

# The Tunnel

Once upon a time there lived a brother and sister who were not at all alike. In every way they were different. The sister stayed inside on her own, reading and dreaming. The brother played football outside with his friends, laughing and shouting. At night, he slept soundly in his room. But she would lie awake, listening to the noises of the night. Sometimes he crept into her room to frighten her, for he knew that she was afraid of the dark. Whenever they were together they fought and argued noisily. All the time.

One morning, their mother said, "Out you go together and try to be nice to each other, just for once. And be back in time for lunch."

They went to the dump. But the boy didn't want his sister with him.

"Why did you have to come?" he moaned.

"I'm scared," she said.

The boy went to explore and found a tunnel.

"Let's go down it!" he said. But his sister was scared and so she waited for him to come out again. She waited and waited, but he did not come. She was close to tears. What could she do?

At last she had to follow him. The tunnel was dark and damp, slimy and scary. At the other end she found herself in a dark forest. She thought about wolves and giants and witches and she wanted to turn back. But she couldn't - for what would become of her brother if she left him? Her heart was beating and she ran faster and faster, through the tall trees. Just when she could run no further she saw a figure, still as stone. It was her brother.

"Oh no!" she sobbed. "I'm too late."

She threw her arms round the hard, cold statue. Very slowly it became softer and warmer. Little by little it began to move. Her brother came back to life. They ran back, through the forest, through the tunnel and home. Together.

"Hello," said their mother. "You two seem very quiet. Is everything all right?"

Rose smiled at her brother. And Jack smiled back.