

“El Pie Grande” – Focusing on Characters

Before reading through the story, discuss with a partner what you know about the following vocabulary:

- Archaeology
- Expedition
- Remote (not like for a television – the other kind)

As you read, you’ll answer the following questions in your journal in a two column set-up. Write the questions listed below in your journal on the left, and write your answers in the right hand column in your journal:

From the TEXT	From my MIND
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Who is T. Don Looney? Describe his personality in the beginning of the story.2. How does Looney react when he meets Loft?3. How does Looney act while listening to Loft?4. Does Looney believe Loft’s story? Why?5. What change does Looney experience by the END of the story (think about his final reaction)? What does this say about his character?	

HEX FILE #D1304-8
"El Pie Grande"

.....
I heard a terrifying howl. I asked my guide what it was.
"El Pie Grande," he said. That's Spanish for "Bigfoot."
.....

T. Don Looney was one smart guy. Practically overnight, he had gone from poor computer nerd to software billionaire. Yet, as quickly as he had made his fortune, Looney seemed to be in a bigger hurry to spend it.

Despite his brains, Looney had a big heart. He was very honest and believed everyone else was as honest as he was. As a result, just about every shady character in America with a get-rich-quick scheme came to Looney, asking for money.

Fortunately for Looney, his ex-girlfriend was FBI Agent Skilly. If Looney trusted everyone, Skilly was the opposite. It was her job to discover the truth behind appearances. Skilly did her best to protect her old friend Looney from con artists.

"I'm telling you, Dr. Loft is for real," Looney told Skilly. They were driving across the campus of State University. "If she is a con artist, then how did she get a job as a college professor?"

"If she is a con artist, I'll find out," Skilly replied. "That's why you asked me to tag along, right?"

Looney sighed, then nodded.

Skilly and Looney were on their way to visit the famous scientist Dr. Cora Loft. Loft traveled the globe looking for treasures from the ancient world. She had sent a letter to T. Don Looney, inviting him to visit her. She wanted to tell him all about her latest discovery.

To Skilly, that meant one thing. Loft wanted Looney to give her money.

Skilly and Looney walked into the Archaeology Department. It was an old, dusty building. The first person they met there was a gray-haired woman with thick glasses.

"You are Dr. Cora Loft, I presume." Skilly held her hand out to the old woman. "My name is Agent Skilly, and I'm here with—"





"I'm not Cora Loft," the old woman said. "I'm a student." She pointed to another woman. "There's Dr. Cora Loft."

"Now, that's more like it!" T. Don Looney said, a big smile on his face, as he looked at Dr. Cora Loft.

Loft was a pretty young woman wearing shorts and hiking boots, with a big backpack slung over her shoulder. Skilly groaned and shook her head. It was going to be hard to keep Looney from acting like a fool now....



"The legend of *El Pie Grande* goes back thousands of years," Dr. Loft was saying. "Scientists will tell you it is just a myth. I think it's based on the truth."

Skilly and Looney sat in Dr. Loft's office. She was telling them all about her recent trip to South America. Loft had made a great discovery down there. Or so she claimed.

"Many countries have legends like *El Pie Grande*," Loft explained. "In the United States, there is 'Bigfoot,' the giant man-ape who is supposed to live in the mountains out west. In Tibet, they speak of the 'Yeti,' the legendary 'snowman' who lives in the Himalayas. *El Pie Grande* is the South American version of this creature."

Looney gave the beautiful professor a dreamy smile. "That is so fascinating," he said.

"Hmmm," Skilly growled. "It's part of my job to know about strange legends. Why have I never heard of *El Pie Grande* before?"

"Because the legend is told in remote villages in the Andes Mountains," Dr. Loft said. "I first heard about it last year. It was on Christmas Day." Dr. Loft shuddered. "I'll never forget it. I was sleeping in a camp at the base of a mountain when I heard a terrifying howl. I asked my guide what it was. '*El Pie Grande*,' he said. That's Spanish for 'Bigfoot.'"

Dr. Loft opened a diary and looked at her notes there.

"My guide told me that the people in the mountains always hear the howl of *El Pie Grande* at that time of year. According to the legend, the creature leaves the mountain tops at the start of winter and comes to the lower regions to avoid the snow and ice. *El Pie Grande* is supposed to be fierce—no person has ever seen him and lived. Of course, as soon as I heard this, I began my search to find the creature."

Looney gave Dr. Loft an admiring stare. "You are so brave," he said.

"I am a scientist," she said. "I hiked up the mountain in the direction I heard the howl. The rocks were cold and icy. I could see a blizzard raging near the peak of the mountain. I didn't see *El Pie Grande* that day. But I



did see this.”

Dr. Cora Loft dropped a big slab of plaster on the table. In the center of the plaster was the imprint of a giant naked foot.

T. Don Looney gasped.

“I found this footprint in the snow,” Dr. Cora Loft said. “I made a copy of it using plaster of Paris. That’s the only evidence of *El Pie Grande* I found. But I’m convinced the creature exists. The legend is real!”

“What do you need to prove it?” Looney asked.

“Just a little money,” Dr. Loft said. “I want to mount a full expedition. I can visit the mountain when school is out over Christmas.” She got a determined look on her face. “I will find the creature,” Dr. Loft vowed.

T. Don Looney whipped out his checkbook. “How much do you need?” he asked.

“Hold on!” Skilly barked. She gave Dr. Loft a cold look. “Before you pay for an expedition to find *El Pie Grande*, I think Dr. Loft should tell you why she really wants the money.”

Dr. Loft looked offended. “Are you saying I lied?”

“I’m saying your story doesn’t add up,” Skilly said. “I know that because—”




DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Skilly go with her friend T. Don Looney to visit Dr. Loft?
2. How does Looney act when he meets Dr. Loft? How does Skilly respond to that?
3. What story does Dr. Loft tell Looney? What does she ask him for? Why?
4. Why does Skilly think that Dr. Loft is lying? Think about Loft’s story. What detail or details about it are not correct? Talk about the possible endings for this story.

Now continue reading to see if you were right.





Dr. Cora Loft blushed and looked away after Skilly pointed out the obvious: 'El Pie Grande' wouldn't leave the mountain tops at the start of winter...not in December in South America.

South America is below the equator...where summer starts in December!

"Have you ever even been to South America?" Skilly asked the professor.

"Well...not yet," she admitted. "But with Mr. Looney's financial help I was hoping to go this December." Cora Loft batted her long eyelashes at Looney. "Wouldn't you like to go on an expedition with me?"

T. Don Looney stuffed his checkbook back in his pocket. Without a word, he turned and marched out of the room.

"I didn't even see it coming!" T. Don Looney moaned, as he and Skilly left the building. "If you can't trust a college professor, who can you trust?"

"You can always trust your friendly neighborhood FBI agent," Skilly said with a smile.

