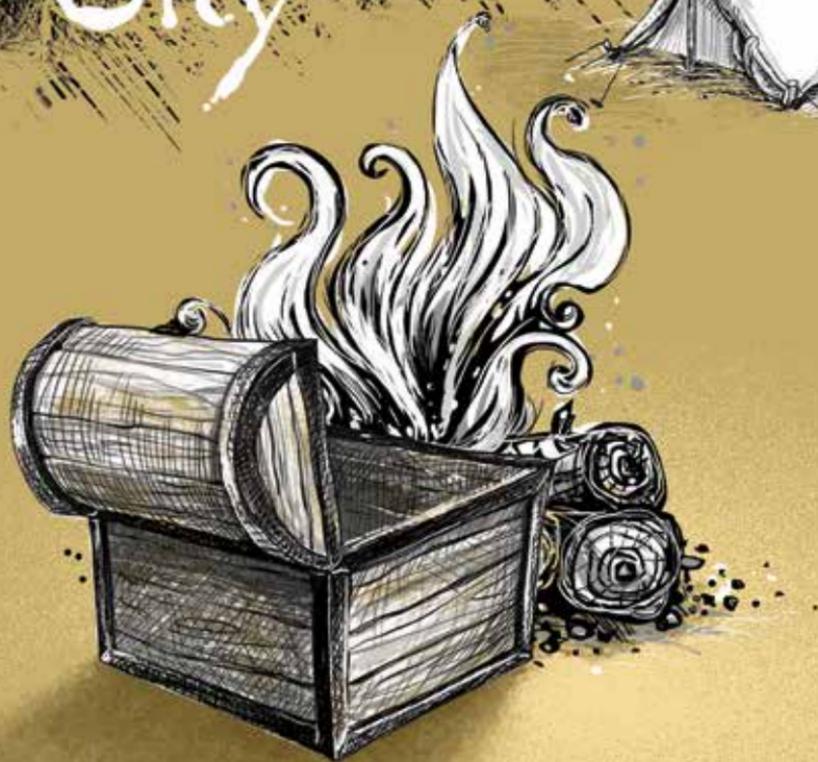


A Mystery
in the
City



A Mystery in the City



A Story By Sahar Naja Mahfouz
Translated By Chadia Bekhazi
Illustrated By Fadi Fadel

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للطفل



مدينه صديقه للاطفال واليهاميين
SHARJAH CHILD FRIENDLY CITY



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Personal ID Cards

The Adventure and Exploration Team



Name: Rashed

Age: 15 years

Country: UAE

Specialty: Member of UAE Legislative process for Youth

Hobbies: Reading, adventures, and Basketball

Role: Group leader

Favorite thing: Finding solutions problems



Name: Ibrahim

Age: 15 years

Country: UAE

Specialty: Blogger for antiquities in the Arabian Peninsula

Hobbies: Writing in two languages, swimming

Role: Archaeology expert

Preference: Bothering his sister, Mariam



Name: Sami

Age: 15 years

Country: Syria

Specialty: Photographing nature

Hobbies: Football, traveling, cars

Role: Photographer

Favorite thing: A gift of Canon EOS camera



Name: Hamed

Age: 14 years

Country: Iraq

Specialty: Technology and mechanics

Hobbies: Repairing things, competitions

Role: Technical coordinator

Favorite thing: Friday/Family day



Name: Ali

Age: 14 years

Country: Tunisia

Specialty: Being- friendly

Hobbies: Watching the sunset, football

Role: Adding surprises

Favorite thing: Chicken biryani



Name: Mr. Abdullah

Age: Unknown

Country: UAE

Specialty: Patience and wisdom

Hobbies: Adventures & mountain climbing

Role: Supervisor

Favorite things: Self-development!! (and coffee).

The Assistance and Support Team



Name: Mariam

Age: 14 years

Country: UAE

Specialty: Lover of Sharjah

Hobbies: Travelling, Handball

Role: Girls' Group Leader

Favorite thing: Trying different foods



Name: Salma

Age: 13 years

Country: Syria

Specialty: Math Genius

Hobbies: Mental calculation competition,
Checkers

Role: Everything related to mental
calculation

Favorite thing: Ignoring her brother Sami



Name: Andrea

Age: 14 years

Country: India

Specialty: Thinking outside the box

Hobbies: Arguing and writing

Role: Supporter

Favorite thing: Raspberry Ice cream

Introduction

The last Friday of January 2019 felt special. Since the rising of the sun, it had insinuated a very different aura. The sky was bluer and the scattered clouds, small as balls of cotton wool, made a futile attempt to block the blazing sun. The air felt heavy, promising rain that would cleanse the streets and the trees they held. It was as if the day was holding its breath.

When the rain finally came, the children in the neighborhood rushed to their backyards or to one of the public parks spread across the city and stood under the rain singing. Happiness surged through them with every raindrop that caressed

their eyes and foreheads. Freshly sown seeds had not sprouted yet but with the rain, they would; and even though they had to wait for each small, green sprout the children laughed and played.

So this was not an ordinary day at all, especially not for the heroes and heroines of our story. This was a day they would remember forever, etched in their memory and growing into the vision of a more beautiful tomorrow and a future as bright as their souls and their happiness.

Dear reader: This resounding introduction is a necessary start to the story. Now, take a deep breath and follow us.

The Choice

The day before this special day, a surprise was awaiting a particular group of children when they arrived at the Sharjah Youth Center.

These boys were not friends who lived in the same neighborhood or studied at the same school but they *were* friends. They first met when they were very young, taking lessons in swimming, arts, theatre, and sports together at the children's center in their area.

Everyone knew about this group's love of adventure and challenges. So when a mission that required cooperation, unity, intelligence,

quick thinking, successful planning, and careful consideration arose, it was clear who should take it on. This was an adventure they had been training for their whole lives.

But back to the day before our special day!

Their supervisor, Mr. Abdullah, gathered Rashed, Ibrahim, Sami, Hamed, and Ali together.

He inquired, “Are you ready to take part in an adventure of a lifetime? Would you be interested in winning an extraordinary prize if you complete the challenge? Then get ready for a 24-hour trip that starts tomorrow morning, God willing”.

The young boys gathered in the center’s garden, amazed by their supervisor’s announcement. What could it possibly be? And what was this

mysterious prize? It was clearly an important challenge since Mr. Abdullah had entrusted them with it, and little did they realize that it would turn out to be an expedition to remember. That evening, they got the permission from their parents and planned what they needed to take with them on this adventure.

Then they waited for Mr. Abdullah’s instructions.

The Adventure and Exploration Team – A Who's Who

Rashed is known for his love of leadership, analysis, and oration. A member of the Youth Shoura Team, he has progressed to a significant level. An eloquent speaker and intellectual, he likes to read about all sorts of adventures. Rashed knows exactly what he wants or perhaps he only thinks that he does...

Ibrahim loves traveling and then writing about the strange and wonderful things he comes across during his travels. His blog has hundreds of followers who he has introduced the antiquities and landmarks of their country. Ibrahim's friends call

him 'Al Hajari' (the stone man), which encourages him to keep on traveling, exploring, reading and blogging. He's very good at swimming.

