

Written by Bohdana Jarošová ★ Illustrated by Filip Horník



LITTLE
BAT GARY
AND THE
**FABULOUS
CAVE**

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Bohdana Jarošová & Filip Horník



GARY WAS BORN ONE SUNNY MORNING.


But he has no idea what the sun is. As he is a greater mouse-eared bat, he was born in a dark cave, where he lives squashed together with all the other babies at the bat nursery. Gary's mum recognizes her son by his smell. When she finds him among the others, she feeds him milk. Although they fly like birds, bats are mammals, so they drink mother's milk.

Oo-ah! Where am I?
why am I upside down?
Help! I'm falling ...

Gary, Gary ... I'm here.
You won't fall, don't
worry. The claws on
your feet will hold
you tight.

THERE ARE THOUSANDS OF CAVES IN THE WORLD.

Some are small. Others wind this way and that underground for several kilometres. Gary was born by the entrance to a deep cave. It is Gary's whole world. He knows no other. He doesn't know that he was born in an underground hollow formed by water. For many years this water flowed underground, taking roots, clay, sand and stones along with it, till this open space emerged—Gary's home.



BATS HAVE BEEN AROUND ALMOST SINCE THE YEAR DOT.

Gary comes from a very long line. Bats evolved 60 million years ago. To some people, they look like flying mice. But their closest relation is the hedgehog. Unlike the hedgehog, the bat has legs that are too thin to walk on. But it has tremendous strength in its wings. When Gary spreads his arms, he is as big as a swallow. But there are hundreds of bat species. Some are as small as bumblebees, others as large as eagle-owls.

Stop fooling around down there, Gary, and join the nursery.

Ow! I'm not much of a walker ...

IN A CAVE, IT'S LIKE IN A FAIRY TALE.

It takes Gary a while to fly through the whole cave. Some corridors are so narrow that a small child would struggle to fit through. At other places, the cave opens into a magnificent space that looks like a concert hall. And what wonderful figures Gary meets on his way! One dripstone looks like a witch, another like a gingerbread cottage, another like a dragon's den. Some walls are a red or green, made that way by water, algae and air.

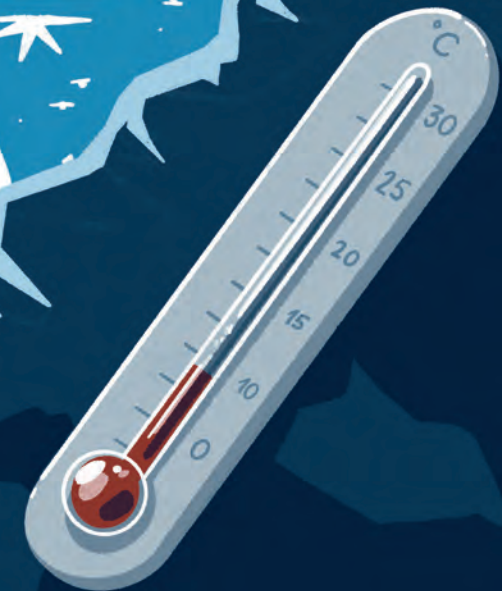
GARY SLEEPS IN THE DAY.

After a bat falls asleep, its temperature drops till its body is cold. To stay warm, it wraps its flexible wings around its body. As dusk comes and then night falls, Gary slowly awakes, to go hunting outside. But first he must warm up. To do so, he shakes his body. Do you know why bats sleep upside down? It's so they can fly off quickly if danger comes.

Get up, boys
and girls. It's
breakfast time!

IT'S COLD AND DAMP IN THE CAVE.

It may be scorching hot outside, but in the cave, it is around 10 degrees. It works here as it does in old cellars. The cold of the long winter stays at the bottom of the cave, too much for the warm air of the summer to push out. Underground streams and rivers form waterfalls and lakes. Their water is clear, and fish live in some of them. The lakes can be as small as a puddle or big enough to sail a boat on. Some caves are so cold that everything in them freezes. A waterfall becomes an icefall.





PREHISTORIC HUMANS LIVED IN CAVES.
Finds of firepits, tools and wall paintings are proof of this. In the dark underground, humans drew hunted animals in clay or coal. Sometimes they carved pictures into the rock. Humans go to these caves today, but only as tourists. As they admire the underground beauty, they follow lighted paths. If you ever visit a cave, don't forget to raise your eyes and wave to the bats. Shoosh! Please don't wake them!

Burp! My belly is so big, I hope my legs will carry me until I can hang.

Don't worry, Gary. Our legs may be thin, but our tendons are as strong as rope.

Be quiet and go to sleep!

Shoosh!!

WINTER IS COMING.

It is beginning to freeze outside, but in the cave the temperature is the same. The beetles and mosquitoes are flying no longer. Gary and his friends are preparing to hibernate. Every bat needs much more space than when they were crammed together in the nursery. To survive the winter and the long sleep when they neither eat nor drink, they must feed themselves up. For their energy to last as long as possible, they must conserve it. Their heart begins to beat more slowly. They even manage to breathe more slowly. They will breathe properly again only when spring is here.



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**GARY IS A GREATER
MOUSE-EARED BAT.**

He's still new in this world. What interests him most is the cave he was born in. He and his friends have explored its every nook and cranny. He knows the best places for hide-and-seek, where the juiciest caterpillars are, and where the great dragon sits. If you wish to know what life in a bat's home is like, open this book right now. Gary is just waking up...

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