

Stranded in a Cave

Stephen reckoned they must have walked almost a mile along the beach when they first saw the cave. Alex stopped swinging the bucket he was carrying and said it felt more like two miles and it was time they turned back. Mum had said that they could have an ice-cream at three o'clock and it must be at least that now. He was hungry and his foot hurt where he'd trodden on a sharp stone. He tipped the water out of the bucket and the tiny crab they'd caught earlier scuttled away.

They were very surprised to see how far they'd walked. The pier was just a speck in the distance and they couldn't see any stripy umbrellas or any people. "We should turn back!" said Alex, panic in his voice, "we're miles away. Let's run!"

But the rock pools were rapidly filling with water and the seaweed, which was drifting in, wrapped itself around their feet and ankles as they ran.

"It's too late," yelled Stephen, "we've come too far. We won't get back before the tide comes in. Let's climb up to the cave."

They looked up at the cave, it would be a hard climb and they'd need every bit of their energy.

"Leave the bucket behind," said Stephen.

Alex hurled the bucket into the water and they raced toward the rock face, which was sharp and slippery but little by little, and driven on by the ever approaching water they hauled themselves onto a rocky ledge several metres above the tide.

Way above them the mouth of the cave yawned widely, it was another steep climb but seeing how quickly the water was surging towards them, they decided to head for the cave.

"We're going to get into such trouble," gasped Alex as his knee scraped against the rock.

"Like we're not in trouble now!" panted Stephen, "Mum and Dad must be out of their minds with worry. If only we could let them know we're all right."

Finally they dragged themselves into the mouth of the cave, "We should be safe here," said Stephen and they peered over the edge to where waves were breaking and foaming over the rocks where they'd been climbing only a few minutes before.

Overhead a flock of gulls wheeled and screeched.

"How long before the tide goes out?" asked Alex.

"Hours," said Stephen as he stood up, "so we might as well have a look in the cave."

Stepping carefully, he led the way into the cave, the temperature dropped immediately and the droplets of water, which trickled onto their heads and backs were icy cold. Alex pointed to a recess at one side, "There's a way through there, I think."

Stephen led the way into the narrow opening, the wall was very wet and slimy and the ground sloped down quickly beneath their feet. It was pitch black as they edged slowly along the wall.

"I wonder how far you can go?" said Stephen and his voice echoed back to him.

"I don't know," said Alex, "but let's not go any further, we can't risk getting lost on top of everything else that's happened. Let's just go and sit on the rock and wait for the tide to go out then we can run back."

Stephen ignored him, "It could be a smuggler's cave, there might be some treasure," he said.

"We'd never find it without a torch," said Alex, "come on let's get out of here before we freeze to death."

"Look there's a light in the distance," said Stephen, "let's just see what that is and then we'll go back."

The passageway widened as they approached the light and soon they found themselves in a large section of the cave where sunlight was streaming in through a hole in the roof and there in the corner was a roughly hewn stairway leading to the roof of the cave.

Stephen suggested that they climb up the stairway and when Alex shrugged he took that as a sign to lead the way. The stairs led out of the cave and out onto the cliff tops where they breathed in fresh warm air and looked around them. In the distance they could see the pier and immediately ran towards it in search of their parents. They were late, but at least they hadn't been stranded in a cave!



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Section A

Choose the best word or group of words to fit the passage and put a ring around your choice.

Stephen and Alex had walked a long way along the beach. Mum said they could have an ice cream at

- 1 1 o'clock. 2 o'clock. 3 o'clock. 4 o'clock.

Alex said they should turn back when they noticed

- 2 the sun had gone in. the ice cream van had gone.
 the rock pools were rapidly filling with water.

Stephen said they should

- 3 go back. have a swim. climb up to the cave. sit down.

Alex was concerned about getting into

- 4 a fix. a cave. trouble. a difficult situation.

They dragged themselves into

- 5 the staircase. the water.
 the life boat. the mouth of the cave.

Stepping into the cave the

- 6 gulls floor temperature sun

dropped immediately. Through a narrow opening they followed sunlight to find a stairway leading up to the cliff top.

Section B

- 1 Why did Alex's foot hurt?
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- 2 How did the boys know they had walked a long way?
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- 3 Which signs alerted the boys to the fact that the tide was quickly coming in?
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- 4 Why did Alex 'hurl the bucket into the water'?
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- 5 Which trouble was Alex worried about and which trouble was Stephen more concerned about?
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- 6 What does the phrase 'gulls wheeled and screeched' suggest?
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- 7 Why did the boys decide to look inside the cave?
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- 8 Which two of the following phrases best describes the danger to the boys caused by the tide? Give reasons for your choices.

'the ever approaching water'

'the mouth of the cave yawned widely'

'the water was surging towards them'

'they dragged themselves into the mouth of the cave.'

Section C

Plan your own short story about being trapped by the tide in which a helicopter is called to make a rescue.