

Deepens With The Years

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2021 International Year of Caves and Karst

I wait there, tensely, in the dark.

The atmosphere has left its mark.

Anticipation starts to build as silence takes a hold.

Then suddenly I hear a splash –
a water drop and surface clash.

It seems so insignificant but through the drops unfold
the stories of this foreign place
that has me in its strange embrace.

It's like a womb – it's all around – protecting what's inside.

It's tale began so long ago
that not a living soul could know

a tiny fraction of the span of time that it's defied.

Though something we can't well transcend,
the darkness is its closest friend.

Its every move concealed throughout the aeons by that shroud.

I feel uneasy, being brave

until the lights reveal ... the cave.

Another world, so humbling, that I feel I should be bowed.

The architecture's slightly rough

but that is nowhere near enough

to prejudice the grandeur of the decorations laid.

Though water was the sculpting hand,

it also had the healing planned

through buttressing and smoothing in a crystalline cascade.

The flowstone looks like wax,

the stalagmites like stacks

and stalactites point downward urging columns to be made.

Translucent shawls – just one drop wide –

draw open with exalting pride

in helictites that grow all ways or spiral, unafraid.

Such beauty, formed in zero light –

a realm within eternal night,

like artwork by a sightless sculptor fixed on her life's work.

But other senses stir as well.

The humid feel and patent smell

combine with rich acoustics that make any singer smirk.

A cave is such a special place
of magical mystique and grace;
 an ancient, peaceful chamber where drips call and answer back.
It has a presence one can feel
that generates its own appeal –
 a challenge to reveal its hidden secrets past each crack.
The limestone's fossils can attest
dead creatures of the sea, compressed,
 became the rock that rivers carved for crystalline veneers.
Quite often there has been collapse
but water pushes through the gaps;
 a cave – like understanding – tends to deepen with the years.
The case for preservation's clear.
They're places we should all revere –
 alive examples of what limestone, time and water crave.
Resilient and yet fragile too,
with both the very old and new,
 a place of myth and wonder; come, experience a cave.

Creator's statement

- Date of work: January 2021
- Title: Deepens With The Years
- Created by: Gregory North www.gregorynorth.com.au
- Statement:- What was it about caves or karst that inspired the work? (500 words max.): Introduced to caves as a child, I have explored, guided and toured many caves in Australasia and in other parts of the world. They are such fascinating places with no two the same. The variety and grandeur are often overwhelming and the idea that speleothems are created in total darkness still captivates me. The need for more exploration, study and conservation are also important. I wanted to convey these ideas in my poem and encourage others to experience what I have enjoyed.
- Medium: rhyming verse/bush poetry.