Sami's hobby is photography; especially taking pictures of nature, wildlife, and racing cars. He carries his cameras and equipment on everywhere, taking a huge of pictures, especially during his annual vacation to his home country, Syria. Sami likes hanging around with his group of friends and he is especially friendly with Ibrahim, who helps him to photograph artifacts even when it's just a small stone he's found somewhere.

Hamed is an expert in computer and technology. He can identify the fault in any device within an hour and loves everything related to modern

technology. He intends to study mechanical engineering and computer programming at university. Hamed's disability is not an obstacle; he has trained himself and it's easy to use his wheelchair in the city's facilities and parks, each and every one of which is equipped and accessible. He has entered many competitions based on intelligence and perception and he never gives up, even if he doesn't always win.

And last, but not least, **Ali**, who has been part of the group for three years; one year after his arrival in the friendly Emirates. Ali is daring and funny, and he's always ready to give a helping hand (often destroying almost everything). He makes friends easily with his humorous spirit and kind-hearted nature. He enjoys being a part of the team a lot,

and he idolizes Rashed. No one knows his main role in a group searching for adventure, but he always accompanies them on their trips and the others boys love have him around!

The Assistance and Support Team

Dear Reader, did you honestly think the story was only about an all-boys' team? No - the girls also have a big part in our story

Mariam, Ibrahim's sister is clever and patient. She adores every inch of her city and there is almost nothing she does not know about it. Her brother can be a real pest at times but Mariam still supports him. For this adventure, she forms a small team to lend a helping hand which consists of her friend Salma from Sajaya Center (The Girls' Center in Sharjah) and her childhood neighbor, Andrea who is very much like a sister to her.

Salma is Sami's sister . She often has to listen to her brother's explanations about light, shadow and other artistic matters that she really could not care less about. However, she manages to find enough interesting things to think over until he's finished talking. Salma counts the number of letters and words that Sami says and often says the number out loud without realizing it. She is a genius in mathematics and algebra and a member of the Emirates' team for mental math.

Andrea is known for her impulsiveness and a unique way of thinking which sometimes gets her into trouble. She has plenty of weird ideas, sometimes based on analysis and others on imagining what lies behind events that she's seen on television. She is one of the most prominent

members of the Students' Council at her school and the primary speaker.

The girls decided to meet at Mariam's house to assist the Adventure Team in solving the puzzle and winning the prize, and just to spend some time together.

**On the anticipated/ memorable/ promised
whatever. On THAT day**

A text message right after dawn from Mr. Abdullah
to the Adventure and Exploration Team:

“Good morning guys, are you ready for the
adventure?”

Gathering place: Youth Center in Sharjah

Departure time: 8.00 a.m. sharp

Means of transport: A small van

Equipment: Your open minds, tents and sleeping
bags, food, camping gear, water, etc...

Destination: You will know when we get there

See you later!”

The team arrived at exactly 8am, all of them enthusiastic and excited.

“Did you bring your tent, **Sami**? Your equipment, **Hamed**?” asked Rashed who was assigned as the team leader. “What about food, **Ali**? Did you bring enough for the whole 24 hours?”

“Food! Huh, oh, should I have brought food for everyone? I’ve only got enough for me and a surprise for dinner!”

So they took a trip to the Co-op to buy provisions – nobody wanted to be hungry while adventuring!

Once in the van, they tried to persuade Mr. **Abdullah** to give them more details about the puzzle and the anticipated prize; as if they didn’t know their supervisor well enough to know that

he wouldn’t give them any clues! Not a word came from him as he drove but he kept smiling and looking mysterious.

They reached their destination in less than an hour and stepped down from the van, stunned by the beauty of their immaculate looking destination. A young man, looking strong and professional, came towards them.

“Welcome to Mleiha Archaeological Center.

We are very pleased to have you with us today and we wish you good luck. We shall oversee you on this trip, but we are not going to interfere with the solution of any puzzle. Don’t worry, we have staff trained and equipped for first aid service and assistance. You are in safe hands. Come along!”

“First aid!! Do we really need that?”

Ali whispered. “Will we be getting injured? I say, teacher, can I go back to the van? I have forgotten something important.”

Mr Abdullah laughed at **Ali’s** bewilderment and assured him that they would be fine and that the first aid team is always available in all tourist and archeological sites. He then told them that the van would be leaving them there and would return to pick them up the following morning.

Ibrahim felt confident, “I’ve read a lot about the nature reserve. I know it very well.” He said

Sami looked around, watching the reflection of the sunbeams on the rocks and sand dunes. “Wow, this place is amazing for taking pictures!”

Great excitement, preparation for the adventure, waiting for the start whistle.

But wait a moment! First of all, the supervisor has to explain the nature of the adventure.

Mr. **Abdullah** sketched a map on an area of sand. “Look, guys, here you have a map of Mleiha archaeological area. **Hamed** will spend most of the time in the middle of this area, based at the Center. He will be in charge of the technical coordination and locating the places you should explore. He will also be in charge of the communications between all of you”.

The supervisor quickly wiped the map away as the boys looked on, determined and as prepared as they possibly could be, without actually knowing what they were going to have to do.

“There are six puzzles that will lead you to the

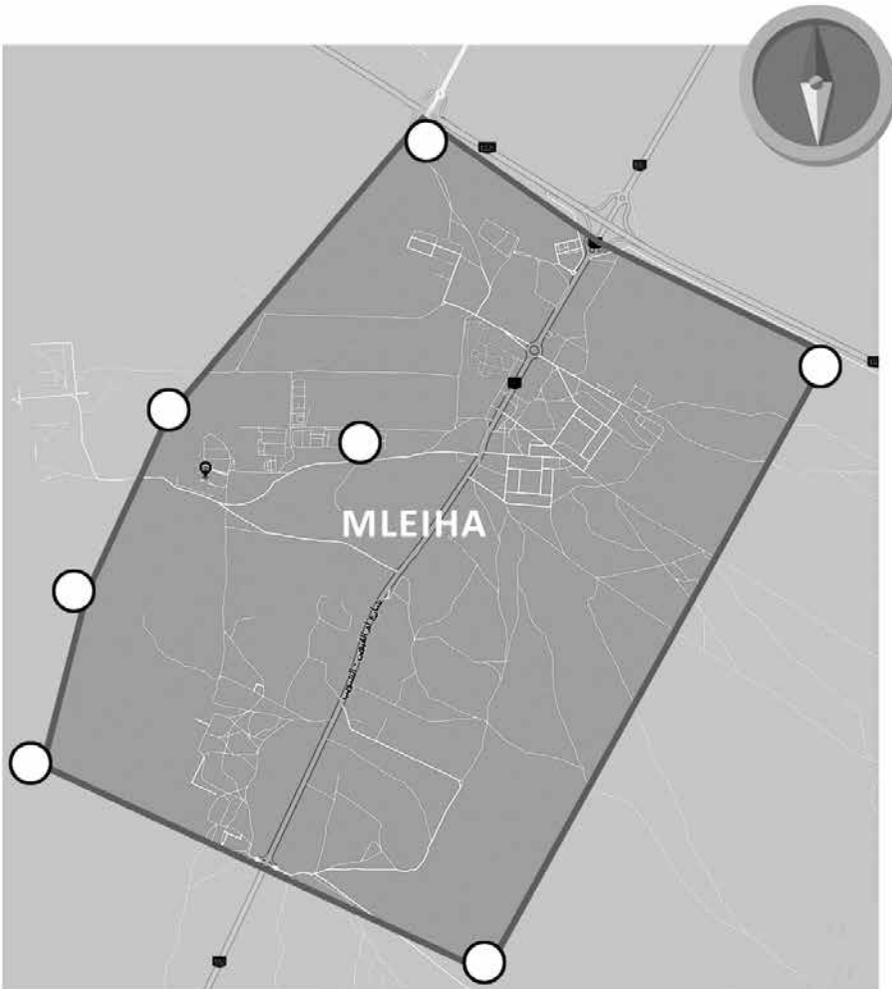
final puzzle and the prize. Every time you solve a puzzle, you get a letter or a symbol that qualifies you to move on to the next puzzle, and so on until you have solved them all. Some puzzles need general knowledge and others need logic and deduction. Most of them have a specific deadline. You are used to working as a team and I have great confidence in you!”

