

*SOPHIE ASKED, “WHERE SHOULD WE GO NEXT?”*

*“HOW ABOUT—,” STARTED MATEO.*

*“WAIT,” INTERRUPTED SOPHIE. “YOU’VE HAD TWO TURNS ALREADY. I THINK NOAH OR I SHOULD PICK THE NEXT SPOT.” MATEO NODDED RELUCTANTLY.*

*“OKAY, THEN,” SAID SOPHIE, “HOW ABOUT THE DESERT? DOES THAT SOUND OKAY TO YOU, NOAH?”*

*“SURE, LET’S GO.”*

*“OKAY, ENNA,” YELLED SOPHIE, “TAKE US TO THE DESERT!” THE COLORS STARTED TO SWIRL.*



### Chapter 3—The Desert

It was sunset, so it wasn't too bright out, but all the kids could see were some cacti and rocks and sand.

“Maybe we need to hold still. Maybe all our moving is scaring the animals.” Noah observed. “Besides, it's hot and I don't want to move around anymore.” The other two agreed and they all sat down. And waited. Mateo thought this was taking too long, but just as he was about to suggest doing something else, something moved out of the

corner of his eye. He was so startled, he jumped a little, but luckily didn't scare away the small lizard that had crawled out from under a rock.

"Whoa," he whispered, "so cool!" He saw that the other two had slowly leaned in closer to get a better look.

"Wow," Sophie whispered as well. "I wonder what it is?" The lizard looked around for a few moments and then darted to the cover of another rock. The lizard crawled around that rock and then crawled on top. A few feet away from the lizard's rock they heard a hiss. When they looked, they saw a small snake. It was slowly inching up, getting closer and closer to the lizard. As they watched, the snake stretched out and bit the lizard. The lizard scurried away, but only made it a few yards before it slowed and stopped; the snake's poison had worked and now the lizard couldn't move. The snake slowly followed the trail of the lizard. When the snake caught up, it opened its mouth wide enough to place it over the head of the lizard and began swallowing it whole.



While the snake was slowly consuming the lizard, the kids heard a flutter. They looked up and saw an owl swooping down on the snake. It snatched the snake and lizard up in its sharp claws and a feather dropped to the ground as it flew away.

"Wow!" all three kids exclaimed.

"Aw, man! That was so cool!" shouted Mateo.

"I didn't know that owls eat snakes," said Sophie.

"Predators eat animals, but sometimes predators are also prey," answered Noah. "Sometimes they get eaten, too. There's even this thing that shows which animals eat other animals. Like, it'd show a bug, and then a lizard, 'cause lizards eat bugs, then a snake, then an owl. Then it'd show how the owl would die and the bugs would eat the owl. Then the lizards would eat the bugs and it keeps going."

"Gross!" exclaimed Sophie.

"I actually think it's super interesting," answered Noah.

"And I didn't know that owls lived in the desert." replied Mateo.

"Hey," Noah quietly observed, "since you," he pointed to Sophie, "didn't know about the food chain and since you," he pointed to Mateo, "didn't know about owls in the desert, maybe we should pick up the feather for our evidence."

"I got it!" called Mateo as he raced to pick it up.

"But what about you?" Sophie questioned Noah. "What did you learn about the desert?"

Noah thought for a moment. "I didn't know it could get so cold after the sun went down. It's getting pretty cold, don't you think?"

Sophie and Mateo agreed. Mateo placed the feather in the backpack.

"Okay, how about this?" Sophie asked. "This is our third biome and we still have two question times for Enna. We can ask her why the savanna was so green and why it's not super hot. I thought the savanna was hot like the desert," Sophie commented. "And," she added, "we can ask why the desert is so cold now that the sun has gone down. And maybe we can also ask if she can dress us for the cold. Then we could go see the penguins."

"Cool," said Mateo. "Now, if no one plans on slapping my mouth," he looked significantly at Noah, then at Sophie, "I'll ask Enna to come. Okay?"

Noah and Sophie nodded.

"Hey, Enna," Mateo called, "we have some questions."

Enna appeared before them. "How may I help you?"

"Why was the savanna so green? And why was it not super hot?" asked Mateo.

"The savanna has a tropical climate. This means that during the rainy season, the plants are green and healthy. The rainy season can last six to eight months of the year. This also means that temperatures are mild. Even during the hottest months, temperatures usually do not exceed 85 degrees fahrenheit."

"Okay. Makes sense. But why is the desert so cold?" responded Mateo as if he was trying to see if he could stump her.

"The desert is dry and does not have a lot of moisture in the air. Moisture in the air is known as humidity. Humidity holds on to heat. Because the air is not humid—"

"It doesn't hold on to the heat!" finished Mateo. "Okay, but here's another one for you. Can you give us warm clothes to wear? We want to see the penguins."

"Yes," Enna simply stated as the colors started to swirl.

"You know," observed Sophie as they were disappearing, "if this weren't an encyclopedia, I'd ask to see some unicorns like the ones in that virtual program on the library website."

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