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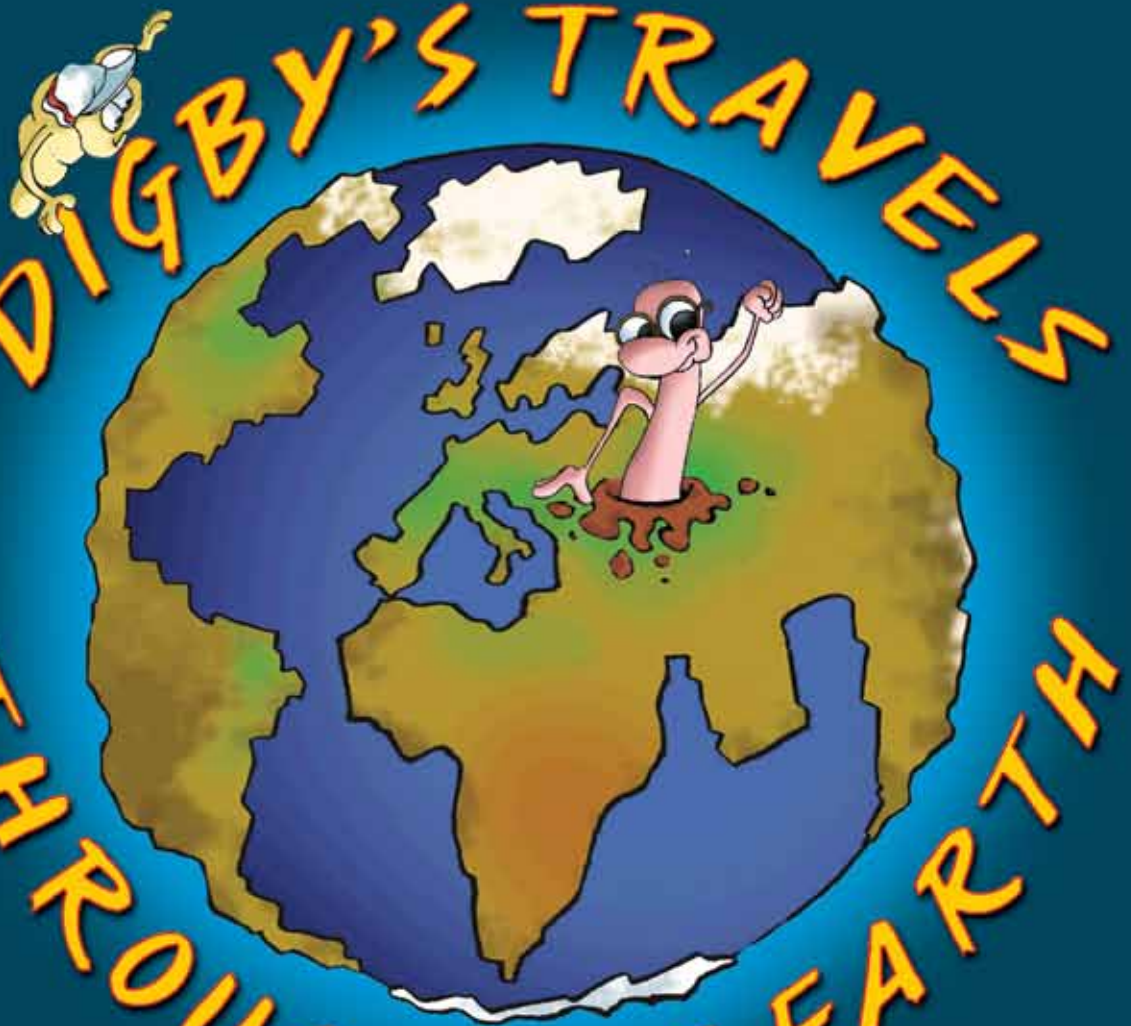

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Belgrade, 2011

Our story begins in a luscious, unusually large and thick apple tree in the midst of a magical fi eld, not as far away from your house as you think. This particular apple tree was very special for amongst its entwining branches it nestled, all tucked away safe and sound, the nicest, happiest and most inquisitive worm you'll ever had the pleasure of meeting- Wormsworth Mc-Crawlford.

Wormsworth in appearance was a tiny, stocky and pudgy little bundle of joy with the most wondrous pair of crystal blue eyes you had ever seen.

