

Chapter 5

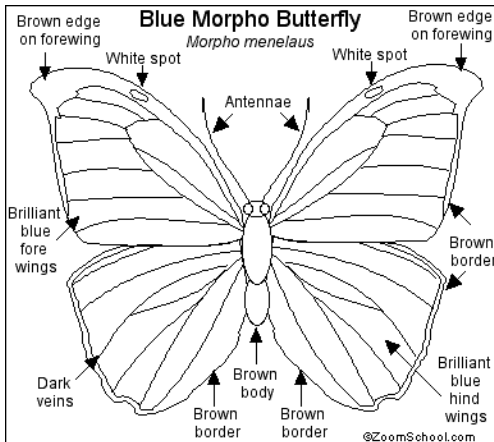
This time there was no dock or even a post to tie the boat to so Dad and Tiago pulled the river boat onto a cleared stretch of the river bank and then tie it to a tall tree. A narrow path lead into the forest and then seemed to disappear. “Dad?” I said with a shaky voice, “Are we going in there?” pointing to the scary path. “We sure are punkie!” (Punkie is what Dad called me when I was little.) He winked and smiled with his eyes. I could tell Dad was really excited about hiking through a rarely traveled area of the jungle so I wasn’t going to let him know just how scared I really was.



Before we even took two steps I heard a strange howling sound. First there was one, then there was two and then it sounded like the howling was everywhere like a spooky surround-sound system. I ran past Tiago and grabbed Dad’s arm refusing to let go. “Alex, Alex honey, it’s just the Black Howler Monkeys. Their howl can be heard up to three miles from their current location—it only sounds like they are in the trees above us. Don’t worry they are not aggressive, they are just noisy.” With my heart still beating fast I said, “Well, that’s no way to greet new guest!” Dad laughed and rubbed my head, “You’re a good sport, Alex.” And with that we were off into the jungle.



It was like being in São Paulo, but in an animal version. The forest was so busy. There were frogs, bugs, monkeys---lots of monkeys, birds of every



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color you could think of, beautiful butterflies like the Blue Morpho Butterfly, and snakes, yuck!! I stayed as close to Dad as I could. I have to admit sometimes I was scared but then other times I just couldn't believe I was here, in the Amazon rainforest, and didn't want it to end!

We walked for almost a full day until we found a small clearing with hut-like houses arranged in a small circle. It looked deserted at first glance and then I heard crackling noises and rustling in the bushes, I turned towards the noise and then all of a sudden a little boy appeared and then disappeared. I pulled back the big green leaves of the bush peering through the area where he had been just moments ago and then felt a tug on my hair from behind. Quickly I



twirled around to find nothing but giggles disappearing to the sound of quick feet crackling on the forest floor. I followed the sound of the foot prints pushing away big palm leaf that hung over the path walking at first and then running. The giggling got louder so I knew I was getting close. Jumping over fallen trees, birds scattering, intermittent sunlight

flashed through the forest canopy and then..."Gottcha!" I said as I grabbed hold of the little nymph. He turned and looked at me with big brown eyes and a smile that instantly made me feel happy inside.



Before he could open his mouth to say even a word, "Alex!" Dad's booming voice came out of the forest. "ALLLex!" Dad said again in a long holler. "Over here Dad!" I said yelling in the direction of his voice. Just then Dad appeared. He looked like he had seen a ghost! "Alex" his face still white with concern, "you can't run through the forest like that! There are Jaguars in the jungle!" "Jaguars are the largest cat in the jungle weighing up to 300 lbs. They are great hunters and may find you as a delicious treat!" I grabbed on to Dad tightly and began to look quickly all around the forest, "But the little boy I was chasing...he was with me and now he is gone! He is out here somewhere all by himself!" Yes, Alex that is Almir, he is the son of the village chief. He has been taught a lot about the forest and how to play safely. It is you I am worried about, so let's get you back to the village.

To be continued...