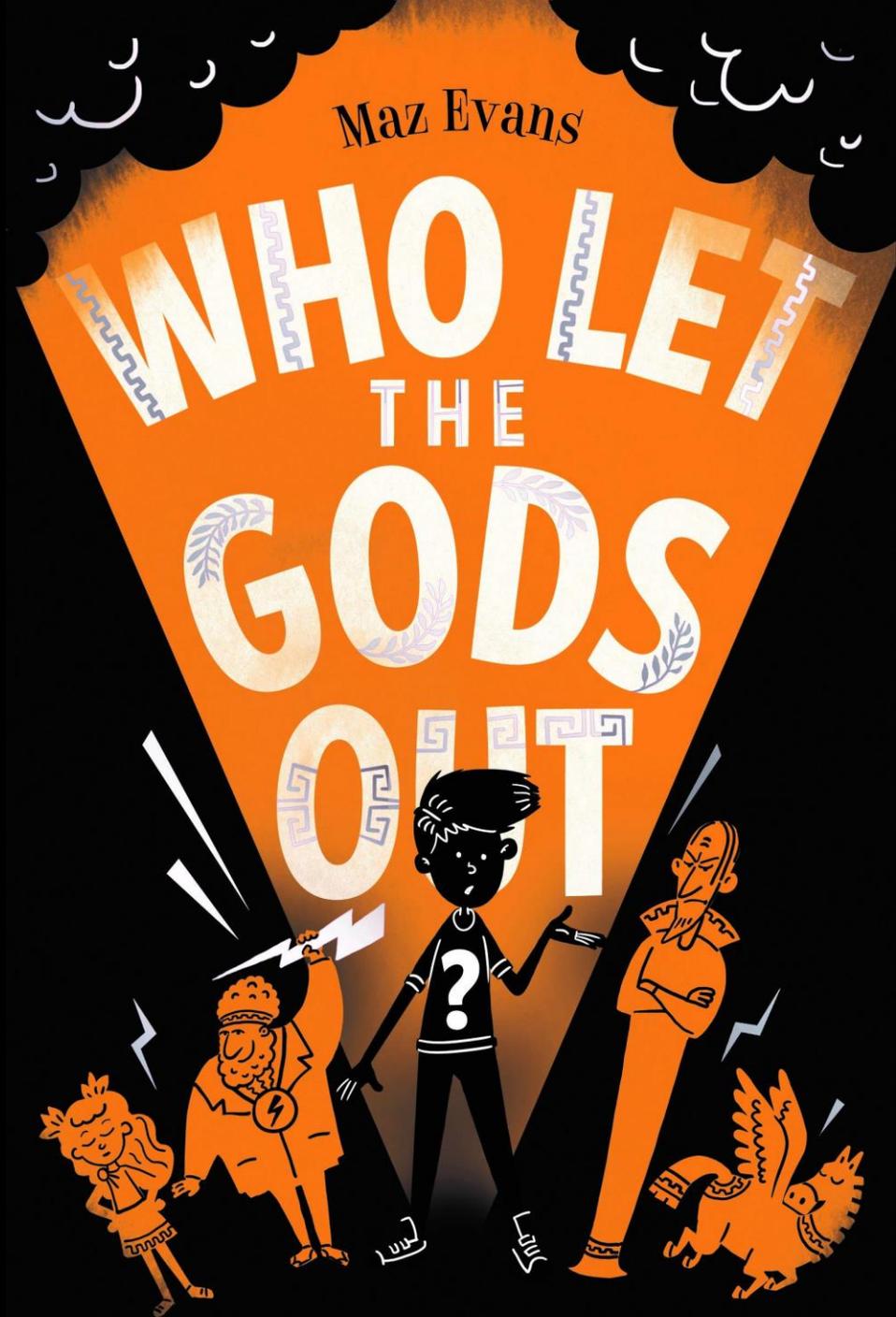


Tuesday  
Chapter 1



This week's activities will focus on the comprehension of extracts from the book 'Who Let The Gods Out'.

If you have the book, you could read two chapters a day to keep up with the story (or refresh your memory if you have already read it). Otherwise, read through the extracts first then go back and answer the questions which correspond to that part of the text.

The letter at the end of the question indicates which Reading Viper is being focussed on .

## Reading Vipers

**V**ocabulary

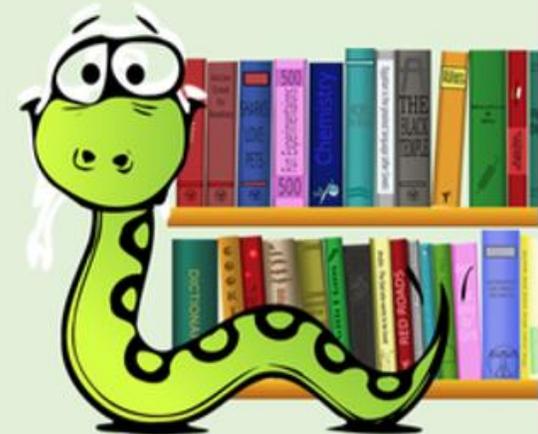
**I**nfer

**P**redict

**E**xplain

**R**etrieve

**S**equence or Summarise





## 1. Lying Low

It began on a Friday, as strange things often do. This particular Friday turned out to be stranger than most, although it had started normally enough. Elliot Hooper got up at 7.30 a.m. as normal, made his mum breakfast at 8.15 a.m. as normal, went to school at 8.55 a.m. as normal and was in the headmaster's office by 9.30 a.m., which was, in fact, slightly later than

normal.

'Oh, Elliot,' sighed Graham Sopweed, headmaster of Brysmore Grammar School. 'What are we going to do with you?'

