

Mystery of the Golden Temple

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Meet the Characters

Jess Johnson
loves playing soccer
almost as much as
mysterious adventures
in faraway places.



Jared Johnson
is Jess' older brother.
He likes karate and dirt
biking. He keeps an eye
on his little sister too.



Nong May Wattana likes to sing, dance, and make new friends. She is excited to show her new friend, Jess, all around Chiang Mai.

Pee Aran Wattana is Nong May's older brother. He likes Muay Thai (Thai boxing) and works at the Elephant Rescue Center.



NOTE: Nong May and Pee Aran speak some Thai in this book. Use the language glossary on page 98 to learn how to pronounce Thai. To keep things simpler for readers, tonal marks are not used in the text.

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Chapter 1

Off to a Faraway Place



Jessica Johnson knew the drill. Shoes off. Jacket off. No water. Put your bag on the moving belt-thingee. And don't forget to give them your favorite stuffed puppy, Pink Dog. It didn't matter that her favorite stuffed animal had been through the moving belt machine-thingee a gazillion times, Jess still worried a little. What if THIS time she didn't come out on the other end?

The officer motioned Jess to step through the

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metal arch. He glanced up at the top. “Step aside and wait here, please.” The man smiled and nodded in the direction he wanted her to go. She already knew she needed to wait for her mom. It was all part of the drill.

Jess fidgeted with her favorite soccer ball necklace while she waited. She craned her neck to see the other end of the moving belt thingee. Pink fluff crushed up against someone else’s suitcase at the end. Now she had to worry that someone would see how cute Pink Dog was and take her. No one ever did, but what if THIS time someone did?

Airport security? A major drag.

Thank goodness her mom stepped through the arch at that moment. They gathered their stuff off the belt-thingee. Jess grabbed Pink Dog and hugged her big time.

This trip was the farthest away from home Jess had ever been. Her mom had showed her Thailand

Off to a Faraway Place

on their globe. She couldn't believe it was on the other side of the planet. Her mom said they'd see golden palaces and temples and jungles. They might even get to see some elephants.

Jess couldn't stop wondering about so many things. "Are the people in Thailand nice?" she asked her mom. "Do they speak English? Do I have to eat anything weird?"

"Jess, the food in another country is not 'weird.' It's just different from ours. Don't worry about it. You'll be just fine," Mrs. Johnson said.

Just fine. Oh yeah. Jess had heard that one about a million times. In her nine short years, Jess had been "just fine" in over ten different countries already. And it wasn't always "just fine."

Like the time they bought the wrong tickets for the ferry in Greece. They had to sleep all night on hard benches instead of cushy seats.

Not just fine.

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Or the time it took ten hours to go 200 miles on a winding, dusty road in Peru.

Definitely NOT just fine.

But that's what you get when your parents like to work with schools around the world.

"Group one can now board. Group one only."

"That's us," Mr. Johnson said.

"Me first," Jess' older brother, Jared, said as he slyly stepped in front of her.

Jess knew why. They both wanted the window seat so they could watch the plane take off and see the land disappear below them. Totally cool.

"Hey—that's not fair," Jess said in her loudest inside voice. "It's my turn to have the window seat."

"You snooze you lose," Jared said.

"Stop, *please*," Mrs. Johnson said in *her* loudest inside voice. "We've got a long trip ahead of us. Jess, you get the window to London. Jared, you can ride in the window seat from London to Bangkok."

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“Bangkok?” Jess asked.

“That’s the capital city of Thailand. After we land in Bangkok, we’ll switch planes one more time to Chiang Mai, which is in northern Thailand.”

“Chang My?” Jess said, trying hard to say it right. “Geeesh. How long is this going to take?”

“Probably a little over one full day and night,” Mr. Johnson said.

“What? We’re going to travel all day and all night? Seriously? You didn’t tell us it would be *this* long! This is going to take for-*ever*.”

“Jessica, now is not the time to start whining. You’ll be just fine,” Jess’ mom said again as they boarded the plane.

After a very, very, *very* long time—on the afternoon of the next day to be exact—Jess stumbled off the plane in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The first thing she noticed was the strange letters:

ท่าอากาศยานเชียงใหม่

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Jess tugged at her mom's arm. "Mom, Mom, Mom—is that the language here? Why is it so swirly? What does it say?"

"Jess, Jess, Jess," Mrs. Johnson teased. "Yes, that's their language. They speak Thai here. It sounds like T-I-E, but it is spelled T-H-A-I, like the first part of Thailand. But you can look below and see the words in English: Chiang Mai International Airport. Let's hurry along now, we've got to catch a taxi."

