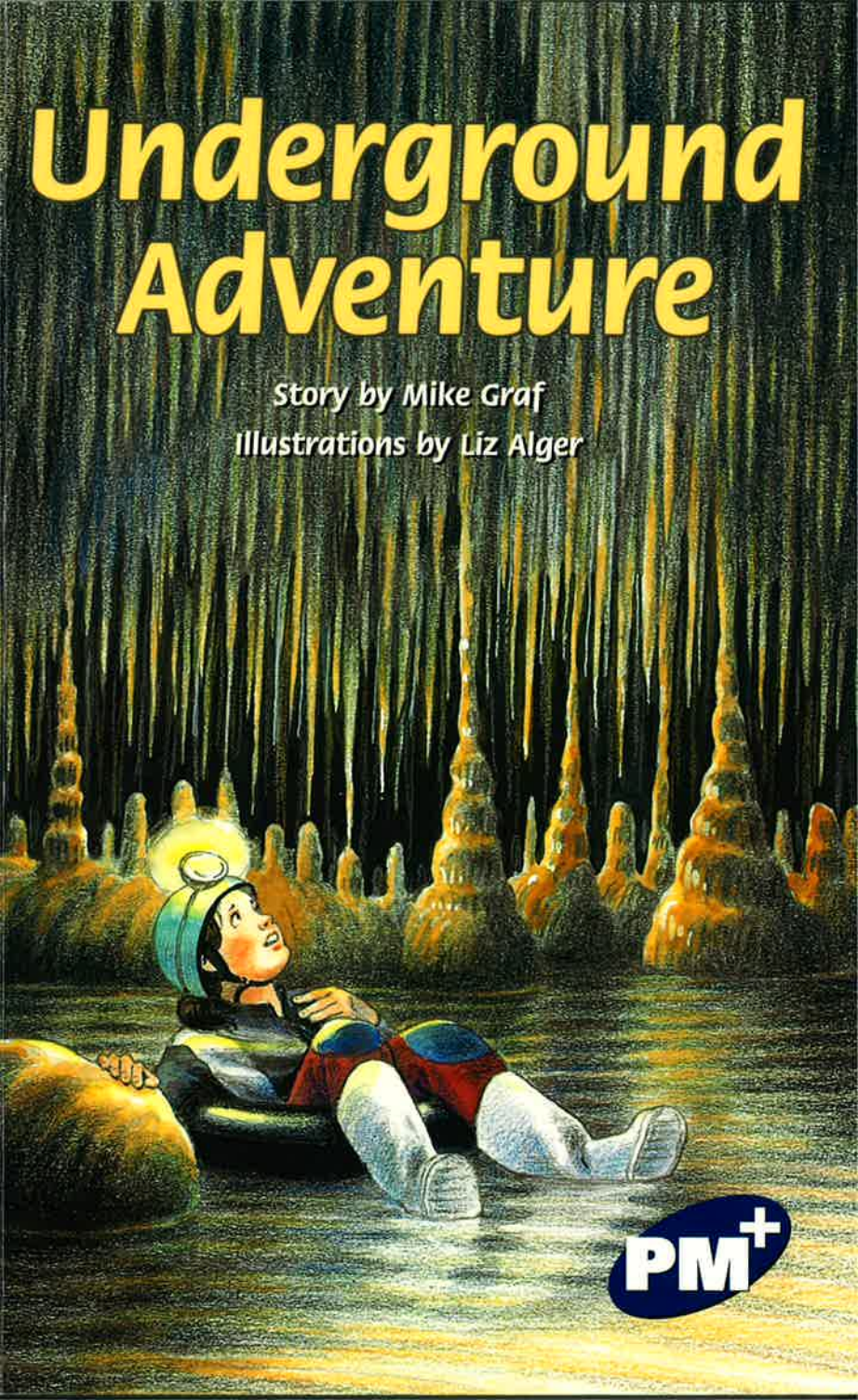
