

Chosen Round Square Heroes of Discovery- Inquisitive Indu

Name of Character- Lina 'Ace' Jones

Personality- 13 years old, playful and energetic, good at solving problems that put you on the spot, and good at dreaming innovative ideas, and has a nose for mysteries.

'And the winner yet again for this week's poetry competition is..... Lina Jones! Please come up here to collect your prize, Lina. Congratulations!' The anchor bellowed into the microphone as Lina 'Ace' Jones, a 13-year old mastermind at poetry, came up to the stage to collect Velora Academy's 'Week's Best Poet' award.... for about the millionth time. She looked around, beaming, and caught the eyes of Indu Shah, her best friend, who was clapping and screaming excitedly with the other students.

She grinned back and walked onstage to meet their headmistress, Ms Enid Johann, who handed her award and said, with a slightly-strained voice, " Keep up the good work, Lina. You're doing us proud!" Lina smiled back politely, and nodded, tongue-tied and lost for words. But that's when she heard it.

A scuffling kind of sound.

Lina strained her ears to listen, but just then the sound stopped. She tried to hear it again, but she couldn't. She shook it off, thinking that it was just her hallucinating.

As Lina stepped off the stage, the crowd erupted in applause once more, but it was Indu's quiet, knowing smile that Lina focused on. No matter how many times she won, it was her best friend's opinion that truly mattered.

"Guess I'm on a roll," Lina said to her, her voice light but proud as she sat back down next to Indu. Indu shook her head, rolling her eyes with a smile.

"You always are, genius," she teased. "At this point, they should just name the award after you."

Lina laughed, brushing a stray lock of hair behind her ear. "Hey, maybe next week they'll just make me a permanent judge."

"Yeah, and I'll be your assistant," Indu shot back, her voice full of sarcasm, though there was a sparkle of admiration in her eyes. But then she shook her head and sat right up, her eyes wide, like she'd just noticed something beautiful, that she hadn't noticed before.

'What?' Lina looked in the direction that Indu was looking, and found herself looking at the display screen next to the stage, which was now displaying a photo of Miss Enid's office.

'Look, she has a painting on her wall!'

'So? Indu, can you just not get too fussed about that?'

'How can I not? That's literally an original Van Gogh! !' Indu stood up, clicked a swift photo of the display and sat back down, zooming in on the photo she'd just clicked. 'That's Cafe Terrace at Night!'

Lina leaned in closer, squinting at the blurry image of the office. There, indeed, was a painting. But something about it didn't sit right. The brushstrokes were bold, yet almost too perfect for a Van Gogh. There was a sense of... of something off, like the painting wasn't quite *right*, even though it was clearly famous.

'Zoom in,' Lina instructed.

Indu zoomed in further, her thumb trembling slightly on the screen as the details became clearer. The painting was no ordinary Van Gogh. In the bottom right corner of the canvas, under a panel, something was subtly scrawled—barely visible unless you were looking for it.

Lina leaned in, her heart racing. She could just make out the words: **"The truth lies within the walls."**

'What...?' Indu whispered, her voice strained. 'That's not a quote anyone's ever seen before, is it?'

Lina's pulse quickened. This was more than a strange discovery. Something was going on at Velora Academy. Was Ms. Johann hiding something? And why was the painting displayed so conspicuously?

Lina's mind raced. She turned to Indu, her eyes wide. 'This is no coincidence. We need to find out what's hidden in her office. There's something there, something important.'

Indu nodded slowly, a mix of excitement and uncertainty in her eyes. 'But how? Ms. Johann is always there, and we can't just... sneak into her office, can we?'

Lina's lips curled into a determined smile. 'We don't have to sneak. We just need to be... clever.'

'Hey Indu! Look at this!' Lina ran excitedly into their common room, where they sat if they had a free class. '

It was Monday, and since both the girls had a free period, Lina and Indu had decided to brainstorm ideas which they could use to sneak into Ms. Johann's office and examine the painting. Indu looked up at the flyer that Lina was excitedly brandishing in her face.