Elliot scratched his shaggy blond head. He figured that 'excuse me from school for ever and make me Lord High Emperor of the Universe' wouldn't be deemed an acceptable answer, so he said nothing.

'You seem rather . . . distracted lately,' said Mr Sopweed to fill the silence. 'Is everything OK? Is anything wrong at school? Or at home?'

Elliot avoided his headmaster's concerned stare. School was . . . well, it was school. Annoying, boring, pointless. Nothing new there. But home? That was a different story . . .

'I'm fine,' he said after a lengthy pause. 'Thank you, sir.'

'Oh, Elliot,' Mr Sopweed sighed again, nervously flicking his floppy grey fringe. 'You know you can call me Graham. Let's all use the names our mothers gave us.'

There were many more creative names for Brysmore's headmaster than the one his mother gave him, but the politest by far was Call Me Graham.

A shout outside nearly made the jumpy headmaster fall off his chair. Elliot couldn't help but feel sorry for Call Me Graham. There were many theories at school as to why he was such a bag of nerves, not all of them started by Elliot.

1. Is Elliot often in trouble? How do you know? **I**

2. Where does Elliot go to school? **R**

Some said it was because his wife had left him. Others said it was because she hadn't. Elliot's favourite was that Call Me Graham was actually a serial killer on the run. He could imagine the appeals on *Crimewatch: So be on your guard against Graham Sopweed, the Cardigan-Clad Killer, and be sure to call this number if he's bored someone you know to death . . .*

'The . . . the . . . the thing is, Elliot, everyone at Brysmore wants to help you to achieve your fullest potential,' Call Me Graham went on.

'Mmm. Not everyone, sir,' muttered Elliot.

'Whatever do you mean?' squealed Call Me Graham, nearly pulling a button off his cardigan. 'Everyone at Brysmore is committed to encouraging, nurturing and inspiring every pupil in our care. We're always here for a friendly word, helpful advice, or to make sure we know—'

'WHERE IS THAT SNIVELLING RUNT OF A PATHETIC EXCUSE FOR A BOY?!'

The office door blasted open with a furious roar, making Call Me Graham scream like a kitten on a ghost train.

Elliot was all too familiar with that loathsome voice.

'Ah – hello,' whimpered Call Me Graham. 'As you can see, I am just having a little chat with Elliot . . .'

'Hooper,' sneered the new arrival, lurching up behind Elliot's chair and polluting his airspace with weapons-grade body odour.

3. What does the author mean when referring to the body odour as 'weapons grade'? ✓

There was only one person who could make Elliot's surname sound like a dirty word. It was Mr Boil, head of history, Brysmore's deputy headmaster, and, unless there was a schoolmaster somewhere on the planet who minced his students into sausages, the world's worst teacher.

Boil was a stumpy, piggy little man who was the only person Elliot knew with fat eyes. He squashed them behind a pair of thick, bottle-lensed glasses and glared at his pupils like most people look at used cat litter, as if he had a permanently nasty smell under his nose. (In fairness, he did – his own.)

His few remaining strands of dark, greasy hair were pasted over the top of his head, held in place by hope alone. To the naked eye, Mr Boil had three chins, but who knew how many more were lurking beneath his shirt, which always smelt like three-week-old vegetable soup? He truly hated everyone, but reserved a special revulsion for Elliot, who had been getting up his pudgy nose for the past year.

'Sir?' asked Elliot, innocently.

'Don't you "sir" me, Hooper,' growled Boil, bringing his sweaty face millimetres from Elliot's own. 'What you did in my assembly was disgraceful, disrespectful and downright disgusting!'

'Yes, we were just getting on to that . . .' stammered Graham.

'He disgraced the Brysmore name!' roared Boil. 'He shamed himself! He

shamed the school! He ruined my brilliant PowerPoint presentation on Napoleon's favourite socks! He . . .'

'He fell asleep,' said Call Me Graham quietly, looking at Elliot's pale face and dark-rimmed eyes. 'Let's try to keep a little perspective, Mr Boil. This isn't the first time this has happened lately, Elliot. Why are you so tired?'

'Pah!' spat Boil. 'Out all hours terrorizing old ladies, I expect! Or playing violent computer games until dawn! Or putting my underpants up the school flagpole! Again!'

Elliot tried not to smirk at the memory of his all-time favourite prank, which Boil knew – but could never prove – that Elliot was responsible for last year. But pranks were long gone. These days Elliot couldn't afford any more trouble.

'Hooper!' shouted Boil. 'The headmaster asked you a question! Don't be so disrespectful . . .!'

'It's quite all right,' whispered Call Me Graham, 'Elliot can take all the time he —'

'SHUT UP, GRAHAM!' shouted Boil over his shoulder, his chubby eyes not leaving Elliot's face. 'And look at the state of you! When was the last time that shirt saw an iron? A tramp would turn his nose up at those shoes. And if I've told you once about that pocket watch – jewellery is forbidden at Brysmore . . . Well – come on, then? Let's hear your pathetic excuse!'