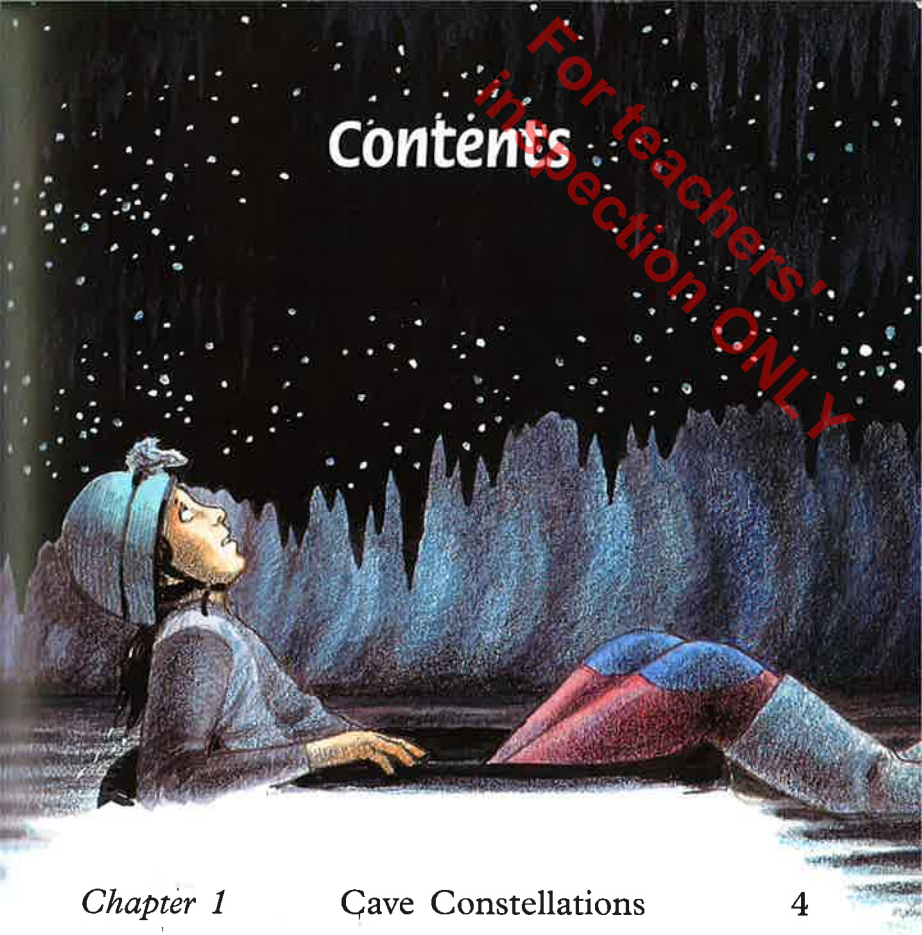
Underground Adventure

