

## Behind the Green Door

### Part 1

There have been many rumors about what's behind the green door. Will claimed Brandon lived there. Brandon claimed Will lived there. Oliver claimed there was a black hole which transported you to a new universe. Stephanie and Giulia think there is a hugging bear behind the door. All of these theories are wrong...

It all started on the first day of school in 2013. Thomas, Sephora, Francesca, Nolan, Teddy, Natsuka, Hannah S, Joshua, Joci, and NZ, were young, innocent, enthusiastic 4<sup>th</sup> graders way back then. Alan had everyone sit on the rug for a quick meeting, and every fourth grader intently listened to each of Alan's entertaining and insightful words. As Joshua was enjoying Alan's words of wisdom, everything suddenly went silent for him. Joshua saw Alan's lips move, but he heard no words. There was just silence. Then, Joshua heard a bubbly voice fill the room: "Don't listen to him. Do NOT listen to Alan. Only listen to me."

### Part 2

Where was the voice coming from? Joshua looked around the room. Was it Will, Alan's archenemy? No, Will was eating a pickle. The bubbly voice continued, "Do not listen to Alan," but not one person in the room was speaking. NZ was sleeping, Francesca was staring at a green crayon, Teddy and Nolan were giggling, and Sephora was listening to Alan (while rolling her eyes).

Maybe it was someone not in the room. Joshua tried to follow the voice. He looked towards the office. Nothing. He looked at the window. Nothing. He looked toward the green door. Nothing. Then Joshua looked at the fish tank. A fish was calmly floating in his tank looking right at Joshua, and the fish and human made eye contact. Then the fish winked.

### Part 3

After the fish winked, he said, "Finally, someone who understands me. Joshua, after this meandering meeting, we must speak."

Joshua suddenly could hear Alan's voice, "...and that is the most important instruction. Whatever you do, do not forget what I just said." Everyone stood up and went outside. As Joshua walked with his friends, he thought to himself, "Is this fiction? Was a fish really speaking to me? How did he know my name? Where are my shoes?"

Later, Joshua returned to the Ozone and walked to the fish tank. The room went silent, and the bubbly voice spoke, "Hello Joshua. My name is Moonberry and you are a very important person."

"But how is this possible?"

"Quiet human! I've observed your species in this dreadfully dry setting and have learned that humans speak too much but never listen."

Offended, Joshua started to walk away. Moonberry spoke again. "Stop. Please stop and come back. I am so sorry I offended you. I am not used to speaking to humans for you are very rare and special. Hundreds of humans have visited me, but you are the first Fish Whisperer."

#### **Part 4**

"Fish Whisperers are fortunate people because they have the good fortune to hear my beautiful voice and gather the wisdom of all the fish in the world. However, before we proceed, you must make two promises."

Joshua, nodding his head and excited to gather more aquatic wisdom, was ready to agree to almost anything.

Moonberry continued, "One, you must agree to never eat sushi or fish sticks."

Joshua thought that made sense. He wouldn't want to eat someone who could speak to him.

"And two, you must help me escape from Alan."

Joshua was perplexed, "Why would you ever want to escape from Alan? He's a perfect gentleman."

Moonberry laughed, "This so-called perfect gentleman is confining me to this little bowl. Years ago I was swimming with my brothers Mooncherry, Moonmelon, and Fred in the moon's biggest ocean. It was just another lovely day at sea with my family until the Petco Pet Prison Corporation arrived. Alan hired them to capture me and now I'm his prisoner. Please, Joshua. Please help me escape this menacing despot."

#### **Part 5**

Joshua wondered how he could help a little fish escape. "Moonberry, it's impossible to escape the wise and powerful Alan."

Moonberry laughed and responded, "I defeated mightier challenges than Alan, and someday I will tell you these fish tales. Now, however, it is time to focus on toppling Alan. We cannot do it alone. You will need to recruit teammates who are loyal, intelligent, and sneaky. Do you know anyone who has these character traits?"