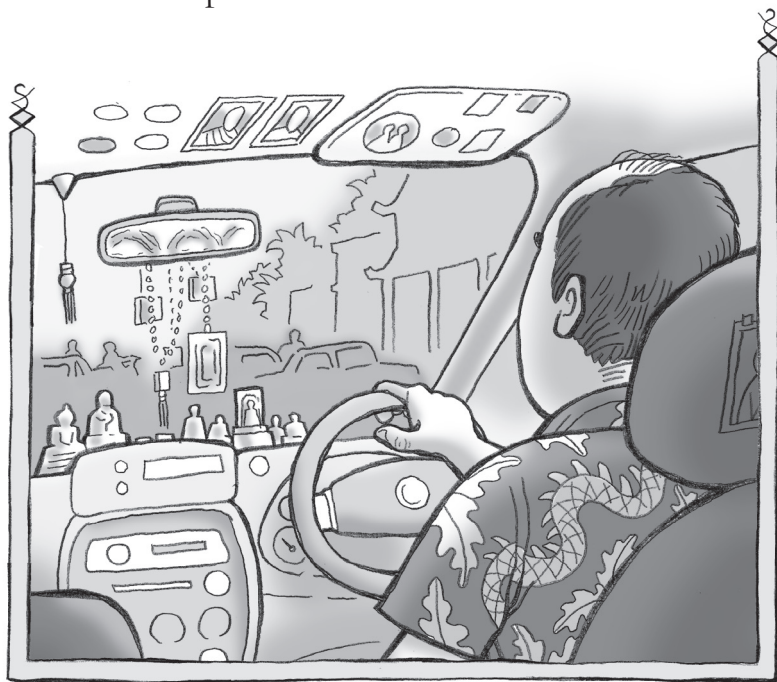
The taxi driver zoomed wildly out of the airport. Jess decided this was not like a taxi in Boston or even New York. Not only was he driving all crazy, the inside was decorated all crazy. Necklaces with little square charms hung from the mirror. Golden coins and statues were glued all over the dashboard. And pictures of royal looking people were taped up on the car seats and roof.

Jess leaned over to her mom and whispered, "Who are they?"

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“Oh, that is His Majesty the King of Thailand and his wife, the Queen. They are very loved here in Thai—”

Just then a motorbike zipped out in front of them. The taxi swerved and the driver slammed on his brakes. One of the statues flew off the dashboard straight at Jess. It crashed on the floor and splintered into a million pieces.



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Nearly in tears, the driver mumbled in a mix of Thai and English, “No, no, no . . . bad luck.” He suddenly skidded to a stop on the side of the road.

Jess thanked her lucky stars to be safe. Seemed like good luck to her.

“Bad luck. It broken,” the taxi driver cried. He frantically waved them out of the car. “Keep driving . . . be very bad luck. Get out here.”

The whole family sat, frozen. Did he just say to get out?

“Get out here. Please get out,” he repeated. “Bad luck. Go. Go. GO!”

He pushed the Johnsons out of the car. Then he sped away leaving them and their bags on the street.

“Don’t worry, guys,” Mr. Johnson said. He shook his head and rubbed his neck. “We’ll be just fine.”

Definitely and totally NOT just fine.

What to Know Before You Go!



Where is Thailand?

Thailand is located in Southeast Asia. To the north and east are the countries of Myanmar (also sometimes called Burma), Laos, and Cambodia. The long southern part of Thailand connects with Malaysia. The Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea are on either side. Tourists often visit the city of Bangkok, the mountains in the northern part of Thailand, and the beach in the southern part of Thailand.

Some people say that Thailand is shaped like an elephant's head. The elephant has played an important role in Thai history. It is one of Thailand's national symbols.

Facts about Thailand

Official Name: Thailand was known as Siam until 1939. It is now officially the Kingdom of Thailand. Thailand means “land of the free.”

Capital: Bangkok. Bangkok’s full ceremonial name is Krungthepmahanakhon Amonrattanakosin Mahintharayutthaya Mahadilokphop Noppharatchathaniburirom Udomratchaniwetmahasathan Amonphimanawatansathit Sakkathattiyawitsanukamprasit. That is the longest place name (with spaces) in the world.

Currency: Baht

Government: Thailand is a constitutional monarchy. The king is the leader of the country and very respected and loved. The country is governed by the prime minister, cabinet, and national assembly.

Language: Thai

Population: 69.52 million people (as of 2013 estimate)

Say It in Thai!

English

Thai

Thai Pronunciation

Hello (woman/man)	สวัสดี	Sà-wàt-dee khâ/khráp
My name is (man/woman)	ผม/ดิฉันชื่อ	Phôm/Dì-chăn chêu khâ/khráp
Respectful title	คุณ	Khun
Younger sibling/people	น้อง	Nóng
Older sibling/people	พี่	Pêe
Please	กรุณา	Gà-rú-naa
Thank you (woman/man)	ขอบคุณ	Khòp khun khâ/khráp
Thank you/Thanks (to younger or friend)	ขอบใจ	Khòp jai
It's okay/Is no problem	ไม่เป็นไร	Mâi pen rai
You're welcome	ไม่เป็นไร	Mâi pen rai
My pleasure	ยินดี	Yin dee
I'm sorry/Excuse me	ขอโทษ	Khõr tòht khâ/khráp
Temple	วัด	Wát
Awesome	เจ๋ง	Jěng

Tone Marker Note: There are five different tones in Thai: 1) low tone, which is flat at the bottom of the vocal range (hòk); 2) mid tone, which is flat at the middle of the vocal range (no marker is used); 3) falling tone, which starts high and falls sharply (mâi); 4) high tone, which is at the top of the vocal range (khráp); 5) rising tone, which starts low and rises gradually (săhm).