He glanced at the boys and saw that they were waiting for further instructions.

“You can use technology to a certain limit –and your brains of course – and you can ask friends to help if you want to. If you manage to solve all the puzzles and are able to draw the map required before 24 hours are up, you will receive the final

part of the puzzle which qualifies you for winning the prize. I am here to watch you and guide you when possible. Come on, start!”

Distribution of Tasks



Everyone agreed that **Rashed** should lead their team.

“**Hamed**, you must find the best place for you at the Center, where you can use the Wi-Fi and help us out. You must follow up with the map of puzzles.” Of course, the first task is getting out the map to identify the key places.

Then **Hamed** went to the Center in his wheelchair, where an employee showed him to his place.

“**Ibrahim**, we want you to concentrate on every detail. Is your sister Mariam willing to help us?”

“Yes of course. She is at home with her friends to give us support.”

“**Sami**, you have to make sure that the camera and equipment are working.”

“Don’t worry my friend. I made sure of that before we left. My camera is always ready!”

“And you, **Ali**, mmm, you can give us all possible assistance especially when camping.”

“I’m here with you and for you and I’m one of you, our daring leader, haha!”

Rashed looked at him sideways and smiled.

‘The daring leader’– that phrase resounded in his head... his new dream.

Each one was in position and everybody was ready... **Rashed, Ali, Hamed** and the computer, **Sami** and his camera, **Ibrahim** and his knowledge. The supervisor was watching them from afar; waiting to give them the first envelope as soon as they were ready.

Puzzle One – General Knowledge



The supervisor called out to **Rashed**: “Come and take the envelope.

If you know the puzzle, put the numeral 1 on the map to the north of the Center”.

Rashed opened the envelope and read out loud, **Ibrahim** texting the question to his sister in case she and her friends were able to help.

‘State two places in Sharjah where various kinds of wild animals and birds are preserved in their natural habitats You have 30 seconds to answer this question and then read the question hidden inside the envelope.’

Ibrahim’s phone rang at the moment **Rashed** finished the question. Mariam was the caller, quick

to answer any question related to her beloved emirate.

“Hello **Ibrahim**, tell **Rashed** that the answer is the Arabian Peninsula Animal Center and Waset Nature Reserve for fertile lands.”

“Are you sure, **Mariam**?”

“Of course, hurry up and tell him. I have visited those places and others on school trips and I’ve read a lot about them.”

Mariam was faster than **Hamed’s** computer and her memory was better than **Rashed’s**.

She solved the first puzzle quickly and before the specified time.

It was no wonder that her friends called her the ‘**Lover of Sharjah**’.

Rashed then seized the question inside the envelope. He read it and a smile spread across his face; he knew the answer to this question without the help of the others. But he shared the question with the group anyway.

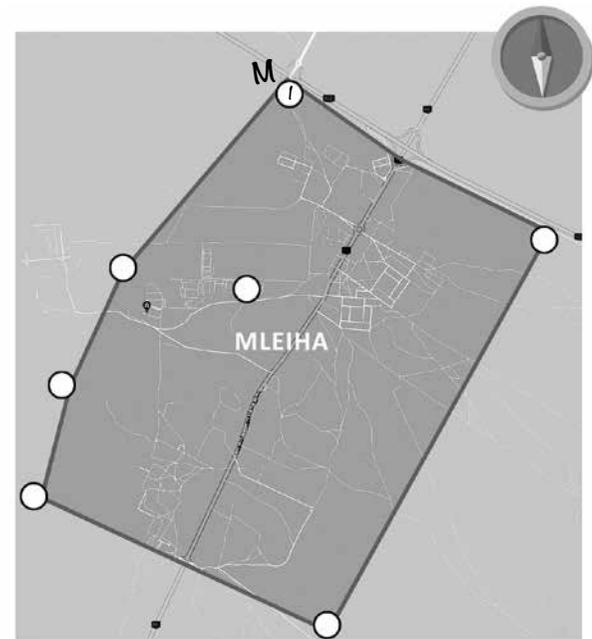
‘What is the color of the Arabian tiger?’ **Rashed’s** correct answer was..... *(the solution of the first puzzle at the end of the book).*

The friends were delighted. They’d solved the puzzle and were given their first clue by Mr Abdullah - the letter (M) in record time. On to the next one!

Hamed put the numeral 1 on the map to the north of the Center according to the supervisor’s instructions. Then he wrote the letter M beside it.

Ali said jokingly: “Does anyone feel like having a sandwich, or a snack or two, to celebrate?” Secretly he hoped that they would agree – he was getting a bit hungry.

Hamed sent a message to the team:
‘Congratulations my friends. We have solved the first puzzle, only five more to go!’



Puzzle Two – Do you like Geography?



“I shall tell you about the next puzzle and if you can solve it, we shall stop for Friday prayer and then have lunch before **Ali** and **Ibrahim** devour all the food we bought from the Co-op.”

(Imagine Dear Reader, the supervisor looking at them, clutching his beard or gritting his teeth, or any way you want).

Ali tried to keep a straight face before he burst into a fit of laughter: “pfffft ha haaa, you’d better do what Mr. Abdullah says or else ... don’t say I didn’t warn you!”

“Go ahead, **Ibrahim**, it’s your turn. Take the second envelope.”

Ibrahim walked with confident steps towards the

supervisor, flexing shoulders that were broad and strong thanks to the swimming lessons and local competitions he participated in. He almost looked like an eagle preparing to spread its wings. He opened the next envelope.

“By the name of Allah, the question is:

‘To the west of the Umm Al Nar memorial and within the coordinates (25.1264292, 55.8566108) there is a tree surrounded by the scattered fossils of seashells. You will find among them a folded paper. Put it in your pocket and bring it with you. Don’t look at it now. You have five minutes to find it.’

Ibrahim put the envelope aside. He knew Mleiha very well and knew he could solve the puzzle.

“**Hamed**, the memorial of Umm Al Nar is the big

circle in front of the Center where you are now.
Put the coordinates in Google Maps and guide me
to the tree west of the memorial. I think point 1
was to the north of the Center.”

Hamed started setting the coordinates to check
the right direction.

“First you have to go west. I have found the tree
and it’s near you. I think it’s only about 50 meters
away. Or perhaps 150 ft, depending on the foot
size.” **Hamed** said jokingly.

Ibrahim went 50 meters towards the west but he
could not spot the tree.

“**Hamed**, please confirm the location.

We are running out of time!”