Joshua thought about this question. He liked all of the fifth graders and they treated him well, but the ones he trusted most were Nolan, Teddy, Thomas, and NZ. However, were they smart and sneaky? Thomas was an expert on cell phones and the MBTA; NZ always seemed to trick his teachers; and Nolan and Teddy defeated Christie and Jason in the Great Bake Sale Battle of 2012.

"Moonberry, I have a great team of four friends that will help me. What shall we do first?"

Moonberry replied, "Excellent! Your first task is to steal Alan's key to the green door."

## Part 6

“Where’s the key? How do we steal it? What’s behind the green door? Why do you want to go through the green door? Where are my shoes?” Joshua was full of questions

“My special fish senses told me you were an inquisitive human. That is good. Now I will reward your inquisitiveness with answers. To get back to my home, I need space to build a special device, and my fish senses tell me there is plenty of space behind the green door.”

“But I thought Brandon, Will, and a hugging bear lived behind the green door?” replied Joshua.

“Silly rumors! Who would ever come up with these foolish ideas? There is just empty space behind the door. Soon that will change. You and your friends will build me a giant fish tank behind the green door and sneak me in. In this tank, I will build an Aqua-Transporter which will return me to the moon’s largest ocean. However, none of this will be possible if you do not take the key from Alan.”

“Where is the key and how do I get it?”

Moonberry swam around the tank counterclockwise and said, “The key is attached to Alan’s walkie-talkie.”

## Part 7

“What in the world is Joshua talking about?” Joshua and his friends were meeting outside by the giant tree. Other than Joci, who was staring at a caterpillar, there was no one else nearby.

Joshua’s friends were stunned when he told them what happened and what Moonberry wanted them to do. The story seemed bizarre, but Joshua has never lied to them before. After some discussion, they all agreed that they would help Joshua. Even if his story wasn’t true, they were excited to have an adventure that involved tricking Alan.

Joshua was so pleased everyone agreed to help him. “So how do we get the key?”

NZ leaned back, “I got this, guys. I can smooth talk Alan into letting me see his radio, and we’ll grab the key.”

A few days later, NZ sat next to Alan, smiled, and said, “Hey Alan, my buddy. Lemme see your walkie-talkie for a minute.”

Alan pulled the walkie-talkie out of his pocket and was about to hand it to NZ, but then he stopped. “No, no, no. Ellen warned me about the NZ Mind Trick. I’m not falling for it. Children are not allowed to touch walkie-talkies.”

Devastated, NZ reported the news to his friends. The group sat silently. Was the adventure over before it even began?

“Hey guys. Excuse me. Can I say something?” Thomas broke the silence.

Everyone nodded and Thomas continued, "This week I've been observing Alan. He has dropped his radio seventeen times since Monday."

Teddy asked, "Why does he drop his radio so much? What's wrong with this guy?"

Thomas replied, "I don't know. He is always picking things up off the ground. When he bends down, the radio falls out."

Joshua smiled. "I have a plan."

## **Part 8**

"Where are all these pencils coming from? Why are they all over the floor?" Alan was fuming. Operation Pencil Drop had begun.

For days, Joshua and friends have been collecting pencils to get ready for this mission. Now Joshua went into action. He grabbed a piece of paper, drew a little bit, and casually dropped the pencil on the floor. Next, he grabbed another pencil, added to his drawing, and casually rolled his pencil off the table. He then grabbed another pencil, and then another, and another, and another until the floor was littered with Number 2 pencils.

"Who is this rascal leaving so many pencils on the floor," Alan yelled. "You are ruining my clean floor. Pencils belong in hands, not on floors!"

Alan continued to rant as he bent down over and over to pick up pencils. "We need to have a pencil meeting!" Nolan, sitting next to Hannah, calmly watched with a bemused expression as he pretended to work on his homework. Alan bent down again for another pencil and his walkie-talkie spilled out of his pocket. Nolan quickly grabbed the walkie-talkie, ripped the key off, and put the key in his pocket.

"Alan, sir, here is your walkie-talkie. It appears that you dropped it."

"Thank you Nolan," Alan replied. "What a fine young man you are to pick up things for me."

"You're welcome sir." Nolan then covered his mouth to hide his giggles. Joshua, watching Nolan's quick hands, smiled knowing that they had the key.

Hannah wrote in her notebook.

