

The Journey
By Talitha Gholston

As I stand looking out off the edge of the cliff I know what I had to do. Looking at the danger sign makes my heart flutter. Looking down at the opening of the mine I can see a gate blocking my way. "Do you really want to go in there?" I asked myself. I close my eyes as I lean my head back.

"Grandpa. Tell me a story," I said.

"When I was young lad I worked in the mine. My best friend Charley and I were hard workers. We had our hardhat on and our pickaxe in our hand," my grandfather said. "Charley talks to me about taking his woman out." He smiles. "Before I can say something the earth shakes. I can hear some of my friends scream. My hands shake and my heart speeds up. I look to my friend, and he's stuck in place. I hear people yelling. I run towards the voices. The ground is still trembling, but I know I have to save them. Rocks hitting the ground echo off the walls. Clink, Clink, Clink sounded through the mine."

"SABRINA," my best friend said. My heart flutters.

"You scared me Rachel."

"I'm sorry. What are you doing out here?"

"I'm doing it."

"What?"

"I'm going to go find grandpa's treasure?"

"Huh?"

I look at her, and her face wears a frown. I think back on that day and talk like Grandpa Russell.

"When I was a young lad, working in the mines, there was an earthquake that killed my best friend Charley and a few other guys I worked with. I hid something deep inside while being stuck for three days. I knew this was going to be the last time I was here. I knew I would never go back," my grandpa said.

"What was it Papa?" younger me asked.

"When you're older, you will have to go find it yourself," Grandpa said.

"But Grandpa," younger me said.

"Time for bed little one," my mother said, interrupting my grandfather.

"He never told you did he?" Rachel asked.

"No but you're going to help me find it," I order. "She is my best friend so she should know what I was about to do," I thought to myself.

"No. You're not getting me in trouble Sabrina," Rachel said. "When do we start?" She breaths out heavily.

"Now," I said. I turn from the cliff and head into town. She starts smiling.

"Where are we going?" Rachel asked.

"The library," I answer.

After hours of research, we find a lot of articles from the earthquake that closed the mine. I found a map of the mine. With only one way in I know what I needed now. I know my mother isn't going to like what I'm planning. We go our separate ways. I'm getting the money I had saved up from years of allowance when my mother comes into my room.

"What are you doing?" She watches intently.

“I wanted to go to the store,” I answered.

“Need a ride?” she asked.

“No. I got it,” I answered. I go to the local hardware store for rock climbing equipment. After I get everything I need I go back home. Tomorrow is Black Cat Day and that is when I’m going. I have till the end of the festival to get the treasure and get it back before my mother knows I am gone.

“Dinner’s ready,” my mother yelled from the kitchen. We sit at the table. “How was your day?”

“Good. Rachel and I went to the library.”

“What for?”

“Just a little reading.” We stop talking.

She gives me her look, so I know she is reading to me.

I hurry up and finish my food. I know I need a lot of rest if I’m going to make it safely into the mine and back. “Can I be excused?”

“Yes.”

“I’m going to bed after my shower. I’m tired.”

“Sweet dreams.”

I take my shower then get dressed for bed. I know she will come to check on me so I can’t look at the map tonight. I climb into my bed and swiftly fall asleep.

“BEEP, BEEP, BEEP.” The sound of my alarm wakes me up. I search the house and find that my mother is not home. I grab my backpack with my rock-climbing gear and leave. I get to the cliff and hide my bag in some bushes, so no one finds it.

“You sure you want to do this?” I asked myself. “You could get hurt or stuck down there.” I turn and look at the sign. “DANGER: DO NOT ENTER.” Were wrote in big bold red letters. Taking a deep breath, I look at the mine one more time. “I’m doing this.”

I get back home and as soon as I walk into the house my mother is standing at the table with something that looks like my map in her hand.

“Sabrina, what is this?” my mother asks.

“What?” I say. My mother holds the map in her hand. My heart beats out of control, and my palms get sweaty.

“Don’t play coy with me young lady,” my mother says. She’s frowning.

“It’s a map,” I say. As she looks at me, I keep a blank look on my face.

“I know it’s a map. I’m not stupid. The question is why do you have a map of the old mines?” my mother asks.

“Is that what that is?” I ask. Thinking to myself, “I hope she doesn’t figure it out.”