Hamed instructed him to take a few steps further,
across a sand dune; and then he would be able to

see the tree with its branches and twigs. Lo and
behold! There it was.

The tree was surrounded by fossils of shells.



Ibrahim looked carefully for the folded paper and found it hidden behind a small stone. He put it in his pocket without opening it and went back to his friends raising the victory sign.

“Wooahoo... that was quite an easy one thank god. We’ve solved the second puzzle!”

For sure, **Hamed** played the biggest role in solving the puzzle and finding the clue. He put the numeral 2 on the map with a little note that read: ‘A piece of folded paper’.

Back home, the girls were talking....

“**Mariam**, tell **Ibrahim** that I have a brilliant idea to present to the Shoura Council. He won’t regret hearing it. Basically, it’s about volunteering.”

“Later, **Andrea**, let’s finish solving the puzzles now. I promise I will tell **Ibrahim when he is home again.**”

Soon enough, it was time for the noon prayer, followed by lunch.

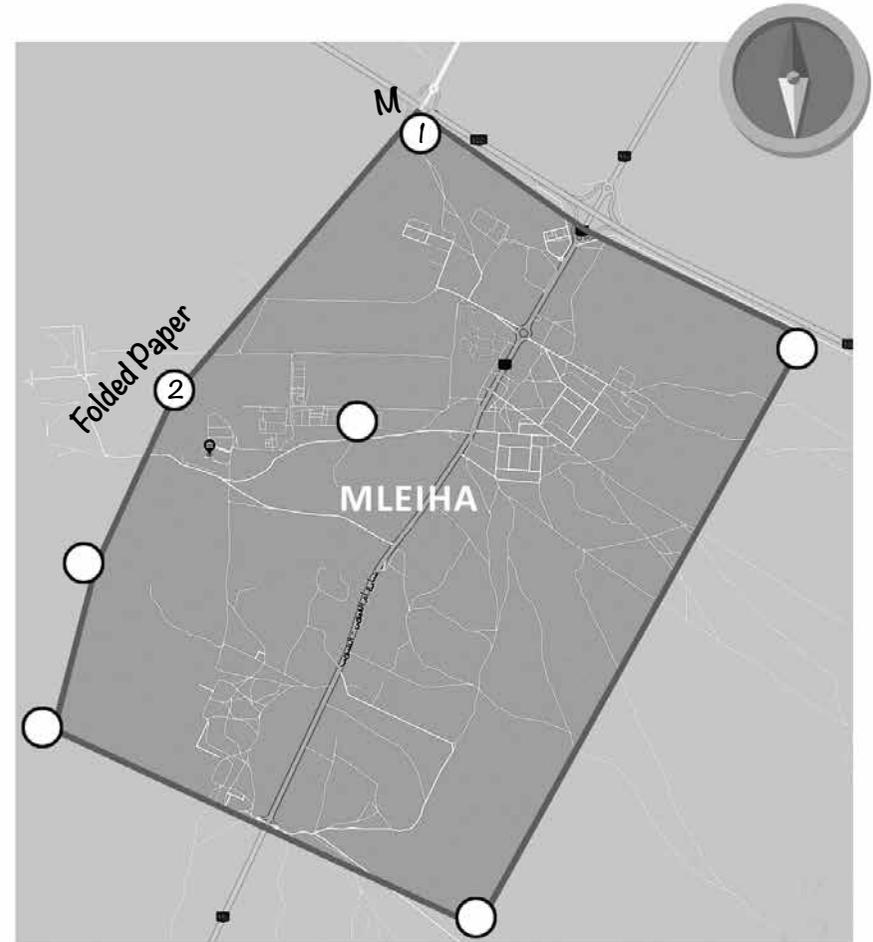
At the Center, those who wanted to pray performed ablutions and then they all joined **Hamed** to discuss what they had discovered so far. Meanwhile, **Sami** was engrossed in taking pictures of the Center, the memorial, the clouds, and the sky, while waiting for their important meeting at lunchtime.

During lunch, they couldn’t help but look at each other and at their supervisor, with huge smiles plastered across their faces. **Rashed** placed his

hand over the table and they all joined him in their usual demonstration of unity. They shouted: “ADVENTURE TEAM!”, then they applauded themselves amid laughter from the Center’s employees and **Mr. Abdullah**.

In the meantime, the Assistance and Support Team were waiting for the new task and busying themselves playing checkers. **Mariam** tried hard to beat **Salma** but lost as usual. She was baffled by the quick thinking of that little girl who was a year younger than her. Wasn’t more it logical that **Mariam** should be the smarter one?

Back at the Center, Mr. Abdullah addressed the adventure team: “Come on, guys, the break is over and it’s time for the third puzzle.”





Puzzle Three – Fast enough? Let's see!

They soon returned to their places, **Hamed** staying beside his computer and the rest of the team back at their designated spot, and they waited for the next challenge.

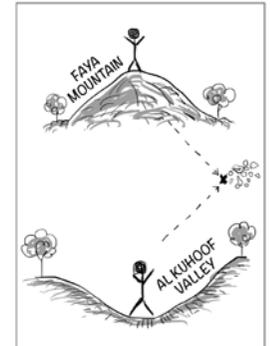
It was **Sami's** turn now and he was a little worried! He breathed deeply, three times in succession. Then he gripped his hands and relaxed them. It was a useful relaxation exercise he had learned for those times he felt tense. Now he was better prepared to receive the third envelope containing the next puzzle.

Slowly, he opened the envelope, took out the paper and read it. Grabbing his phone he called his sister, the 'Math Genius'.

“**Salma**, I'll read the question to you once only and then you have one minute to reply or else we lose. We are depending on you.

Listen to me carefully: At an equal distance between Al Faya Mountain and the Valley of the Caves, and at a distance of $(28 \times 3 / 6)^2 \text{m}$, there is a rock shaped like letter of the alphabet.

Don't touch it; just take a picture of it. I want you to solve the equation and then give us directions. Over.”



Salma was amazed. It was the first time that **Sami** had spoken to her with such precision and speed. “It's very simple, my brother. The answer to the equation is 196 meters. As I see the map of Mleiha

in front of me on **Mariam's** phone, the rock cannot be midway between the two locations, but at a place equally distant from each of them.

One of you goes to the Faya Mountain and another to the Valley of the Caves. Walk towards the other at the same distance and speed so that you can meet in the middle. You will find the rock. Over.”

Salma seemed extremely confident with her answer; she didn't even stop to take a breath.

In less than thirty seconds, they had the solution.

Everyone was stunned, including her brother, who was aware of **Salma's** speed in mental math.

Stupefied, **Andrea** asked her, “How did you do that so fast?”

“To me, this is a very simple equation. I've been

practicing with the Emirates' Team for Mental Math since I was in second grade. I am very fond of mathematics.” **Salma** replied while adjusting her eyeglasses and awaiting the result of her answer.

A determined light shone in her eyes as **Andrea** said, “Mental math should be a fundamental subject in all schools! Ask **Sami** to tell **Rashed** about this!”

“**Hamed**, try to find the distance between the two locations and show us the nearest point; that's better than splitting up. This way, we will save time and avoid any of us getting lost.”

“You are right, **Rashed**. I'm waiting for you, **Hamed**.” **Sami** said while preparing his camera to take a picture of the right one.

And indeed, **Hamed** was able to identify the approximate location and guided them to the spot where he thought they needed to be.

