," said Mel. "See you later!"

Not long after, Chloe came in.

"Hi, Chloe!" said Leah. "Look at this photo of Mel! Ha, ha - her hair looks so stupid!"

Emma was fed up. Why was Leah being so mean?

But it got worse.

By the end of the day, Leah and Mel were not speaking.

Chloe had told Leah that Mel wanted a fight (this was not true).

Leah had posted Mel's photo all over Instagram.

Mel had called Chloe a %!*"! and all the girls had blocked each other.

A bell rang and all the children went home.

Emma turned round and round about ten times, then lay down for a sleep...

Suddenly she woke up. The room looked the same as when she first got there. She could see Lean and Mel with their phones.

But something was different.

She stood up.

"Hi, Emma! You woke up!" called Mel.

Emma looked down. She had feet again. Then she looked at her hands. No paws! She was herself again!

Just like before, the Mel and Leah were on their phones.

"Look at this picture of me!" said Mel. Just like before!

Suddenly, Emma knew what her job was. She knew just what she had to do, to get home!

Chapter 7 - Toad in the Hole (What Anna Did Next)

Pat had said she would need to find a cook book.

Anna could see some books on a high shelf.

She stood on a chair so she could reach them.

She picked a large book: 'All you need to know about cooking.'

But where do you find how to make 'Toad in the hole'?

Who wants to eat toads anyway?

Anna flicked through the page after page. No pictures of toads anywhere.

She got to the end of the book. This had long lists.

Anna saw that the lists followed the order a, b, c...

"T for toad!" she thought, and followed with her finger until she came to T.

"How do you spell *toad*?" Anna tried to remember the sounds from her reading lessons.

"T - oa - d." She counted the sounds on three fingers.

Then she spotted the word. Toad.

Toad in the hole, p352.

Anna got down from the chair and quickly found the page.

Some of the words she knew. Some of the words were tricky.

'Flour'

F...l...our. Flour!

'Eggs'

That was easy. But what was the word after it?

'beaten'

Anna looked at the word. Then she saw the ea in the middle.

"ea - cup of tea!! She said. "b...ea...t. Beat. e...n. ..en...beaten! I have to beat the eggs.

She read and read.

With the help of the words and the pictures, Anna could see what to do! She was quite good at the cooking bit.

"Thank goodness there are no toads in it!" she thought.

"Dong, dong, dong..." Anna counted eleven dongs. 11 o' clock!

Just two hours to cook for the King!

She opened doors to find all the things she needed:

Mixer, bowl, jug, spoon.

A big, white fridge stood in the corner. All kinds of food were inside.

Step by step, Anna read and cooked. She was hot and very tired.

But at last the dinner for the King was in the oven.

She even had time to boil some carrots and peas.

The woman dressed in black and white came in.

"All ready?" she asked.

"I just need to take it out of the oven," said Anna.

But when she opened the oven door, instead of heat, there was cool mist.

Anna stepped through.

She was back in the PLC!

Chapter 7 - Popcorn (What Sophia Did Next)

Sophia opened the door and stepped through.

She found herself in a small room, like the room where you wait to see the doctor.

A girl sat with her head in her hands.

Sniff. Sniff. She was crying.

"What's up?" asked Sophia.

The girl looked up when Sophia spoke. It was the girl from the films!

"I have to choose a door. The door I choose is the rest of my life. But I don't know which one to choose."

Sophia could see three doors. Each door had a box in front of it.

"What is in the boxes?" asked Sophia.

"One has money, one has make-up and one has school books." Said the girl.

There was another, narrow door at the side of the room.

"What's in there?" asked Sophia.

"Just a mop, a bucket and a broom. It's just a cupboard."

Sophia walked up and down for a bit.

"I think I can help," she said at last.

She told the girl about the three films.

"I think the boxes are clues. You want to choose the door to the happy ending!"

Sophia felt quite pleased with herself. The girl stopped crying and got up.

"OK," she said, "So if the boxes are clues, I think I should choose the door with the money. I think I want the life with lots of money!"

"No!" said Sophia. "Not if it comes from selling drugs!"

"Oh," said the girl. I had not thought about that."

"Well, I don't want school books. I hate school! Maybe I should choose the make-up."

"I think," Sophia said, "The make-up will lead to the ending with the man who hits you."

"Why?" asked the girl.

"Well, the books must mean school, so you can go off to learn how to do hair and get a job. So that means the make-up must be the baby and getting beat up."

The girl did not look too sure.

"But if I end up with a man who hits me, I will just get out and take the baby with me," she said.

