

A boy, his dog, two birds, and a mysterious ghost!

Mystery of Madera Canyon

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Chapter 3

THIS HOMEWORK WAS COOL

Although I went right to bed, I had no intention of sleeping. Not yet anyway. I still had a lot of homework to do. And, this type of homework was fun.

As a final birthday present, my father had agreed to drive me and Lobo out to Madera Canyon in the morning. I had heard wonderful things about this place, but I'd never been there.

I excitedly took out my Madera Canyon books, maps, and new National Geographic bird book and went to work.

Well past midnight, I was still awake under my bed covers with a tiny flashlight in my hand. Good old Lobo was right there with me.

This stuff was really interesting!

First, I learned all about the history of Madera Canyon. *Madera* is the Spanish word for lumber. Early settlers had cut down many trees there to build their homes in Tucson.

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The book said the canyon was way up in the Santa Rita Mountains and described it as ‘a beautiful, moist, refreshing haven from the hot desert.’

That sounded pretty cool.

It was also located the Coronado National Forest, which is huge. The book said this forest contained 12 mountains and almost 2 million acres of land in both Arizona and New Mexico.

Now that’s a lot of trees!

Madera Canyon was also chock full of hiking trails. There were all kinds – from easy, sissy ones to steep, tough ones. There were so many hiking trails I couldn’t decide which one to take in the morning.

But what fascinated me the most about Madera Canyon were the birds.

The guide book said, ‘Madera Canyon is a haven for bird watchers, with over 240 different species of birds.’ Can you believe it? Over 240 species of birds! It was hard for me to imagine that many different kinds of birds.

Then I saw the information on the hummingbirds and really got excited. The book said, ‘There are 22 species of hummingbirds, and 16 of these species can be found in Madera Canyon. Some of them fly 2,500 miles to reach the canyon.’

“How can those itty bitsy birds fly that far?” I whispered to Lobo.

Lobo just looked at me and yawned. I guess he was getting tired. But he woke up real quick when I read this part to him.

“The hummingbird is considered nature’s stunt bird. Unlike other birds, it can hover, and fly up, down, and

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backwards. Like a helicopter, a hummingbird can even tilt the angle of its wings and execute precise, accurate turns and movements.”

I could tell that Lobo was impressed. But now I was getting sleepy.

2 AM! Where did the time go? I put the books up, shut off the flashlight, and got ready for some shut-eye. But I looked out the window first. That was a big mistake.

It was a real clear night, and a full moon was shining down on the desert.

Just as I was about to fall asleep, my eyeballs popped wide open and I stared out that window again.

The full moon? The full moon? What had I read somewhere about Madera Canyon and the full moon? Think, Bonafacio, think!

I turned on my flashlight again and found the book I was looking for. It was one of those weird mysteries of Arizona type books. I had lots of them since I like weird mysteries.

I gulped hard, and read the passage out loud to Lobo. I definitely wanted to get his reaction on this one.

“When a full moon rises above Madera Canyon, a ghostly figure soon appears. This ghost stands high on a rock formation across a canyon wall, usually between 10 PM and 2 AM. It’s a large hooded figure with the face of a skeleton and it moves back and forth on the rocks until it finally vanishes into the darkness. It has been photographed and seen by countless numbers of people over the years.”

Even old Lobo was nervously sitting up now. His big floppy ears were pointing straight up.

Ed Kostro

“*Oye Chihuahua*, Lobo! And we’re going hiking out there tomorrow? Good thing we’re going in the daylight.”

Lobo seemed to agree.

“There’s more, Lobo. Listen to this!”

Lobo was staring at me now, his big black eyes almost popping out of their sockets, too.

“The ghost has a legend attached to it. It’s said to be the spirit of an Indian woman who once loved a great warrior. After he was killed in a fierce battle in the canyon, she died of grief.

“Some believe that she still wanders Madera Canyon in the moonlight, desperately searching for her dead husband.”

I quickly shut off the flashlight again. And this time, I hid under the covers with old Lobo. We were both shivering.

Man, that was pretty spooky!

And I don’t think either one of us got much sleep that night.

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