4. What did Elliot do to get into trouble? **R**

5. Explain whether you think Call Me Graham is a good head teacher or not. Try to present an argument for both sides. **E**

6. What are your impressions of Mr Boil from this extract? Use evidence from the text to justify your points. **S**

7. What are your impressions of Elliot from this extract? Use evidence from the text to justify your points. **S**

# Answers

1. References to the fact that Elliot is often in the headmaster's office and the fact the headmaster doesn't know what to do with him suggests they repeatedly have a similar conversation
2. Brysmore Grammar School
3. His body odour was incredibly strong
4. He fell asleep in Mr Boil's assembly
5. References to positives and negatives e.g. he shows concern for Elliot but is undermined by Mr Boil
6. Personal impressions based on evidence
7. Personal impressions based on evidence

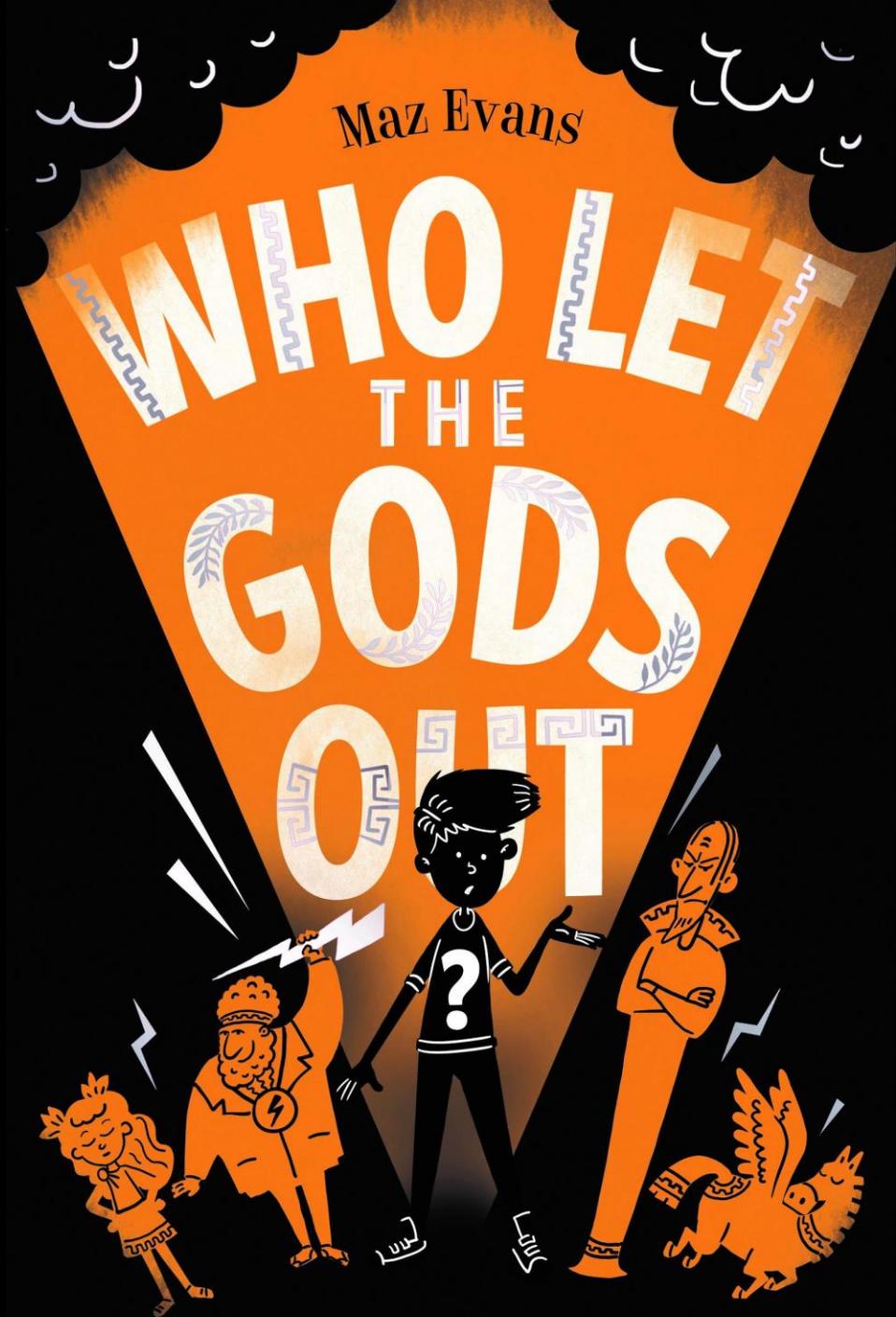
If you are able to, finish reading chapters 1 and 2. If not, see the short chapter summaries below.

Chapter 1 introduces the main character, Elliot, who has ended up in his headteacher's office for falling asleep in an assembly! This is not Elliot's only discretion however, and there is also a secret about his home life which is yet to be revealed.

In Chapter 2, Elliot arrives home and is ambushed by his neighbour, Patricia, who wants to speak to Elliot's mum. Elliot lies to Patricia about his mother being ill to get her to leave. When Elliot finally gets into his house, he realises that his mother is missing.

Wednesday

Chapter 3





### 3. A Star Is Born

**V**irgo! Virgo! Wake up!’  
‘*Brrlpmpmgh* – pencil sharpeners!’ burred Virgo, her long silver hair flopping over her face as she woke with a start in the middle of the Zodiac Council meeting.

‘Whatever are you babbling about, child?’ grumbled Pisces, the large fish

whose turn it was to chair the Council in November. 'So have you done it?'

Virgo tucked her hair neatly behind her ears and fidgeted slightly in her sumptuous red chair – sofa, really – one of twelve that surrounded the circular golden table, which was elaborately engraved with every councillor's zodiac sign.

She had only been half-listening as the other eleven members of the Council (twelve if you counted the Gemini twins separately) discussed whether to renew Dionysus's public licence, and if the Cyclops were entitled to half-price eye-care. Her mind had started to wander, as it frequently did these days, to what life might be like outside Elysium, her heavenly home above the Earth's clouds.

