



Classified Information

"Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!" the students laughed as they climbed onto the school bus on a warm, sunny day for a field trip to the zoo.

The happy mood was extinguished when Carlos pulled out an article he'd clipped from that morning's newspaper. Several animals had been stolen from the zoo the night before, and the police suspected that someone was pretending to be a zoo employee to get keys to the cages.

Valerie, Meredith, and Carlos decided to investigate while they visited the animals they were assigned to write about.

"Excuse me," Valerie said to the woman working at the main information desk. "Where would I go to see the bats?"

"The bird house, right up this path," the woman said.

Meanwhile, Meredith was disappointed when she arrived at the polar bear exhibit. No bears were to be seen, since they were all back in their cave.

"Can't you get the bears to come out?" she asked the zookeeper.

"I'm afraid they won't come out on a day like this," he said.

Carlos was also disappointed when he reached the owls, which were just sitting on their perches.

"I was hoping to see them fly," he said to a zookeeper there.

"I'm sorry, but you'd have to come back tonight to see that," the woman replied.

When they gathered at the bus to return to school, they shared their experiences. Valerie whispered to their teacher, Ms. Peralta, "I know who's been pretending to be a zoo employee."

"Who?" Ms. Peralta asked.

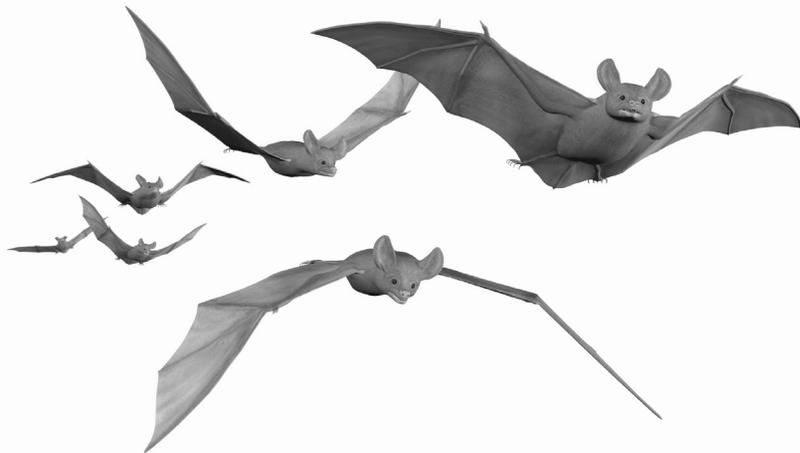




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Ms. Peralta took Valerie to see a security guard. "Tell him what you told me," Ms. Peralta said.

Valerie said, "Meredith asked the zookeeper at the polar bear cage to bring out the bears, but it's too hot for them and it would be very dangerous to try to get a bear out of its cave. And Carlos was disappointed that the owls weren't moving, but owls are nocturnal. That means that they sleep during the day and become active at night. Those zookeepers knew what they were talking about. But you ought to investigate the woman at the information desk. She told me to go to the bird house to find bats. Bats aren't birds, they're mammals, and anyone who is really a zoo employee would know that."



Food for Thought

It was the "End of the Pleistocene Epoch Party" and half the students had been assigned to decorate the room, while the others brought in food, all with an Ice Age theme.

After they finished doing cave drawings on the blackboard, Kyrie, Taylor, and Emma walked around to check out the food.

Kyrie looked at a punch bowl full of some red liquid. It smelled like regular punch, but she wasn't so sure. It was thicker than punch and warm.

"What's that stuff?" she asked Zackery.

"Woolly mammoth blood!" he said.

"Ewwwww!" Kyrie said.

"Try this 'giant deer' meat. It's real venison my dad got from a hunter," Derek said.

"Ugh!" she said.

At the next table, Emma saw something that kind of smelled like salmon, but was as tough as leather. "What's this?" she asked Cameron.

"Dried, smoked fish, of course," Cameron said. "Remember we learned that smoking meat over a fire preserves it? We could leave this out for weeks and it would taste just the same."

"Just as bad, you mean," Emma grumbled.

Taylor, meanwhile, had stopped at Daniel's table, where he was arranging a plate of cookies shaped like Stegosauruses.

"Finally, something I recognize as food," Emma said when she and Kyrie joined Taylor. "Don't you just hate it, being hungry and most of the food is so gross?"

