

The Secret behind the Waterfall

by Connie Adams, Young Batty Laureate 2022

336 BC

Fire blazed on the torches of the Tikawali people, as they journeyed across the Mexican plains. Finally they arrived at the waterfall. Yuum K'iino (the priest) took the sacred jewel and performed a ritual. Five warriors, with Yuum K'iino, went behind the waterfall and buried it – never to be discovered again.

Until...

2022 AD

She thought the climb out of the hotel window would be tough, but this was a whole new level. Gabrielle walked across the car park, as stealthily as a professional ninja. Exploring would make this work trip that she had been dragged along to, sooo much more enjoyable – especially at night. Ever since her older brother went missing, she always had to come on her mum's stupid trips. Gabrielle had a brilliant memory so when she crossed the road and arrived at the jungle, she made sure she took in her surroundings before venturing in.

Looking around, she saw huge statues of what looked like *bats*. Surely not? She walked on. Further into the jungle, Gabrielle noticed that amongst the moonlit trees the remains of houses and buildings stood. It looked abandoned. Now this was an adventure. Nearby the noise of water trickling caught Gabrielle's attention. She jogged to the stream and followed it with her eyes. She decided she would see where it was coming from.

Further up the hill, there were more statues of the bat-like creatures. At last, Gabrielle saw through a thicket of bushes the most beautiful waterfall. She climbed towards it. Gabrielle sat and watched the water gush down the rocky cliff. Then, she saw something glinting behind it. She found herself walking towards it.

She stepped behind the waterfall. There was a tower of engraved rocks and stones on top of a mound. They looked like ancient runes and she couldn't read them. Gabrielle moved them carefully, one by one onto the floor and started to dig up the mound. Ten minutes later she had dug the whole mound up and found a black onyx gem carved in the shape of a bat. She ran her fingers over it. It was so smooth.

Suddenly, the cave started to shake. She didn't notice at first, she was so mesmerised by the stone. A stalactite fell on her head. The last thing she saw was a colony of bats swarming towards her...

Gabrielle awoke on the edge of the jungle, with a huge lump on her forehead and a few people looking at her. She felt in her pocket. The cold, hard bat shape of the stone was there. *The bats must have saved me* she thought. She smiled. As she looked up at the hot Mexican sun, something dark flashed across the sky, and the stone in her pocket pulsed. This excited Gabrielle, this was just the beginning.