That morning after a full breakfast and a little stretch, Wormsworth crawled out onto the branch in front of his house in with his wide blue eyes scanned the fi eld below-but from all of the wondrous fl owers in bloom, livid butterfl ies and insects scampering about he couldn't spot his best of friends-Digby Wormington- the smartest and the most determined earth worm ever to grace on a planet. Digby, being long and wirey was the exact opposite of our Wormsworth in appearance, but they meshed together like stars and stripes.

Wormsworth was rather surprised he couldn't Digby who was usually so easy to spot, being so long and all. And after a few confused seconds, he called out to Digby in an unusually loud and high-pitched shriek. Wormsworth's voice wooshed through the rich green leaves of the apple tree slid down the trees strong trunk and whirled around each and every blade of grass in the fi eld below.

The ants marching in a procession below were stopped short by this strange sound, lady bird beetles and butterfl ies were rudely awoken and from shock began to fl ap and fl y about bumping into each other like crazed mad men, the only fi eld inhabitants who thought it rather amusing were the crickets and grasshoppers who pranced along quickly and skillfully from grass blade hoping to catch Wormsworth's traveling voice. All in all, everyone was caught up in the big tangling, fl ustering hullabaloo below-then as if on que, silence, total utter silence and everyone, in complete unison, turned to watch Dugby who bustled about carrying on with his business as if not a thing had happened.

Quickly and diligently Digby crammed his belongings into a large green backpack-rushing around and marking items off his check-list to make sure he didn't forget anything.

All the fi eld's inhabitants were rather astonished by his behavior, even the grass itself was rather surprised and fl owers even forgot to close their petals from wonderment-even if the sun has already set and the night has grandly announced its arrival, but the most surprised would have to be Wormsworth who paced up and down the trees branches rather chuffed his friend was packing and Wormsworth hadn't the faintest idea why or what he was up to.

Finally he gathered up all his courage to ask:

"Hey Digby-sorry to disturb-but what in blazes are you doing!?"

Digby abruptly turned and shot a piercing stare at Wormsworth-rather annoyed that he had been bothered now with all this work to do, he took a deep breath to calm his nerves, irritably rolled his eyes and pushed aside a few articles to make room to sit-he had a lot of explaining to do. As if in a dream, he tilled his head up to the sky and began to speak as if he was reciting a poem or chanting a spell:

"You and I and all our dearest friends live on planet Earth which is by far the most beautiful planet in our solar system. Earth is shaped like a pale blue ball-almost resembling the apple of your eye and in it are many glorious rivers and mountains for the sun to shine on or snow to fall upon. Everything we see and love belongs to dear Mother Earth. She is our home and home of all living creatures. The home of birds you see fl ying high up in the sky,

the fi sh swimming around in the oceans and of fi elds full of fl owers where you and I usually play in. Earth gives us life, joy and beauty and I am forever grateful of it.

I wish, a wish as big as a house, to really get to know this Earth that we live on. To see, touch and feel every nook and cranny of it. I want to know the fi eld of course, but I have plans to go deeper-right under and travel right to the very centre of the Earth. I love the planet we live in-but, you see, I feel that if you really want to love someone you have to get to know him and understand every little inch of them-as I understand you and that's the reason why I've decided to tunnel right through this Earth of ours."

Wormsworth, so taken back by his friend's words began to drift off into a vivid day-dream-but his dream was shattered when his friend abruptly began to pack again.

"I say Digby, why on Earth do you need that large backpack of yours and why are you holding a torch for?"

"In my backpack I'll be carrying food, water, light bulbs, cables, batteries,

lots of instruments, bottles of oxygen, a drill, shovel and a special suit to protect me from the heat, because deep down in the Earth it gets very, very hot-so basically, I'm packing all the necessities needed for such a trip. The torch, I will need to be able to see where I'm going down there, because inside the Earth it can get ever so dark, just like in a cellar. I've also brought along a helmet to make sure I don't bump my head and it will also come in handy to hook my lamp onto it and have both hands free for digging."

Everyone had hung onto to Digby's every word. No longer was there hustling and bustling or hullaballoning for that matter, just a strange silence that had fallen over the fi eld.

Wormsworth feared his next question and rather dreaded an answer.

