

# **Subterranean Study Guide**

## **Subterranean by James Rollins**

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# Plot Summary

*Subterranean* by James Rollins focuses on a team of explorers who believe that they have been brought to Antarctica on a scientific research expedition. The team soon learns that they are not the first group to go under the ice to explore the abandoned dwellings. While searching for the first team, the group finds that there is an entire civilization under the ice. The explorers find that there are dangerous creatures, deadly plants, and even a member of their own team with intentions of killing everyone while they fight to get to the surface.

Ashley Carter, an archeologist, is asked to be the leader of the government's scientific expedition in Antarctica. She agrees but insists on bringing her son, Jason, who will be watched at the army base. The group also consists of Ben who is a cave explorer, Linda who is a biologist, Khalid who is a geologist and three army personnel. As they are ready to head into the vast tunnel system, Ashley is told that they are not the first group that has entered the caves and that the other group has been missing for three months. The group feels lied to, with the exception of the army personnel, but feel that they have no choice but to continue and look for the missing group.

They are in the caves a few days, following the trail of the previous group when one of the army personnel goes missing. They follow a blood trail and find that he has been eaten by a strange reptilian looking creature. They are soon attacked by several of the creatures and are barely able to escape with their lives. Ashley's group is taking refuge in a cavern, unable to contact the army base, which is also being attacked by the fierce creatures. Ashley, Ben and one of the army personnel decide to go further into the caves and leave Khalid and Linda with the other badly injured army personnel.

Ashely, Ben, and the major soon find themselves in the middle of an ancient civilization. The people, called the mimi'swee, explain that they are dying and believe it is because the humans have taken away a sacred statue from up top. Ben agrees to help, and when he gets back to the army base he finds that it has been nearly destroyed with the people nearly completely dead. Ben finds Ashley's son, who explains that Khalid has strapped a bomb to Jason's waist in order to control Linda. Khalid murdered the army personnel that had been left with him and Linda. After looking at the bomb mechanism, it is discovered that Khalid lied and the bomb can be taken off but would still have exploded.

The group is able to find the statue and replace it and Khalid dies while trying to blow up the entire cave system and kill all those left alive. The mimi'swee are saved after the humans discover that it is an mold unknown to the mimi'swee's ecosystem that has caused the problems. Ashley and Ben decide to stay with the mimi'swee for a time.



# Book 1: Chapter 1-4

## Book 1: Chapter 1-4 Summary

Subterranean by James Rollins focuses on a team of explorers who believe that they have been brought to Antarctica on a scientific research expedition. The team soon learns that they are not the first group to go under the ice to explore the abandoned dwellings. While searching for the first team, the group finds that there is an entire civilization under the ice. The explorers find that there are dangerous creatures, deadly plants, and even a member of their own team with intentions of killing everyone while they fight to get to the surface.

Chapter begins with Ashley Carter working on a dig site in New Mexico. She arrives home to find that a Dr. Blakely and Major Michaelson are there waiting for her. Ashley isn't interested in hearing Dr. Blakely's business proposition until Ashley is offered a very large sum of money and it is agreed that her eleven-year-old son, Jason, can go with her. Ashley is showed a statue that is made out of diamond and is told that it was found beneath the surface in Antarctica.

As chapter two begins, Benjamin Brust is in a jail in Australia for having taken his rich employer spelunking in a government restricted cave. Ben is visited by a government official, who agrees to set Ben free providing he agrees to help with a mysterious expedition. Ben agrees, and that night has a dream that he hasn't had since his childhood. He was in a cave with his grandfather when he was told that Ben was a direct descendant of an Aborigine. Ben had been so ashamed and had been afraid that his friends might have found out. After Ben wakes up, he attributes his time in the cell for the sudden re-occurrence of the dream. Thirty days later, Ben is Buenos Aires, meeting for the first time with Dr. Blakely and the other members of the expedition team.

In chapter three, Dr. Blakely is addressing his carefully selected team and explaining to them that a military base is at the base of a volcano at Mount Erebus and this is where they will head. Under Mount Erebus they discovered a vast system of caves. The main cave they have named Alpha Cavern, two miles below the surface, and there is a military base set up here. Blakely shows the slides of hundreds of holes in a wall that was a vast system of cliff-dwelling homes. Blakely introduces the members of the team. Ashley Carter, an anthropologist, will be the leader, Linda Furstenburg is a biologist, Khalid Najmon is a geologist, and Benjamin Brust is a cave explorer. In addition to these scientific people, there are three SEAL operatives that will be accompanying the crew, lead by Major Michaelson. Dr. Blakely leaves the stage and he and his assistant Roland agree that the new crew doesn't even suspect that there was a previous expedition crew.

In chapter four Ashley, Ben, Linda and Khalid meet for drinks before going back to their rooms after Blakely's speech. The group agrees that there is something more going on than scientific interest, although they don't know what.



## Book 1: Chapter 1-4 Analysis

Blakely has had contact with all the characters at this point. It is clear that the scientists on the expedition crew don't really know what to make of him and seem to distrust him. Ashley states that she doesn't trust him. Later on in the story, Blakely will show what kind of character he is when he helps to save Ashley's son.

Major Michaelson has a personal reason for going on this trip. That won't be revealed until later in the story. This will have a large impact on the story from Michaelson's point of view. Ashley will eventually know of this reason. She won't chastise Michaelson for his reason for going but will have to warn him that his personal issues may be putting the crew at risk.

Blakely is hiding the truth of the first expedition team from the new scientists he has recruited. Later in the story, it be seen that seemingly everyone is hiding something. Ben's dreams will continue and will become more odd and prophetic. Despite this, he will keep these dreams to himself. Ashley hides the fact that she has been hurt badly in the past. Linda also is hiding something that is seemingly significant. Khalid will prove to be a crucial character in the story and will have a much more detailed story that will affect everyone around him.

There have been several moments of foreshadowing already, in regards to the Aboriginal ancestry that Ben has and the dream. It is also significant to note that the statue that was brought back by the first expedition team is female and made of one large diamond. This will have a connection to other items found later on in the story.



## Book 2: Chapter 5-9

### Book 2: Chapter 5-9 Summary

Chapter five begins with the crew on a plane heading for the Antarctic military base. Ashely begins talking to Major Michaelson and learns that he has a brother, Harry, and that they both joined the marines. Major Michaelson admits that he volunteered for the expedition, although he refuses to explain why. They soon arrive at McMurdo. They stop to eat at the base and Jason goes to the bathroom. While in the stall, Khalid comes in and sits in the stall next to Jason. Khalid's bag spills onto the floor and cubes of gray clay fall out onto the floor. Khalid picks them up, not noticing Jason, and puts them back into his bag. Jason is able to take one of the missed packages of clay and puts it into his pocket.

In chapter six, they continue on to the Alpha base. Ashley notices that Ben is looking worriedly at Linda but Ashely doesn't know why. When they take the elevator shaft down to Alpha Base, there is a column in the cave with the words 'Hell...one mile!' (p. 54) written on it. Blakely says he will have someone clean that off immediately and then welcomes the group to their new home.

Chapter seven continues, with Ashley and Jason settling into their rooms. While there, Jason will have homework to do but will also be able to continue his martial arts lessons and play on electric bikes and jet skis. Before dinner, Ben goes out to talk to Linda alone. He tells her that he has noticed her symptoms and she admits that she suffers from claustrophobia. Despite her intense fears, she doesn't want to miss this opportunity and has brought anti-anxiety medications and has been going through therapy. Ben agrees not to mention anything to anyone. At dinner that night, Ashley and Ben decide they will go the next morning to look at the sight where the dwellings in the wall are located and the diamond statue was found. Jason eagerly agrees to go with Linda to go fishing and find specimens with her while his mother is off with Ben. That night while everyone is asleep, Khalid goes to the elevator shaft and puts a large amount of the plastique explosives he brought with him on the motor box to the only elevator. Khalid believes that this will cover his tracks when he is ready to escape.