Sami went with **Ali** to take a picture of their next clue. When they arrived at the location **Hamed** had found it was filled with many rocks of different shapes and sizes. They started the search. It was like trying to find a needle in a haystack.

“This rock looks like a chicken drumstick, do you think it froze here!?, said **Ali** jokingly.

“Don’t touch anything **Ali**, we just need to take a picture of the rock”

But amongst the dozens of rocks, **Ali** suddenly saw one that looked like the letter U and called **Sami** to take a picture. As usual, **Sami** was not

satisfied with one picture; he conducted an entire photography session on that poor rock who could not object or run away.

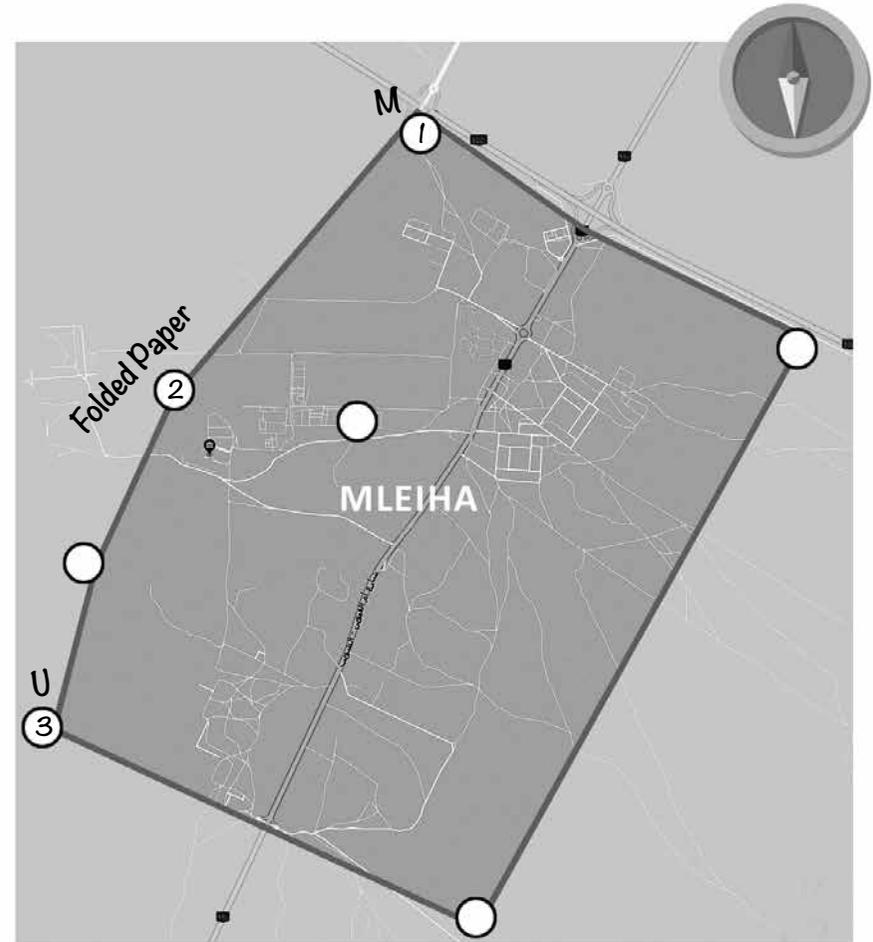
Then they returned, victorious, to the group and waited for the supervisor’s confirmation that they’d got it right.

“That’s great, guys. I’m really proud of all of you! And your sister, **Sami**, if it wasn’t for her Anyway the shape of the rock is the next clue. The letter U”

So far, they had solved three puzzles. They had three more to go and plenty of time.

On the map, **Hamed** put numeral (3) in front of the place where they found the rock and wrote beside it the letter (U).

Before giving them the fourth puzzle, **Mr. Abdullah** informed them that it was the last one before putting up their tents, lighting a fire and heating their dinner.



Puzzle Four – Watch Out!
Confusing information!



It was the turn of the adventurer, **Ali**, to receive the envelope and try to solve the puzzle with everyone's help. He opened it very slowly and carefully as if he was handling a historical document. He read the question and smiled: "I know it and I don't need anyone's help. But I'll read it out to you anyway.

Ibrahim, write down the question and then listen to the brilliant reply from your friend!"

The question is: 'What is the fastest animal in the world? If you know it, you'll get a new letter. You have one minute to answer starting now.'

"Definitely my friends and audience, because I read a lot about animals and watch documentaries on '*National Geographic*', I shall give you my

answer in a mere 10 seconds. The fastest animal is the hunting leopard, also called the Cheetah."

Ali's voice was so loud that it echoed between the mountains.

Everyone was waiting for the new letter. But the supervisor surprised them with his comment: "Your answer, **Ali**, is not correct. The cheetah is the fastest land animal, but the question did not specify that. You still have half a minute to give the correct answer, or else you will lose this stage and the competition as well. Bewilderment was apparent on the boys' faces. They were running out of time and their dream was about to disappear.

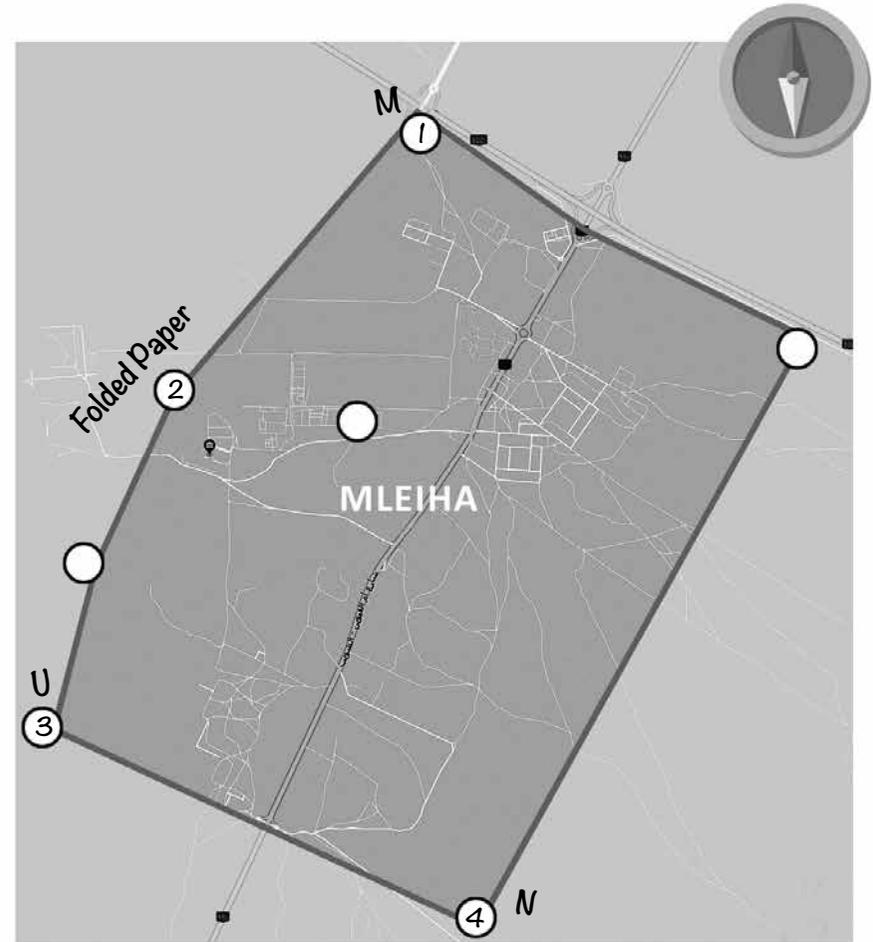
All of a sudden, **Hamed** called from the center:

“Guys, as the supervisor said, the cheetah is the fastest land animal, but the fastest of all is a bird..... *(the solution of puzzle 4 is at the end of the book)*. It is considered the fastest among all animals in general; it flies at a speed of 354 km an hour. I found this information online.”