“It’s closed off to people for a reason.” I look at her with a blank stare. “That’s it. You’re going to Black Cat Day, I am too. You think I don’t know what you’re up too. You are just like him,” my mother says. I knew I couldn’t be lucky enough to get away with playing dumb. My mother catches my every time.

“I am,” I say, excited.

“Yes. He stayed in his own world. You do the same. Eventually that is what got him killed,” my mother answered. “Let’s go.” I grabbed my jacket and followed her out. Shortly after arriving at the festival, my mother decided she wanted something to eat. “I want some cotton candy. You want some?”

“No,” I reply. We get to the booth with cotton candy hanging. My mother turns to pay, I slip into the crowd.

“SABRINA!” my mother yells. I know she’s mad, but I have dreamt about doing this since the day my Grandpa told me the story. I know I have a limited time to find the treasure before the night is up. I get to the tree line, turning back I check for my mother. I take a deep breath before I venture off into the forest. The deeper in the trees I get the darker it is. I make it to a cliff where the big, big tree hangs overhead.

“Good thing I stashed a bag earlier, if not I wouldn’t have had what I needed,” I said to myself out loud.

“No good thing I’m here so if you don’t make it back I can get help,” my friend said.

I gasped as I jumped.. “You scared me.”

“Your mother looked like she was going to kill you. It never fails you are sly as a fox. Time to go if you want to get back before dark,” my friend says.

I pulled the rope out of my backpack, wrapping it around the tree and anchor hitching it. I pull it tight before putting on my Harness. Putting my backpack in place when I’m finished securing myself. Now that I’m connected, I began my descent as the rain begins to fall. It’s not normal for it to rain this late at night. It’s not that far but it’s slippery and wet.

“You okay down there,” my friend yelled. The rain makes it slippery, so I lose my balance and slip. Kind of poetic since I slipped out of my mother’s sights. My heart pounds in my chest. I stop moving. Steadying my feet, I look up to the sky, blinded by the moon and rain, I closed my eyes. Taking deep breaths, I continue my descent.

“Yes.” My feet land on a tiny ledge and I release the rope. Carefully walking on the edge, I know I can’t move too fast, but I can’t waste too much time. I only have a few hours. My foot slips again and I struggle to keep my balance. I start to tremble, but I know I have to be strong. Taking short breaths, I get to the entrance. “I know. Forbidden entry.” The sign on the gate says it. I get the bolt cutters out and cut the chain off the gate.

“Bark.” It doesn’t sound like a dogs bark, so I turn on the flashlight connected to my hat. I knew I needed to see while still using both hands. Slowly walking into the entrance, I see them. It looks like a momma fox, and she is protecting something.

“Hi. I’m just going in the mine. I will leave you alone.” The fox watches me closely as I slip past her. I got deeper into the mine and stop. Laughing at the irony of the fox. The deeper I get into the mine the darker and slimmer it gets. Luckily, I’m small enough to get past it. I get to a part in the mine where there are a bunch of rocks, moving deeper, I see where my grandfather was trapped. I look behind me seeing nothing but darkness. My heart starts to flutter and beat faster. Sound echoes off the walls.

The ground starts to shake. “This was the dumbest thing I have ever done. I’m already here I need to finish it.” I move farther pulling out the map. I look around the floor where I stand. I see something sticking out of the ground. I walk to it and see it’s a string. I start to pull as the earth shakes again. I have to hurry. I drop to my knees, taking out the small shover I purchased at the hardware store and start digging. After digging a little I find a small box. Opening it up I only find a letter and a locket.

“Seriously that’s all you put down here, grandpa.” I open up the locket and see two faces I have never seen before. The earth shakes and I know I have to get out of there. I walk fast to get out. I can hear the rocks falling. They echo loudly. I see the roof falling as I run faster than I have ever ran. I see it before it happens. I jump out of the way just before the rock hits me. When I get out and up the cliff my friend is no longer there but in her place is my mother.

“You are in big trouble and once again you got Rachel in trouble too. You just couldn’t keep well enough alone,” my mother says. She is unusually calm. I follow behind her the whole way home without making a sound. When we get home my mother looks at me. “Go to your room. We will discuss this tomorrow.”

I go into my bedroom, pulling the locket and letter out. I open up the letter. First words in the letter were, “Dear Charley.”