"Not so easy if you haven't got a job or any money!" said Sophia.

"OK," said the girl after a long time thinking. She did not seem keen on the door leading to school.

She smiled at Sophia as she went through the door.

"Thank you."

Now Sophia was on her own.

"I have done my job now," she thought. "So how do I get back?"

She didn't think the three doors were for her, so she opened the smaller door.

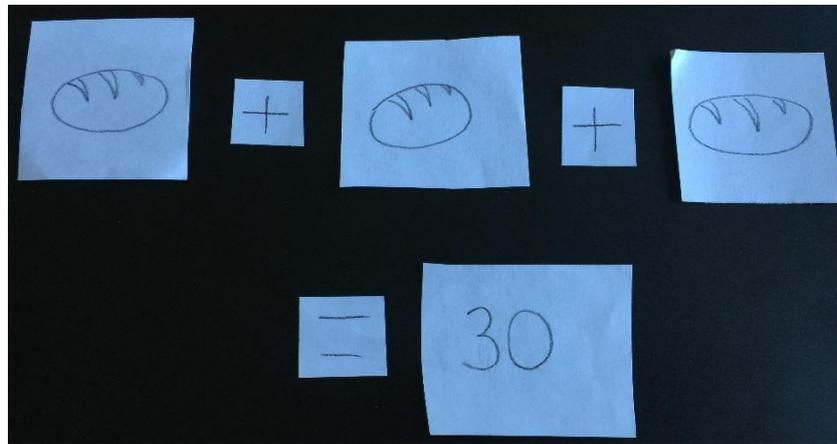
Behind the mop, bucket and broom it was all dark.

Sophia stepped inside. Then it went all misty...

and she stepped out into the PLC.

Chapter 7 - What is the Number? (What Willow Did Next)

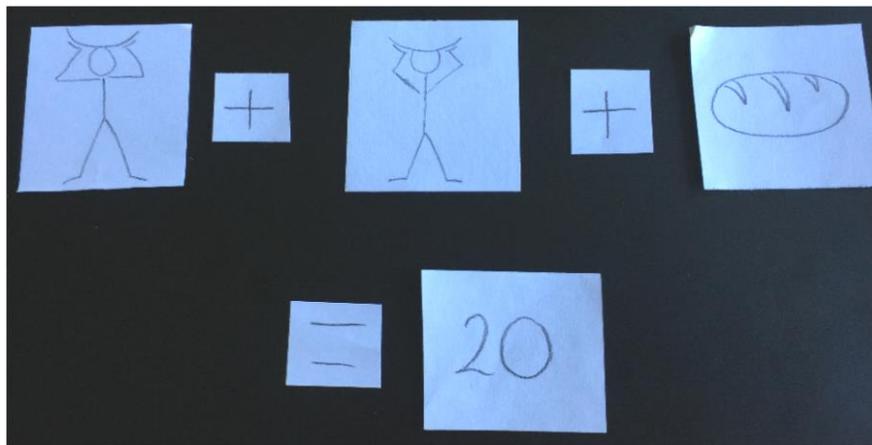
Willow looked at the first picture.



"That one is easy," she said. "Three tens make 30. One loaf of bread must be 10."

Akiki nodded. "Yes, I got that too. But it gets harder."

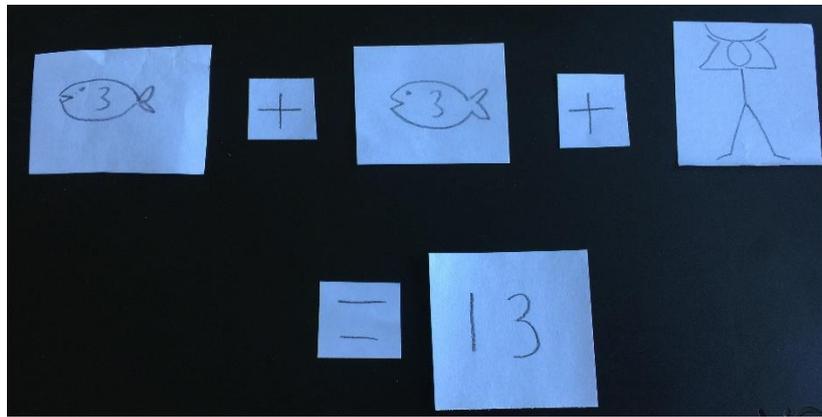
Willow fixed her eyes on the next picture.



"So, if the bread is 10, then that means the two men must also be 10," said Willow slowly.

