

DANIEL AND MARISSA EXPLORE A CAVE



The team of spelunkers entered the cave. They wore special helmets with lights on top. The cave wasn't too dark at the entrance. But it was completely dark further in.

"We wouldn't be able to see anything at all without these lights," Uncle Jorge said.

The entrance area was wide. But soon they had to get down on their hands and knees and crawl through a tunnel. After several minutes of crawling they were able to stand up. They had entered a large room called a cavern.

Daniel and Marissa stood looking around in amazement. It was so beautiful. Suddenly Marissa heard a trickling sound. She became frightened.

"Uncle Jorge," she called. "I think the cave is leaking."

"It is, kind of," he answered. "Caves are actually formed by water."

"How could water make a cave?" Daniel asked.

"The cave is made of a rock called limestone," Uncle Jorge answered. "Water got into cracks in the rocks. When water enters



cracks, it makes them bigger and bigger. Water can actually dissolve or wear away limestone rock. Just like sugar dissolves in lemonade. There is a stream close to us that also wears away the rock."

"Is water still dissolving the rock?" asked Marissa.

"Yes, it is," responded her uncle.

"What are all of these pointy things?" Daniel asked his uncle.

"Those are stalagmites and stalactites," he answered.

"Stalactites hang down. Stalagmites stick up from the ground. You won't forget which one is which if you remember that stalactites have to hold on tight to the ceiling."



"How are they made?" asked Daniel.

"They're actually formed by dripping water," Uncle Jorge answered. "The water drops contain minerals, which slowly build up into this icicle shape. It can take thousands of years for them to get this big."

"Wow!" said Daniel.

"Let's go see the stream," said his uncle.

They walked over to the opposite side of the cavern to a small stream.

"Look!" cried Marissa.

“A fish! A fish with no eyes!” cried Daniel. “And it’s so pale.”

“This fish is a troglobite. Troglobites don’t need color, so they are often pale or white,” said his uncle.

They spent a few hours more exploring the cave. Daniel and Marissa were sad when their uncle told them it was time to go. But he promised he would take them again soon.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STORY

Why did the spelunkers have to crawl on the ground?

What sound did Marissa hear that frightened her?

The cave was made from what type of rock?

Which hangs from the ceiling: a stalactite or a stalagmite?

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