Story by Mike Graf
Illustrations by Liz Alger



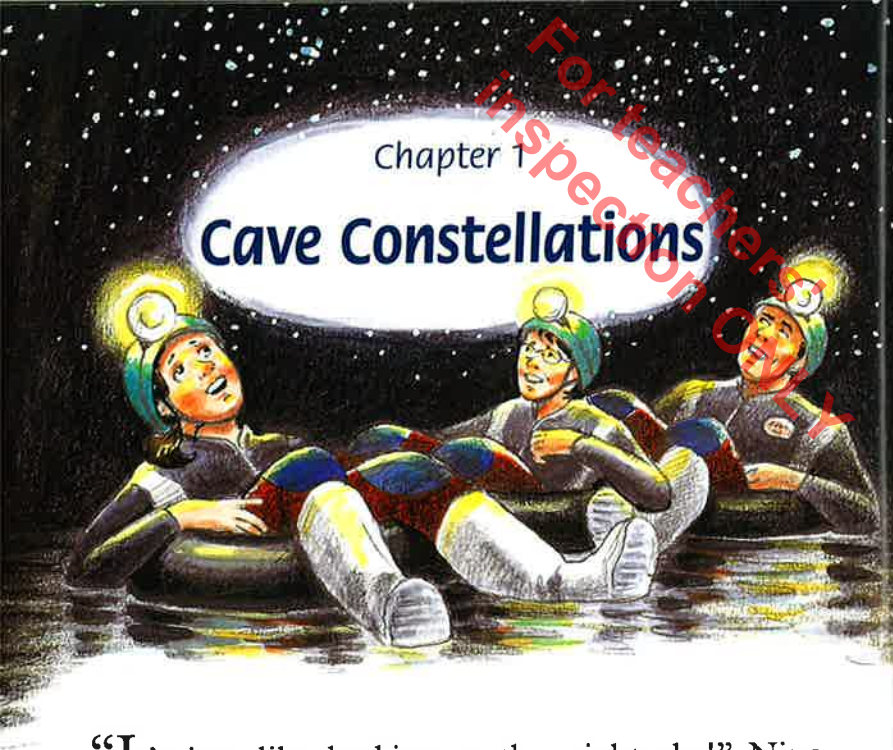
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Chapter 1

Cave Constellations

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"It's just like looking at the night sky!" Nina announced.

"Except I don't see the Southern Cross," Nina's father Paul said.

"Or Orion's Belt," her mum Theresa added.

"That's because," Nina went on, "they're cave constellations."

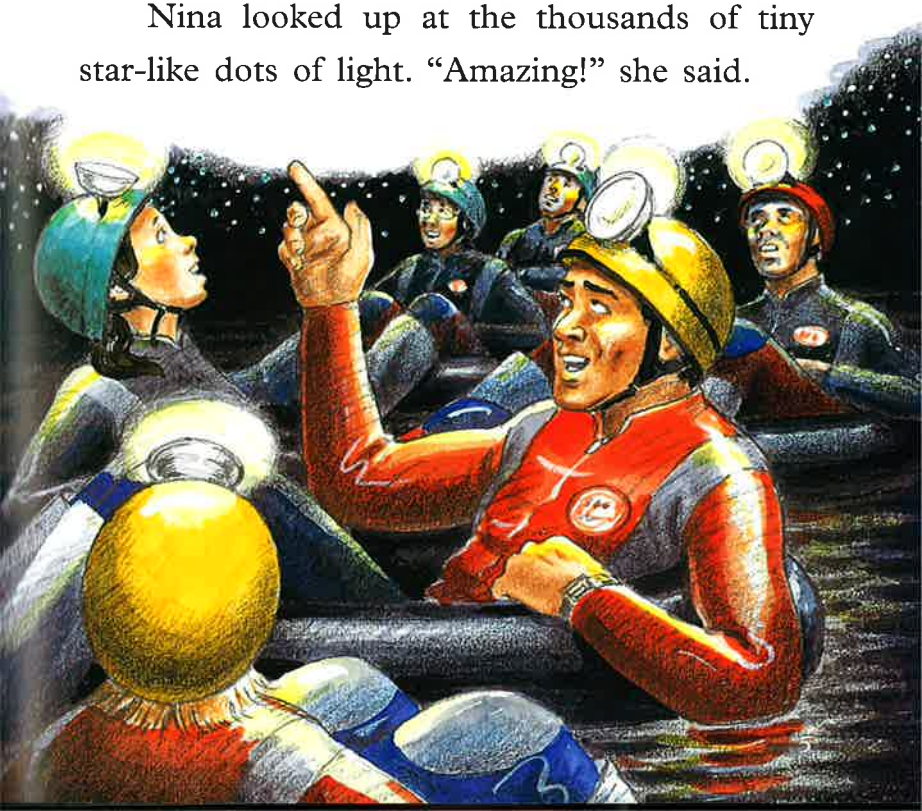
Nina's family and a group of other tourists floated through an underground stream. Two guides, Kelly and Rick, led their group.