This was absolutely *not* because there was anything wrong. Not at all! Virgo's life, like her, was completely perfect. Administering the immortal community was, after all, an immense privilege – the Zodiac Council had been appointed by Zeus himself when he and the other Olympians retired. Now it was responsible for organizing every aspect of immortal life, from justice to jumble sales.

But however scintillating it was to ensure that sea nymphs had regulation verruca socks, or that chimeras' smoke alarms were tested quarterly, Virgo found herself wondering if there wasn't something . . . else? Nearly two thousand years in the same job looked excellent on the CV, but it was possibly getting slightly . . . less than fascinating. Immortal life was a gift, a miracle, a

1. Look up what a zodiac is. From this, what is the 'Zodiac Council'? **V**

2. Why might Cyclops be entitled to half-price eye care? **I**

blessing. It just went on a bit.

‘Virgo!’ shouted Pisces, snapping her out of her daydream. ‘So have you done it?’

Virgo tried to look as if she’d been listening, but realized that either answer could be wrong. Deciding that no response was better than the incorrect one – Virgo was *never* incorrect – she shrugged a bemused apology.

‘For goodness’ sake, child, pay attention!’ snapped Pisces, a frustrated bubble escaping his pink lips. ‘The Muses need that stationery order right away! It’s no use being the source of all creativity if you can’t find a paper clip!’

‘Yes – absolutely right – of course,’ said Virgo, picking up her golden quill and scratching ‘paper clips’ on a piece of parchment. A job. Excellent. That should keep her busy for . . .

She looked out of the council chamber’s glass pyramid at another perfect day in her perfect home above the clouds. She knew how lucky she was – after all, who wouldn’t want to live in paradise? It was, well, perfect. Once the Council’s business was done for the day, perhaps she’d fly a unicorn over the marshmallow meadows? Or swim with the dolphins in the warm waters of Honey River? Or possibly ride the roller coasters at Wonderland? Or maybe not – she’d done all of those things yesterday. Or was it the day before? Or last week maybe? Virgo couldn’t remember and there was no one to remind her. But that was

3. What are Virgo’s responsibilities? **R**

4. Find words that show that Elysium is a paradise. **V**

fine. Her life *was* completely perfect. And if she'd had any friends to talk to, she would have told them exactly that.

'So if we're happy to agree that Pan can do another stadium tour – so long as he stops by 11 p.m. so he doesn't upset the Furies – then I think that's everything . . . ' said Pisces. 'Ah. No. One more thing. Prisoner Forty-two.'

A chorus of moans rang around the chamber as Pisces produced a small golden flask.

Virgo's ears pricked up. She'd always liked the sound of this job. It required a Zodiac Councillor to deliver a dose of ambrosia to an immortal prisoner on Earth. It was particularly unpopular amongst the Council, none of whom wanted to leave the warmth and comfort of Elysium to visit the cold and dirty mortal realm. But as the youngest councillor, Virgo had never yet been allowed to go. Her mind started to buzz with excitement as she shot her hand up.

'Any volunteers?' Pisces asked.

Virgo waved her hand in the air, letting out a strained grunt as she tried not to shout out.

'Anyone?' said Pisces, somehow oblivious to Virgo nearly exploding right in front of him. 'Anyone at all?'

At that moment, every other pair of eyes in the chamber had somewhere else to look. Whether it was something fascinating they had written down,

5. How do you know people don't want to do the Prisoner Forty-two task? **I**

6. What is involved in the Prisoner Forty-Two task? **R**

something out of the window, or an imaginary speck of dust (of course no such thing existed in Elysium) on their purple robes, not one of them met the fish's glassy gaze.

Virgo stretched her left arm as high as it could reach, supporting it with her right to get some extra height.

'There must be someone,' sighed Pisces.

'Me! Me! Let me!' Virgo blurted out. 'I mean . . . I could perform this task proficiently.'

The laughter of her colleagues echoed perfectly around the chamber.

'Don't be ridiculous,' snorted Aries, the golden ram. 'You're only a child.'

'I'm one thousand nine hundred and sixty-four!' Virgo challenged, to an outpouring of 'Aw, bless' from her colleagues.

'No,' declared Pisces finally. 'This is an important job for an *experienced* councillor. You stick to your paper clips.'

'But I—'

'Enough!' snapped Pisces. 'My decision is final.'

Virgo accepted this perfectly wise and fair decision without question. Curiously, at exactly that same moment, her golden quill snapped in her hands.

'Well, then, if we have no other offers, I volunteer Taurus,' said Pisces to the bull, who was crocheting a scarf with his horn.

7. Why hasn't Virgo been allowed to do the Prisoner Forty-Two task? R

# Answers

1. The zodiac is the circular arrangement of the 12 astrological signs (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces) which stand for the twelve different constellations (groups of stars) the sun moves through each month.

The council, therefore, is made up of the different zodiac members.