## **Part 9**

"Excellent job, Joshua. I knew you guys could do it," Moonberry swam in circles as he spoke.

"What do we do next?" Joshua asked.

"First, please do not stand still and look at me while we speak. I think Alan is getting suspicious, and he will get much worse if he sees you staring at me for a long time. Alan may have even hired spies, so we must be extra careful. When you speak to me, pace around the room."

Joshua started to wander around the room as Moonberry gave him instructions, "You must sneak into the room behind the green door and take notes on everything you see. After that, you will be able to figure out how to build a giant fish tank and how to fill the tank with water. This will be quite the challenge. Have your friends help you as much as they can."

Moonberry's voice disappeared and Joshua could hear everyone else in the Ozone again. Teddy and Nolan were giggling and Hannah was asking if she could wash her hands because she got dust all over her fingers.

Later, Joshua relayed the instructions to his friends and asked, "How can I get behind the green door without Alan noticing?"

NZ spoke up, "I can distract Alan. That's an easy thing to do."

Joshua nodded, "Yes, Alan does get distracted easily, but after I go through the green door, Alan will notice I'm gone."

Teddy smiled. "I have a plan. On the days I'm not scheduled to be here, I'll sneak into the Ozone and pretend to be you. I already own a dark hair wig. Just lend me some of your clothes, Joshua."

Joshua was skeptical. "That won't work. Even with the best costume, you will still look nothing like me."

"Not if you give him a compliment." Everyone looked at NZ. "My brothers and I have done a lot of research on tricking adults. If you give an adult a compliment, their pride clouds their judgment. Alan will be so happy to be complimented that he'll forget that Teddy looks nothing like Joshua."

"Really?" Joshua, Nolan, NZ, and Teddy were shocked that adults could be tricked so easily.

NZ nodded, "It's true. The Compliment Technique gets me five extra juices from Alan every day."

## **Part 10**

"Alan, I need help with my math homework."

As Alan walked over to help NZ, Teddy who was wearing his Joshua costume, snuck into the Ozone. Joshua looked at the distracted Alan as he crept up the stairs to the green door.

Alan was taking his shoes off and saying, "You see NZ, when I run out of fingers to count, I then use my toes. No one ever taught you to add like this?" Alan wasn't looking. Joshua used the stolen key and opened the green door.

Joshua closed the door behind him and turned on his flashlight. There was a dirt floor and low ceiling. He shone the flashlight on the walls which were mostly empty except for a LeBron James poster and an old portrait of a distinguished man. There was a name written below the portrait, "Sir Bo Owen, Jr."

Meanwhile, back in the Ozone, NZ asked Alan, "What do you do if you run out of toes to count?" Alan stuttered, "Um, let me see, well you just need to...Actually, I need to check on the other kids now."

Alan walked towards Teddy who was pretending to be Joshua. "Joshua, did you just comb your hair? Something looks different." Alan was getting confused and suspicious. Teddy was running out of time and had to think of a compliment quickly.

"Hey Alan, I've been meaning to thank you for telling me not to run in the hallways yesterday. I never realized running inside was dangerous until you told me. How did you become so smart?"

Alan smiled widely at these kind words and forgot he was suspicious of "Joshua" looking so different. "Thank you Joshua. Let me get you another juice as I explain to you how I learned so much about hallway safety."

Because the Compliment Technique worked so well, the real Joshua had more time to explore behind the green door. In the back of the room, he discovered a giant pipe. Leaning against the pipe were old storm windows covered in dust. Joshua approached the windows. On one window, it looked like someone wrote something through the dust on the glass.

Joshua looked closely at the words. The handwriting was very messy, but he was starting to figure out each letter -- first an "L," and then an "E." Joshua continued reading and figured it out: "LEAVE NOW!"

Joshua had seen enough. He rushed out of the room and came back to the Ozone.

## **Part 11**

Joshua quickly crumpled a piece of paper and hurried away from Alan. He had been doing this all week since his visit behind the green door -- drawing plans for the new fish tank, but crumpling the plans before Alan could see them. He was frustrated with all of these interruptions and was making little progress.

