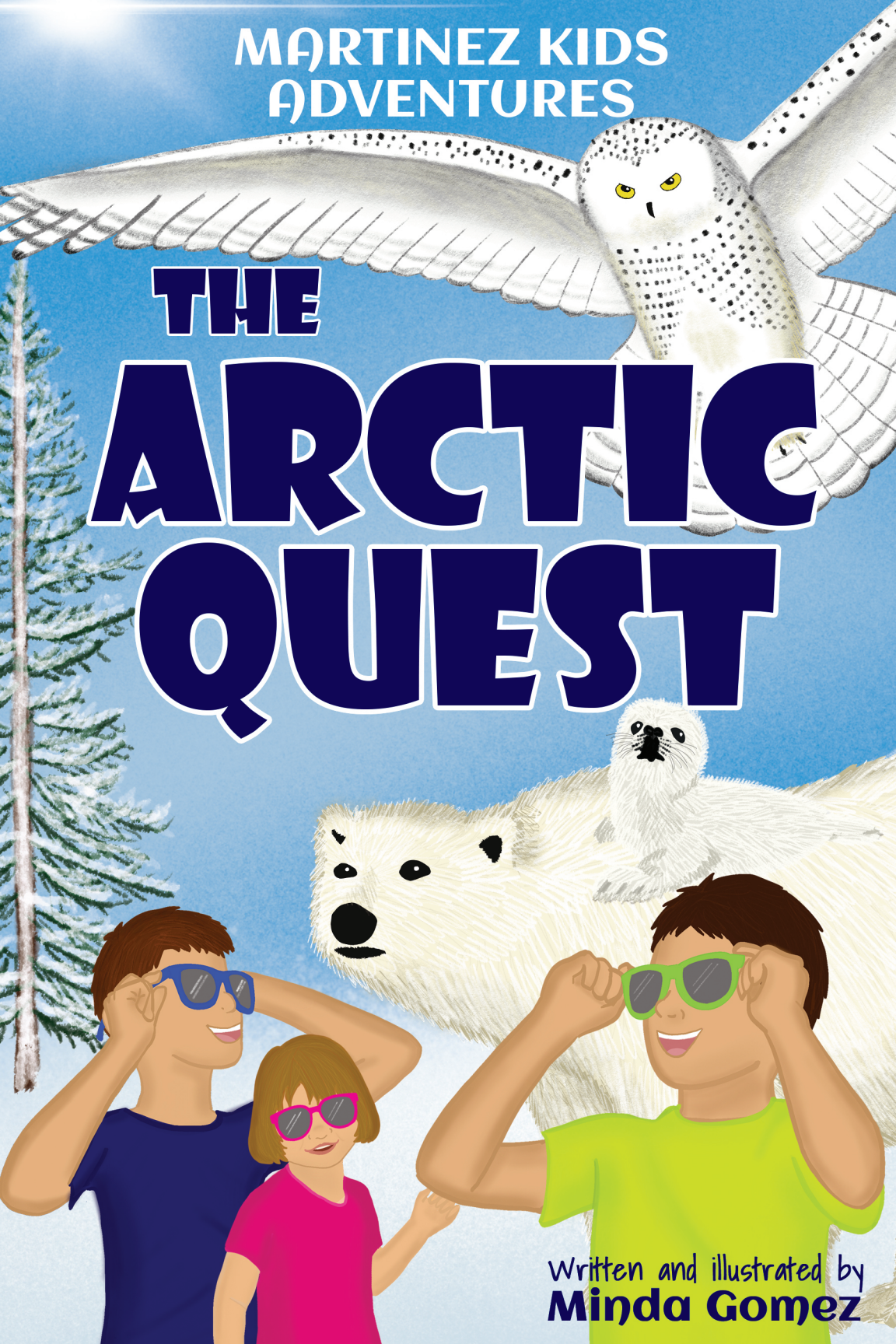


MARTINEZ KIDS  
ADVENTURES

THE  
**ARCTIC  
QUEST**



Written and illustrated by  
**Minda Gomez**

# Meet the Martinez Family



**Rico**  
8 years old



**Diego**  
5 years old



**Araceli**  
2½ years old



**Papi**



**Mami**

# SPANISH WORDS

SPANISH	ENGLISH	PRONUNCIATION
Abrazos	Hugs	(ah-BRAH-sohs)
Abuelita	Grandma	(ah-bweh-LEE-tuh)
Abuelito	Grandpa	(ah-bweh-LEE-toh)
Abuelitos	Grandparents	(ah-bweh-LEE-tohs)
Ahorita regreso	I'll be right back	(ah-or-REE-tuh ree-GREH-soh)
Al fin llegaron	You finally arrived	(ahl FEEN yeh-GAHR-ohn)
Amiga	Friend (female)	(ah-MEE-guh)
Amigo	Friend (male)	(ah-MEE-goh)
Amigos	Friends	(ah-MEE-goce)
Amiguitos	Little friends	(ah-mee-GEE-toce)
Amor	My love	(ah-MOHR)
Amores	My loves	(ah-MOHR-ayce)
Atole de avena	Oatmeal drink	(uh-TOHL-eh deh ah-BEH-nah)
¡Ayúdame!	Help!	ah-YOO-dah-meh)
Bienvenido a nuestra casa	Welcome to our home	(byehn-ben-NEE-doh ah NWEHS-trah CAH-sah)
Buenas tardes	Good afternoon	(BWAY-nahs TAHR-dayce)
Caldo de pollo	Chicken soup	(CALL-doh deh POY-yoh)
Casa	House	(CAH-sah)
Chamacos	Kids	(chah-MAH-koce)
Chido	Cool	(CHEE-doh)
Chiquita	Little one	(chee-KEE-tuh)
Cinco	Five	(SEEN-koh)
Cuatro	Four	(KWAH-troh)
Diecinueve	Nineteen	(dyeh-see-NWAY-beh)
Dieguito	Little Diego	(dyeh-GEE-toh)
Discúlpame	Excuse me	(dis-CUHL-pah-meh)
Está bien	It's OK	(eh-STAH bee-YEHN)
Estados Unidos	United States	(eh-STAH-dohce yu-NEE-dohce)
¡Feliz Navidad!	Merry Christmas!	(feh-LEECE nah-BEE-dahd)
Foca	Seal	(FOH-cah)
Garita	Border checkpoint	(gah-REE-tah)

Part

1

# THE JOURNEY SOUTH



## Chapter 1

### Back Again

The sun beat down in the sky as Diego swung through the leafy jungle. Extending his tail above him, the spider monkey grasped a tree branch and moved expertly ahead, high above the ground. Reaching out his long arms, he grabbed hold of a hanging vine and launched himself forward, yodeling in a loud voice.