In chapter eight, Ashley and Ben go out to inspect the cliff dwellings. Ashley and Ben fall while looking in one of the dwellings and see a small symbol carved on the ceiling in front of the doorway. Ben is surprised to see the symbol because it is one that very closely resembles a symbol used by his grandmother's Aboriginal tribe. It was the symbol for the tribe's spirit people that lived in the rocks called the Mimi.

Chapter nine begins with Ashley and Ben back at Alpha Base and Jason telling his mother about his day with Linda catching fish. They finish dinner and Ben asks Ashley if he can have a moment to speak to her alone. She takes Jason back to his room and then goes out to meet Ben. Ashley talks to Ben about her insecurities as the group leader. They come to the edge of the base where a marine stops them and says that



they have tightened security and that Ashley and Ben can't go any farther. When Ashley asks why, she is simply told that it is classified information. Meanwhile, Blakely is discussing the expedition team with one of his men. Blakely says that things will go differently this time because they have the communications systems set up in the caves. Blakely doesn't believe that the scientists need to know about the other crew that has been missing for four months since Major Michaelson and his men know. Blakely says that they are well prepared this time, but the other man says that there is no way to be certain of that.

## Book 2: Chapter 5-9 Analysis

There are several relationships that are developing in the story. Linda and Khalid are an interesting relationship. Several times it seems that Khalid is very interested in Linda and often worried about her. This relationship will be one that changes drastically as more of Khalid's personality and the truth of his motives comes to light. Ben and Ashley are another relationship that will evolve as the story continues. This will be a very hard change for Ashley. The hurt that she carries around from her failed marriage is something that seems to almost shield her. She uses it as an excuse to keep most people away from her. For whatever reason, Ben refuses to forget about Ashley even after she is rather rude and seemingly hurtful to him.

Ashley had failed to notice anything wrong with Linda, although Ben seemed to figure out rather quickly that she was claustrophobic. Ashley continues to tell herself that she isn't interested in Ben, but it seems that she has moments of what could be called jealousy when she notices the way that Ben is paying attention to Linda. This is one of the big differences between Ashley and Ben. Ashley is very analytical and does well with objects and how they pertained to ancient civilizations. Ben seems to be someone who reads people much better than Ashley. Despite Ben's ability, neither of these two main characters will discover what Khalid is planning.

The symbol found inside the cliff dwellings are important only because they provide a link for Ben to the Aboriginal people in Australia. As more clues about this new culture continue to be revealed the similarities to the Aboriginal tribes will become more evident.

Jason has yet to have a significant role in the story. The fact that he picked up the piece of plastique that fell out of Khalid's bag will prove to be useful much later in the story. Much of the story will have Jason and his mother separated during their journeys.



## Book 3: Chapter 10-14

### Book 3: Chapter 10-14 Summary

Chapter ten begins with the expedition getting ready to leave. It is now that Blakely explains to the group about the previous crew that has been missing for more than three months. Ashley and the others are angry at being lied to. Ashley says it is now a rescue mission, but Blakely says that it is a joint operation. Blakely says they waited to send another expedition crew in until they had better communications systems set in place. Major Michaelson leaves for a moment, and Blakely tells Ashley in private that Major Michaelson volunteered for the job because Michaelson's brother, Harry, was a member of the first expedition crew. Ashley tells Blakely that he had better take good care of Jason, to which Blakely says he will.

Chapter eleven continues, with the crew already entering the tunnel system. Ben tells everyone that they should pair up in order to conserve on batteries and make sure that each person has help if they need it. They quickly pair up, with Ashley as the odd man out so that she can keep an eye on the group. As they travel, they find many different signs of the first expedition crew and followed this trail closely. They stop that night for rest near a place to refill their canteens. Linda is exploring the immediate area surrounding their camp site when she finds a snail shell the size of a watermelon. Linda and Ashley are amazed at the size and the fact that this species died out thousands of years ago. While they are looking at it, Khalid finds one in the water and fishes it out. Before he can hand it to Linda, the squid-like creature emerges and latches on to Khalid's arm. Ben is able to get it off after he damages the squids tentacles. Ashley says that they should have kept it since it is an extinct species, but Ben says that it is obviously not extinct. Ashley and Ben discuss what food the squid creatures had been living on since they would need large amounts of it. That night Ben had the same dream again. His grandfather emerges from one of the caves and Ben calls to him but is unable to get into the cave. Ben wakes up but remembers the dream and the feeling that it created in him.

Chapter twelve has the crew three days into their journey and still following the trail from the previous expedition crew. Ben calls Ashley over and shows her a dented tin cup and explains that it isn't one of theirs. Ashley tries to find Michaelson to tell him, but finds that he has gone off scouting ahead of the team. Ashley tells one of the other marines, Halloway, to go and tell Michaelson to get back on the double. Halloway quickly leaves and soon Michaelson returns. Ashley shows him the cup. Michaelson says that there is a stream that is the only way the previous team could have gone and that they should cross it that night so that they can let their clothes dry out during the night. Ashley agrees and then asks what Halloway is doing. Michaelson says that he hasn't seen Halloway.

In chapter thirteen, the team begins to search for Halloway. The other marine, Villanueva, says that Halloway would not have abandoned the team. They continue to





look for Halloway and Ashley and Michaelson go off away from the others. Suddenly they hear a scream that comes from across the river. Villanueva hears that scream and says that they will wait a few minutes with the others before leaving, although Ben is adamant that he won't leave Ashley. After a few minutes, Michaelson and Ashley return. Michaelson and Villanueva say that they must evacuate, but the others say that they won't leave Halloway. It is voted that they continue on.

They come to the water and Villanueva swims across the swift current with a rope to tie off to the other side. A huge albino fin appears in the water and Ashley shoots it before Villanueva is attacked. Once across, Ben finds a small crack in the wall about the width of his boot and the group slides through one at a time. Linda gets stuck for a moment and begins to panic, but Khalid is able to calm her down and talk her through the crisis. They follow a trail of blood. They are late on their report to the Alpha Base, but can't stop to get the equipment out if they plan to get to Halloway in time to save him. Soon they enter a cavern and Villanueva has everyone stop and get quiet. In a cavern up ahead, there is an odd sound. Villanueva calls for Halloway but receives no answer, and so opens fire on the hole. After a moment there is a cry from the cave, and then Halloway's head is thrown at the group.

Chapter fourteen begins back at Alpha base with Jason waiting to go to his karate lesson. Jason is not to go out alone, but Roland, Dr. Blakely's assistant, tells Jason to go ahead. Jason's teacher cancels and Jason wanders around by himself for a time. Jason goes into Blakely's office and asks to use the restroom. While heading to the bathroom, Jason hears Dr. Blakely arguing with an admiral who says that the base is now his and Blakely has made far too many mistakes. They are talking about Ashley's crew when Blakely throws the door open and Jason asks what is going on. The admiral says that Jason is now his responsibility, but Blakely grabs Jason and heads out the door with him as sirens begin to go off around the base. Blakely explains that the base is under attack.

## **Book 3: Chapter 10-14 Analysis**

The attack on the base isn't looked at very extensively yet. In the next few chapters, the full extent of what the creatures are capable of will be seen. The reason for their attacking seems to be simply because they have a drive for food or perhaps because of territory. Later on there will be more information added to their motivation. When the sirens go off, Blakely simply says that the base is being attacked and grabs Jason by the arm. Blakely will take full responsibility of Jason in the next few chapters and will protect Jason in a way that seems to indicate more about Blakely's character than anything else that has been revealed about him in the book.

