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“Katie! Katie, where are you?”

I reluctantly glanced up from my sketchbook, where I had been copying the desert landscape around me. For the past couple days my family and I had been camping with my dad’s brother. Right now I could see my cousin Natalie racing towards me, her long, wavy red hair streaming behind her like a river.

“Come on, Katie!” she exclaimed excitedly, “Let’s explore! My dad says we can go by ourselves, as long as we stay together.”

I slowly stood up and brushed the dirt off my jeans. “Where do you suggest we go?” I asked, irritated. “We’re in the middle of nowhere!”

Natalie put her hands on her hips. “Listen. I know you don’t enjoy being stuck in the middle of the desert with a cousin you barely know, but you can’t just sit around moping until we leave. Why don’t we at least *try* to be friends?”

I thought for a moment. “Okay,” I sighed, “Let’s go.”

We trudged through the desolate desert landscape, pausing every now and then to catch our breath and drink from our water bottles. Finally, after what seemed like five hours of walking, I leaned against a rock, exhausted.

“I can’t go any further,” I declared, “We should go back.”

Natalie didn’t even seem to hear. She pointed below the rock that I was leaning against. “Look!” she gasped.

I gazed at the ground where she was pointing. There was a giant hole underneath the rock!

“Let’s go check it out!” I exclaimed.

Natalie grinned, and we cautiously slipped inside.

As soon as we dropped into the cave, a rush of cool air met us. It was a relief after the long journey. We journeyed deeper underground.

Suddenly we came upon a giant cathedral of stone, reaching high above our heads. We could see light streaming through an opening in the ceiling. The two of us stopped to take it all in, our fears melting away like snow in the spring. It was breathtaking.

Suddenly I caught sight of a strange object leaning against the wall. I nudged my cousin. “Natalie, what is *that*?” I asked, pointing.

She took a few steps closer. “I don’t know. It looks like a clay pot.”

“What’s a clay pot doing here?”

Natalie shook her head, clearly puzzled. I followed her as she crept towards a small opening near the pot and peered inside.

“I can’t see anything,” she announced. Then she brightened. Pulling a small flashlight from her pocket, she motioned for me to follow her.

What we found was astonishing.

It was a tiny room, filled with pots similar to the one that we had stumbled upon at the entrance, but much larger. Some were broken, but most were intact. We couldn’t believe what we had just found!

“Do you realize what these are?!” Natalie exclaimed, breaking the silence. “These are old Native American clay pots! These could have been used hundreds or maybe thousands of years ago!”

“How do you know?”

“One of my good friends is Native American,” Natalie explained, “I’ve learned a lot from her.”

“This is amazing!” I screamed with excitement, hardly daring to believe it. We had just found a place that hadn’t been occupied for thousands of years! How often does that happen?

Natalie nodded happily, “We need to show our parents! Let’s go back and tell them!”

The two of us grinned at each other. No one needed to say it out loud. In this incredible adventure, we had truly become friends.