Suddenly, Diego's vine disappeared and he briefly hung mid-air like a cartoon character. He caught his breath. This wasn't supposed to happen! Then, just as quickly, he was falling, down, down, faster and faster. "Don Toño!" he tried to yell as he tumbled downward.

A sparkling blue ocean appeared below him and

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he splashed through the surface of the water. Diego looked around and discovered he was in a coral reef, surrounded by fish of every color of the rainbow. His strong tail propelled him forward easily.

“Am I an orca now?” he asked himself happily. Almost without thinking, he flipped his fins and leaped from the water, executing a perfect spin before gracefully diving back in. All of the smaller fish around him watched the shiny black-and-white whale in awe, admiring his skilled acrobatics.

“Diego!” The orca heard a loud voice nearby that could not have come from a tiny fish.

“Who’s there?” Diego called. He swam in a circle, trying to identify where it had come from.

“Come on! Let’s go play!” the voice spoke more urgently. This time Diego recognized it as his brother’s voice.

“Rico? Are you a whale shark again? Where are you hiding?” he called into the crystalline water, confused that he could not determine where the enormous animal could be.

“What? A whale shark?” laughed the voice.

Diego felt something pushing him roughly in the fin.

He was suddenly aware that he was tangled in the blankets on his bed. He pried open his eyes to see his older brother Rico, still in his pajamas, his short brown hair sticking in all directions on his head.

“Diego, it snowed last night!” said his brother excitedly. “Let’s go play outside!”

Sighing, Diego pulled himself out of bed and stumbled to the door. “I wish it wasn’t just a dream!” he said wistfully. “When are we going to go through Don Toño’s secret door again?”



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## Chapter 4

### Into the Arctic

“Woooah! What a ride!” marveled Rico. “I’ll never get used to the swirling as we move into Don Toño’s worlds.”