When Blakely explained to Ashley and the others about the previous crew, it seemed to increase Ashley's uneasiness about the situation and the fact that she is the leader of the group. This also increases Ashley's belief that Blakely cannot be trusted. There are many mistakes that Blakely has made in assembling the team and beginning the second expedition. The first mistake he has made is in assuming they are prepared for



whatever they encounter in the caverns. In the next several chapters, it will also be seen that Blakely made a mistake when picking the people for the expedition team. Although many of Blakely's intentions are good and his mistakes were without malice, they will ultimately be what kills Blakely.

Michaelson is very focused on finding his brother. This brotherly bond will continue to play a crucial role in the story and something that influences much of the story for the main characters.

Khalid continues to be an unknown factor in the book. It is obvious that he views the military personnel with them as a threat to his individual mission, but the details of that mission have not been revealed. Khalid is very kind to Linda and seems to genuinely care for her. This seems to indicate that he does have some emotion and ability to care, but it will quickly be forgotten as the story progresses. Despite his other attributes, Khalid is not handling the prospect of monsters well. The squid that attacked him has left him rattled and the fin that appeared next to Villanueva in the water added to Khalid's uneasiness. Khalid's fears will be crucial to the story and the role that Khalid plays in it.



## Book 3: Chapter 15-20

### Book 3: Chapter 15-20 Summary

Chapter fifteen begins with silence coming from the cavern that Villanueva fired into. Suddenly a creature attacks as Ben and Ashley dive behind a boulder. Ashley has dropped her gun, but the creature cannot reach them. Villanueva stands still and the creature doesn't seem to see him. Villanueva waits for a good shot, knowing that once he draws the attention of the creature there will be little to stop it from killing him. Meanwhile, Michaelson is covering the back where he sees several more monsters. Villanueva takes a shot but misses. The creature attacks Villanueva. Linda and Khalid make a loud noise and the monster is distracted for a just a moment. It turns away from Villanueva and he is able to shoot the monster with his good arm. Michaelson has twisted his ankle. The group makes its way to a tunnel where the monsters are too large to fit. At the end of the tunnel, they stop and set up their equipment to radio Alpha Base, but they receive no answer. Michaelson confirms that for them to not have answered there must be something very wrong.

When chapter sixteen continues, Blakely is pushing Jason, telling him to run. There is gunfire coming from all around the base. Blakely and his assistant, Roland, try to get Jason to the elevators. On the way to the elevators, they walk into the path of one of the attacking creatures. Jason, Blakely, and Roland duck into a building, but the creature continues to crash through doors getting to them. As Blakely runs, suddenly he begins to have chest pains and then the pain radiates down his arm.

Blakely realizes the creatures are only attacking from the land, so they decide to make their way to the lake in the middle of the base. Blakely leads them to the motor pool room. There is one vehicle in there, but Blakely realizes there isn't a tire. They hesitate for only a moment before they are rammed by one of the creatures and Roland starts the vehicle and the drive toward the lake. They debate staying in the vehicle where it would be safe when they see another military vehicle that had been ripped to shreds. The vehicle is tipped as they near the dock. Roland stays behind to slow the creatures down as Blakely and Jason get to the boat. Roland tries to make it to the boat but is killed by one of the creatures. Blakely starts the boat motor as Jason unties from the dock and they flee to the middle of the lake.

Meanwhile, in chapter seventeen, the expedition crew are able to find a cavern to hide in with an entrance that is too small for the creatures to enter. The cavern is beautiful and is covered in large diamonds. They decide to camp in the cavern, but when they turn out their lights the room is still brightly lit. Linda examines the fungus on the wall and finds that it is the cause of the light. Ashley sleeps for a few hours before Ben wakes her up for her turn to take watch. Ashley gets up to watch, with Khalid and Linda awake doing tests on the fungus. Linda asks Ashley where the creatures that attacked have been getting enough food to create that many of them. Ashley doesn't have an answer for that, but it is a question that bothers her as well.



As Ben lays down to sleep, he begins to dream the same dream. The image of his grandfather appears and tells him he is there to warn Ben. Ben is warned not to go up but to go down, instead. Ben is shaken awake by Ashley. As they all wake up and begin to eat, they discuss their options. Ashley asks if they should wait in the cavern for help to be sent, try to go back the way they came, or head on into the cave in the hopes of finding another way out. Michaelson points out that they were sent in three months after the first crew and that they don't have enough supplies for that long. Ben suggests they move on deeper into the cave and Ashley agrees. They ultimately decide to split up. Khalid, Linda, and Villanueva stay behind while Ben, Michaelson, and Ashley push on deeper into the cave.

The group has split up and Linda wakes up after taking a nap. She notices that she feels dizzy. She looks around and realizes that the fungus in the room is releasing spores to try and kill them. She quickly gets Villanueva and Khalid and drags them partially into a small tunnel leading out of the room. It is very cramped but there is good air. Meanwhile, Ashley, Ben, and Michaelson are scaling a wall despite Ben's unspoken urges to go down rather than up. When they reach the top of the cliff, they find that there is a vast field of eggs and several of the monstrous creatures that are only babies. The babies begin to make an odd noise and they can hear something large and angry heading straight for them.

Chapter eighteen begins with Jason and Blakely sitting in the boat. Jason is thinking about his mother and how much he misses her. There is a thick cloud of smoke covering the area where the Alpha Base had been and the explosions had stopped. Suddenly, Jason sits up and realizes that he is watching things drift past even though they were anchored off. Jason wakes up Blakely and they quickly pull in the anchor, but something has chewed through the line. Jason goes to the front of the boat and turns on the search lamp. They grab the paddles but can't see where to paddle to, and before long they are sucked into a tunnel where the water is sweeps them along deeper into the cave and the darkness. They quickly find that there is glowing mold on the walls. They fight to keep the boat upright when suddenly they hear a waterfall. Blakely tries to start the engine on the boat, knowing that it doesn't have much gas in it. Jason yells in triumph as the motor starts, but just as quickly it stops.

Meanwhile, in chapter nineteen, Ashley, Ben, and Michaelson quickly make their way back down the wall. Before they are safely down, Michaelson starts being pulled back up by the mother creature. Ben is able to kill her after throwing a rope over her neck, but when Michaelson, is dropped he breaks his leg when he hits the wall. Back at the cavern where Linda is, she is explaining to Villanueva what happened and how her and Khalid found another cavern to hold up in. Khalid is sleeping and Linda grabs Khalid's bag to get a cigarette for Villanueva. Villanueva quickly identifies the plastique explosives in the bag. Khalid wakes up and tries to convince Linda that it is not explosives and that Villanueva is delirious from his injuries. Linda doesn't believe Khalid's denial and Khalid pulls a gun on the two of them. Khalid points the gun at Villanueva. Villanueva asks how Khalid expects to make it out of there and Khalid says, "By lightening the load" (p. 209) as he shoots Villanueva in the head twice.



Linda screams, but is too frightened to move any more than that. Khalid quickly explains that his mission is to keep a vast amount of diamonds from reaching the world's market and ruining the finances of those currently in charge of the world's diamond wealth. Khalid offers his hand to Linda and says that he needs someone to help, but that if she betrays his secret then he will be forced to kill again. Linda agrees to go with him but refuses to take his hand. At this same time Ben, Ashley, and Michaelson are traveling deeper into the caverns. Ben tells them they should leave them and explains that they are being stalked. They debate outrunning whatever is tracking them but know that Ben cannot keep up. Michaelson eventually puts a gun to his head and tells them to go or that they won't have anyone to protect their trail while they make their escape. Ben finds a place for Michaelson to hold up and fight before he and Ashley reluctantly leave. Ashley and Ben continue to be followed and Ben knows that they have been herded this direction. They are forced down a large slide and find themselves in a vast field that is well lit. Six creatures emerge out of the field that look lion-like in appearance. As Ashley and Ben stand still, something reaches out and grabs Ashley by the ankle.

