

Caves

Initially I had Peter and Tara discover the caves on their own, before Professor P's disappearance. I wanted to convey their sense of wonder at finding a fantastic crystal cave, hidden away in the depths of the earth. Although I liked this scene I felt it slowed down the start of the main story too much. I tried putting some of the description later, when Peter and Tara arrive at the caves with Floppy, but then the emphasis needed to be on the pyramid and there was no place to describe the crystals, or Peter and Tara's sense of awe at discovering the cave.

I called to Sparky. He was having great fun running in and out of the waves and barking at the seagulls. We all ran along the pebbles towards the caves. The tide was a long way out now and I could see the cove with its long sandy beach walled on either side with great boulders. At the base of the cliff were three caves. We clambered over the rocks and jumped down onto the sand.

We went to the largest cave first. Tara took the torch out of her rucksack again, switched it on and shone it into the mouth of the cave. I felt a shiver of excitement run up my spine as we went inside. The opening was small and I had to bend my head to avoid hitting it on the narrow roof. Once inside I could hear the echoing sound of dripping water.

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“Spooky, isn’t it?” Tara whispered.

The small entrance to the cave opened out into a high roofed cavern. Drips of water fell down on our heads and splashed into puddles on the sand. We walked slowly across the uneven floor, trying to avoid stepping in the puddles. Sparky stayed close to my heels. He seemed a little unsure of this cold dark place.

As we walked further into the cave the sand disappeared and we found ourselves on a rocky ledge. We scrambled up onto its slippery uneven surface and continued deeper into the cave, which narrowed as it curved up into the cliff. Tara shone the torch onto the cave walls and roof. I noticed a dark eerie shadow with two light patches that looked like eyes.

“Tara! Over there!” I said nervously.

She shone her torch onto the shadow and we went over to investigate. I could see a dark hole in the rock.

“It’s a small tunnel!” I said in surprise.

“Come on, let’s see where it goes,” Tara said squeezing into the narrow gap.

As she disappeared into the tunnel the light began to fade. I fumbled in my pocket for my key ring torch but could not find it.

“Tara,” I shouted but there was no reply.

I crawled cautiously into the dark tunnel. My hands sank into a pile of cold wet slippery seaweed.

“Yuk!” I cried, pulling my hands out quickly.

“Peter, come quick!” Tara’s faint voice echoed down the tunnel, “You won’t believe this!”

I hurried along the tunnel as fast as I could with Sparky following closely behind. As I rounded a bend I saw the faint light from Tara’s torch ahead.

“Nearly there, Sparky” I said, quickly scrambling along the last few metres.

When I reached the end I stopped and stared in

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amazement. Tara was sitting on the smooth dry floor of another smaller cave, shining her torch onto the walls.

“Crystals!” I said breathlessly staring around the cave, “thousands and thousands of crystals.”

They covered the walls and sparkled like diamonds in the torchlight.

“Beautiful isn’t it,” Tara said in a hushed tone.

I climbed out of the tunnel and sat down next to her. Sparky came and sat at my feet and we all gazed in wonder at the most amazing sight I had ever seen.

“A crystal cave,” I said quietly, finally breaking the silence. “It’s incredible.”

I stood up and went over to look at the crystals more closely. They ran in horizontal veins along the walls. Most were clear like small pieces of glass but some were purple and others white. I reached out to touch them. They felt sharp and slightly damp.

“Peter,” Tara cried, “there are fossils over here too. I’ve never seen so many!”

I went over to her and looked at where she was pointing. I could see countless tiny fossils embedded in the rocks between the layers of crystals.

“Look!” I said. “A fossil fish.”

It was a small fossil, no bigger than my fingernail, but I could clearly see the tiny backbone and fins.

“And here’s another,” Tara said excitedly.

We continued to study the walls, looking with fascination at the crystals and at the tiny fossil creatures. But then we were suddenly plunged into darkness.

“Oh, no,” Tara cried. “My torch! The bulb must have blown!”

I had never experienced such blackness. It was so complete it felt almost solid, and pressed in against me. Strangely, I did not feel at all afraid. I felt safe, protected in this space deep inside the earth. Sparky barked. The sound

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echoed round the cave.

“Peter,” Tara said, holding tightly onto my arm. “Where’s your torch?”

“I don’t know,” I replied, “I tried to find it earlier.”

I felt through my pockets again, this time more slowly and carefully. There it was, tucked away in my back pocket. I switched it on. It gave out a very weak light but it was bright enough for us to see our way to the tunnel. Sparky jumped in first, I climbed in backwards and, holding the torch in my teeth, crawled along the tunnel into the main cave.