"Yes," agreed Akiki. "So, I knew if the two men are 10, one man must be 5."

Akiki used his hands and bottom to shuffle along to the third picture.



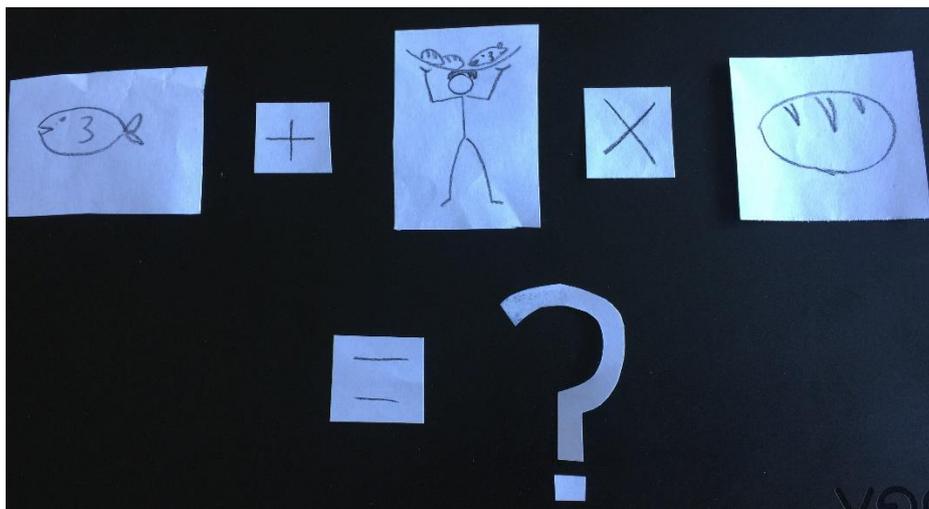
Willow pointed to the man.

"So, we know the man is 5. So how do we work out the fish?"

"Well," replied Akiki, "13 take away 5 is 8, so each fish must be 4..."

"...because two fours are 8!" finished Willow. "So, bread is 10, man is 5, fish is 4."

The two children moved on the last picture.



Willow looked at it and counted on her fingers. Four plus five, gave nine. Nine tens...

"Is the answer 90?" she asked.

"No, look at the basket the man is carrying," said Akiki.

Willow looked.

"Oh!" she said. "The basket has two loaves of bread and a fish in it!"

She counted up.

"So the man is 5, the fish is 4...that makes 9...and then the two loaves of bread are 20...so together that makes 29."

"Yes," said Akiki. "I got that too. So, 5 for the fish, plus 29 makes 34. And 34 times 10 makes 340."

"So, isn't that the answer?" Willow was puzzled.

"That is the problem," said Akiki sadly. "One of the village men went to tell the witch. But she just laughed and said it was the wrong answer."

Willow sat down again and closed her eyes. She needed someone wise. Someone clever... She could suddenly feel warm sun on her shoulders. She opened her eyes.

She was back with Pat on the sand, by the sea!

"Well, well, well. So, you need some help too? I have just had Anna here...some time ago... Maybe a few minutes...or days...?" sighed Pat, dreamily.

Willow did not want to waste time, so she told Pat all about the maths problem.

"Easy," said Pat. "You need BODMAS."

Willow could remember Miss Lambert talking about it, but she was not at all sure what it was.

"What's BODMAS?"

"It is the order you do maths in," said Pat.

"B is for brackets, O is for orders, D for division, M for multiply, A for Add and S for subtract."

"Just tell that to Akiki," Pat added.

Willow said it over and over again in her head, until she could remember it. Then she popped some more blue candy floss into her mouth...

When the mist cleared, Willow could see Akiki looking at her.

"You went all wobbly for a bit," he said, "And then I couldn't see you."

"Listen to this!" said Willow, her eyes dancing.

She told Akiki what Pat had said. Soon he was excited too.

"So, in BODMAS," he said, "The M comes before the A, so you have to multiply before you add!"

Willow and Akiki looked again at the last pictures.

"29 times 10 is 290," said Willow.

"And if you add on 4 for the fish, you have 294!" shouted Akiki.

Almost as soon as the words were out of his mouth, there was a noise like a rumble of thunder. Willow ran out of the hut to look.

"I can see children!" she shouted. "Children running down from the woods on the hill!"

Akiki had shuffled out to join her. There were tears of joy running down his face as he sat on the ground, watching his friends running towards him.

"Tell Granny!" he said to Willow. She turned and entered the hut.

But once through the door, Willow was in mist again.

