

SummerQuest 2020: To the Dunes!

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1. **Tent in the sand.** It's a pretty day at the beach, though on these sorts of days the sun burns a hole in the sky so powerfully it feels like a slap on the skin. Still the breezes are delicious, and the water is cold, and the sand is so soft. Some people bring an umbrella to the beach, but you decided hey, why not bring a tent? Portable shade, no sand blowing in your picnic, and when you need a moment out of the sun you can rest in a red glow that feels warm and comforting like when you close your eyes and can still see that sun shining strong.

Hey for snacks later, did you bring A) Chocolate? Or B) Marshmallows?. ***Read one or two adventure books. If you read one book you get to pick which tasty treat you have with you, this determines which path you take in area 4 (A or B path). If you read both you can choose either path.***

2. **Sand castle.** Enough of the napping though, there are worlds to create! You scoop handfuls of sand and water them down with buckets direct from the sea and begin to build a sandcastle -- no, a sand citadel; wait! Sand City! The afternoon grows long as you continue to add structures and streets and bridges and towers that the birds and sand bugs can walk on and explore. ***Read a fantasy book.***

3. **Dune City.** In fact before you are done you have covered the entire beach and built a vast sprawling metropolis in the sand. You ran out of seaside space and built your civilization high into the dunes that stand sentry staring into the sea and the far horizon. You straighten up and watch the sun slowly sinking in the evening sky. But it is summer, there are hours left of daylight, and hey, if you get tired, way down there you still see your tent on the beach well above the high tide line.

But what's that? Something catches your attention, you see movement skitter past, and you turn to follow it with your eyes. Where did it go? Did it run into the dune grass? Or did it disappear down that hole over there? ***Read an award-winning book.***

If you brought Chocolate you can take the A path and continue from here. If you brought Marshmallows you can skip to 4B below.

- 4A. **Sandyfox.** You see there is a skinny path of white sand through the saw edged grass. You decide to follow it. Hey, what's that? Up ahead is a large-eared critter with a huge fluffy tail. It wears an ornate golden collar studded with beautiful stones. It looks at you with a calm gaze as if it were expecting you to follow, then turns with a flick of that tail and skitters away down the winding trail. I mean, really, what else can you do? You follow it! You can see its tail held high and proud above the grass. ***Read a book of your choice.***

- 5A. **Driftwood forest.** Through twists and turns in the winding sandy trails you follow after the cunning critter. It hops over a bundle of sticks of bleached wood then glances back. It

seems to dare you to follow it. You're up for the challenge. It runs along a log as white as bone. You balance nimbly along that beam. It hops up a staircase of fallen logs. You bound up the logs two at a time. It disappears over the top of a huge pile of smooth fallen trees. You vault over the driftwood hill but land on a stick that snaps underfoot, spilling you in a long awkward tumble of cracking and crunching til you tumble to the sand and dried seaweed. No bones broken, just your pride, and there is no way back the way you came. You find yourself in a vast fallen forest of logs and sticks. What giant wave could have brought them here, high up in the dunes? Over how many years was this fallen forest built? You can see the fox skittering along in a tunnel of arched wood, precariously balanced. You follow more carefully this time. **Read a book about science or nature. It can be fiction or non-fiction.**

6A. **Ancient empress.** You duck into the shadow passage under the jumble of fallen timber. Maybe it is safest to stay close to the ground. You pick your way through paths, so as not to dislodge anything and have it come crashing down on your head. In the shade of these dead trees, the air is cool, the sand is damp, and the sounds are eerie. You can hear the wood creak and sift. You can hear sand sifting down between skeletal branches. You can hear ticking sounds, like claws scratching on tile. You are being watched, you can tell. As you glance around you can see the beady black eyes of hundreds of crabs. They are standing on wood, digging themselves out of the sand, following your progress on pointy legs. You have trouble keeping your eye on them all while watching where you are going. A misstep sends you sprawling and you crash into an open space under a dome of woven branches. There is a shifting in the sand and a huge beast digs itself to the surface.

In front of you is a Horseshoe crab, more ancient than dinosaurs. She speaks in your mind in a flood of images and feelings. She is the daughter of the Sea itself, and empress of all things wash across its' sandy bottom. She demands tribute. You must give her a gift or else all things that scuttle and crawl and live in the sea will stalk you to the end of your days. **Read a book of your choice.**

7A. **Temple of shells.** Oh that tricky fox! .Now you know why you were led here. That canny critter must have meant YOU to be his gift to her. Maybe she caught him eating one of her crab soldiers, or maybe he was trying to steal one of these beautiful shells. The ancient empress slowly crawls up onto a throne of shells. Crabs by the millions sidle out of the darkness surrounding you. You'd better think quickly. What do you have to give her that she does not already have? You check your backpack.

Chocolate! They must not have this under the sea. She is unimpressed with the brown wrapper. But the shiny silver foil catches her eye, and then oh those slick smooth sweet squares, she tastes them and her delight washes across you and all the skittering creatures under her control. Yes. This is a good gift. You may choose a treasure from her collection. **Read an "old" book, one written before you were born.**

Continue to area 8. (Skip 4B-7B)

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4B. **The Temple under the Sand.** A hole! Why didn't you see that before? You investigate, walking over to it, feeling a little bit creeped out. It is under a fringe of grass at the top of a dune face. It is hidden from the sun, if anything ran down there -- maybe you shouldn't be so close to it, right? Anything could be down there. Perhaps it is even watching you right now. So why are you kneeling to peek into the dark?