“Where did the van go?” wondered Diego. “How did Don Toño do this?”

As Rico, Diego, and Araceli’s eyes adjusted to the bright light, they looked around. Everything was white, stretching flat out around them in all directions. Jagged snow-covered mountains jutted up in the distance on one side. In the other direction, a few skinny pine trees protruded out of the otherwise smooth landscape. Directly above them, the sun shone brightly against a brilliant blue sky, but it didn’t

seem to provide any warmth. The three huddled into a little group on the ice, trying to keep warm.

“So cold! Brrrr!” exclaimed Araceli.

“Where are we?” Rico shivered. “This is NOT the rainforest.”

“Or the coral reef!” agreed Diego. “It’s FREEZING here! I wonder where we are?”

“You are in the Arctic Circle,” came a booming voice from above them. The Martinez kids separated from their huddle to look up, startled to see an enormous brown walrus towering over them. Whiskers hung down from his large, rounded snout, and long ivory tusks curved down, seeming to point straight at them.

All three kids screamed in terror.

“Run! It’s a giant monster!” shouted Rico, turning to scamper across the ice.

“*Chamacos, soy yo.* It’s me, Don Toño.” The kids now recognized the familiar voice of their neighbor coming from the walrus.

“Don Toño! You’re huge! How did you get here? We’re in the van on the way to Mexico right now!” asked Rico incredulously. “Or I mean, we WERE in the van... we’re still there in real life, right?”

“Yes,” chuckled the walrus, lowering his immense head to the icy ground to look them over. “This is just virtual reality. The beauty of technology is that it allows us to be together even when we’re not physically in the same place. Kind of like when you talk to your family in Mexico on video chat.”

“*Chido!*” marveled Diego. He finally tore his gaze away from the giant walrus and looked over at his brother and sister, still shivering next to him on the ice. Small, furry black and brown bodies shaped like little mice with stubby tails looked back at him with their beady black eyes. He glanced down to see that he was covered with the same fur. “We’re kind of funny-looking! What are we?” he asked.

“Lemmings!” concluded Rico. “I’ve seen them on TV. They’re really funny, and like to jump off the side of cliffs. Wait... do we need to do that?”

“Actually,” corrected Don Toño, “that’s just a myth,



## Chapter 6

### Tita and Tito

At that moment, the Arctic scene began to swirl around Diego. A second later, he found himself strapped into his seat in the van. Papi was standing by the open sliding door, holding three folded pairs of plastic sunglasses in his hand. "Sorry to take your glasses off, *hijo*. It sounded like you were having fun. We've arrived in *México*," Papi explained.

Diego protested. "No fair! I never even got to be another animal!"

"Enough!" Papi cut Diego's complaint short. "We're here now, and it's time to enjoy this time with family. Let's go say hi to your grandparents. Rico and Araceli are already inside."

Diego unbuckled himself from his seat and hopped out of the van. He stopped to stretch his legs before he followed Papi up the sidewalk and into the small, brightly-painted house owned by his grandparents. Papi's mother Tita, short for *abuelita*, stood in the doorway.

"Dieguito, *mi amor*," said Tita to Diego as she greeted him with a big hug and a kiss on the cheek. "*¡Feliz Navidad! Bienvenido a nuestra casa.*"

"Merry Christmas. Welcome to our house," Diego translated in his head. "*Gracias, Tita*," he responded, thinking how his Spanish was going to get a workout during this trip.

Walking up behind Tita came Tito, Papi's father. "*¡Al fin llegaron!*" he said contentedly as he hugged his grandson.

"You finally arrived," Diego translated to himself as Tito greeted them with hugs and kisses on the cheek.

Diego temporarily forgot about the drama in the Arctic as he settled into his grandparents' house.

Tita ushered them into the kitchen where she had mugs of steaming *atole de avena* waiting for them. The kids thirstily slurped the sweet oatmeal drink made with evaporated milk and cinnamon sticks.

“This is delicious!” Diego announced. “I mean, *¡qué rico!*” he clarified, looking at Tita with a smile. Rico and Araceli agreed, licking their lips happily.

Later that afternoon, Mami took Araceli to the bedroom for her nap. Rico and Diego ran up to Papi. “Can we use the glasses again? Pleeeeease?” they begged, staring up at Papi with their big, brown puppy dog eyes.

