

### Cave Story

I've been here a while now. It's roughly day 57 (you can never tell in constant darkness) repeating the same monotonous routine each day. I'm in a cave, I don't understand how I got here, but every day I try to escape the dark cavern. This is not a show cave with bright lights and public footpaths, just a natural, dark prison.

I can't escape, all I can do is explore. I run, my breath getting heavier with every stride I take. Today something is different, I can see light.

I hear footsteps, and I stop in fear. I had assumed it was only me trapped down here, what could possibly be approaching? I mask my fear as the unknown form reveals itself.

"Hello I'm John."

His voice soothing me, I loosen up. The torch illuminates his face showing his dark skin and warm smile.

"Hello," I smile in return. His presence is lifting.

I lead, using John's torch. Stalagmites and Stalactites shape the rock surface. Alien forms crawl around, with a bioluminescence under light.

I hear something; I'm not too sure what, but something. I glance across at John, but he looks as placid as ever. Music fills my throbbing ears, it's the one song I know all the words to; my favourite song. Where is it coming from, could it be a search party? I hold John's hand in excitement; we have to find them! We walk again, gaining rapid pace, John encouraging me as usual.

Without warning the cave begins to shake, our surroundings crumble. That's when I hear it. "Sophie, if you can hear me, you can do this, you can break out of this mess. None of this was your fault, just please..."

The sound cuts off. I fall to my knees and cry.

"I'm so confused and I'm lost and I'm tired of this place!" John comforts me, and lifts me up.

"You can do this, just don't give up," he consoles me as we walk again.

My hand begins to tingle as if held by a non-existent being and I still hear my song in the distance. Wait! There's light, bright now and rapidly getting closer. This isn't the same as John's light; it has the artificial glow of strip lighting. I rush forward to investigate and I trip, feeling pain for the first time in a while. I shout out to John but I can't see him. I'm alone.

My eyes open slowly, to see a pale man wearing a blue uniform. The fluorescence of the lights blind me.

"John?" I splutter. My throat feels hoarse and the pain from the fall is still strong in my body. But John's gone, and I am left with this stranger who looks like a nurse.

"That's me." The man says softly. His voice is the same as John's but his appearance doesn't match. My song is playing somewhere in the room. I'm confused.

"Sophie, you've been in a coma but you're safe now."