'Poetry Competition..... Entries to be submitted to Ms Johann's office... Lina, you could do it, but don't we have to go together, incase anything happens?' Indu's instinctive thinking kicked in.

'Wait... I just saw a poster for art competition, and since I'm good at art, I could enter it, and....'

'We could submit our entries to Ms. Johann together, and also find out more about the painting!' Lina high-fived Indu. 'You are a genius, Indu!'

Indu cleared her throat. 'Actually, it was teamwork. If you hadn't found the poetry competition, You would have had to go in for the art one, and we both know how you absolutely despise Art. So we both did it, Lina.'

Lina blinked and shook her head. 'So we did! Wasn't it actually kind of fun? I liked collaborating with you here. But now we must remember, we've got the real challenge now. We have to submit the entries, and try to find out more about the painting. But we're going to do this, Indu. We will.'

Three days later

'Wow, Indu, that's a truly amazing painting!'

They were sitting in Ms Johann's office, and Indu had just produced the magnificent painting that she'd painted over the last few days.

'We'll definitely consider your entry for the art competition. It's really good, Indu, you might even win a prize for it,' Ms Johann was speaking. Then she turned to Lina. 'And... Lina, I guess you've come in with another entry for the poetry competition?' There was a tone of amusement in her voice as she surveyed Lina.

'Umm- well, yes.' Lina said. But before she could speak more, her secretary, Ms Liaise spoke from the corner of the room. 'Ms Johann, Mr Lester wants you to come to the music room urgently to listen to the concert students. Would you like to accept or decline it?'

Ms Johann looked at her and said, 'Accept, Ms. Liaise. Also, could you get these two a few biscuits and tea while they wait for me to return? Sorry girls,-' She looked at them '-but Mr Lester had asked me previously to listen to them, so I'd better go. Wait here until I return, will you, girls, because I'd like to talk about something to you.' She got up, and hurried out of the door, while Ms Liaise went with her to bring the biscuits and tea.

Lina and Indu looked at each other. They were alone! 'Now to examine the painting,' Lina said, and dragging Indu along, she made a beeline for the painting. They re-read the message on the corner of the painting. 'The truth lies within the walls...' Indu mused. Do you think there's a secret room or a bookshelf of some sort behind the walls, Lina? Or what about some kind of spacing between the bricks that would allow the person to store stuff?' Indu turned around. 'Lina, what are you thinking?'

Her friend walked up to the walls and examined the painting closely. Then she began tapping on the walls. 'What are you doing? Are you trying to find loose bricks?' Indu stared at her friend as she tapped like a maniac knocking on a door. Suddenly, her fingers seemed to find a kind of

projection, and by instinct, Lina pressed it- and the floor below her gave away! She screamed as she fell into the hole, and finally emerged into a big room filled with crates of all kinds.

She walked forward, and was about to open one of the crates, when a voice spoke. 'Step away from that, girl.'

'Aaah!' Lina turned around and found herself face to face with a man holding a pistol. He was about to pull the trigger, when Indu appeared out of nowhere and banged him on the head with a wooden plank. He fainted, and Indu held her hand out to Lina, to help her up.

'I hope you aren't too frightened,' she said, grinning.

Within the next hour, the police arrived and arrested the man lying in the basement. It transpired that he was actually Ms Liaise's cousin whom she'd been hosting in that room, unknown, as he was an internationally wanted smuggler who smuggled all kinds of goods around the world. Ms Liaise was also arrested for assisting him by providing him a hidden area.

About the picture, one day, when the cousin had come out of the room, he'd seen the painting and had decided something he'd heard the day before, and written it on the painting in small, cramped letters.

Lina and Indu were the school's heroes for finding out the hideout and were honoured with special prizes for finding out the truth. But as Lina put it, 'We would've never even thought about it, if Indu hadn't been entranced by the painting in Ms Johann's room.'

THE END