2. Cyclopes, giants from Greek mythology, only have one eye

3. Source of creativity = ordering stationery

4. perfect, unicorn, marshmallow meadows, warm waters of Honey River, Wonderland

5. moans rang out around the chamber, every pair of eyes look elsewhere

6. delivering a dose of ambrosia to an immortal prisoner on Earth

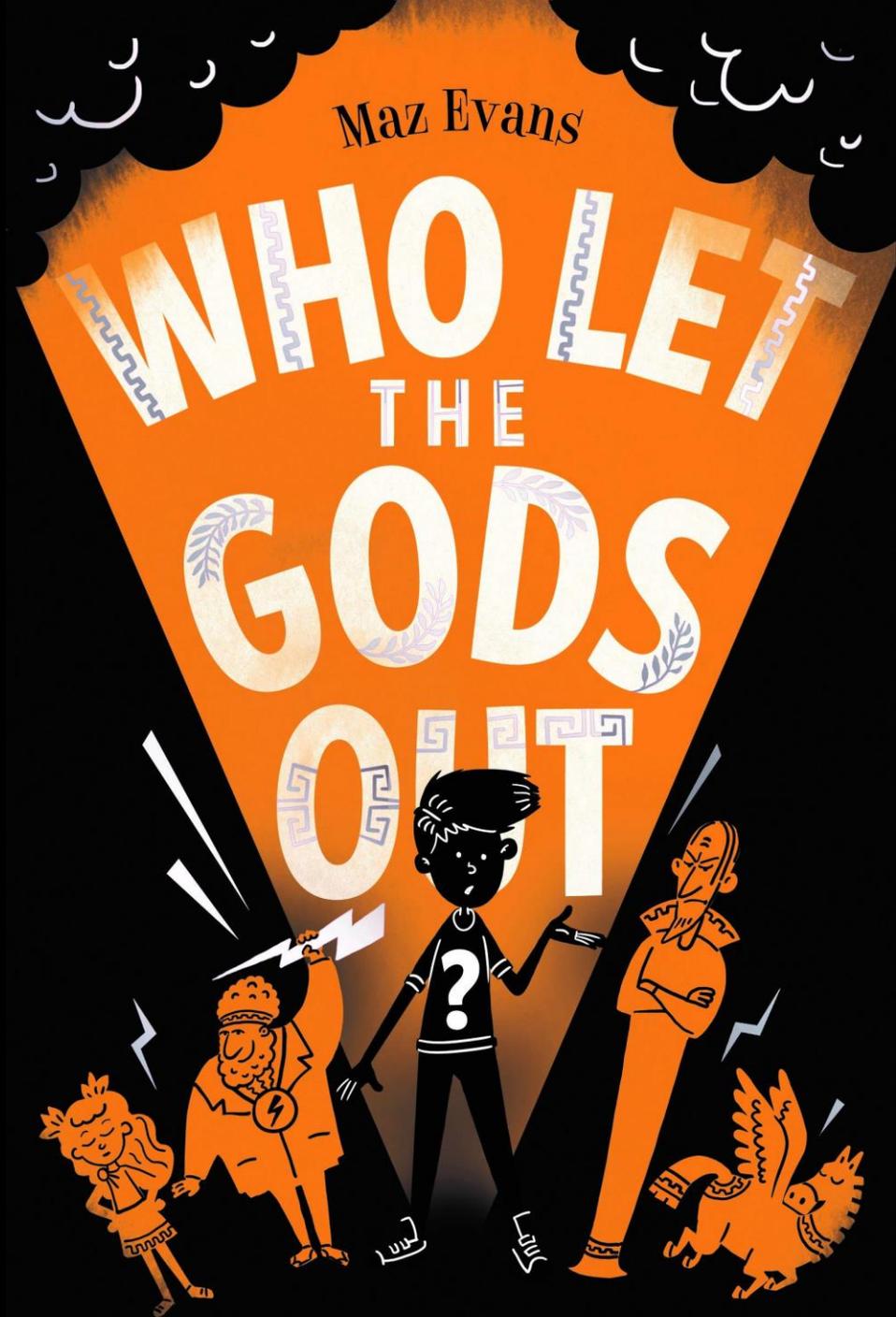
7. The other councillors think she is too young

If you are able to, finish reading chapters 3 and 4. If not, see the short chapter summaries below.

Chapter 3 is set in Elysium: an immortal realm above Earth. Virgo, a member of the Zodiac Council tries to volunteer for the task of delivering a golden flask to Prisoner Forty-two on Earth. Pisces ignores Virgo's pleas to go, but none of the other council members want to do it so she steals the flask and goes anyway. Unfortunately for Virgo, she doesn't actually know who Prisoner Forty-two is, or where to find them.

In chapter 4, Elliot finds his mum in the garden planting clothes pegs. We learn that Elliot's mum, Josie, is sick and unable to look after herself and her son. Elliot takes care of his mum but it is not easy as he has little money and lots of bills to pay. While Elliot is worrying about how to pay the mortgage on the house (as it's about to be repossessed), he notices that Virgo has appeared in the sky and appears to be moving closer to Earth. At the end of the chapter, he realises Virgo has fallen from the sky and crashed into his cowshed.

Thursday  
Chapter 5





## 5. Strangers in the Night

1. What was the giant metal bird? **I**

**V**irgo didn't come down to Earth with a bump – more of a damp, loud splat.

For a moment, she lay absolutely still, trying to figure out exactly what had just happened. Everything had been going perfectly until that giant metal bird came out of nowhere and knocked her into a tailspin. Hitting the

ground had re-formed her into her bodily shape – surely such a great fall should have shattered her into a million pieces? But in the darkness she thought she could feel her arms and she thought she could move her legs. Indeed, the fact that she was thinking at all was a positive sign, so she risked some small movements. She slowly wiggled her legs until her feet met with a solid floor. Greatly encouraged, Virgo groped around to see what had broken her fall. She felt the immediate area around her body, but every time she put a hand down, it simply disappeared into the squelchy substance upon which she had landed.

She let out a tired sigh and lay back in the mush. There was a slight possibility that this was not going perfectly.

Once the shock of being in one piece had passed, Virgo's nostrils were hit by a truly disgusting stench. She realized it was coming from her squishy landing place and her floundering around had spread it all over her long silver hair and purple robes. With a great heave, she pulled herself to her feet. She closed her eyes, pressed her hands together and opened her palms slightly to summon her star-glow.