"But, how long will you stay down there?", he asked timidly almost in a whisper, trying to hide his sadness.

"To tell you the truth, I really don't know, perhaps until the fi rst snow falls, I suspect. Here's an odd fact for you, do you know when I get to the other side via my tunnel it will be summer, whilst the winter freezes everything over heremarvelous!"

Wormsworth, full of dread and rather upset asked quietly as if speaking to himself:

"So, does that mean I won't see or hear from you for a very long time?"

"Oh, come now, old chum! You will hear from me, you just won't see me!"

Digby, though agitated that he was wasting precious time, did his very best to cheer up his forlorn friend, so he added:

"Why, we have our mobile phones with which we'll constantly be in touch-I'll tell you everything I see, how I'm doing-I might even need to ask for your help at some point, I can count on you for that, can't I?"

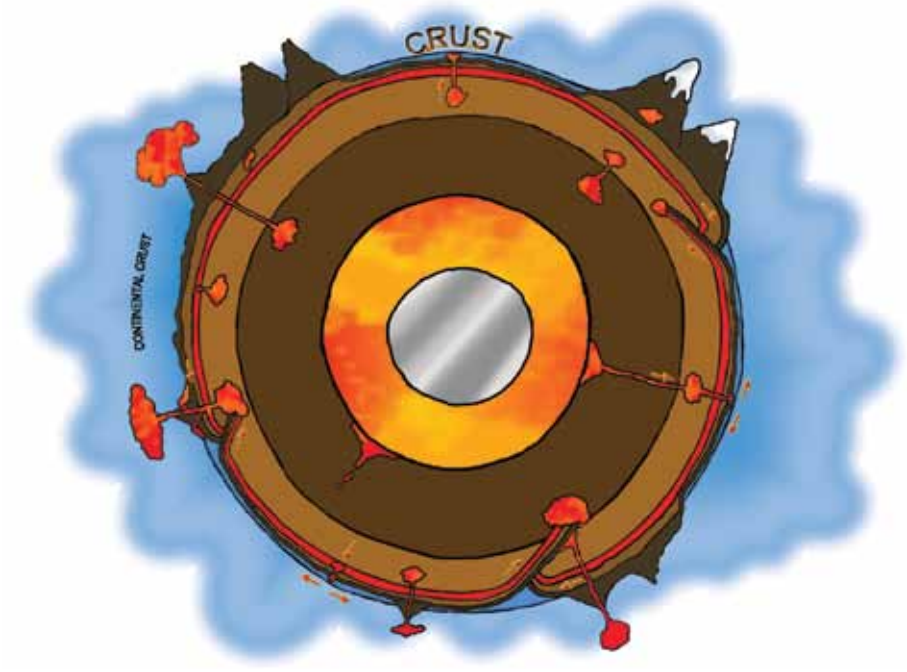
Wormsworth face lit up, his crystal sapphire-blue eyes glistened at the thought of being needed.

"Oh, boy, you sure can, Digby! I would do anything for the best of my friends. So, when are you leaving?"

"Tonight-right after our favorite cartoon an television."

"Well, then it's time I guess to wish you a Bon Voyage and the best of luck. Don't forget to call as soon as possible and above all, please, look after yourself."

And with that Wormsworth looked away, he couldn't out of sadness even look at old Digby. Besides, he didn't want his friend to notice the tears well-



ing up in those eyes of his. Although he was grief stricken over his friends departure he also felt rather proud to be best friends with such a brave and courageous worm as Digby was.

“Hello? Hey, hello there! Can you here me?”

Wormsworth piped up excitedly literally shouting down the speaker of the mobile phone. he waited for Digby’s reply with much impatience.

“Yes, yes, I can hear you, geez I think nearly the whole world’s population can hear you with all that shouting!” , Digby jokingly replied.

“Where are you?”, asked Wormsworth.

“Not that far away from you, I should guess. As you well know, we both live on the Earth’s Crust…”

“Crust? What kind of Crust?”, Wormsworth squealed rather dumbfounded.

“Geez you must know the fact that the Earth’s round, just like a ball?!”

Wormsworth started out very defensively:

“Yes, I know of course, who doesn’t?”

“Well, the outer part of that ball or sphere, including all our mountains and rivers, is called the Earth’s crust.”

“Ok, ok, forget about the crusty bit for a second and tell me where you are?”, insisted Wormsworth.