Chapter twenty rejoins Blakely and Jason as they are about to go over the waterfall. Blakely can tell from the sound of the fall that it must be high enough to kill them. They try to slow themselves but eventually they go over. Blakely is shocked to realize that that fall was very short, but then realizes there is a series of falls ahead of them. They go over several, but on the last the inflatable boat they are in gets a rip. Blakely is able to swim to shore and saves Jason, who has hit his head and is unconscious. Jason is alright and they get their items from the boat and set up camp.

Khalid and Linda continue to make their way back toward Alpha Base. Linda begins to ask Khalid why he was picked for this mission and if it was because of his geologist background. Khalid admits that he is not a geologist and that his real name isn't Khalid and that he took on Khalid's life in order to get into the cave. Linda asks what happened to the real Khalid, but Khalid refuses to answer. Linda then asks what his real name is, but Khalid doesn't answer that either. Suddenly they hear humans yelling from up ahead. Jason and Blakely are setting up their camp when they hear someone calling to them. Dr. Blakely calls back when suddenly he collapses and Jason yells for help. Khalid and Linda are making their way to Jason and Blakely when Khalid stops her and warns her that he will kill them if need be and that she must remain quiet in order to save their lives. She agrees and quickly continues to Jason. Blakely tells Jason to get his nitro pills. Blakely has taken the pills when Linda and Khalid reach them. Jason cries into Linda's shirt.

## **Book 3: Chapter 15-20 Analysis**

Much of what drives Khalid and the details of his mission has been explained in these chapters. This character will continue to be called Khalid and his real name and identity will not be revealed. His character seems to have changed drastically as well. He had been kind and considerate of Linda. This in part may be why he hasn't killed her at this point in the story. Khalid will do whatever it takes to try and control Linda. Her desire to try and keep anyone else from dying will be the method of control that Khalid uses. He



is a killer but he is also very smart. Later on in the story, Jason will say that Khalid is a very smart kind of monster. In many ways, Khalid and the creatures share this in common. They are both driving in their single-mindedness, but that doesn't make them stupid. Their intelligence is a large part of what makes both Khalid and the creatures dangerous.

Blakely has had a heart attack already in the story. It will soon become evident that he will not be able to make it out of the cave. Despite the hardships that he goes through, Blakely will continue to use whatever is at his disposal to try and protect Jason. Ultimately, this will be only life.

Ashley and Ben continue to get closer as the story continues, which will be significant in the next few chapters. Michaelson has been left behind so that he can try and help Ashley and Ben escape. Michaelson didn't realize that the things that were tracking them were not the monsters but were something else. Many of the plots in the story will be given a larger amount of detail in the next chapters.



## Book 4: Chapter 21-25

### Book 4: Chapter 21-25 Summary

In chapter twenty-one, Ashley finds that the creature that grabbed her leg is a short human-like creature covered in hair. The creature seemingly says in its native tongue for the lion-like animals to leave and then has Ashley and Ben follow him. The creature leads them on to its village. Ben suddenly faints and has another dream. In the dream, his grandfather tells him to go into the cave with a star symbol above the door. Ben wakes up and continues on with Ashley. They reach several dwellings when two leaders begin to have an argument. Ben and Ashley can't understand what is being said but when the old one turns toward them he points a stick at them and says the word "Death" (p. 248).

Chapter twenty-two continues, with Michaelson beginning to fall asleep in his cavern when suddenly his brother comes and pulls him out. Harry quickly explains that the short hairy men are friends and that a crak'an, the monsters that attacked Michaelson's crew, is following them and they must go quickly. They make their way quickly to the tunnel that leads down to the mimi'swee's village. A crak'an catches up with them and Michaelson uses his gun to help kill the creature before it kills one of the mimi'swee hunters. Harry explains that the hunter wishes to share the honor of the kill with Michaelson and that this makes them blood brothers. The small hairy man says the word brother.

Meanwhile, in chapter twenty-three, Linda and Khalid are told the story of how Alpha Base was attacked by the creatures. Khalid knows he has to get there before the military swarms the base. Khalid notices a trail of smoke coming from the tunnel that must be coming from the camp and realizes he can follow that back to Alpha Base. Khalid pulls Linda aside and tells her that he is going to leave the doctor and the boy behind that night after they get some sleep. Linda realizes that is the same as killing them, but Khalid refuses to take them. Linda agrees but has made a plan already. Linda uses her anti-anxiety pills to dope Khalid, and once he is asleep she wakes up Blakely and Jason and they make an escape, leaving Khalid nothing but his sleeping bag and the gun that is in the bed with him. Khalid awakes to find he is alone but he has a lighter and the gun. He decides that when he finds Linda he will show her no mercy.

Chapter twenty-four has Ashley and Ben stand alone in the middle of the village as a series of drums begin. Soon there are winged lizards that come toward them. Ashley and Ben realize there are five tunnels they can choose to go into, and Ben picks the one with the symbol on it that had been in his dream. Once inside the cave, Ben is faced with the old man who tells Ben that he is one of them. Ben explains that if they had picked any other tunnel they would have been fed to the lizards like cattle. Ben explains that he has been having dreams for a while, and they follow the old man who indicates that his people are called mimi'swee. Ben connects this to the mimi spirits that his Aboriginal people had worshiped. Ben and the old man sit down and Ben begins to





dream again but is awake. Instead of his grandfather it is the old man. The old man explains that he is Mo'amba and is responsible for the dreams. Mo'amba says that he and Ben are both heri'huti, a person that can connect on the dream plane. Mo'amba is the last of the heri'huti in his village and called Ben to come and be with his people. Ben wakes up and Ashley shows Ben carvings of Antarctica connected with Australia and then breaking apart. Michaelson and Harry show up and explain that Alpha Base has been destroyed. Ashley is worried about Jason, but Ben assures her that Blakely would have gotten Jason out first thing. The village leader breaks in and there is an argument. Harry speaks their language and says that there is trouble.

As chapter twenty-five starts, Jason, Linda, and Blakely are working their way back to the base camp. They encounter a rockfall but don't want to head back toward Khalid. Linda says she wishes she had taken the explosives from Khalid and explains what it is. Jason pulls out what he had thought was clay and produces an airplane made from the explosives. They are able to use that and a cherry bomb that Jason had stashed in his pack to make a bomb for the rockfall. To light it they use a flare gun. Blakely is thrown back as the bomb goes off. Linda sees a light down the tunnel as the debris clears and sees that Khalid is pointing a gun at her. Blakely is badly injured and tries to use the now empty flare gun as a threat, but Khalid knows it is empty. Khalid grabs Jason and gives Linda a gun with one bullet. He tells her to either kill Blakely or he will kill Jason. She refuses but Khalid says he will only take one. Blakely has blood coming out of his mouth and tells Linda to kill him. She can't and he takes the gun from her and says he won't let Khalid win as he pulls the trigger to his own head.

They travel for a short period of time and Linda is tied up. Jason and Khalid leave with Linda begging that Jason be spared. When they come back, Linda is untied. Jason pulls up his shirt and shows her that he has a belt of explosives tied to him. There is a timer and Khalid must put in a code every two hours or it will go off. If Jason tries to remove the belt it will go off. Jason says that Khalid explained that if the bomb goes off it won't hurt. Linda asks what kind of monster Khalid is and Jason says he is a smart one.

## **Book 4: Chapter 21-25 Analysis**

The full amount of coldness that Khalid is capable of has been seen already. He not only desires to have power but to manipulate those around him as well. He hands a gun to Linda and tells her that either Jason or Blakely must die. She asks him not to kill the boy. Khalid tries to put the murder on her own shoulders and explains that the choice is hers and that he is nothing more than the instrument. This cold, murderous demeanor will continue to be what defines Khalid as the story continues.