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"This is the 'Glowworm Grotto,'" Rick explained. "It's one of the largest rooms in this cave. And, it's known, of course, for the glowworms that cling to the ceiling."

"They aren't really worms though," Kelly added, "but the larvae stage of a small fly. Their tails light up by a process called bioluminescence. The light attracts bugs, which get caught in sticky threads spun by the glowworms. They eat the bugs."

Nina looked up at the thousands of tiny star-like dots of light. "Amazing!" she said.



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"If you turn off your headlamps," Kelly told the group, "you'll really see how much light these glowworms can give out. Please be as quiet as you can. Noise disturbs them."

Nina and the others floated silently on inner tubes in the dark cave. Their wetsuits kept them warm in the cold water. Nina heard the others in the group but could only see their faint silhouettes.

"It's pretty great, isn't it Mum?" said Nina quietly.

"I've never seen anything like it."

"I'll never forget it," Nina said.



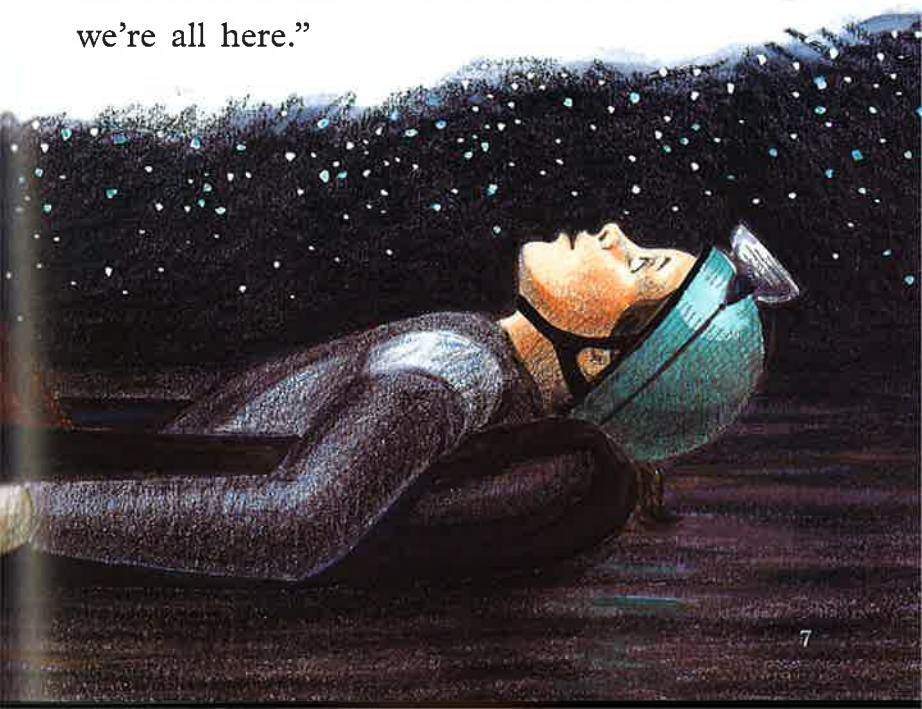
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Nina rested her head back on the inner tube and stared up at the bluish lights. As she fluttered her hands through the cold water she thought to herself, *I'm floating through a lost, underground world. A world full of grottoes, fluorescent bugs, and...*

SMACK!

Nina's tube bumped into a rock.

"Welcome to the end of the grotto!" said Kelly. One by one the cave visitors grouped together. Kelly turned on her headlamp and did a head count – "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8... Yep, we're all here."



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"Everyone please turn your lights back on," Kelly asked. One by one the cavers flicked on their headlamps.

Kelly looked at the group. "This is an easy cave, but it gets a bit more difficult up ahead. There's a tricky spot about 15 metres around the bend. I'm going to check the water level there first. After a bit of rain it can be too dangerous. If the water is okay to go, I'll stay up there and wait for each of you to come through safely. Rick will give you instructions from here."

