

## CHAPTER ONE, A REAL ADVENTURE

Tristan ran as fast as he could. This was exciting, he thought. This was a real adventure!

He loved adventures. He loved reading about them. He loved the kind of books where the kids always did fun and dangerous things. Where they had to fight a thief, or catch a smuggler, or even where they were kidnapped. Except that it was hard to have that kind of adventure yourself, as thieves and smugglers and kidnappers were hard to come by. And he didn't really like the idea of actually fighting anyone, of having someone threaten him with a knife, or tie him up so that it hurt. When he played with his friends they always made sure that it didn't hurt, and that the knives were plastic toy knives, not the sharp ones like his mum had in the kitchen.

Most of all, Tristan loved having adventures himself. He loved being outdoors, running around, playing in the woods, splashing through a river, climbing a tree. He was always active, and he was always pretending to have an adventure.

But this time, it was for real. He was running home as fast as he could because he had found this cool cave in the woods. He needed a torch so he could go inside and explore it. That was exciting enough by itself, but he was also pretending to be in a race. He had to be the first to get the torch and then return to the cave, because if he didn't, his enemies might get there first. And they would then take the cave all for themselves and hold it forever and ever.

So Tristan jumped over tree trunks, his dark brown eyes alight in his small, oval face. He dodged underneath low hanging branches and swerved around the really muddy patches so he wouldn't slip and fall and make his dark blue tracksuit bottoms with their stripe along each leg muddy.

This was fun. Much more fun than just walking slowly home!

There was home now. His mum was in the garden, hanging up the washing. Oh no, she mustn't see him, he thought. She wasn't his mother in his story, she was a spy! She might suggest he'd have a drink before going off again. But that would only be to delay him, so his enemies could get there first. So he had to make sure she didn't see him.

And where was his sister, Megan? She was annoying at the best of times, as older sisters always were, but right now, he really didn't want to bump into her. She'd probably be an ogre in this story, dressed in a pink frilly dress, ready to guard the cave from intruders. He chuckled at the image that brought up.

He hid behind a tree, looking around. He didn't see her. Good. Slowly and carefully he crept away from the tree, keeping an eye on his mother. Silently he moved to the next bush and crouched down behind it. He did the same for the next. But then he had a problem. There was no other shrub or tree between this one and the back door. How would he get there without being spotted?

Maybe he could distract his mum, so she would go away or look the other way. He picked up a stone and weighed it in his hand. No, ofcourse he wasn't going to hit her with it. No, he was thinking of throwing it far away, so she would look in the direction that the stone fell instead. But he didn't think he could throw that far, so he dropped the stone again.

Suddenly the door bell rang. His mum left the washing and walked inside the house. Saved by the bell! This was the break he needed! Tristan used his chance and ran to the back door. There he stopped, and peered inside the house. No-one to be seen. It should be safe to go in now.

He tiptoed as silently as he could through the hallway, avoiding the clutter of shoes, boots, rollerblades, a bag and other stuff. There was a door in-between him and the front door,

where his mum was talking to someone. He could hear her melodious voice, but not see her. This meant that she could not see him either!

He reached the stairs and crept up it. The stairs creaked, and he stood still, listening hard. No, his mum hadn't heard it. He crept up the rest of the stairs, thinking triumphantly that he had made it unseen to his room. But at that moment, his sister's bedroom door opened.

"What are you doing creeping around?"

"I'm not creeping, I'm just going to my room."

"Yeah, right," Megan sneered, dangling a make-up brush in her hand. "You're always creeping around. You're such a creep," and she laughed shrilly.

"Creep yourself. And what are you doing with mum's make-up stuff?" Tristan looked at his sister's narrow, thin face, thickly covered in make-up, and shuddered.

"It's mine, not mum's, she gave it to me," and Megan stuck her tongue out at him. "Now that I am 13, she says I am allowed to wear it. So there."

"Better learn to use it properly then, or you'll look even more like a scarecrow," Tristan responded, sticking out his tongue and quickly nipping into his room, slamming the door shut behind him. Phew, that was a narrow escape. And my, did she look awful with that stuff on her face. He was glad he wasn't a girl, having to wear make-up.

He looked around his room, which was more cluttered than the hallway downstairs, thinking back to the cave and what he was going to need. Where was his torch? Somewhere around his bed, he remembered. He had used it to read with in the night, when he was supposed to be sleeping, which had been much more fun.

It took him a little while to find the torch. It wasn't in his bed, or under his pillows, it wasn't around the pile of adventure story books and comics that were lying higgledy-piggledy

beside his bed. Not till he went down on his hands and knees and looked underneath the bed that he found it among some dirty socks and pieces of lego.

Was there anything else he might need? Wistfully he thought about a pocket knife, but his dad had said that he wasn't allowed one till he was 14, which meant he still had to wait another 3 years. He put his torch in his red rucksack and grabbed a bottle of water and stuffed that in too. A half-eaten packet of biscuits followed.

Before he left his room, he stood by the door and listened. He couldn't hear his sister, but that didn't mean she wasn't waiting for him. He could hear her music though. He couldn't hear his mum talk anymore, so where was she? Had she gone back to the washing outside? Or had she gone to the kitchen or somewhere else? He didn't know, but if she was outside, he'd have trouble getting out of the house unseen.

Noiselessly, he opened his door. He didn't see or hear anyone. He moved to the stairs on tiptoes, past Megan's room, hoping that she wouldn't notice him. It wouldn't do to alert the ogre that he was trying to get into the cave.

Very cautiously, he went down the stairs, stopping every now and then to listen. Now he could hear his mum. She was in the living room, still talking to someone. That meant that he could get out without her noticing! So he tiptoed on, and out of the house. He quickly ran to the first bush and stopped there, panting slightly. This was hard work. But fun!

He ran off into the woods, glowing with success, a big smile on his face. He kept running, once again dodging the tree branches and jumping over everything that was in his way. Then, when he reached the area where he knew he had to leave the path, he slowed down, panting. He had left himself a clear marker so he could find the trail to the cave again. He looked

around carefully. There it was! Two sticks, one larger, one smaller, were lying on top of each other, showing him where he had to leave the path.

He followed his own marker, and walked on the little trail. He decided to be really quiet again, in case his enemies were already there. It wouldn't do for them to hear him coming. Then he shrugged. He knew well enough that there wasn't anyone else out there. This whole thing about enemies was only a game. But that didn't matter, he was having fun.

He walked quietly on. The little trail was a lot more difficult to follow. He had to squeeze himself between small trees, scrape through some brambles, jump over a really muddy patch, go around shrubs that were in his way.

Finally the forest opened up a little and he stopped. Crouching down, he looked around. No-one to be seen or heard. Great, that meant that he was the first and his enemies would not be able to hold the cave for ever and ever. Unless they were already inside...

As he went up the little rise in front of him, he became more and more excited. This was going to be the first cave he'd ever been in! And he was going to go in it all by himself! He could see it now; it was that dark patch near the edge in front of him. All he had to do was slide down that hole into the ground and his real adventure would begin!