She found herself in a large, dark cavern that seemed to contain nothing but straw. The only other light came from the hole her dramatic entrance had made in the roof and that, at first sight, appeared to be her only way out again. As her eyes grew accustomed to the dark, she could make out another figure

2. What had Virgo landed in? I

– to her great relief, she recognized the form as a female Bovinor, the same species as Taurus on the Zodiac Council. This was good news – Bovinors were renowned for their wisdom and Virgo knew that she was in safe hooves. She decided to make her acquaintance, remembering that Taurus was a stickler for good manners.

‘Greetings, Lady Bovinor, my apologies for the abrupt arrival,’ whispered Virgo, bending into a respectful curtsy.

The creature didn’t return her polite greeting, which Virgo tried not to find extremely rude.

‘Forgive me interrupting you,’ she continued, ‘but could you tell me where I might find Prisoner Forty-two?’

Once again, there was no reply – and to add insult to injury, the Bovinor simply sniffed her udders and released a wholly unimpressed moo.

‘I’m so sorry, your ladyship, I’m unfamiliar with your accent,’ said Virgo more curtly, crouching down to try to catch her eye. ‘Would you mind telling me where I am?’

The Bovinor seemed quite determined to contribute nothing to the exchange, although she did release a loud, wet noise from her backside that Virgo couldn’t translate. It certainly smelt like the conversation was over.

‘Well, er, thanks for your time,’ she said, discreetly covering her nose as she

3. Why does Virgo get annoyed at the cow? **I**

4. What words show the cow isn’t pleased about Virgo’s presence? **V**

backed away.

This was no good – she needed some guidance. Wiping her hands carefully on her hair, Virgo reverently pulled out her copy of *What's What*, the immortal guidebook she always kept in her robes. *What's What* was a known authority on every subject and invaluable in any situation. She opened the two ends of the rolled parchment and spoke clearly into it.

'Mortals,' she said to the scroll, which immediately filled the empty page with scratched words from an invisible quill.

'*Mortals,*' she read by the light of her own star-glow. '*Category: Human. Realm: Earth. Powers: various; sometimes too many, sometimes not enough. Mortals are the result of a failed experiment by the Olympians to create a perfect race. After several unsuccessful attempts to improve on the prototype, mortals were kept as entertaining pets for the Gods, but soon bred out of control. Mortals are very complex and all major studies have proved inconclusive as to their use. But it has been observed that most respond well to food and discount coupons . . . Hmmm. Interesting.'*

Virgo was about to do more research into her whereabouts when a loud creak interrupted the silence of the cavern. There was a door. And it was opening . . .

Not only that, she was completely unarmed. She clapped her hands to snap off her glow, retreated to the smelly mush and grabbed the nearest thing to

5. Explain how 'What's What?' works. Are there human equivalents? E

hand to await her attacker.

'Bessie?' Elliot whispered as he shone a torch into the pitch-black cowshed.

'Bessie, are you OK?'

A low moo reassured Elliot that his cow was unscathed by the star-ball.

Thank goodness. He looked around as well as the feeble light from his torch would let him. Nothing was on fire and apart from a huge hole in the roof, no other damage appeared to have been done. What could it have been? A meteorite? Space junk? The contents of an aeroplane toilet? It didn't matter now. He could go to bed – everything else would keep until the morning.

But a sudden rustle in the straw made his heart pound.

'Hello?' he whispered. 'Who's there?'

'Don't move, mortal!' threatened a piercing voice, cutting through the silence of the shed like a thunderbolt.

Elliot stopped in his tracks, his ragged breathing betraying his thumping heartbeat. He shakily aimed the weak beam of light from his torch at the figure in the gloom.

Standing in the large pile of cow dung in the corner of the shed was a girl, no older than himself, dressed in a purple fancy-dress toga with a long silver wig. Her big round eyes were as dark as the night outside and although she

6. How does Elliot realise someone is in the shed? R

was doing her best to twist her delicate features into a ferocious stare, she just looked like a china doll on a bad hair day. She was pointing a large, yellow rubber glove threateningly in Elliot's direction.

'I'm not afraid to use this,' she warned.

'I've seen where the vet puts that glove,' said Elliot to this strange, angry girl.

'Trust me, I'm not coming anywhere near you.'

The girl inched closer to Elliot, not taking her eyes from his.

'Where am I?' she demanded.

'In the cowshed,' Elliot replied.

'Hmmm – Kowsh Ed,' said the girl. 'I've not heard of this region of Earth – are the inhabitants friendly?'

'When they're not being threatened by a trick-or-treater covered in cow poo,' said Elliot.

The girl picked up a handful of Bessie's cow feed and threw it enthusiastically at Elliot's feet.

'Help yourself,' she smiled.

Elliot sensed that he was supposed to be pleased with this gesture. The girl appeared confused when he didn't respond. She moved a little closer and placed her right hand on her left shoulder in some kind of greeting.