To make things worse, Moonberry was silent. Also, for some reason, every time Joshua tried to speak to a friend, Sephora, Francesca, or some other person with long hair would distract his friend.

To make things worse than worse, Joshua was nervous about the message, "LEAVE NOW!" Who wrote it? The ghost of Sir Bo Owen, Jr.? A creature hidden behind the LeBron James poster? A hugging bear? Someone did not want Joshua in that room.

Despite his fear, Joshua decided he must try to help Moonberry. Yes, he was scared, but his fear would not prevent him from helping an innocent prisoner escape to freedom.

Finally, on a rainy Tuesday, Nolan approached Joshua to see how he was doing. Joshua told him everything and complained how he can never get his plans done because Alan was always trying to look at his written work.

Nolan thought about everything Joshua said and proposed a solution to the snooping Alan problem. "Whenever I mention Minecraft to Alan, he becomes very bored and confused and walks away. Next time Alan checks on your plans, just tell him you're working on Minecraft. He'll leave you alone, and you can complete your plans."

The plan worked. Every time Joshua mentioned Minecraft, Alan walked away. The only unfortunate result of this strategy was that whenever kids mentioned video games, Alan started bragging about how good he was at Candy Crush.

A few days later Joshua completed his blueprints for Moonberry's new tank. He was so happy to finally be done with his plans. Suddenly, Alan appeared, "Hey Joshua!"

Alan sounded very excited. Did he discover Joshua's blueprints? Was Joshua and Moonberry busted? Joshua held his breath in anticipation as he waited for Alan to speak again.

"I have to tell you something very important, Joshua. I think you should sit down before I tell you this. After several weeks of thinking and working, I finally did it."

Joshua was so nervous to hear what was coming next. Alan continued, "Joshua, I just passed level 655 in Candy Crush!"

## **Part 12**

"Oatmeal. We need lots and lots of oatmeal."

Joshua had gathered all of his friends and presented his complicated plans. As everyone listened to Joshua, they passed around diagrams of fish tanks, water proof outfits, and pipe breakers.

Joshua continued to speak about oatmeal. "If we mix it with glue, the storm windows will stay together and the fish tank won't break apart."

"But won't the water dissolve the oatmeal glue?" asked NZ.

"No. I did several tests. Water does not breakdown the glue/oatmeal combination. The only thing that can dissolve this mixture is maple syrup and there is none of that behind the green door."

Joshua looked around to make sure Alan was not nearby. The only person nearby was Natsuka reading an upside down book. Joshua continued, "Anyway, next time Alan serves oatmeal for snack, we need to save as much as possible. Once we have enough, Thomas and I will sneak behind the green door and build the tank. This will be a two man construction job. Nolan you'll need to dress up as Thomas while Teddy is dressed up like me."

For the following week, all the boys begged Alan to make them oatmeal for snack. They lied to Alan, explaining that BASCP graduates told them that he makes the best oatmeal in the world.

As the boys were begging Alan for oatmeal, Nolan was working on his Thomas costume and Joshua was using all the Ozone supplies to create a pipe breaker and water proof outfits. Alan

seem oblivious to all of the work being done by Joshua, but he was wondering where all of the duct tape went.

The next Monday, Alan finally served oatmeal. "This is the best oatmeal we ever had! Please give us more, Alan." The boys snuck the oatmeal into plastic bags as Alan bragged about his oatmeal cooking abilities. Joshua and friends had everything they needed. They were ready to build the giant fish tank.

### **Part 13**

Joshua and friends felt tense like the day of a spelling test that they studied all night for. They were prepared but nervous. Teddy and Nolan were in their Joshua and Thomas costumes, waiting at the doorway to the Ozone. Thomas and Joshua were sitting by the stairs to the green door with their supplies. Thomas's backpack was filled with bags and bags of oatmeal glue. Joshua had the key to the green door in a hidden compartment in his lunchbox and parts of his pipe breaker, waterproof outfits, and duct tape in his backpack. Everyone was ready.

Joshua winked at NZ across the room, and NZ yelled, "Alan, come over quick. I think I figured out who dropped the pencils all over the floor."