It was only then that they saw the relief on **Mr. Abdullah’s** face. Like them, he wanted to finish the adventure and win the prize.

Mr. Abdullah gave them a new letter (N) and sat on a nearby rock sipping the rest of his cold coffee.

Hamed was pleased that he was able to resolve the confusing puzzle on time. He put numeral (4) on the map to the south of the center, and wrote beside it the letter (N).



Camping and Disappearance

It was time to prepare the camping site, light a fire and heat their dinner.

Hamed joined them to help and to put up his own tent. He was able to do everything by himself because he was used to doing almost everything independently. The team decided to erect their tents before the sunset and the boys went to look for firewood and sticks, agreeing to meet back at the campsite in 30 minutes.



They finished setting up the tents. **Ali** helped them because he had brought a pop-up tent (though he did not realize that it didn't prevent moisture and

rain). He didn't really mind though, he had a big sleeping bag and an extra cover and that was all he needed.

Ali stayed at the camp trying to arrange the inside of his tent and protect it by placing some nylon rolls outside it. He wished he'd known more about what quality of tent should be used in an overnight adventure. He found some dry sticks nearby and placed them in the designated hole, then took out his dinner bag and put it near the supervisor's chair. Finally, **Ali** left a voice mail and left.

The rest of the boys and the supervisor returned at the appointed time carrying dry branches for the fire. **Hamed** had brought some big pieces of wood from the Center. One of the young employees had

given them to him to keep them all warm at night. The team lit the fire and gathered around it in a circle just as the sun was setting.

Suddenly, **Rashed** noticed **Ali's** disappearance and got very worried. Even though **Ali** could be annoying, their friendship had turned into a brotherhood over time.

Where could he be? A horrible silence descended over the group, interrupted by **Ibrahim** asking if they should search for their friend before it got fully dark. He was afraid that the nice, cheerful boy could be lost between the rocks or over the mountains.

"Don't worry, **Ali** is fine and he'll be back soon!" The supervisor suddenly announced, poking the fire with a stout stick.

The crackling noise of the wood burning was accompanied by the sound of the wind coming from the hills.

Disguising their anxiety, the team started heating their dinner meal. They could not stop thinking about their friend and the calm reaction of their supervisor to his sudden disappearance shocked them. Sitting around the flaming fire after eating the surprise meal of chicken Biryani that **Ali** had brought from home, the team worried. Where was **Ali** and why wasn't he answering his phone?

"Let's see what we have got so far. Do you have the map, **Hamed**?" **Rashed** said, in the tone of a leader who wanted to be in control again.

He looked at their clues: "We have the letters (M) then (U) then (N): (MUN). Do they mean moon?!"

Maybe we have to sleep here tonight and watch the moon to work out the answer to the next puzzle?"

Suddenly **Mr. Abdullah** spoke, his eyes gleaming from the glow of the fire; "Alright guys, now that we have finished eating and drinking, I shall give you the fifth puzzle and you will be relying on each other's knowledge without resorting to any kind of technology."

"The fifth puzzle? Right now? Can't it wait until morning? We want to look for **Ali**!" **Ibrahim**, who couldn't hide his concern, asked.

"**Ibrahim**, it will be you who solves this puzzle. I trust you. As for **Ali**, I have already told you that he is fine and will be back soon. We are safe here."

The supervisor's voice was soft, woven with the crackling sound of the burning wood and the light wind, as well as a strange growling noise that had started nearby.

**Puzzle Five – Don't you love
antiquities and history?**



Ibrahim held the envelope, his hand trembling a little from cold – or perhaps it was the fear of losing. He put a light blanket over his shoulders and opened the envelope. All eyes were on him, waiting to find out if the question was a hard one, especially without any outside help. Would their worry about **Ali** break their concentration?

Ibrahim read the question by the light of the fire, telling his friends: ‘Mleiha is one of the most important archaeological sites in the country. It reveals several ancient prehistoric periods. At the Center, there is a detailed explanation of these periods on display. Name three ages of them. If you get the answer within five minutes, you will get a new clue to solving the puzzle.’

“A clue and not a letter? What does that mean?”

Ibrahim was surprised.

“I think I’ve read about this before during our visit to the Center. I saw the archaeological exhibits and read what was written below them. I also learned about fossils when we visited the Sharjah Archaeology Museum.”

Everyone waited for **Ibrahim**, the Stone man, to continue. “Huh, and what is the answer Oh Archaeologist?” **Sami** asked.

“In this area, you can see evidence of several prehistoric periods, including the Stone Age (like my nickname), the Bronze Age, and the Iron Age. I know the rest if you want! (*the solution of puzzle 5 is at the end of the book*).

Write this down, **Sami**, it might come in useful for you someday.” **Ibrahim** replied confidently.

The supervisor smiled and patted **Ibrahim's** shoulder proudly. "Didn't I tell you that you would be the best person to answer this question? Here is your next clue." And **Mr Abdullah** handed him a small piece of paper with the symbol ∞ written on it.

Hamed opened the map and wondered where to put numeral (5) and the symbol. Eventually, he reasoned that he should put it at their camping site, between 2 and 3.

"Let me tell you more about these periods. Did you see the evidence of graves there on the other side? You can imagine the lives of those who once lived in this land of mountains and sand dunes."

Mr. Abdullah began to tell them stories of the ancient people who lived there, tales of wars that

they fought and the families that they founded. He told them about their huge monuments and how they dressed. And the more he told them, the deeper they dived into that ancient world. They listened to the noises of the night; the soft wind, the crackling of the flames and the sounds of small animals, mostly desert Garb, moving around them. Suddenly, they heard a deep groan nearby. Then they saw the shadow of a giant extending his hands and marching towards them! **Rashed** let out a small scream, then coughed loudly to disguise the sound he'd just made.

They froze in their places. **Sami** held his head in his hands as the deep voice of the giant roared: "Did you leave enough Biryani for me? You know how much I like it!"

Mr. Abdullah broke out laughing and couldn't stop for several minutes. The giant was none other than their friend **Ali**, his shadow elongated by the light from the fire. He'd been asleep in his tent all along! The growling sound they'd heard earlier had been the sound of his snoring. The sudden groan had been his yawn on waking. He had needed a nap and left the supervisor a voice mail telling him so.

Everybody laughed so hard that **Ibrahim** even had tears in his eyes.