Out of the mist she saw books. Lots of books. She was back in the PLC!

Chapter 7 - Honesty Pays (What Emma Did Next)

Emma interrupted before Leah could speak.

"Let me have a look," she said, reaching out to take Mel's phone.

Emma looked at Mel's picture.

Mel had her hair in a bun on the top of her head. It looked okay, but did not look as nice as when she left it long around her face.

Her make-up was too dark. Her face had a fake orange glow.

Emma took a deep breath.

"It's not your best," she said, looking at Mel.

"I'm just being honest. You are very pretty."

Emma watched Mel's face, hoping she would not be upset.

Leah grabbed the phone from her, before Mel could reply.

"Yeah," agreed Leah. "Too much orange. And your hair looks better down."

"You should let me do your make-up," Leah added.

"That would be cool!" said Mel, cheering up a bit.

"I'm good at making hair straight," offered Emma.

"I could do yours and Leah's and Leah could do our make-up. And we could ask Chloe too."

"OK." Leah said. "Let's do it Saturday. I'll ask Mom if we can have a sleep-over!"

Mel got up and stretched.

"Cookie time!" said Emma brightly.

"Hey, that was just what I was thinking!" said Mel. "Come on, you two. Let's find Chloe and see if she is free on Saturday!"

Emma smiled as she followed the two girls out to the quad.

It had not taken much. Just saying what was true and being kind.

"You don't always have to say what someone wants you to," she reminded herself.

Soon all the plans for Saturday were made. Chloe was calling for Emma. Then they were going to Mel's house. All three of them would get to Leah's mid-afternoon. Now all they had to do was decide what to wear...

The bell rang and the girls headed off to Maths.

Mrs Trotter was coming the other way, handbag on her shoulder, holding a mug of tea and two large carrier bags of books. Her handbag slipped down her arm, making her tea spill.

"Do you want any help, Miss?" asked Emma.

"Oh thanks, Emma! There's a cloth in my cupboard," said Mrs Trotter, gratefully. "Here. Take my key."

Emma went over to the office, which was more like a cupboard, in the corner of the room. The key was stiff, so she had to use two hands to turn it. She opened the door, but as she stepped inside to look for the cloth, she could only see white mist...

...and then books.

She was back in the PLC!

Chapter 8 - Back at School

All four girls just looked at each other with wide eyes.

Sophia was first to speak.

"Did that just happen?"

Suddenly the bell rang and made them jump. End of break.

"EVERYBODY OUT!" came the stern voice of Mrs Ellsmore. But as usual, she was smiling, so everyone knew she wasn't really cross.

"How can it only be the end of break?" gasped Anna.

"We've been gone ages!"

But before anyone could reply, the girls were mixed up in the crowd of people streaming out of the door and halfway down the steps of the PLC.

At the bottom, they all had to say goodbye in a hurry, as no one wanted to be in trouble for being late to lesson.

So much to say...but no time to say it!

* * * * *

By the time Sophia got to Maths, her shoe was rubbing and her foot hurt. Once inside the classroom, she reached down to take off her shoe. No wonder it was uncomfortable, she thought to herself, as sand poured out of it...

* * * * *

Willow also had maths. Never her favourite lesson, but today she felt...well...taller? She saw the work on the board and smiled.

"BODMAS!" she said. Miss Lambert stood speechless for a moment, before she recovered herself, reaching for the silver stars she kept in her drawer for such moments.

* * * * *

Emma had a lot to think about. "But did it really happen?" was the question she kept asking herself. She was sure no one would believe her if she tried to tell them. She was sure of one thing: friends can be tricky. She made up her mind that if there was going to be more falling out, she would not be the one to take sides...

She felt the urge to yawn, so quickly covered her mouth, wishing she could turn back into a cat and curl up on the chair in the corner.

* * * * *

Peace and quiet once more in the PLC. Mrs Ellsmore was in her cupboard making a cup of tea when she heard the phone ring. She sighed, put down to mug and hurried over to the phone at the other end of the room.

"PLC. Mrs Ellsmore speaking...er pardon?"

"Er...yes, Your Highness...of course, your Highness..."

"Yes, I'm writing it down...the best one you have ever eaten? Yes, I will pass it on..."

Sipping her tea a few minutes later, Mrs Ellsmore looked round at the shelves. Books in all directions. Everyone an adventure to another world. Her eyes landed on the shelf by the desk. She smiled. In a few minutes, she would put the mug down, go over to her favourite book...the one with the silver cover...and go off on another of her adventures!