Blakely made crucial mistakes in his eagerness to explore the caving system. Despite the mistakes that were made, he ultimately gave his own life in order to try and save Jason. Not only did Blakely save Jason at this juncture in the story, but in a sense he also saved Linda. She was in charge of deciding who died. Blakely helped to take the responsibility off of Linda by pulling the trigger himself and explaining the full extent of his life compared to the short life that Jason has had. It is unclear how much this helps



Linda. By the end of her ordeal with Khalid, it seems that much of her spirit has been broken.

Ashley, Ben and Michaelson are now safe from the crak'an, but it is obvious that they are not completely safe from the mimi'swee. As the story continues, it will become obvious that there is an unknown story developing here as well. Mo'amba will continue to be a very important character. The creatures seem to be less evolved than humans in many ways, but they are very much aware of the careful balance between them and the crak'an as well as the other creatures and organisms that live in their environment.



## Book 4: Chapter 26-30

### Book 4: Chapter 26-30 Summary

In chapter twenty-six, Harry explains that he and Michaelson have been adopted by the warriors and so are safe, but that the leader of the mimi'swee has decided that Ben and Ashley are still to die. Mo'amba is able to get a hearing for them scheduled for the following day. That night Ashley and Ben make love. As they drift off to sleep, Ben is called back into a dream with Mo'amba who explains that the fungus that protects them from the crak'an is dying and the mimi'swee blame the humans. Mo'amba explains that they cannot kill the crak'an because they need the crak'an to keep the ecosystem balance. Mo'amba says he has a plan and lets Ben go back to sleep.

In chapter twenty-seven, the trial soon begins. There are other matters brought up before the sentencing. The mimi'swee lay eggs and a large egg is placed in the middle of the room for Mo'amba to touch and read in order to name the child. Mo'amba touches the egg and is thrown backwards. Ben also feels something. Mo'amba gets up, laughing, and announces that the child is going to be a heri'huti. Everyone cheers, and once everyone is quieted down, the sentencing for Ashley and Ben starts. The argument against them explains that they tried to befriend the humans, pointing to Harry, but that it didn't work, and now that they have decided to destroy the humans a new heri'huti child has become part of their village. After the accusations are made Mo'amba stands up and agrees that the humans are to blame.

Chapter twenty-eight continues, with Mo'amba speaking. Mo'amba says that the humans did what they did unknowingly by taking the female statue Ohna. Mo'amba says that the humans must be given a chance to right their wrong. Mo'amba says that Ben is a heri'huti and so must be judged worthy by the spirits and then explains that the night before that Ben planted his seed in Ashley and it has taken root and this is another sign that the humans are blessed. Ashley is stunned to hear all this. It is finally decided that Ashley stays there and that Ben goes to replace the statue. If Ben doesn't return in a day, then Ashley will be killed.

In chapter twenty-nine, Ben is arguing that he can't leave Ashley, but Mo'amba says he will watch over Ashley and the unborn child. Mo'amba shows Ben a secret passage to where Ohna must be returned, the spot where the first expedition crew took her from. The hunters have retrieved the body of Villanueva and Michaelson and the others know it must be Khalid. Ashley makes Ben promise to find Jason even if he must forget about her. Michaelson says he will stay with Ashley since his ankle is still not any good.

In chapter thirty, Ben is waiting for the day to come and start his journey. Ben goes to talk to Mo'amba, who tells Ben that he will fail unless he can accept the truth of his heri'huti and his heritage. The next day, Ashley comes to see Ben off. She is unable to tell him that she cares for him and he leaves with Ashley fighting with her feelings for him. As Ben leaves, Ashley whispers that she loves him, but the sound is lost as the



contraptions that Harry and Michaelson put together spur to life and take off up the narrow shoot.

## Book 4: Chapter 26-30 Analysis

The hurt that Ashley carries around with her from her ex-husband affects much of what she does in regards to her relationships with other people. It isn't until she tells Ben that she trusts him that she realizes how much she is depending on him and truly does trust him. Ashley has been pushing herself and has been at the front of much of what was going on in the story. She finds now that she is forced to take a back seat and sit still while Ben takes care of things for her. This may be crucial to their relationship progressing, since given the choice it appears that Ashley would never willingly give over control of any situation to anyone else.

Ashley spends a lot of her time worrying about Jason. This is understandable, since he is her son and is only eleven years old, but Jason will prove that he is very mature beyond his years as different situations continue to be thrown at him. As the story continues, he will show more maturity with his ability to think quick on his feet and his willingness to try and save Linda.

Ashley and Michaelson have stayed behind. Although Michaelson is somewhat protected by his connection to the hunters, it will be seen quickly that Ashley and he are both still in real danger. Mo'amba will try and protect them, but there is a dangerous plot that is already in motion within the mimi'swee people. This will not only threaten the humans in the story but will also be a danger to many of the mimi'swee people.

Mo'amba touched the child in the egg and realized that it was a heri'huti. Mo'amba also told Ben that blood runs true. Both of these things will be important to remember later in the story.



## Book 5: Chapter 31-33

### Book 5: Chapter 31-33 Summary

Chapter thirty-one begins with Linda struggling to keep up with Khalid. He had warned her that it was her and Jason's job to keep up with him or else Jason's bomb would explode and it wouldn't be his fault. They come upon one of the radios that Blakely had installed. Following the wires should lead them straight into Alpha Base. Khalid is far ahead and Jason tells Linda that Khalid is going to let him die and if Linda gets a chance she should run and leave Jason. She refuses, but Jason is certain that Khalid means for Jason to die. When they come to the base they find that there is nothing much left standing. Meanwhile Ben, Harry and a couple of mimi'swee hunters are traveling on the contraption that Harry created toward the base and the cliff dwellings that were near the base. Ben lets his mind wander and connects with one of the hunters. This is a mild shock to both Ben and the hunter. When they reach the top, Ben looks at the base and realizes that there is not near enough lights and that much of the base has been destroyed.

Chapter thirty-two has Khalid tying Jason to a column. Khalid resets the timer once Linda has tied him up. Khalid explains that Linda will help him set the charges and then they will come back for Jason. Linda promises she will be back. Jason is trying to get loose when he hears gun shots. Ben and his men are making their way to where the diamond statue had been kept by Blakely. They encounter many of the crak'an once they get toward the base and Harry tries to lead some of them away. There is one that Ben has dubbed Tiny Tim who is too smart to be lead away from Ben.

In chapter thirty-three, Linda realizes that they can't get done in time to get back to Jason. She tries to unsettle Khalid by pointing out that whatever the men are firing at is getting closer and so is heading straight for them. Khalid begins to get scared. Jason can hear Ben and tries to get his game boy out of his pocket. Finally the game is on the ground and Jason is able to turn it on. Jason hopes the sound will attract Ben, but then realizes it may also attract some of the monsters.

### Book 5: Chapter 31-33 Analysis

Tiny Tim is the only crak'an that will be given a name or seen more than once in the story. This crak'an will ultimately be the one that stops Khalid.

Jason continues to show resourcefulness despite how afraid he must be. Although the game boy does help him get noticed, he still has the bomb strapped to his belly. Linda is trying to hurry Khalid and get back to Jason. Despite her desires to help Jason, she will feel that she has failed in more than one way. This failure that Linda experiences is just what Khalid wants her to feel. He wants to break her, as if she is some kind of animal that needs to be rid of her free will. Whatever kindness Khalid had shown Linda earlier



in the story is gone at this point. For whatever reason, everyone seems to be expendable and something that slows him down, with the exception of Linda. The fact that she has been allowed to live, despite her betrayal, may be due in part to the fact that she is someone he feels something for.