Alan rushed to NZ, "Finally! This pencil polluter will be in big, big trouble. As Alan ran to NZ, Teddy and Nolan snuck into the Ozone to fill in for Joshua and Thomas. Joshua and Thomas then hurried up the stairs, opened the green door, and entered the room that would hold Moonberry's future tank.

"So NZ, it was your little sister who dropped the pencils? Boy is she in trouble!" Even though this didn't make much sense, Alan was so excited and distracted that Joshua and Thomas had time to construct the tank.

Behind the green door, the boys aligned the storm windows into a perfect rectangle. As Thomas held the windows up, Joshua globbed the oatmeal glue on the inside corners. Then Thomas added oatmeal glue to the outer corners. As they waited for the oatmeal glue to dry, they began to assemble the pipe breakers...

Meanwhile in the Ozone, Alan was walking around the room thinking up punishments for NZ's sister. He then looked at Nolan who was dressed up as Thomas. "Thomas, I didn't know you wore glasses?" Nolan couldn't believe he forgot to take his glasses off! This mistake could ruin his costume...

The corners of the tank were dry and the pipe breaker was assembled. Joshua aimed the breaker at the pipe and took a shot. He hit the pipe and made a small crack. Joshua took another shot...

"Thomas, I thought you had excellent vision," Alan was really baffled.

"I always wore glasses," responded Nolan disguised as Thomas. It was time for the Compliment Technique. "Oh by the way Alan, how do you make such perfect checkmarks when you take

attendance? They're so beautiful. Did you go to art school to learn how to make these checkmarks?"

"It's about time someone noticed my checkmarks. I practice two hours every night before I go to bed. Let me get you some juice as I explain more about my checking technique." Alan was no longer suspicious...

The pipe behind the green door was dripping a lot but not enough to fill up the tank in time. Joshua took another shot at the pipe but missed. He knew he was running out of time. He only had one more shot left. Joshua took a deep breath and aimed at the crack on the pipe. He took his last shot.

Bull's-eye! Joshua hit the pipe in the exact right spot and water gushed everywhere. Joshua, smiling and soaked, stood in the middle of Moonberry's tank as the water around him got higher and higher.

#### **Part 14**

The water in the tank rose above Joshua's head, so Joshua started to tread water. Joshua treaded water as the water raised higher and higher. Finally, Joshua could almost touch the gushing pipe. When he was able to touch the pipe, Joshua yelled, "Now, Thomas!" Thomas tossed Joshua a roll of duct tape. Joshua caught the tape and quickly sealed the pipe.

After the pipe was sealed, Thomas helped Joshua climb out of the tank. Joshua took off his waterproof outfit, so only his face and hair were wet.

The boys snuck back into the Ozone. Alan was still speaking to Nolan disguised as Thomas, "You see Thomas, the key to a good checkmark is how you hold the pen..."

Nolan, who was really struggling to pretend to be interested in what Alan was saying, saw Joshua and Thomas going through the green door. He coughed twice loudly and NZ luckily noticed. "Alan, I think I have more information about the pencils on the floor. My sister had someone helping her. Come here and I'll tell you more."

As Alan walked to NZ, Teddy and Nolan snuck out of the Ozone. Everything was back to normal, except for Joshua's wet hair.

"So Brandon was helping your sister?" Alan continued to speak to NZ. "That guy does steal my stapler a lot. Guess I need to hire a security guard to keep Brandon out of the Ozone. Joshua, would you like to be my secur...wait a second. Why is your hair so wet?"

Joshua didn't know what to say. He should have thought of a good excuse ahead of time. Did he need to confess? Suddenly, Teddy spoke up, "You didn't know that's the new style, Alan? Everyone is keeping their hair wet to look cool." Teddy then dumped a cup of water on his head and his friends all copied him. All the boys in the Ozone now had wet hair.

Suddenly the room became silent for Joshua. “Sensational job, Joshua!” Moonberry had spoken. “Tomorrow you shall carry me to my new tank and I will be able to build my transporter to take me home.”

Joshua was sad to know Moonberry would be leaving, but he was so happy that his fish friend would get to go back home and see his brothers Mooncherry, Moonmelon, and Fred again.