“Oh, my, it is absolutely spectacular here!”, cried his friend ecstatically, “I’m in a large cave through which an underground river fl ows and all around me are stone roses, all colors of the rainbow. There are also large stone pillars where all these horrid bats hang upside-down from. They don’t like it when I shine my torch on them and when I do, so they fl y around shrieking and fl uttering-it’s most annoying!”

“I am so greatful to hear you’re alright.”, stated Wormsworth, then quickly added:

“Are there any fi sh in that river of yours?”

Although he tried to conceal it, Wormsworth’s voice still quivered slightly from the joy and excitement he felt from hearing his friend’s voice. Digby’s voice had a hint agitation-as if the question had rather annoyed him as he answered:

“No chance! In an underground river there aren’t what you and I would call fi sh, only transparent crab-like creatures that are ever so frightful.”

Wormsworth burning curiosity asked:

“Does anyone live in that cave? Or are you on your lonesome?”

“To tell you the truth, hardly anyone all I’ve seen are a few spiders and bugs who, just imagine, spend their whole lives in the dark of the cave and are very unused to the light, so when you fl ash a torch upon them, they scurry off in fear of being caught. It’s ever so dark here, but I suppose I’ve gotten used to it so it’s not that bad. Since there’s no one about, I suppose I have nothing to be afraid of.”

“How do you get about? Do you crawl or walk? Have you found a tunnel leading anywhere?”

“I have, sometimes the tunnel is as large as a corridor, other times it’s so cramped and narrow I can barely manage to crawl through, once I even had to tie a rope around of one of the pillars and lift myself up how narrow it was. Now you must excuse me, I’ll have to put my cell phone back in my pocket, so as I can swim across this lake before me.”

“Pardon me!? What lake? How big is it? Is the water chilly?”

“No, it’s not that big at all-roughly the size of a basketball court. The water’s cool and clear-so clear, in fact, that with my torch I can see right through it to the pebbles below.”

“How on Earth did a lake get there? Oh, do be careful, Digby! What if you slip and fall into it!”

“Come now, worry not, my dear fellow! Now, let me explain to you how a lake got here in the fi rst place, but to understand this concept I’ll have to tell you how a cave got here. You see, the Earth is a living planet…”

“However do you mean living? I don’t understand a single thing!”

Wormsworth was terribly confused, he didn’t even bother excusing himself for rudely interrupting his friend.

“Precisely what I said-it’s living. The sun with it’s heat, the wind, the rain and snow work at keeping the surface of the Earth fl at. Did you know the pebbles and sand you see at the bottom of rivers have come from very summit of tall mountains.”

“Whoa, slow down there, boy, how did these pebbles travel from mountain tops all the way down to river beds?”

“The sun and rain and all natural elements cause the rock at the mountains summit to erode and break. These small jagged pieces are carried from mountain peaks to river beds via the rivers current which fl ows down the mountain side. They’re literally dragged and pushed out onto river beds for you and I am to play about with making houses, castles or skimming them across the water’s surface like we do every year on holidays.”

“Oh, I see-now I even understand why pebbles are all smooth and round like marbles, it’s all that tumbling and bumping they do down the mountain side, it wears them down and smoothed them out.”, stated Wormsworth triumphantly.

“Well done! Good show-not even I had thought of that!”, Digby gave his friend well deserved approval, then quickly added:

“Now, allow me to continue. So, we have all the natural elements, the “Outher forces“ at work breaking down the rock. The sun’s shining, rain’s falling, wind’s blowing-not to mention snow, all trying to keep the Earth’s surface fl at. Now, from inside the Earth you have forces whish shake the rock about-up and down, all around-they bend and twist and mash the poor thing. This is actually how the mountains are formed, volcanoes too! The forces from inside that move and break apart the rock are called “Inner forces“, because they come from deep down inside the Earth.

These two forces are constantly at battle, just like a pair of boxers in a ring. One of them is determined to tear and twist the rock trying to form hills and mountains-while the other struggles on attempting to make everything as fl at as a chalk board. That is why the shape of the Earth is forever changing! Scientists, those are fellows that are dull “all work, no play” characters to live just to study and work, declare that due to this very movement we have life on Earth.