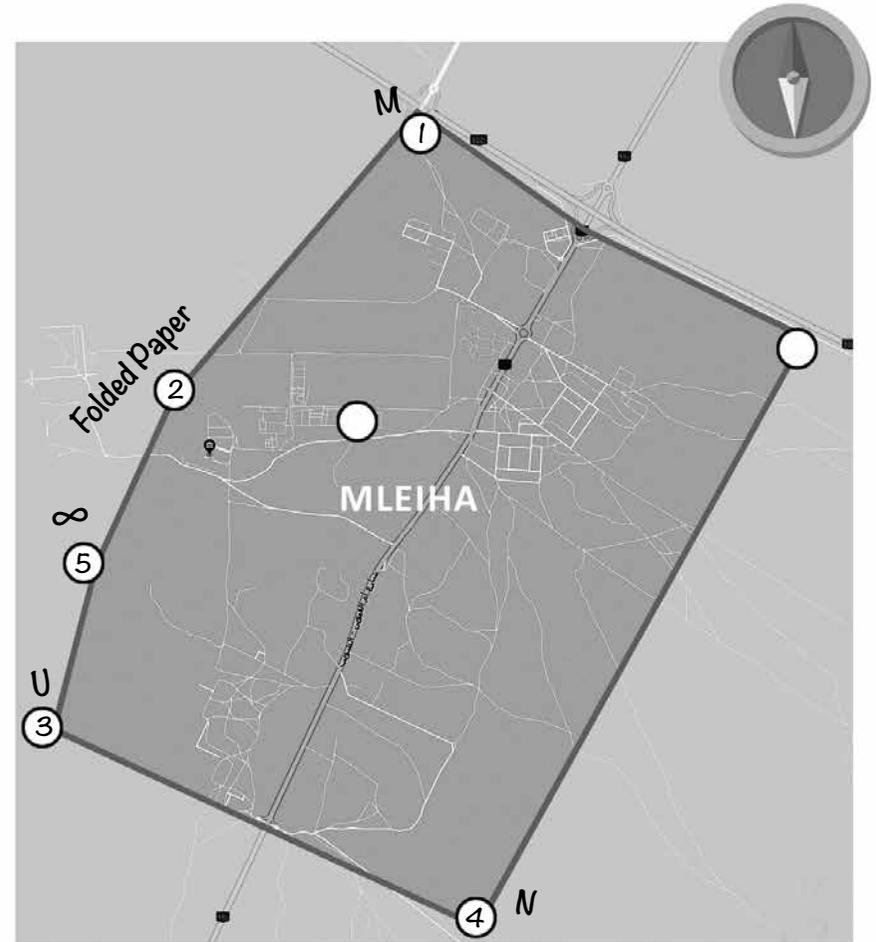
"Thank God you are safe. We were all worried about you while there you were, tucked up in your tent, sound asleep. We left some food for you though, but it might need reheating" Said **Hamed**, smiling. The young man, usually so in control of his

emotions, could not, for once, disguise that he had been concerned at **Ali's** disappearance and that he was happy at the sight of his good friend.

Sitting around their campfire the friends relaxed. They played games and recited poems that they had composed. The poems revealed some promising talents (if promising could be used to describe these poetic disasters – they were *terrible*). They told jokes and unraveled puzzles and finally decided to rest a little before dawn caught up with them.

"We should all have a quick sleep. You still have one more puzzle to solve and I hope you can make it, guys! I can feel the excitement, maybe even more than you. We'll get up at dawn and resume our mission".

The supervisor damped down the campfire and checked that each one of the boys had retired to his tent, then he, in turn went to rest after a hard day's work.





Puzzle Six and the final one – A new dawn

On Saturday morning the group was woken before sunrise by the voice of their supervisor, reminding them of the deadline for solving the final puzzle.

“Shall we have our breakfast now or after it, sir?”

Ibrahim asked with half-closed eyes, not from fatigue or sleep; he was probably pleading.

Mr. Abdullah decided to give them the last puzzle immediately to ensure they had enough time to finish the adventure. Afterwards, they would eat, pack their things and return home.

The sun rose and the golden rays of the sun spread over the sands of the desert.

“The final puzzle is open to everyone.

I shall read it out and you will find the solution.

Once you’ve done that, I can give you the last clue.” He took a deep breath and continued: “On a nearby high, you will find an old wooden box. You must bring it back here and use the clues to open it and find the treasure. You have ten minutes.”

The friends agreed that **Sami** and **Rashed** should go up the nearby hill with the camera and the rest of the photographic equipment. That was the best way to look for the box they needed. It felt as though they were on a mission at the Sharjah Space and Astronomy Center, searching for a hidden star. **Sami** set up his camera on the hill and attached his large zoom lens. **Rashed** was fascinated – he was enjoying watching **Sami’s** expertise. “It’s ready now; let’s begin. We are running out of time!”

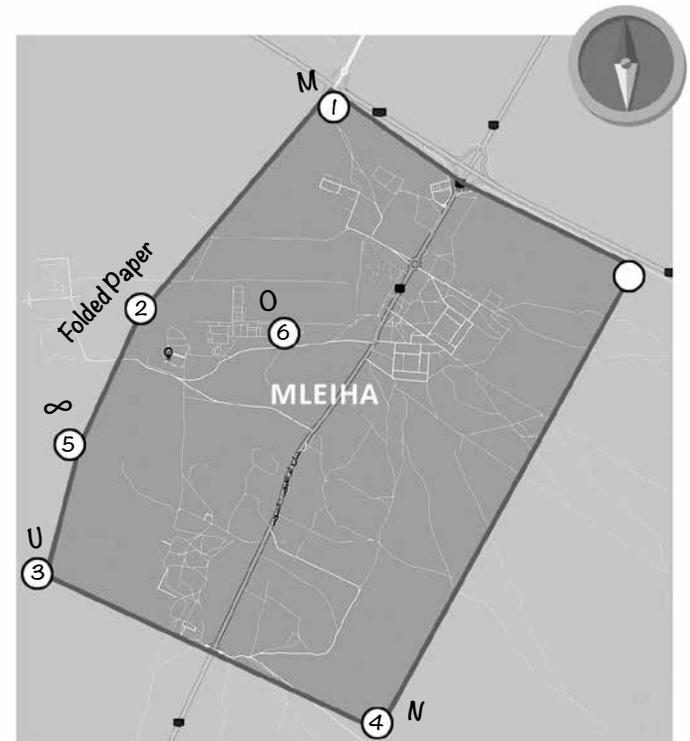
“He said: a nearby high and didn’t mention a mountain. A wooden box? Where could it be and how was it placed on a nearby hill while we were so nearby and no one heard a thing! Hmmm...”

Rashed was wondering in a loud voice while **Sami** was busy scanning the area in the hope of finding the box quickly. “I’ve got it, **Sami**, turn your camera towards the Center, and zoom in on the roof of the building. Tell me what you see.”

Sami followed **Rashed’s** instructions and shouted: “YES, I see something black on the roof. It looks like a box. **Ibrahim**, quick, run and bring it back. That must be it.”

Ibrahim returned carrying an old wooden box, while **Rashed** and **Sami** came down the hill.

The supervisor applauded them; they had solved the puzzle in time. He gave them the last clue, written on a small piece of paper. It was the letter O. **Hamed** held the map in front of him and wrote down numeral (6) on the Center’s location and beside it the clue.



The Secret of the Box

On examining the box down, **Ibrahim** discovered that it was tightly locked. The lock was made up of six squares. He understood then that they had to fill the squares so that the wooden box would reveal its secrets.

They all sat on the ground near the box with the map open in front of them. They had to find a solution that would enable them to open the box and win.