"There's only one thing I'm not going to have, and that's because it's not realistic," Taylor said.

"Which one is that?" Kyrie asked.





Food for Thought

"Much as I like cookies, Stegosaurus cookies don't fit in with the theme of the party," Taylor said. "Dinosaurs lived in the Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous periods between 250 and 65 million years ago, meaning that they were extinct long before the Pleistocene Epoch and the Ice Age. The Pleistocene Epoch was only about 1.8 million to 10,000 years ago."



Bear Scare

At a one-week ski camp in mid-winter, three best friends were in the same group—Carla, Sasha, and Elizabeth. Today their group was going on a treasure hunt for a bag of candy.

They had a map with names of the different ski trails and clues that led them to the right ones. After going down several trails and up some ski lifts, they found a tree painted with an X. Also on the tree was a large scratch mark.

"X marks the spot," Carla said.

They took off their skis and dug in the snow at the base of the tree. But there was only an empty box.

They skied down to the ski school, where they found Leslie Coyle, their instructor.

"We found the box, but there was no candy in it," Sasha said.

"I asked the workers to take out the prize because of the bears," Ms. Coyle said. "Bears can smell food even through a box and we don't want them going to the areas where there are skiers."

Elizabeth noticed a big bag of candy on Ms. Coyle's desk.

"Stealer!" Elizabeth said, laughing. "You just wanted the candy for yourself. And I can prove it."

"So, prove it," Ms. Coyle laughed. "Are you saying there are no bears in this area? Or that bears couldn't smell candy through a box?"





Bear Scare

"There are bears here—that's what made the scratch mark on the tree," replied Elizabeth. "And bears probably could smell the candy through a box. But it's the middle of winter. Bears are hibernating now, so they wouldn't be out roaming around."

They all shared the candy.



The Horse's Fodder

Horseback riding was a big part of the program at the summer camp. The campers were going to learn how to ride, tack up, and groom the horses. Everyone was assigned a horse that they were expected to take special care of for two weeks.

It was the first evening of camp, and around the dinner table, Kelsey, Drew, and Malaya were very excited about their horses—Rocky, Alex, and Blaze. The next day, they were going to ride the horses down to the stream that ran past the camp to wade in the water.

"Is it okay if we take a treat to our horses?" Malaya asked their counselor after dinner.

"Sure, they'd love that," said their counselor, "Except it has to be food you took for yourself but just can't finish."

After clearing the table, they wrapped some leftovers in napkins and started off toward the stables.

"If I'd known the rule, I would have saved more food for Rocky," Kelsey said. "I only had a couple of carrot sticks left."

"All I have for Alex is one apple chunk," Drew said glumly.

"Well, I saved a whole pork chop for Blaze," Malaya said.

Kelsey smiled as she said, "I know which horse is going to eat the least."

"Which one?" Drew asked.





The Horse's Fodder

"Horses are herbivores, not carnivores. That means they don't eat meat, just plants," Kelsey said as they reached the stables. "They'll eat carrot sticks and apples, but they won't eat pork chops. Here, Malaya, you can give some of my carrot sticks to Blaze."



Left in the Dark

"You're kidding," Dejon said.

"Nope," Damien said. "My parents told me this morning. The power's been out in the school almost the entire break."

Dejon, Matt, Quincy, and Damien were walking to school on the first day back after the winter break, which lasted more than a week.

"What happened?" Matt asked.

"Dad said they were doing some kind of work on the electrical system and they had to shut down the power the whole time," Damien said. "He said it's a good thing the weather has been so mild, so at least the pipes didn't freeze and break."

As they approached the school, they could see that the lights were on. Everything seemed okay. But then Quincy realized something. "Our experiments!" he said.

For several weeks before the break, they had been doing projects that measured the effects of light on growth, using terrariums with lights on automatic timers.

Dejon had been growing bean sprouts, Matt had been growing mushrooms, Quincy had been growing cucumbers and Damien had been growing corn. It was going to be a big part of their grade for that marking period.

"What about the experiments?" Dejon asked.

"We'll have to start all over again," Quincy said. "Without those automatic lights, they'll be ruined."

"Not all of them," Damien said. "I can think of one of them that should be all right with very little light."

"Whose?" Quincy asked.