Caves are evidence of this battle of the forces. Firstly, we have the “Inner forces“ move, break, tear and crumble the surface rock. On occasion we feel these “Inner forces“ at work through earthquakes-those awfully scary jolts that shake and move everything about and scare the living daylights out of you. Mum and Dad told me all about them. So, old chum, did you get all that?”

“Oh, but of course!”, Wormsworth stated boldly even though he was fi bbing, because he didn’t really understand what these Inner forces looked like.

“As I was saying, these Inner forces tear and break the rock causing large cracks and gaps in it. These cracks and gaps are what we call cliffs, just to be sure I’m telling you it right, I’ll check what my Atlas has to say about all this. Good thing I brought it along for moments like this and I actually only dragged it along for some bed-time reading.

Ah, here it is, just as I suspected: caves are formed only in limestone to make houses and building blocks, things like that.

Now, water-when it passes through the cracks at any giving moment, dilutes and erodes the limestone creating even larger cracks and holes of all shapes and sizes-just like the different shapes and sizes of our pots, pans and plates. Mum uses to serve our lunch on, but in this case, the cracks and holes can be as big as houses, even bigger! Sometimes they can be as large as theatre halls.

Sometimes the water that seeps through the gaps carries with it a diluted form of limestone which builds up to make curtain-like structures, just like the curtains at the sides of a stage.

I’m actually looking at one now. It’s ever so beautiful and has the most intricate coloring.”

“Well, good for you.”, snapped Wormsworth urging Digby to stop his ramblings and get on with the real facts. Digby was rambling because he couldn’t fi nd the right words to explain what he saw next:

“On the roof of this and other like it are… I’m sorry, I’m really lost for words…”, he paused a quite stuck and then all at once blasted as if out of a cannon:

“Ah! I’ve got it! You know during wintertime you open your window and view all those lovely icicles that have built up on the sill? Well, what I see before me are very much like icicles, but larger. Some of them are as big as you and I put together. Oh, I wish you could see this! These icicles like formations are not only dangling from the roof, they’re also coming up out of the fl oor, except these are much wider and more spread out than the ones on the roof.”

“Huh? How ever did they get there?”, Wormsworth curiosity ate at his insides.

Digby held onto his mobile rather theatrically and cooed down the phone at the chance he had to show his friend what he knew.

“Well”, he drawled, “The water that diluted the limestone and created the icicles continues to drip onto the fl oor of the cave and forms the smaller and wider icicles. I sometimes get a chance to slither around their smooth surface-it’s ever so much fun!

I have a confession to make on my travels. I accidentally manage to break one of the icicles and guess what-they’re totally hollow on the inside, like cyllindress. You see, they’re hollow because water, with it’s limestone particles continues to drip through them. There are people who spend their life studying caves. These people are called Speleologists. The formal name they give to the icicles that hang from the roof is Stalactites and the one’s on the fl oor are called Stalagmites. You’ll remember this through a simple rhyme:

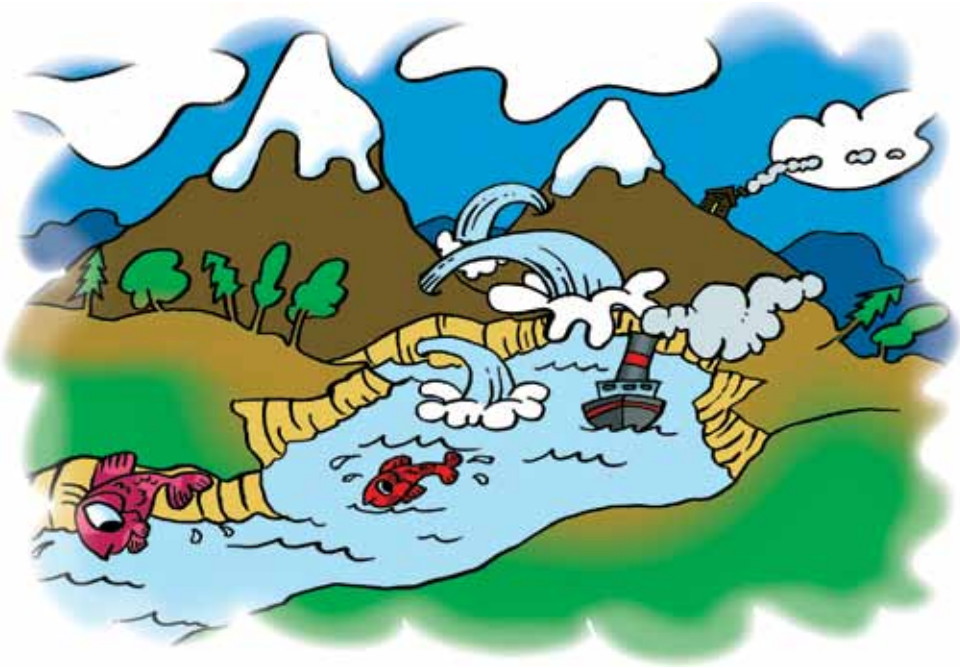
Stalagtites hang tight onto the roof, while Stalagmites hope they might catch them.

