

THE LIGHT WITHIN THE CAVE

The year is 1963, cave explorer John Geuse and his team of three are about to explore a cave in Montana. The group had grown up together, Geuse had known Henry Weisler his entire life and they were best friends. They didn't meet the 3rd member of their crew, Alfred Stock, until the 3th grade when they all joined an after school group. Geuse was the leader, and the peacemaker. Weisler was the shortest, but also the bravest. He liked taking unnecessary risks. Stock was the tallest, and the most cautious of the three.

When they were kids, they used to read and talk about how rocks, mountains, and caves were formed. They expressed a keen interest specifically in caves. They were fascinated with how dripstone was made, how bats made caves their home, and the group couldn't wait to begin exploring caves for themselves. They finally were able to explore a cave in their second year of high school. The crew didn't stay long, since they didn't have proper equipment. Once they graduated, they got summer jobs to afford necessary equipment to explore the caves safely.

Now, Geuse, Weisler, and Stock are 23 years old, and have been exploring caves for years. They don't know it yet, but they are about to explore their deepest and strangest cave yet. It took the whole day to get there; now it's sunset and they are just getting their equipment setup. "Should we set up a tent and wait till the morning?" Stock worryingly mumbled, "It will be fine Alfred, plus it will be dark in the cave no matter what." Weisler said. As soon as the sun set, they started rappelling down. As they got deeper into the cave, the air became thinner and the smell was humid. The walls were moist like they had been

sprayed with a pressure washer hours before. It was dark, frightening and thrilling as they reached what they thought was the bottom of the cave floor. Their flashlights glimmered like the sun. Each step they took their hearts sank deeper into their chest.

Geuse was walking to what he could tell was an indentation in the rock. Though he walked cautiously, Geuse stepped in the wrong place and fell down a great distance. Luckily, his repelling hook saved him from death. "Are you ok!?" Weisler yelled with trepidation in his voice. Geuse hollered back "Yes I'm okay, a bit shaken, but okay. I'm going to repel down further to explore what's down here." "Ok, we'll follow your lead." Stock replied.

Once they are at a safe point of this seemingly endless cave, they decide to split up to see if they find anything of interest. They all have walkie-talkies, so if one is in trouble they will know. Stock, having the most fear of being alone, is practically always holding his walkie-talkie. He is slowly repelling down into this void of nothingness. He decides to drop a rock down to see how long it will take to reach the bottom. 15 seconds later he finally hears it crash. "Oh god, this is going to take awhile." Stock reaches the bottom of the cave about 20 minutes later and starts wandering around.

After about an hour of wandering, Stock sees a moving light. He calls in on his walkie-talkie informing the group. "Hey guys, I see a moving light." No one says anything back. "Hello? Is anyone there? I repeat, I see a moving light and don't know what it is." He hears a glitching noise over the walkie-talkie of someone trying to respond; but couldn't make out the voice. Since no one is responding, Stock decides to move towards the light. Once he gets closer, whatever is holding the light looks human. He decides to yell at the figure "Hey! Who are you?" The shadowy figure responds "Alfred." Stock gets goosebumps on the back of his neck and leaps behind a wall in the cave. He thinks to himself, how does that thing know my name? Stock yells out again "Who are you??" As he looks over his shoulder, the figure has vanished. He tries his walkie-talkie one more time. "Hello, is anyone there? I don't know what I just saw but I might need your guys help." "Yes I copy, coming to your location now." Weisler responded. "Same with me." Geuse said. With a deep sigh of relief, Stock mumbled, "Oh thank god".