'I am Virgo, Constellation of the Zodiac Council and Guardian of the Sta-

7. What does Virgo grab to defend herself? R

# Answers

1. an aeroplane

2. cow pat

3. because the cow does not respond to her questions

4. wholly unimpressed

5. When a word is said into the scroll a definition/description appears. This is similar to a dictionary.

6. He hears a rustle in the straw

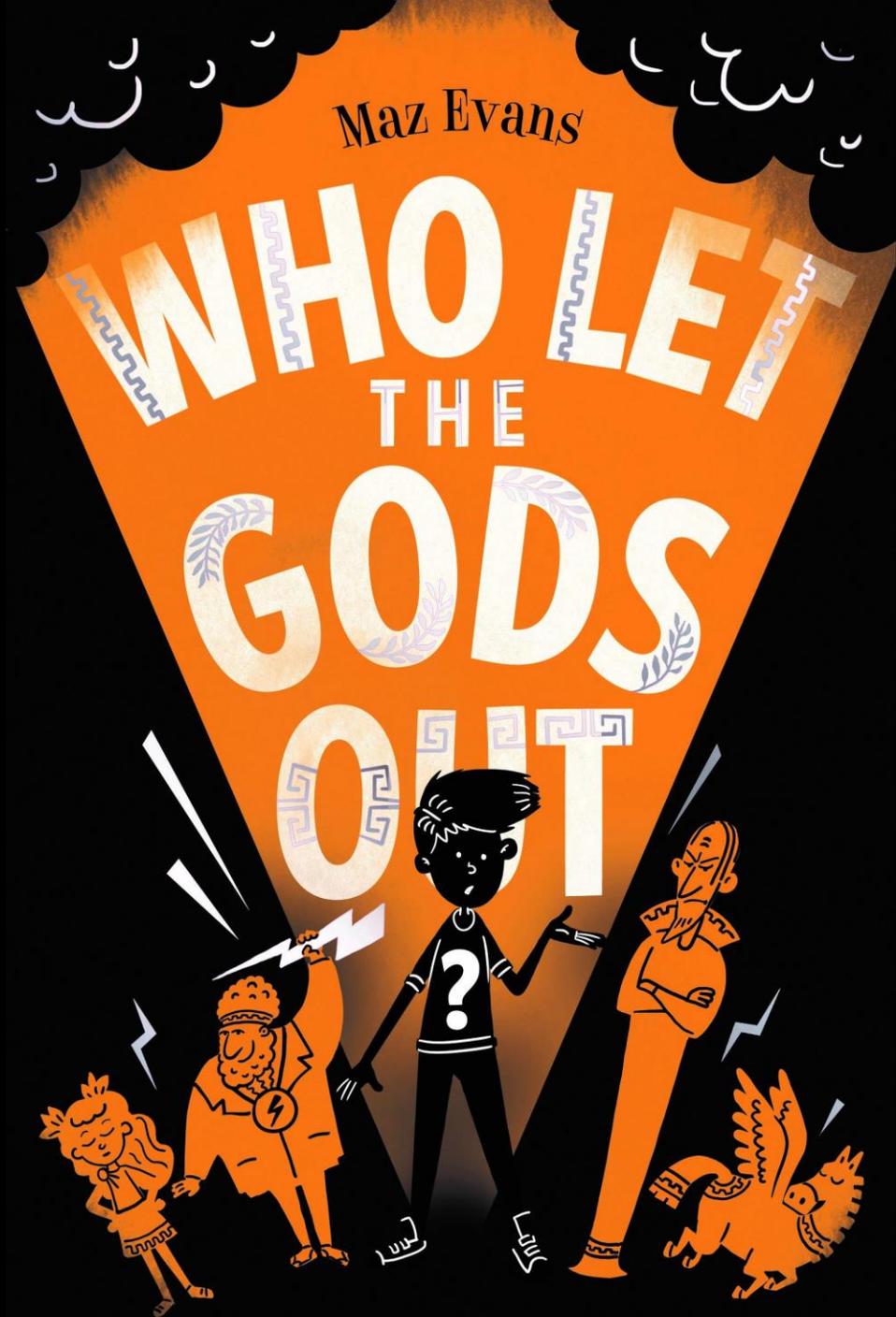
7. a large, yellow rubber glove

If you are able to, finish reading chapters 5 and 6. If not, see the short chapter summaries below.

In Chapter 5, Elliot and Virgo meet for the first time. After landing in his cow shed, Virgo is wary of Elliot but he is too tired to care. He believes she is a young girl who is lost so he invites her into his home. Once there, Virgo explains who she is (an immortal being from Elysium) but Elliot finds it hard to believe her.

In chapter 6, Elliot decides to take Virgo to the police station. On the way, Virgo shows Elliot that she is immortal (and not lying) by entering the river and staying under water for 5 minutes. Elliot finally believes her when she uses her constellation to dry them both after Elliot goes into the river thinking she had drowned. Elliot then takes Virgo to Stonehenge where she looks for the entrance to Prisoner Forty-two's cell. After accidentally alerting the security guards to their presence, Elliot and Virgo jump inside the hidden entrance to escape capture..

Friday  
Chapter 7





## 7. Prisoner Forty-Who?

**E**lliot's mum always said that when one door closes, another one opens.

Unfortunately Josie's wisdom didn't apply on this occasion.

When Elliot threw himself and Virgo into the hole, he'd had no time to worry about what lay beneath the Heel Stone. He quickly found that it wasn't a hole at all – it was a set of stone steps, and he tumbled down every hard one.

Two things prevented him from fracturing every bone in his body. Firstly, there were only five steps. Secondly, his fall was broken by a soft landing.

'What have you done?' whispered the soft landing angrily, throwing Elliot off her.

Elliot spat out a mouthful of dirt.

'Saved us getting clobbered by the security guards you summoned, Mouth of the South,' Elliot retorted, hauling his bruised body upright.

'We have to leave!' Virgo whispered.

They both pushed at the Heel Stone above their heads. It was immovable. They were trapped.

'I can't be here. It's against the rules. I'm supposed to drop the flask and go.'

'Looks like the rules will have to deal with it.'

Virgo gently pulled her palms apart to illuminate the cave. They were on a narrow ledge at the top of a winding iron staircase, which spiralled down into the endless gloom below. It was surrounded by a stone circle, which Elliot realized was a continuation of the stones above the ground.

'Right,' said Virgo shakily. 'The most important thing is not to panic. I never panic. Never, never, never. I absolutely never, ever, ever panic. It's completely vital that I...'

