

Chapter 5. In the Cave

The next Saturday was Becky Thatcher's birthday, and all Becky's friends were very excited.

'It's going to be a wonderful day,' Becky told Tom. 'We're going to have a picnic by the river, and after that, we can visit McDougal's Cave.'

So in the morning, a big boat took Becky, Tom, and all their friends down the river. There were some older children on the boat too, but all the mothers and fathers stayed at home. Picnics are better without them!

And it was a very happy, noisy picnic.

After the picnic, the children took out their candles, and ran up the hill to the cave. The mouth of the cave was dark, and some of the children were afraid at first. But caves are exciting, so in the end everybody went in.

McDougal's Cave was very, very big, with hundreds of tunnels and rooms. The tunnels went up, down, and into the hill for miles. You could walk for days in McDougal's Cave. Nobody knew all the cave, but many people knew the tunnels near the door. You could play all day in these tunnels. Tom, of course, knew them well.

For hours the children walked and ran through the cave, up and down the tunnels, in and out of the rooms.

In the evening they came out, and walked down the hill to the boat, tired but happy.

When the boat arrived back in St Petersburg, it was dark. Huck Finn saw the boat, but he did not know about the picnic. He did not go to birthday picnics, of course, because the mothers of St Petersburg did not like him. But tonight Huck was only interested in treasure - Injun Joe's treasure. Injun Joe was in an old building by the river, and Huck waited in the street near the building.

'Perhaps,' he thought, 'Injun Joe's cross is in there. And the box of money. I must wait and watch. I can tell Tom about it tomorrow.'

But Injun Joe didn't come out. At midnight it began to rain, and Huck waited all night in the cold street. In the morning he could not move and he could not speak. He felt cold, then hot, then cold, then hot again. Mrs Douglas, a woman from the church, found him in the street. She took him to her home and put him to bed. And there he stayed for two weeks. He was very ill, and so he did not hear about Tom and Becky..

But on Sunday morning all St Petersburg knew about Tom and Becky - because they were not on the boat when it came back to the village. Where were they? Were they lost in the cave? And were they alive, or dead?

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At first Tom and Becky played with their friends in the cave. Then Tom wanted to go down a new tunnel, and Becky went with him.

They walked and talked, and went into a second tunnel, then a third. Sometimes Tom put a mark with candle smoke on the tunnel wall - he wanted to find the mouth of the cave again! Then they came out of the tunnels into a big room. There were hundreds of bats in this room, and the candles woke them up. Tom took Becky's hand and they ran into the nearest tunnel, with the bats behind them. But one bat hit Becky's candle and it went out. The children ran and ran through the tunnels, and at last they got away from the bats. They stopped and sat down. Suddenly, it was very, very quiet,

'Where are we now, Tom?' Becky whispered, afraid.

'I don't know,' said Tom. 'I think it's time to go back. But we can't go through that big room because of the bats. Let's go down this tunnel.'

They went down one tunnel, then a second, a third, a fourth . . . Then they wanted to find the big room with the bats again, but they couldn't. Becky began to cry:

'Tom, we can't get out. We're lost, Tom, we're lost!'

They walked, and walked. When they were tired, they sat down? Then they got up and walked again. Time went by. Was it day, or night? They didn't know.

Then Tom wanted to find water. They had nothing to eat, and they must have something to drink. They found a very small river and sat down next to it,

'Becky,' said Tom. 'We must stay here. Near this river. This is our last candle, and ...'

He did not finish, but Becky understood.

'Tom?'

'Yes, Becky.'

'Are they going to come and look for us?'

'Of course! When the boat gets to St Petersburg—'

'But how can they find us, in these *hundreds* of tunnels? Oh, Tom, Tom, we're going to die in here!'

Becky began to cry again. Then the candle went out and the two children were in the dark. They sat for hours and hours. They slept a little, then woke up, then slept again. Was it Sunday now? Or Monday?

Suddenly Tom sat up. 'Listen! Somebody's calling!'

The two children listened. They heard it again, a little nearer. They called back; then they began to walk down the tunnel in the dark, with their hands on the wall. They stopped and listened again, but now they couldn't hear anything. Slowly, they went back to their river.

They slept again, and woke up very, very hungry.

'Perhaps it's Tuesday now,' Tom thought. 'What can I do? I must do something!' Then he had an idea.

'Becky, listen, I've got a long string in my pocket. I can go down some of the small tunnels and get back to you with the string. You wait here.'

Slowly and carefully, Tom went down the first tunnel on his hands and knees. Then the tunnel wall on his right finished, and there was nothing. Tom put out his hand to feel the floor. And just then, away to his right, he saw a hand - a hand with a candle.

At once Tom called out. 'Help!' he cried. The hand moved, and Tom saw an arm and a face. It was Injun Joe! Tom was very afraid, but Injun Joe was afraid too, and he quickly ran away down the tunnel.

Tom went back to Becky, but he did not tell her about Injun Joe. Tom waited for an hour, then went into a different tunnel with his string. Then a third tunnel...

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It was Tuesday evening, and St Petersburg waited. Many of the villagers were in the cave, and they looked for the children day and night. But they heard nothing, saw nothing, and found nothing.

Then, late that evening, there was a sudden noise in the streets. People began to run to the Thatchers' house. 'They're here! Becky and Tom are here!' Most of the village came to listen to Tom's story, 'It was in the sixth tunnel,' he told them, 'I went to the end of my string, and suddenly, I could see daylight! There was a little hole in the cave wall. I put my head out, and there was the river, right under my nose! I went back and got Becky, and we climbed out through the hole. Then we stopped a boat on the river. We were five miles from the mouth of the cave!'

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Tom was very tired after his three days in the cave, and he went to bed and stayed there for two days. He heard about Huck and went to see him on Sunday, and then every day. But Mrs Douglas was always in the room.

'You can just say hello,' she told Tom. 'And then you must go. Huck is very ill, and he needs to sleep.'

So Tom could not talk about anything exciting, and he could not tell Huck about Injun Joe.

One day, about two weeks after the picnic, Tom was in Becky's house, and her father came in.

'Well, Tom,' Mr Thatcher said. 'Would you like to go back to the cave again, one day?'

'I'm not afraid of that cave,' said Tom.

Mr Thatcher laughed. 'There are a lot of people like you, Tom. But nobody's going into the cave again. There are big doors across the cave mouth now - and nobody can open them!'

Tom's face went white. 'But Mr Thatcher - Injun Joe's in that cave!'

An hour later, fifty men were at the cave and they opened the doors. Injun Joe was on the ground, dead, his knife in his hands.

Read Chapter 5. Put these sentences in the correct order.

- a) Tom saw Injun Joe, but Injun Joe ran away. ____
- b) Soon, Tom and Becky were lost in the tunnels. ____
- c) But then Tom and Becky left their friends. ____
- d) One Saturday, a big boat took Becky, Tom and their friends down the river. -

- e) Two weeks later, Mr Thatcher told Tom that there were big doors across the
cave mouth. ____
- f) They needed water, so Tom found a small river. ____
- g) So Tom and Becky got out of the cave and went home. ____
- h) Fifty men went to the cave and found Injun Joe dead. ____
- i) In the sixth tunnel, Tom saw daylight and found a hole. ____
- j) All the children went into the cave. ____
- k) Then Tom left Becky and went down a tunnel. ____
- l) Tom and Becky went into a room of bats, and ran away. ____