WHOOOPS! The sand collapses underneath you. You fall for what feels like forever then land with a thump into soft sand. The sun streams in from above, illuminating the sand that is pouring in like a dusty waterfall.

Well, here is a problem. How can you get out? That hole is too far overhead, and the sand sliding down from the dune seems to be swiftly covering up the hole.

Uh oh, what was that? There is a clacking sound behind you. You turn around and in the last few moments before the sun disappears you see a long stairwell marching down into the darkness, and a short shape with a round head walking up those stairs towards you. Then the hole is covered and the light winks out. **Read a book of your choice.**

5B. **Skelekid.** This is not good. You cannot see. You scratch around in your backpack and find a box of matches. Okay good, you light one but it doesn't give you light for long, just enough to see that there is strange writing on the walls, and piles of bones all around. And one short pile of bones seems to be standing looking at you. Then the match burns your finger so you drop it and it snuffs out. Darkness again.

Solve the problem. What do you have with you? All you have is that box of matches, a shovel, a pail, a bag of marshmallows and the stick you were going to use to roast those marshmallows on later. Wait, here is an idea: what about a torch? You slide three marshmallows onto the stick and light them on fire in a merry blaze.

Yes, you were not imagining things. There is a round headed skeleton staring at you. Perhaps this was some ancient burial ground? But the skeleton is short and even though he's made of bones and all he does not seem especially scary. Just like any other kid who is curious, he is standing looking at you. Well actually he is looking at your bag of marshmallows. Does he want one? You hand him the chewy treat. **Read a book about science or nature. It can be fiction, or non-fiction.**

6B. **Bone Bridge.** He takes it and chews it, seemingly enjoying the motion even if well, he can't swallow it. He seems pleased with himself. He turns to a pile of bones nearby. Uh oh. They all start forming into skeletons, and standing up and reaching towards you. You back away, they follow, you turn to run, you can hear their dry bones clattering and rustling as they chase after you. You are sprinting now down a long tunnel with strange petroglyphs carved in the rock. You are in an underdune temple of some long forgotten people. The problem is those long forgotten people are chasing you and have forgotten that they are dead! Oh no! There is a chasm before you, and nowhere to go. Well, since they want them so badly you grab a marshmallow out of your bag and throw it! It sails across the canyon and lands on the opposite side. One or two fall into the gap and crash in the darkness below.

Then an amazing thing happens. The skeletons join together and with the architecture of their own bony bodies they form a bridge. You are reminded of ants in the Amazon crossing a stream with their bodies linked together. They must really have wanted that marshmallow. You jump when the Skelekid grabs your arm and takes you along with him. Together you cross that bridge and into the Temple under the Sand. **Read a book of your choice.**

7B. **Cobra queen.** Who were these people? You see frescos carved into the sandstone, images of a civilization you have never read about. The Skelekid takes you by the hand and walks you through the temple, down stairways and across a long strange bridge that seems to be made of jointed scales, You walk around a corner towards a flickering light and-- that was not a bridge at all. You are walking on the back of a gigantic snake. She is coiled around a blazing flame as if she is greedy for the heat. Her tongue flickers out as she leans towards you.

You do the only thing you can think to do. You offer her a marshmallow as well. Her tongue flutters over it. She stops. Her mouth opens, showing long teeth like scimitars. Well, it's hard to bite with marshmallows on your fangs, you pop one on each tooth, then speaking quickly you show her how to toast them. Immune to fire, she roasts them slowly. You have shown her knowledge, the mystery of the marshmallow, so you may pass to see her treasures. She points you towards a skinny passageway that leads up to the open air somewhere deep in the dunes. **Read an "old" book, one written before you were born.**

8. **Treasures of the Sea.** Here is a treasure trove of rare and beautiful shells. As a reward for your gift you may pick among them and select the ones that please you. Shells the size of shields. Pearls as large as cannonballs, Tiny pretty spiral shells with impossibly intricate designs. Conch shells the size of a playhouse. It is hard to pick something, so you fill your backpack with treasures and even wear one shell like a helmet. Hours pass as you walk through the gallery of beautiful things. **Read a book that tells you how to make or do something. Record your book in the Reader Zone app, then record your activity.**

9. **Fire dance.** Somehow in wandering you find your way through the tangle of driftwood and back to the dunes by the sea. There is your tent below. The sun is sinking over the horizon and there is a chill in the air. But the beach is still warm from the day's light, and you are not ready to leave. One more thing to do: you build a bonfire out of driftwood and watch as the flames dance taller and taller. You can see images and shapes in the fire, as if the flames were a genie showing you visions of some faraway land and people. And when the wood shifts it sends spirals of sparks up to join the constellations in the sky. **Read lots of books. After you have recorded one book in this main SQ section on the Reader Zone app, sign up for the "extra books" group in the app and keep on reading. The code for this "lots of books" group is: 7c87a.**

10. **Sky sparks.** You lay on your back in warm sand and watch the stars overhead. They are impossibly far and filled with countless worlds, maybe one just like this one, with someone lying like you on some faraway beach gazing up at a sky. Maybe that faraway kid is dreaming of stories and listening to the sea across the celestial ocean far away. Tomorrow you will return home, but for tonight there are only dreams and stars and stories you can make by connecting the dots between them. **Re-read an old favorite book.**

Congratulations, you are finished with SummerQuest 2020!!