

Grenok and the Cave Journey

(A story for teenagers)

'A cave is a collapse of a geologic formation, mine or structure which may occur during mining, tunneling, or steep-walled excavation such as trenching. Geologic structures prone to spontaneous cave-ins include lava tubes and a variety of other subsurface rock formations.' <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave-in>

What we have here is a large hole or ground cave, an ancient reverse crater, constantly pumping hot moist air up into the atmosphere, that changes the local weather scene, and the consciousness of a small island village in the South Pacific.

The tribe is facing rising seas and a loss of land and culture in a crisis of climate change. If sea levels rise, the land-based cave, and all of its knowledge, will be submerged or gone for good.

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Our Hero is Grenok, a twenty something daughter of the tribal Chief. With great fanfare, and a burlap journey suit – made from coffee bean sacks, she climbs down into the cave to discover its secrets, perils, and promise. She uses a braided rope, for just her journey, crafted from the hair of the tribal women and men. As local lore has it, she would have to travel down for 12 days to fulfill her mission. The heat is a constant hurdle. But what of the source? There is no smoke, just clean steam generating from an unknown heat source below. A maze of tunnels and chambers. And strange animals and rocks, but no CO2.

She has mostly a wet descent but finds dry nooks and crannies to rest and dry out along the way. Grenok will have leather pouches of water sent down, along with food, using the rope. When she is finished with her journey, she will send a signal and the strongest tribal members will pull her up.

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Grenok is a mist catcher. 'Humans have ... mimicked water harvesting approaches found in nature. Throughout human history, societies have used two-and three-dimensional structures such as plates, nets, or rods to trap fog and mist droplets.' The Cave Tribe uses palm leaves. <https://www.chemistryviews.org/capturing-water-from-the-atmosphere>

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Guano is the accumulated excrement of seabirds or bats. Bats have been roosting here. Grenok lands on a rock shelf to rest and steps in their guano. Guano is a highly effective fertilizer due to the high content of nitrogen, phosphate, and potassium, all key nutrients essential for plant growth. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guano>

"In general, bats seek out a variety of daytime retreats such as caves, rock crevices, old buildings, bridges, mines, and trees. Different species require different roost sites. Some species, such as the Mexican free-tailed and gray bats live in large colonies in caves." <https://www.nps.gov/articles/bats-in-caves.htm>. Based on the movement of the bats, Grenok senses that there are multiple entrances to the cave.

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Sleeping provisions are meager: a small foam pad and a sleeping bag. It is Day 7 of the descent and temperature in the cave is a humid 89 degrees.

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Fossils and ancient graffiti adorn the cave walls at Day 9. Photographs are taken, and Grenok is careful not to disturb the water-colored implants of the people who came before her. At Day10 fresh water seeps through the walls as the cave narrows to no access. Mushrooms are collected and bagged for the return trip up the cave, back with Grenok and her tribal people.

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Day 12. The return. Sometimes she will be dangled and pulled and sometimes she will free climb. It's tricky logistics. Grenok attaches foot rests to the rope to use when she isn't climbing up with her feet. Bagged artifacts from her journey are attached to the rope below her position so they can follow her up to the surface.

"In ... the hero's journey, or the monomyth, is the common template of stories that involve a hero who goes on an adventure, is victorious in a decisive crisis, and comes home changed or transformed." <https://en.wikipedia.org/>

As she is pulled up from the mouth of the cave, her expedition is not ending. Her team of scientists is ready to examine and classify the rocks and animals from her journey. These are sacred with plenty of stories to come. Grenok uploads her photographs and video for this discovery phase. The ecology of the cave and its animals and markings is about to be exposed to light. And love.

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<https://www.planetshifter.com/>