

The Cave

Mary slept fitfully. She tossed and turned without ever properly waking up, and dreams of anxiety came and went as the moon inched its way reluctantly across the cloudless sky. For the first time in many a night she was woken by neither the cries of her hungry young son, nor the late arrival of her workaholic husband.

The previous day had been a long and tiring one. Alfie had been grumpy and had refused his milk all afternoon. Only by late evening had he finally given up and gone to sleep. The heating had broken down in the morning and the plumber hadn't answered his phone. On top of that, Rob's Garage had contacted her after lunch to explain that the repairs to the car were going to take much longer than expected; apparently, the drive shaft was corroded, and the gearbox had to be replaced. Where the money was going to come from, she didn't know. She had tried to phone Jake at the office for support but had just got through to his voice mail every time. Her best friend Belinda, to whom she would normally turn for help, was on holiday and her elder sister Kate was away in Kent on business.

As she awoke, Mary felt her pillow dig sharply into her neck and she moved her head to one side to relieve the pain. A sudden shallow scratch appeared on her left cheek and she sat up with a cry of surprise. Raising her hand to her face, she dislodged the culprit - a small grain of sand - which fell silently and sulkily to disappear into the gloom by her hips.

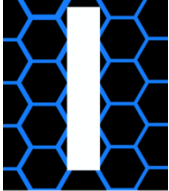
Her bed felt hard - like stone. She put a hand down onto the mattress to discover that her favourite soft cotton sheets were unexpectedly damp and strangely unyielding under her exploring fingers. A fraction of a second later she was wide-awake, mind racing, as she realised that she was not in her bed - nor even in her bedroom! Her heart drummed a frightened rhythm on her ribs and the pupils of her lovely eyes widened in a desperate quest to gather light for her brain. Mary's brain screamed at her to take action, but what action? She scrambled to her feet and hit her head hard on a rocky ceiling. Tears appeared in her eyes but she blinked them angrily away and searched in the darkness for a landmark.

Over there! A lighter patch of dark - no bigger than a grape! With her left hand outstretched, and her right hand shielding her bruised head, she bent over at the waist, crouched as much as comfort would allow, and carefully made her way towards the light.

To keep her fear at bay, she focused her thoughts on other things: the price of children's clothes; the baby aardvark at the zoo - recalling that "It feeds on ants and termites." She remembered the local newspaper report of the man who had apparently gone missing "without trace" from his seaside holiday home last week and that her husband was particularly fond of cheesecake.

The floor was highly uneven, but largely flat and free from obstructions, and Mary made steady progress towards her goal, collecting only minor bumps and scratches on her elbows and shins. Soon, the light had become the size of a football, and then large enough for her to see more clearly and allow her speed to increase. She soon reached the entrance of the cave.

Stopping suddenly with a sharp intake of breath, Mary looked down in disbelief. Below the delicately painted toenails of her besmirched and grimy feet stretched a sheer limestone cliff face. At its base, perhaps one hundred metres below, snaked a silent silvery stream, shimmering in the sunlight.

Text Title: The Cave	
 VOCABULARY	Identify a word in the first paragraph that suggest Mary did not sleep well. Find and copy a phrase that suggests that Mary's husband worked a lot. Find and copy a phrase that shows Mary hurt herself when her head hit the rocky ceiling.
 INFER	'No bigger than a grape' - what does this suggest about the lighter patch of dark.
 PREDICT	There is evidence to suggest that she is not the first person to disappear. How do you think this will impact the story?
 EXPLAIN	Mary moves from confused to scared during the story - find and copy a phrase that shows each emotion.
 RETRIEVE	Find three reasons to support the statement that Mary's previous day had been difficult.
 SUMMARISE	Attempt to summarise the story in ten words only.