Ashley and Michaelson haven't been looked at for a while, but they will soon be in the middle of a trial of their own. Ben will be able to keep in touch with them through his heri'huti abilities. Ben will be able to control these abilities after a time.



## Book 5: Chapter 34-37

### Book 5: Chapter 34-37 Summary

Chapter thirty-four begins with Ashley waiting with Mo'amba. He pulls her into a place to hide and as they sit there one of the village elders, Sin'jari comes and sends several of his guards up the chute to where Ben is. Sin'jari says something and Mo'amba jumps out and faces Sin'jari. Sin'jari pulls out a knife and stabs Mo'amba several times before Ashley can stop him. Ashley is able to get the knife and Sin'jari goes up the shaft. Ashley lays beside a dying Mo'amba as several mimi'swee come in. They look at Ashley holding the bloody knife and she realizes that she has been framed for this murder.

Meanwhile one of the mimi'swee hunters tells Ben about a strange sound he heard. Ben realizes it is Jason and goes to get him. Once free, Jason shows him the bomb and explains that if it is taken off it will explode. The timer moves from six minutes to five as Ben stares at it. Ben uses his ability to contact one of the heri'huti hunters with Harry and tells Harry to get back there since Harry is an explosives expert. Ben gets a flash of images from Mo'amba and knows that there is danger coming but can't understand from what, and then Mo'amba's voice goes quiet. Ben is able to get Harry en route to them. When Harry arrives, he says that there is no circuit on the belt and simply takes it off of Jason, saying that Khalid was lying but that it will still explode. Ben throws the belt toward Tiny Tim as it explodes. Linda and Khalid hear the explosion. Linda is excited at first because the column that he had been tied to didn't fall, but then Khalid points out that the bomb still went off. Khalid tells her that just wasn't enough time but he admits to himself he wasn't going to let Jason live.

In chapter thirty-five, Ben and one of the hunters takes the statue back to the place where it should be replaced while Harry and the other hunter stays with Jason. Once at the place where Ohna is to be placed, the hunter with Ben is murdered and Sin'jari appears and hits Ben in the head and takes the statue. Meanwhile Ashley and Michaelson are both trying to explain that it was Sin'jari that killed Mo'amba. An elder, Tru'gula, appears and says that Mo'amba trusted them and so does he, but that no one else will. Tru'gula tries to get them to escape, but Ashley refuses since she is innocent. They decide to try and catch Sin'jari when he is coming back through the passage. Khalid and Linda are still setting charges. Linda looks over at the elevator and sees that the monsters destroy it while some people are trying to escape in it. Linda asks what they do now and Khalid says that now they die.

Chapter thirty-six begins with Ben waking up and realizing what is going on. He gets back on the sled he used to come up and heads back to the mimi'swee village. Ashley, Michaelson, and Tru'gula are at tunnel exit when Sin'jari and his men appear and kill Tru'gula's men. Ashley realizes she has walked them into a trap. Sin'jari explains that the best way to kill your enemy is to know them, and so has learned English and everything he can about the humans. Sin'jari calls the leader of their village not smart but says that Sin'jari is smart and will be the new leader. Suddenly, Ben falls through the



entrance and is holding his gun. Before Sin'jari can kill Tru'gula, Ben shoots Sin'jari and several of his guards. Ashley throws her arms around Ben and tells him she loves him. Ben then explains that Jason is safe as well. Ben then hands over Ohna.

In chapter thirty-seven, Jason is waiting in the demolished Alpha Base when he hears a woman crying and realizes it is Linda. He tries to warn her that there is something moving out there. Before he can react, Tiny Tim, severely hurt, appears. Khalid is yelling at Linda and walks in front of the monster. Tiny Tim grabs Khalid and drags him away. Khalid is able to get the detonator out as he is being dragged away, but drops it when the creature clamps down harder as it dies. Jason runs out to grab the detonator and Khalid, trapped in the dead crak'an's mouth, pulls out a gun and shoots. One of the mimi'swee hunters throws himself in front of Jason and saved his life. Ben and Ashley arrive and reunite with Linda and Jason. As they stand talking, they see parachutes coming down the elevator shaft and realize the army was coming to help.

## **Book 5: Chapter 34-37 Analysis**

Mo'amba had told Ben that he would need to accept his blood in order to accomplish his goal. This is some rather general information, but it did prove that Ben needed this skill in order to save Jason and get back in time to help Ashley. If Ben had been unable to connect with Tru'gula and know of the danger that awaited him, then Ben might have walked unprepared into the room and be killed by Sin'jari.

Ashley and Michaelson had both refused to run away and leave the village when it was obvious that they were being framed. This may have been instrumental in gaining Tru'gula's full trust.

There are some things that are not answered in the story. There is no indication as to the true identity of Khalid. There is also no mention made as to why Harry didn't try to go back up to the Alpha Base beforehand. Mo'amba believed that his people were dying because there was no heri'huti to take his place. It may be that some of the situation Mo'amba helped to orchestrate in an attempt to save his people.

There is an epilogue in the story that explains that the mimi'swee's protective fungus was killed by a fungus that was brought in by the humans. Ben and Ashley decide to stay with the mimi'swee until the baby that Mo'amba named is old enough to take over the heri'huti role. Ashley creates a device to keep the crak'an away. While they are sleeping, Ben realizes that he can feel the baby in Ashley's belly move and try to connect with him. Ben remembers that Mo'amba said blood runs true. This was said earlier in the story, and the movement of the child was much like the movement that Mo'amba described when he first touched the egg that was brought to him to name. It is indicated that the child in Ashley's belly will be a heri'huti, just as Ben is.



# Characters

## Ashley Carter

Ashley is one of the main protagonists in the story and is the leader of the scientific expedition, because of her archeology background. Ashley takes most things very seriously and is slow to find most things funny. She is an excellent leader for the team in many ways because of her attention to detail and ability to listen to the input of others. Ashley falls short in her leader abilities at times because she lacks the ability to read people. This is seen with Linda, the geologist. It is Ben who notices, seemingly right away, that Linda is claustrophobic. It isn't until they have been in the caves for an extended period of time that Ashley realizes Linda's issue with being closed in.

Ashely is a devoted mother and much of her attention is focused on what is best for her son, Jason. She takes the job in part because she is having such a hard time making enough money for her and her son. Ashley was pregnant with her second child when she comes home and finds him in bed with another woman. The shock caused Ashley to miscarry. This is the basis for much of Ashley's inability to bond with other people, believing that they will all let her down as her husband did. Ashley wants to be in love with Ben, but her fear of being hurt again causes her to push her own feelings aside for a time. Ben finally is able to prove himself to Ashley and she is able to tell him that she does love him.

## Ben Brust

Ben is described as a world-renowned cave explorer and is asked to be on the expedition in order to map the extensive cave system and help the team with safety while traveling. Ben is in jail for taking a very rich client into a forbidden cave system when first approached about the job. Ben is lighthearted about many things, but is able to read people easily in many ways. When Ben first sees Ashley he is attracted to her. He continues to try and talk and joke with her, despite many rude comments, and often a refusal to respond. Ben quickly makes friends with Ashley's son Jason.

Ben goes out on the town with Linda before they head to Antarctica, and after one night out with her realizes that she is claustrophobic. Ben does talk to Linda about his concerns about this, but she wants badly to go and has anxiety pills. Ben understands her desire to see what is under the ground and agrees to keep silent, but it quickly becomes obvious that Ben is taking an extra interest in Linda because of her claustrophobia.

Ben quickly begins having dreams that become more intense while he is in the cave system. Ben's background has Aboriginal blood in it, although it is impossible for anyone to tell since Ben has blond hair. Ben learns after finding the mimi'swee that he has a





telepathic ability passed on to him through his Aboriginal blood. Ben will have to learn to use this ability in order to save himself and the others.