'Stop panicking,' hissed Elliot.

1. What stops Elliot breaking all his bones? **R**

2. How do Elliot and Virgo see in the cave? **R**

3. Is Virgo panicking? How do you know? **I**

'All right!' said Virgo. 'I'll go down and see if there's another exit. But you have to stay here.'

Elliot never did like being told what to do. Particularly when that involved standing alone in a pitch-black cave from which he might never escape. He swallowed back his fear.

'Not a chance – I'm coming with you,' he whispered back.

'No, you're not! You can't be here!'

'Well, I *am* here. So get over it.'

Virgo growled with frustration, but Elliot mustered as determined a look as he was able.

'Fine,' Virgo conceded. 'But stay close. And don't . . . do anything.'

Guided by Virgo's faint glow, Elliot edged down the stairs behind the Constellation. Their breathing was the only sound to disturb the heavy air, the huge stones looming higher above them with every step that drew them further into the darkness.

They reached the bottom stair and looked nervously at one another before hesitantly placing their feet on the cold floor. They scanned the cave with faltering movements, afraid of what their eyes might find.

'Is that a . . . ?' asked Virgo, summoning more stars with her hands. A small stream ran noiselessly along the back wall. But apart from the odd spider scut-

4. Why did Elliot choose to follow Virgo down further into the cave instead of staying put like he was told? **I**

ting across the floor, the cave appeared to be completely empty.

‘There’s no one here,’ said Elliot at normal volume, taking a bolder step into the cave. ‘You’ve been conned.’

‘That’s not possible,’ said Virgo, walking towards a dark spot beneath the staircase. ‘It just doesn’t make any—’

‘HELP ME!’ screamed a terrified voice. A spectral figure launched itself at Virgo, knocking her to the ground and extinguishing her glow.

The cave was plunged into total darkness.

‘Virgo?’ cried Elliot. ‘Where are you?’

The silence that greeted his question may have lasted seconds or hours, but was even more petrifying than the scream before it. Elliot had only caught a flash of Virgo’s attacker out of the corner of his eye. Where was it? And was it coming for him?

‘Virgo!’ Elliot shouted. ‘Virgo! Are you here?’

A weak glow pierced the darkness as Virgo illuminated once more. She was on the floor, dazed and rubbing her head.

‘I’m here,’ she croaked. ‘And that hurt.’

Elliot ran over and helped her to her feet.

‘What was that?’ he asked, whipping his head around to see if it was still there.

5. Why are the words ‘HELP ME,’ written in capitals in the text?

'I don't know,' said Virgo, looking more urgently about the cave. 'But we need to—'

A faint sobbing silenced them both. Virgo slowly dropped her hand from her head and pulled her palms further apart to light up the darkness. Elliot peered nervously into the gloom.

In rusty iron chains, fastened to a rock beneath the staircase, was the most pitiful man – if you could even call him that – Elliot had ever seen. This figure was beyond old – ancient, in fact – with the remnants of a black robe clinging to his skeletal frame. What was left of his grey hair stuck to his skull, which was buried in his emaciated limbs. He was huddled, shivering on the cold floor, wrapping his arms around himself for warmth and comfort.

'Prisoner Forty-two?' asked Virgo uncertainly.

The man lifted his head from his knees, fresh tears streaming down the thousand tiny crevices that lined his face. His eyes met Elliot's squarely, with a look of longing and desperation that made the boy's heart ache.

'Is that what they call me?' he rasped. 'I don't know who I am any more.'

'I've brought you ambrosia,' said Virgo, extending the golden flask with shaking hands.

'Thank you,' said the prisoner. 'I'm sorry for scaring you. You are the first immortal I've seen in millennia.' His gaze switched to Elliot. 'And the first

6. Which word shows that the prisoner was very thin or weak? **V**

7. Does Elliot feel sorry for the prisoner? How do you know? **I**

mortal . . .’

‘How do we get out of here?’ asked Virgo, who seemed unable to meet his pleading eyes.

‘I will tell you. But first – please could I have some water?’ he asked, gesturing to a rusting metal cup at his feet.

‘I am forbidden,’ said Virgo quietly. ‘The rules state—’

‘Why are you here?’ asked Elliot.

The man gave a weak, pitiful laugh. ‘The same reason anyone hides anything, child,’ he smiled sadly. ‘Because they don’t want it to be found.’

Elliot looked over at the stream. Virgo caught his glance and shook her head.

‘Elliot – you can’t,’ she warned. ‘The rules state—’

‘Your rules,’ said Elliot, picking up the cup. ‘Not mine.’

He walked to the stream and filled the cup to the brim with icy water. He returned to the prisoner and placed the cup at his feet.

‘You are kind, child,’ the man said, raising the cup to his lips. He shakily drained it, spilling as much water as he managed to drink.

‘You’ve had your water,’ said Virgo nervously. ‘Now show us the way out.’

‘Behind that boulder,’ said Prisoner Forty-two, pointing to a huge rock on the far side of the cave. ‘There is a tunnel that leads outside. It’s how he left.’

‘He?’ asked Elliot.

8. What reason does Virgo give to as why she will not give the creature water? R

# Answers

1. There were only 5 steps and a soft landing (Virgo)
2. Virgo illuminates the cave
3. Yes. She is repeating herself and trying to convince Elliot that she is not but doing a poor job of it
4. He was scared to be left on his own in the dark
5. To emphasise that the character was shouting/screaming
6. emaciated
7. Yes. His heart aches when he sees the look of longing and desperation.
8. It is against the rules.

If you are reading the book alongside the comprehension tasks, please stop just when Elliot says, 'I have no choice.'

We will continue looking at Chapter 7 next week.

