

WHAT'S IN A CAVE

I used to go on caving trips, back when I was just a youth
And I thoroughly enjoyed it if you want the honest truth
It was tiring, hard and dirty, but I looked on it as fun
And I joined a group of speleo's to learn how it was done
I learnt to climb up wire ladders and abseil down a rope
And practiced other caving skills so no matter what, we'd cope
I learnt the need for decent footwear on my first caving trip
How on steep and slippery slopes you need a decent tread to grip
On my second trip my boots were from the army surplus store
When you need to get a grip on things you couldn't ask for more
I once climbed out of a creek bed, up a guano covered slope
Then I dragged the bloke behind me up to where I thought he'd cope
I started walking up the slope, which was like the slopes of hell
Not only was it slippery, but then there also was the smell
But then I heard a shriek that made all the hairs stand on my arm
It added to the atmosphere, though from panic, not alarm
You've all seen cartoons of that cat slowly sliding down the wall
With all four sets of claws dug in, attempting to slow his fall
The guy was doing likewise cutting trails with fingers and toes
And to my surprise he'd also gouged a furrow with his nose
So I walked back down the slope and put an end to his descent
Then I had to hold his hand until we'd finished the ascent
That's what comes of wearing sandshoes where the soles are flat and slick
Instead of army boots like mine that were chunky, stout and thick
There's lots of people scared of bats though with little cause no doubt
Bet they've never sat inside a cave with all the lights turned out
And heard the whisper of their passing and breezes stir your hair
Yet the bats know what they're doing and can tell that you are there

I've seen them aim straight for my head, flying down my headlamps light
While I stood there like a statue, trusting them to get it right
It is like a game of chicken only played with bats instead
And it's safest not to flinch or move as they aim for your head
But no matter what you think of bats, there's one rule you should keep
Don't let out a high pitched scream while the bats are trying to sleep
A mate did it once and they panicked and all took to the air
Their sonar's all got scrambled and bats were bouncing everywhere
So then people started screaming with bats in their face and hair
Not me though, I'm no hero, you see I wasn't even there
I once got separated from the group with whom I'd started out
I could hear their distant voices, but was lost beyond a doubt
I'd got hung up and when free I found, the group had got away
I could hear their voices in the dark and what they had to say
I was in a creek, inside a cave and also in a bind
For although I searched both long and hard, their trail I couldn't find
The creek came to a sudden end, with a small hole up ahead
"Oh you must have reached the Duck under" the distant voices said
"You just duck below the water then come up the other side
Then you'll find you're in a cavern which will open up real wide"
I followed their instructions, my head and body I submerged
And could not believe the sight I saw as soon as I emerged
A surrounding wall of solid rock just inches from my face
And I knew from their description, I was in some other place
I also knew the way they'd gone was the way that they'd come back
So backtracked to the point where we'd all been sharing the same track
Then lay down for an hour or two on a sandbank, soaking wet
And turned my light out to save power, it's as dark as you can get
It's not like in the movies, where glowing lights are everywhere
Luminous fungi, glowing crystals and fireflies fill the air

Good thing I'm not claustrophobic, not from darkness anyhow
It's narrow spaces I don't care for, I once got stuck and how
It was a cave down at Wee Jasper where I ran out of luck
I got myself wedged in so tight I was well and truly stuck
They always tell you to stay calm when you're in this sort of spot
Panicking just makes it worse, your muscles swell up quite a lot
It's like when you've got a serpent with his fangs stuck in your arm
And some idiot will come along and tell you to stay calm
It's to slow the circulation so the poison doesn't spread
A good trick if you manage it, but most people just drop dead
And there I lay with rock hard walls pressing in on either side
So I couldn't move ahead or back no matter how I tried
I was going numb all down one side from lying on my arm
And this little voice inside my head kept saying to stay calm
My heart was racing like a piston, my pulse was on the rise
And it must have blown my muscles up to nearly twice their size
Then this skinny fellow came along to wriggle through the squeeze
When he saw my boots he asked why I was blocking out the breeze
I told of my predicament, said it wasn't heaps of fun
He said that he would lend a hand and we'd see what could be done
Well at first try that was nothing cause he was too thin and slight
And I was quite immovable, I was locked up good and tight
So we coordinated efforts, I exhaled hard and fast
While he hauled away like crazy and I moved a bit at last
It was just a millimetre, but I knew that from that point
Like a cork drawn from a bottle I would soon exit the joint
Though it might take quite a while at such a slow and steady rate
The best trip that I ever took, freedom really does feel great
And what goes around will come around, or so some people say
I'd helped rescue other cavers, but my turn came round that day

But now I am much older and now my girth has spread a bit
So I've got a lot more padding round my waist and where I sit
My body's not as supple or as flexible as before
And I've got this tricky knee, which doesn't bend well anymore
But still I'll go down underground if I'm given half a chance
And regain that sense of joy and troglodytic ambience
It helps to bring back memories and when all is said and done
Remember what we once endured in the name of having fun

Greg Joass

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