## Jason

Jason is Ashley Carter's eleven-year-old son. Ashley insists that Jason be allowed to come with them to the army base in Antarctica. Jason proves to be a crucial character who is resourceful and very smart, despite the fact that he is only eleven. Jason witnesses many of the deaths in the story and yet continues to use his brain to try and figure out a way out of the different situations that he finds himself in.

## Dr. Andrew Blakely

Dr. Andrew Blakely is in charge of putting together the crew that will go into the caverns. Dr. Blakely keeps certain information from Ashley and the other specialists about the previous exploration team. Many on the expedition crew do not like Blakely, but eventually he gives his own life to help save Jason.

## Mo'amba

Mo'amba is a very old member of the mimi'swee. Mo'amba is the one that has been communicating with Ben through his dreams. Both Ben and Mo'amba are what the mimi'swee call heri'huti. Mo'amba tries to help save Ben and Ashley but eventually Mo'amba is murdered by another member of the mimi'swee.

## Linda Furstenburg

Linda is a biologist. She is claustrophobic, but carries pills with her so that she can handle the confinement of the caverns. Linda is forced to help Khalid, and although Linda does what she can to try and save those that Khalid is trying to hurt, she often feels that she has failed. Linda takes on the responsibility of looking after Jason following the death of Dr. Blakely.

## Khalid Najmon

Khalid is a geologist on the expedition. It isn't until they are deep within the caverns and have already been attacked that Khalid explains that he is not the famous geologist Khalid Najmon but is someone that looks a lot like Khalid and was sent with a mission to keep the diamonds and potential of oil from being discovered. Khalid never gives his real name. Khalid has plastic explosives that he has brought on the trip and uses these to try and bring the caverns down and kill everyone inside. Khalid straps a bomb to Jason's waist, although one of the army personnel is able to remove it.



## **Major Dennis Michaelson**

Michaelson is the leader of the Navy Seals that go with the expedition team into the caverns. One of the members of the first expedition team that disappeared was Michaelson's little brother. Michaelson continually helps Ashley and Ben as they travel deeper into the caving system and stands by Ashley after she is blamed for the murder of Mo'amba.

## **Sin'jari**

Sin'jari is one of the elders of the mimi'swee. Sin'jari has been trying to orchestrate a coup for some time and uses Ben and the other humans to try and gain control. Sin'jari murders Mo'amba. Sin'jari tries to kill Tru'gula, another elder, but Ben shoots Sin'jari.

## **Tru'gula**

Tru'gula is one of the elders of the mimi'swee. Tru'gula believes in Ashley's innocence after Mo'amba is murdered but knows that the rest of the village doesn't. Tru'gula tries to get Ashley and Ben to run away from the village but Ashley refuses to go since she is innocent. Tru'gula tries to help Ashley catch Sin'jari, but they walk into another trap. Tru'gula contacts Ben through Ben's heri'huti ability and warns him of what is happening.

## **Harry Michaelson**

Harry is the only remaining member of the first expedition crew that was sent into the caverns. Harry is Dennis Michaelson's little brother. Harry has been with the mimi'swee long enough that he is the translator for the others when they arrive.



# Objects/Places

## Antarctica

Antarctica is the continent where the expedition crew is sent to explore the underground caverns.

## Mimi'swee

Mimi'swee are the race of humanoid lifeforms that live far beneath the Earth's crust. These people have connections to the aboriginal tribes in Australia.

## Heri'huti

Heri'huti is the mental power that Mo'amba uses to communicate with Ben through a dream like state. Ben also has this power and uses it to communicate with various mimi'swee. Mo'amba was the last of the heri'huti in his village and was worried that there would not be another born until he was asked to name one of the women's children. Ben stays in the mimi'swee village to serve as their heri'huti, since it is needed to keep the hunters safe from the crak'an.

## Crak'an

The crak'an are the monsters that attack the mimi'swee. They are lizard-like in appearance, with an above average intelligence. They attack Alpha Base and kill almost everyone there. They depend largely on smell and sound to track their prey.

## Tin'ai'fori

Tin'ai'fori is the mimi'swee's word for the fungus that helps to keep their village safe from the crak'an. Many members of the mimi'swee village blame the people that have come for the death of this fungus. It is learned later that the people brought an element into the caverns that was killing off the tin'ai'fori.

## Ohna

Ohna is the female statue made from a large diamond. The statue was taken by the people who first entered the outskirts of the caves. Many of the mimi'swee believe that it is because Ohna was taken that the village is now being killed off by the crak'an.



## Umba

Umba is the male counterpart to Ohna. Umba sits in the village in a sacred site. There is a hidden passage that goes directly to where Ohna is kept. Umba is also made out of a diamond.

## Diamonds

There are many diamonds found in the underground caverns. Khalid is sent to make sure that no one is able to get the diamonds out, since it would crash the diamond market. The mimi'swee make almost everything out of diamonds. Harry and Dennis use a diamond to replace a broken shaft in a motorized sled.

## Explosives

Khalid has brought a large amount of explosives with him to complete his mission. Jason takes one of the cubes of plastic explosives, believing it to be a hard modeling clay. Later Khalid straps a large amount of the plastic explosives to Jason's waist.

## Anxiety Pills

Linda is claustrophobic and so has anxiety pills to help her while underground. She uses these pills to make Khalid sleep in the hope that she can get away with Jason and Dr. Blake.

## Alpha Base

The underground base where Blakely is stationed with other personnel and Jason. It is here that Ashely and the expedition team are supposed to radio back three times a day. The base is attacked by the crak'an and virtually destroyed.

# Themes

## The Quest for Knowledge

The main drive behind the events in the story is the quest for knowledge about the things that are found in the caverns. Blakely, Ashley, Ben and many of the others are looking for answers about the people that built the caverns. As they continue to explore, it is quickly seen that there is a lot of to be discovered about the people that made the dwellings that are found as well as the diamond statue. Ben is also on a quest for knowledge that is much more personal. The more the story progresses the more vivid Ben's dreams become. He will have to learn a lot about himself, but also learn about the people and his connection to them.

There are other quests for knowledge in the story that take a minor role but are easily found during the story. Linda continues to look for answers about the biological aspects of the caverns. She will have multiple theories about the fungus that they encounter as well as the strange creatures, the crak'an, that attack. There is also a quest for knowledge that is mentioned briefly but is not focused on heavily. This quest is the quest to find out why the fungus that protect the mimi'swee is dying. Mo'amba explains that it is because the people removed the sacred female statue. It isn't until the end of the story that it mentions that the fungus was dying because of a modern fungus brought in by the exploration teams.

## The Struggle for Survival

There is a struggle for survival that is seen throughout each group of people in the story. The first place that this is seen in the story is from Ashley Carter's group as they are first attacked by the crak'an. The group has to try and find a way to survive. The struggle for survival is then seen when Alpha Base is attacked. The two characters that are most focused on during this trial are Jason and Dr. Blakely. These two groups will be the ones that are focused on the most because they are the ones being attacked by the crak'an and their deaths are often seen. Despite this most obvious struggle for survival, there is another struggle seen in the mimi'swee people.

The mimi'swee people are dependent upon the fungus in the caves to keep the crak'an at bay. The fact that this fungus has started dying out shows this people's struggle for survival. Ashley notes that from all accounts these people should be a calm people but that they are acting this way because they are worried about something. It is soon explained that they believe the explorers and other humans are believed to be responsible for the death of the fungus and the increased crak'an attacks.

Another struggle for survival that is seen is in the crak'an. The crak'an are trying to protect themselves as well as fight for mates. The creatures are very basic and the desire for food and territory seems to be the majority of what drives these basic



creatures. Survival also is what causes the other things in the cave, such as the fish and fungus, to attack. For the fish, it is a desire for food, and for the fungus it is simply trying to protect itself. Both creatures simply are struggling to survive in their environment.

