

ARVEN was looking forward to a relaxing week at home. Attending school full-time and having to put effort into his studies had been something of a shock after spending the last few years more concerned with finding Herba Mystica. He was starting to get used to it, but he was grateful to have some time off to recharge – or he would have been, if he hadn't been disturbed by a very eager knock on the front door of the lighthouse only a day into the break.

He went to investigate. "Nemona?"

"That's right!" said Nemona, whose enthusiastic knocking was hard to mistake. Arven had been less quick to realise that she wasn't alone: Penny was beside her, looking rather like she wanted to be elsewhere, although Arven had come to understand that such expressions were often a sign that she was actually enjoying herself.

"I don't really want to battle," said Arven. "Not right now ..."

"Battle?" said Nemona. "That's a great idea. But maybe later, OK? You have something really important to do. You and Penny!"

"Uh ... we do?" said Arven.

"You got it!" said Nemona. "You been in Penny's dorm recently?"

"Maybe?" said Arven.

"She says she's worried about me," Penny cut in, "because I eat so much pizza. But it's fine! I like pizza!"

“The floor,” said Nemona dramatically, “is *covered* in pizza boxes.”

“I said it’s fine,” said Penny.

“And she’s not getting her vegetables,” said Nemona. “Are you?”

Penny shrugged. “I mean, pizzas have, like, tomato sauce, and ...”

“Oh,” said Arven. “Yeah ... you’re right, Nemona. Penny, it’s really important to have a balanced diet.”

“Ugh, two on one?” Penny complained. “This is unfair!”

“I knew Arven would get it,” said Nemona.

“Yeah,” said Arven. “Wow, Penny, you really need to eat properly, you know? It’s not good for you if you just have fast food all the time!”

“Exactly!” said Nemona. “Which is why you need to teach her to cook. It’s like a project for our week off! You’d have missed us otherwise, right? And you have a nice big kitchen here, don’t you? It’s perfect.”

Arven hesitated. He had been looking forward to a nice break, but nutrition was important. And seeing his friends ... he supposed ... was always enjoyable.

“You got it,” he said.

“Don’t I get a say in this?” Penny complained as they went inside.

While Nemona idly checked the cupboards for interesting kitchen equipment, Arven set some water on the boil and faced

Penny. "OK, vegetable crash course," he said. "Roasting, frying, boiling. Depending on the vegetable, you're going to want to –"

"Ooh, sweets!" Nemonia exclaimed after a while, clutching her latest cupboard find. "I didn't think you'd have any. Thought you were all about the healthy stuff."

"Sweets don't need all that preparation, right?" said Penny, sauntering over to the bag Nemonia was holding to help herself. "You know, Arven, you must get fed up having to spend all that time cooking. Don't you want to have something ready to go? That's the thing about fast food, right? The clue's in the name ... fast!"

Arven groaned. "Nemonia! I thought you were on my side here. Can you stop distracting Penny for a second? Why don't you go outside and catch some Pokémon or something? You don't get to train out here that often, right?"

"Nooo!" said Penny. "She's gotta stay here to protect me from the scary vegetables!"

"Seriously," said Arven. He considered. "OK, let's start with something else. You like pizza, right? How about we make some dough?"

"Pizza dough?" said Penny.

"Uh huh," said Arven. "If you know how to make that, you can have all the pizza you want, can't you?"

"There's gotta be a catch," said Penny.

“The catch is that you have to put some vegetables on top,” said Arven. “Not just pepperoni. You know, people like olives on pizza, and sometimes you would even go for artichokes and stuff –”

“Ew,” said Penny. “Sure, teach me about the dough, but that’s going too far.”

“OK,” said Arven, “how about real tomatoes? I mean, not just sauce, but –” He turned to one of the cupboards and retrieved a couple of them, holding one in each hand to show her. “They’re nice! Honestly!”

“Tomatoes are fruit,” said Nemona nonchalantly.

It was the last straw. “Look,” said Arven, “you’re the one who asked me to teach her!” He slammed the tomatoes onto the counter. “I thought I was going to have a relaxing week off, and then you guys come and invade my kitchen! And you ask me for a favour, but then you don’t even let me explain things without interrupting all the time!”

“Arven,” Penny whined, “we thought you’d like some company! We’re your friends, right?” She reached for one of the tomatoes. “We just thought it’d be cool to hang out. And learn something, I guess. If we just wanted the lesson without any of the fun, I could have stayed in school and asked Mr Saguaro. But we wanted to see you!” She bit into the tomato, looked briefly panic-stricken, but then chewed for a while and swallowed. “OK, Nemona, you stop interrupting. Arven, I’m gonna let you teach me how to make healthy homemade pizza, and

then, uh, I guess we can put some vegetables on it, if we have to. Then afterwards we can all have a battle! Deal?”

“You know,” said Arven, “I don’t understand it, but ... you’re right, I do like spending time with you guys. Fine. We’ll make this dough, and then we’re gonna put olives and artichokes all over it.”

Penny laughed nervously. “And ... maybe some pepperoni?” She turned around and pointed at Nemonia. “You’d better be on your best behaviour! Actually ... maybe you should go out and catch Pokémon after all ... just so I’m not distracted?”

“Sure,” said Nemonia. “OK, enjoy the pizza. I’ll be back later for a battle!”