“We have the letters: M –U –N – O and the symbol (∞), what does that mean? Is it a word?” **Rashed** stroked his short beard, thinking.

Ali took the last piece of biscuit and started munching it. “Is that the symbol of infinity (∞) or is it the no. 8? Is that the letter O or a zero? Just a question that crossed my mind!”.

Ali continued munching. He probably needed that biscuit in particular to activate his rational thinking. “What a genius!! It might not look like it but you really are one. Why did we take it for granted that these are all letters and a symbol and not letters and numbers? So tell me a genius, what does *MUN08* or *MUN80* mean? How do we use five clues to fill the six squares?” **Rashed** was asking **Ali** without expecting an answer.

He looked at the supervisor who was patiently waiting for their answers. He had all the answers for **Rashed’s** questions, but couldn’t help.

“number 8 and number 0, number 0 and number 8, these are numbers of what?” **Ali** asked with innocence.

But his question didn’t pass by easily with **Ibrahim** who said: “Really a genius without knowing, this is the word (NUM) for number and not MUN, followed by 80. I believe the squares must contain numbers only without letters, and this explains it all”

Ali was super proud of himself, he was the main reason for being so close to solving the main puzzle. “Maybe it’s a number starting with 80, like *Al Ameen number* 8004888, I can memorize it easily as I made a pledge to protect this generous place”. It was **Hamed’s** idea, as he found in this city everything he dreamt of.

But that didn't work, the squares are only 6.
"Could it be the police phone number: 999?
Hmmm... no, it's not possible. We need six
numerals, not three." **Ali** was back to his normal
self after the latest Tsunami of genius that had
suddenly hit him.

"Let's think about the numbers that start at 80.
We're definitely missing something here. "**Rashed**
the leader said, "We know now that the letters
are num and that the numbers are 8 and 0. Did we
miss anything?"

Then he suddenly remembered, "Aha, the folded
paper that you put in your pocket after the second
puzzle, **Ibrahim**, where is it?"

Ibrahim went to his tent and brought back
yesterday's clothes.

There, in the pocket of his Kandoura, was the note.
He handed it to **Rashed** immediately.

Mr. Abdullah watched them carefully, pacing
slowly up and down.

Rashed opened the folded paper and saw a word -
child.

Child? What could it possibly mean?

The Final Stage

The team started moving and whispering like a lost swarm of bees.

Suddenly, **Ali** froze in his place, as he remembered something dreadful. He started trembling a little as he began to sweat. His friends, noticing his distress, made him to sit in the supervisor's chair and handed him some water. Then, they waited for him to explain what was happening and what had upset him so much.

"I'm sorry guys. I just remembered a painful incident that happened to me when I was a child, not long after I came to live in Sharjah. It was awful, but I was able to get through it with God's

help and the Child Helpline.” **Ali’s** breath was quickening while he remembered this thing that he had tried his hardest to forget. The memory was painful but it was the key to the solution. He didn’t give them any other details and they didn’t ask him to.

“My friends, try the Child Helpline phone number. It’s 800700. Put the numbers in the squares and let’s see.” **Ali** looked at them seriously. “We must get this over so I can have the breakfast I’ve been dreaming of since waking up.”

He was back to the cheerful facade behind which he concealed so much grief and pain.

Rashed said, “Ooooh, you scared me. I’m really proud to be your friend.” He went to **Ali** and

hugged him. And the rest joined in patting his shoulder.

They looked at the box and tried the number that **Ali** suggested. 8, then two zeros, then 7, followed by two final zeros and... the box revealed its secrets.

The Grand Prize – It Was Unexpected

The old wooden box smelled of the past and their ancestors. It belonged at this ancient site in the emirate. What did this box, their ultimate prize – found after using all their teamwork, knowledge, and capabilities – hold for them?

The boys stood around the box smiling and pleased with themselves. **Mr. Abdullah** stood beside them. He was probably the happiest of them all – the secret was unveiled and all the puzzles that he, himself had supervised, working with the Mleiha Archaeological Center and another authority (yet to be revealed), were solved. A yellowish paper, its edges browned to make it

look very old and tied with a small thread, was waiting for them in the middle of the box. **Rashed** took a deep breath and stepped forward. He held the paper, removed the thread and opened it. On it was another telephone number. **Rashed** looked at the supervisor then took his phone and dialed, putting it on speaker for everyone to hear.

A deep voice answered, “Al salamu alaikum wa rahmatu Allah“ (*Peace and the mercy of God be upon you*). This is the **Sharjah Police Academy**. Who is calling?”

Rashed was a little alarmed, his hands were sweating and he almost dropped the phone! His mouth felt a little dry but he replied bravely: “This is **Rashed** from the Adventure and Exploration Team.”
“**Rashed**! Congratulations to all of you! Since

you have found this number, it means that you have solved all the puzzles before the deadline. What a fantastic achievement! We are honored to announce the prize that you all so clearly deserve; a training course for a whole week at the **Academy** during the Spring break. It’s for everyone, the whole team plus, of course, the girls’ team who contributed to the success of your mission. You will learn the work of real policemen and policewomen; how to think rationally and to work together to solve the most difficult puzzles under pressure.

We are looking forward to meeting all of you just as soon as you get your parents’ permission and fill in the forms that your supervisor has for each of you. Well done!”
The call ended but the team were still dazed by

what they had just heard.

“Is that right, sir? Oh, it’s a dream come true, is it possible?!!” They started jumping, singing and clapping.

Ibrahim stopped, grabbed his phone and made a call: “Good morning **Mariam**, are you all okay? Yes, yes...us too. Listen, dear sister, we have accomplished the mission and won the prize, and you girls are included too.” He then told her the details and their need to get their parents’ consent before joining the training course.

Holding the phone away from his ears so her excited shouting didn’t puncture his eardrum; **Ibrahim** asked his sister to relay the good news to **Salma** and **Andrea**.

Hanging up, he went back to the group who were still hopping and dancing.

Ibrahim raised his hand and looked at them. They all joined hands with him and shouted in one voice: “THE ADVENTURE TEAM!”

Then they went back to the Center to eat a delicious breakfast before going home.

Wait, did we forget something Dear Reader?

Ah yes, packing the tents and all their things. Of course, they did that. Don’t worry!

The End

The Hidden Solutions

1. Solution of puzzle no. (1)
The color of the Arabian tiger: White with grey and black spots, and yellowness along the back.

2. Solution of puzzle no. (4)
The fastest animal, in general, is the hawk or "the falcon".

3. Solution of puzzle no. (5)
The other ages that the area passed through:
The Pre-Islam era (Al Jahiliya) and the post-Islam era.

The telephone number of 'Al Amin' service:

8004888

It's a free service that enables the caller to report any harassments or violations he witnesses or is exposed to. It is available all day long and the caller's identity remains strictly confidential.

Child helpline number: 800700

This line receives all cases related to child abuse, mistreatment or violence. The child has easy access to this service.

It was not an ordinary day at all, especially not for the heroes and heroines of our story. This was a day etched in their memory and growing into the vision of a more beautiful tomorrow and a future as bright as their souls and happiness.

Everyone was aware of their love for adventure and challenges. Their selection was a must to solve the puzzle in Mleiha region. They worked as one to find the keys to the puzzle. The prize was an unexpected surprise.