## The Importance of Heritage

Heritage and ancestry is talked of throughout the story to explain the differences between the humans that have come to the caverns and the creatures and people that are found within the caves. Ashley and Linda will often talk of where the most likely heritage of the creatures comes from. The heritage is very important to understanding things in the story, such as why the crak'an look the way they do and why the mimi'swee have pouches, lay eggs, and why they are so much shorter. The link that the mimi'swee have to the aboriginals will be important for Ben.

Ben explains early on in the story how he was ashamed when he learned that he had aboriginal blood in him. It was an insult and he fought hard to hide the fact from his friends and tried to ignore his heritage. Ben's heritage will eventually be what saves him and the others, but he has to be willing to accept who he is. The dreams that Ben continues to have always show his grandfather. Although Ben is ashamed of his heritage, Mo'amba continues to tell Ben that the proof is in the blood. Ben remembers these words when he touches Ashley's belly and realizes that his child growing inside her is going to be a heri'huti like Ben and Mo'amba.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view in the story is told in third person, but the character whose point of view is being focused on will change throughout the story. Both antagonist and protagonist will have their point of view focused on. While many different characters are focused on for the point of view, there will not be any of the mimi'swee people that are looked at for the point of view in the story. The point of view in the story is limited to whatever the characters are seeing and sometimes thinking, but even when a character is being shadowed, much of what they are up too will still remain a mystery. An example of this is Khalid, when he is thinking about his mission. It isn't until much later in the story that his mission is explained. Khalid's point of view also never explains what his true name is, although it is explained about nightmares that he has as well as how his mother died and even his silent prayers are looked at.

There are unique items that are found throughout the story, and so the author will spend a large amount of time describing the scenery, animals and the impact that the environment has on the characters. Much of what explains the character's quirks and personality traits will also be told through daydreams, nightmares, and inner thoughts that the other characters are not aware of. At the beginning of the story, it seems that most of the story will focus on Ashley Carter, since she is the first character seen and has a major role for much of the story. She will slowly take a secondary role as Ben's story begins to fully develop and his dreams continue to increase.

## Setting

There are several different places that are looked at throughout the story since the story begins with Ashley Carter being approached in her home to go to Antarctica. After the group is assembled, the rest of the story will take place underground in the caverns that the group is exploring and on Alpha base, where Dr. Blakely, Jason, and the other scientists and army personnel are staying. There is very little information given about the physical setting that the characters are in until they reach Alpha base. Once the characters reach this underground destination, the author will focus on the sights and the feel of the area. Each place, object, or creature that the various characters encounter will be given large amounts of detail in order to relay the fictional world that Rollins has created.

While the underground world is fictional, it is easily understood. There are also various levels in the world that will need different descriptions. The place where the crak'an lay their eggs will vary from the place where the group stops to rest after their first crak'an attack with the crystals and the strange fungus that eventually tries to poison Linda, Khalid, and Villanueva. Each tunnel will be different and soon it is seen that there is



nowhere that compares to the world that the mimi'swee have created. Understanding the setting is crucial to comprehending the storyline.

## Language and Meaning

The language in the story is fairly straightforward. There are small differences between how some of the characters talk. Ben often is found using phrases and words that are native to his home of Australia. Ashley is rather scientific and sober about most things, which comes through in much of her speech. Dennis Michaelson and Villanueva both are obviously serious about their military training, and when they talk it will be in terms that are associated with their service.

The mimi'swee have their own language but there are various ways that the author is able to translate this into English. There are several words in the mimi'swee language that are important and don't have a translation into the English language, such as the heri'huti ability that both Ben and Mo'amba have. Some of the mimi'swee elders know a little of the English language. It shows a great deal of their intelligence that they are able to learn it so fast. Sin'jari tells Ashley that he learned her language because it was the best way to destroy her people. There is no indication that Sin'Jari had any way of learning the language before the first expedition group went into the caves, only three months before. While he was not fluent in the English language, his meaning and words were very clear to Ashley.

## Structure

Subterranean consists of 410 pages. The book is divided into five different books. Each book is named and numbered. Each of these books is further divided into chapters. There are a total of thirty-seven chapters, but the chapters are not named. The chapters will vary slightly in length. In addition to this, there is a prologue at the front of the book and an epilogue at the end of the story. The prologue focuses on two members of the first expedition that was sent into the caverns. The prologue only shows a glimpse of the danger that awaits whoever goes into the caverns. These two men will not be seen again or mentioned again by name in the story.

The epilogue answers many of the questions in the story, such as why the fungus that the mimi'swee need is dying. It also explains to a small extent what happens to Ben and Ashley after the expedition is over. There are some questions that are not ever explained. One of these questions is the true identity of Khalid. Another subplot in the story that is not fully looked at is the question of what is going to happen to the mimi'swee since they are now exposed to the outside world. While most of the plots are answered, this is one that is not resolved.





## Quotes

"Dug into the wall was a network of cliff-dwelling homes, rising several hundred feet up the wall." Book 1, Chap. 3, p. 26

"We lost the first team because we were excited and proceeded without proper caution." Book 3, Chap. 10, p. 90

"The team had discovered signs of the previous party's passage-discarded items, boot tracks in the silt, scuffs on the rock-and were sticking close to their trail." Book 3, Chap. 11, p. 97

"Men and rock he could handle, but the creatures down here...first the squid trying to gnaw his arm off and now this monster..." Book 3, Chap. 13, p. 123

"The decapitated head of the former SEAL bumped to a stop a yard away, eyes staring up, snowflakes settling softly on the eyelashes." Book 3, Chap. 13, p. 133

"We're in uncharted worlds down here. Carnivorous snails, whale-sized sharks, and now marsupial predators." Book 3, Chap. 17, p. 175

"Ben struggled in his sleep, knowing he was dreaming but unable to stop it." Book 3, Chap. 17, p. 178

"The fungus was trying to kill them." Book 3, Chap. 17, p. 188

"These dreams of this place...I've been having them a lot since I first got wind of this trip." Book 4, Chap. 24, p. 273

"I am. As are you. Someone with the ability to connect on the dream plane." Book 4, Chap. 24, p. 278

"The crak'an have increased their forays into our territory, wiping out entire herds of our food animals, surprising our sentries with their sudden appearance deep in our territory, killing many of them." Book 4, Chap. 26, p. 303

"There was no evacuation. They attacked so suddenly. There was no time. Everyone is dead." Book 5, Chap. 33, p. 364

"Her team of biologists had also made another discovery: The erosion of the mimi'swee's ring of protective fungus had not been due to the imbalance of umbo and ohna, as Mo'amba had claimed, but rather to the introduction of and competition from a modern fungus, carried here by humans." Epilogue, p. 409

"Under his hand, he felt the baby move in Ashley's belly. And Ben remembered Mo'amba's words: 'Blood runs true.'" Epilogue, p. 410



## Topics for Discussion

Explain Ashley's personality. Which of her traits seem to be directly connected to her failed marriage? Explain.

Pick two pieces of foreshadowing found in the book. Explain what it is that these two moments point to in the story.

List who you think are the top five characters in the book. Which of these characters are antagonists? Which are protagonists? Explain your answer for each.

Explain what the main plot in the story is. Why did you pick this plot. What other subplots play into the main plot? (pick a minimum of three subplots).

Speculate on the reasons that Khalid wanted to keep Linda alive rather than kill her. Would Khalid have let Linda live if he had been able to get out of the cave? Explain why or why not.

Describe the balance that the mimi'swee have with their environment. How does this compare to the balance that we have with our environment?

What role does Jason play in the story? How would the story have been different without Jason?