Moonberry continued, “You and your friends were so brave and clever. I cannot thank you enough.” Moonberry swam in a clockwise circle as the sounds of the Ozone returned to Joshua.

Joshua looked at his friends who were all smiling. He then looked at Hannah, Joci, Sephora, Natsuka, and Francesca who were all laughing. Was that an evil laugh? Joshua then looked at Alan who was pouring cups and cups of water on his head.

## **Part 15**

Today was the big day. Moonberry was excitedly swimming in figure eights. Joshua was so excited he was singing. All of his plans and tricks had worked. Hidden in Joshua’s lunch box was the key to the green door and hidden in his backpack was a bag of water he would use to deliver Moonberry to his new tank.

To make this day even better, Alan was serving pancakes for snack. What a great day! Alan was finally serving a snack that tasted good, and Moonberry would soon be free.

As Joshua prepared to transport Moonberry behind the green door he looked over at Alan. Alan was with Hannah who was asking for more syrup on her pancakes. Alan said, “Sure Hannah. You can have as much syrup as you want. Did you know that maple syrup prevents cavities better than toothpaste does? Let me get you another bottle.”

As Alan went to get another bottle of syrup, Joshua snuck to Moonberry’s tank. He opened his bag of water, and the fish jumped out of his small fishbowl and into the bag.

Joshua’s friends surrounded him and Moonberry. They all wanted to say goodbye to the friendly fish. While Moonberry could only speak to Joshua, he made sure to make eye contact with NZ, Nolan, Thomas, and Teddy as they each said their farewells.

A few minutes went by until Joshua finally said, “Okay guys. Moonberry needs to go before Alan notices.” Joshua looked to make sure Alan was still distracted and walked over to the table to get the key out of his lunchbox.

His lunchbox was gone! Joshua always kept his lunchbox safely on the floor of the Ozone and now it was gone. He started to panic and yelled, “Guys, where’s my lunchbox?”

“Oh, I have it Joshua,” Joci sweetly told him. She handed Joshua the lunchbox, and Joshua quickly went to the secret key compartment. The compartment was empty! “Joci, did you take anything out of my lunchbox?”

Joshua looked at Joci as he asked her, but something wasn't right. Why was Joci wearing glasses? "You have a wonderful lunchbox, Joshua," Joci tried to distract him, but the Compliment Technique does not work on children. Joshua wasn't speaking to Joci; he was speaking to Natsuka dressed in a Joci disguise.

Something strange was going on. Joshua looked all over the room. Hannah was still eating her pancakes, but the syrup was gone....wait a second, that wasn't Hannah. She wasn't wearing glasses and other than the blonde hair and Hannah's clothing, this person looked a lot like Sephora.

"Spies?!?" Joshua thought....and suddenly there was a giant pop behind the green door followed by a giant crash, followed by evil laughter.

Everyone in the Ozone heard the loud flowing of flooding rapids. They looked towards the green door. Suddenly, the door bursted open and Hannah with empty bottles of syrup and Joci with her own pipe breaker rushed through the door, and down the steps.

As soon as the girls got out, Alan slammed the green door shut.

### **Epilogue**

Joshua had returned Moonberry to his small bowl. The space behind the green door was completely filled with water, so the green door would never be opened again. Moonberry was stuck in his little bowl, forever a prisoner of Alan.

For the next few weeks, Joshua and friends were struggling to enjoy their time in the Ozone. Meanwhile, Hannah and her friends always seemed to get extra snacks and juice from Alan.

Moonberry sensed Joshua's disappointment, so he decided to speak to his fish whisperer friend. "Joshua, I know you are sad for me but please cheer up. I miss my brothers in the moon's biggest ocean, but I'm actually happy that I have more time with you and your friends in the Ozone. The Ozone is a wonderful place because of great people like you, NZ, Teddy, Thomas, Nolan, and even those treacherous girls."

Joshua smiled for the first time in weeks. He had to admit he was happy that Moonberry was still around.

"And there's one more thing, Joshua" Moonberry bubbly spoke. "I heard that a very talented group of new fourth graders will be joining us next year. Maybe they can help us create another plan for my escape from Alan."