When the build up continues over a long period of time both Stalactites and Stalagmites join to form the grandest of pillars-larger and wider than the lamp posts you can see glowing in our street…

Well, dear fellow, to tell you the truth, I’m rather tired. I’ll give you a call as soon as I awake all grumpy and sleepy as usual.”

Digby’s voice wondered, he so desperately wanted to end the phone call and head off to bed.

“Oh no, don’t hang up just yet, please.”, begged poor old Wormsworth, “At least have the courtesy to fi nish your tale and tell me how a lake got there in the middle of the cave!”



“Drat! You are rather pushy at times, aren’t you? I’ve told you, fl ows through the gaps and erodes the cave…”

“What does eroding mean?”

“Eroding is when the water rubs and washes away bits of the rock. Surely you know that glaciers and canyons are formed through rock erosion.”, Digby clacked his tongue. He didn’t mean to be unpleasant, but all that toiling exhausted him.

“Yes, I know.”, whispered Wormsworth trying to soothe Digby’s nerves with his voice. The truth was he hadn’t the faintest idea on how water possessed the power to rub away a rock.

“When water rubs away at the rocks face it leaves behind holes unlike pots where water gets trapped forming lakes over time. You get a lot of them in caves, because most of them contain water.”, Digby explained rather wisely for someone his age.

“Yes, but how does the water get in the caves?”, persisted Wormsworth with an even calmer and more timid voice than before, due to the fact that, thanks to Digby, he now understood much more.

“Water seeps through cracks in the rock’s surface little by little every time rain falls over the mountains. It’s rather diffi cult to see this activity because grass usually cover the cracks up. Mountains are, as you know, humungeos! It takes days to get from one point to another. Now just imagine how much water can it be gathered from such a large area and how much can seep into caves that are just like a giant bath tubs.”

Wormsworth interrupted with another question:

“Does the water stay put in the caves?”

“Actually no. Water usually fl ows right through the caves and resurfaces as springs or small rivers which then drifts on to catch up to the larger rivers. All large rivers you see begin as small rivers or mountain springs. Later down the path other little rivers join them to create a large river, just like for example the rivers Sava, the Danube, the Amazon, the Nile and many more…”

Wormsworth quimsically pipped up:

“Didn’t you say you were tired?”

He knew his friend was enjoying this as much as he was, but out of concern added:

“You must be puckish? When will you eat? And where are you going to sleep?”

“I say, I am rather tired. I think I shall rest right after I cross this lake here and go to sleep, snug as a bug beside a gorgeous fl ower I see blooming on the other side.”

“Aren’t you frightened?”, Wormsworth was genuinely worried for his dear friend.

“Gosh, no! There isn’t anyone here to be frightened of-except for maybe the dark which I’m quite getting used to. Besides, I have a lamp which I won’t switch off before bed. It’s always much nicer when you can see what’s about. Like when I’m at home in my own bed I sometimes creep up to the window to peer out at all the trees, lamp posts and stars twinkling in the sky… Well, a good night to you, old friend. Count the stars for me as I have none to count down here-I miss them already, but not half as much as I miss you. I am so lucky to have a friend like you who I can share all my feelings and adventures with and I’m sure you’ll always be there for me in case I need any help along the way, am I right?”

“You sure are, pal.”, nodded Wormsworth in agreement as if Digby was there beside him instead of deep dark cave far away in the middle of the

Earth somewhere. With a sniffl e, due to missing his friend so much, he shuffl ed off to bed and switched off his light.

"Hello, hello?! Well a good morning to you, Digby, old chum, did I wake you?"

Digby stretched and rubbed his eyes, Wormsworth has in fact awoken him, but his pride would never allow him to admit that he'd slept through most of the morning.

"Yes, yes, I'm awake.", he mumbled sleepily, "I would wish you a good morning, but there's no such thing here-just dark. Dark when I lie down to sleep and dark when I awake and I better hurry up and get used to it because it shall be like this through the whole duration of my trip. Now, I really must go brush my teeth and wash my face over by that lake I crossed yesterday. I should top my water supply while I'm there because soon I will have to start rationing due to the fact that on the road to the CORE of the Earth there won't be any."

Wormsworth, realizing he had in fact woken his friend apologetically replied:

"I'm ever so sorry to have woken you Digby, well, actually not that sorry because I can hardly wait in the morning to hear your voice and to know that you're alright, but before we stray off the topic, let's get back to your journey. Why won't there be any water whilst you dig deeper into the Earth?"

"That's simple-as you tunnel towards the Core of the Earth, the rock becomes tougher and tougher making it literally an impossible to make cracks to allow water to seep through as it does in the caves and the like… Well, I've got to go now and commence digging."

Wormsworth quickly leapt in hoping to get a few more words out of his friend:

"Wait, don't go just yet. Tell me what tools you use for digging and is it a diffi cult work?"

"Oh brother, asking all these questions have turned into rather a bore! But since you're my friend, I'll give you a brief answer… Firstly I use an electric drill, to drill holes into the rock face after which I feel these holes with explosives… Do you know what explosives are? They look like candles, but they're much more dangerous-their bang really packs a punch. Anyway, like I was saying, I stuff the hole with explosives, light the fuse and run for cover, the least I need right now is to get squashed or hurt by air born rock shrap-

nel. After all has subsided, I clear the area and path my way through using a shovel. Now, come on. You really must let me go-I'll call you on my break, honest!"

And with that, Digby hung up and returned to his toiling.

Wormsworth was rather upset over how Digby had hung up on him so abruptly, but he also understood why he had. It's hard work down there and Digby had none to help him with all that digging, Wormsworth sighed-all he could do now was to wait.

"Well, hello there, Master Mc Crawlford! Here I am as promised with my daily report. What are you up to, old chum? Huh? I can't hear a thing-oh, you're watching cartoons, sorry to disturb, buddy, I had clearly forgotten it is

nighttime up where you are-I can't tell the difference down here! Well, I can happily say I've fi nished digging for today and I am dead tired.", Digby huffed over the phone from exertion.

Wormsworth could hardly conceal his content-his friend had kept his word and had called.

"Never mind the cartoons! Tell me, anything interesting about? What have you seen? Oh, do tell! You know how impatient I can get!"

"Oh, boy, I have so much to tell you! At the moment I'm still situated at the Earth's Crust, do you want me to read what my ATLAS says about it?"

"You know I do!", replied Wormsworth.

Digby cleared his throat and read:

"The Crust is composed of many types of rock. It resembles an eggshell for it too is thin and fragile. In mountainous areas the crust can be tens and tens of kilometers thick, which is estimated at roughly an hours drive in your vehicle, this area is called the Continental crust because it… hey, that's where you and I live!", exclaimed Digby and continued, "It includes Africa with its wondrous safari and blood-hungry lions and even Australia…"

"That's the place with kangaroo's hopping about." Wormsworth jumped in though. Digby didn't pay much attention to his quimsicle statement.

"The Crust can be found in oceanic areas is much thinner than the latter thick. In some areas it's even thinner, as thin as the highest building in town is tall…"

"That area is called the Oceanic crust", eagerly chimed in Wormsworth with a bluff.

"Correct.", Digby proceeded by raising his voice as to be able to talk-over Wormsworth's interruptions.

"Now, Wormsworth, let me ask you if you know what an ore is?"

"Well, of course I know that.", sheepishly replied Wormsworth rather proud of himself.

"Miners dig in mines constructed from ore's. We get iron, copper and lead from them-these elements are called metals and we can be sure that they're metals because electricity can be conducted through them, where as electricity can't be surged through wood.

You can see metals all around you. Cars, machines and even that trusty drill of yours is made of metal."

"Well done!", praised Digby and added, "Sometimes you really impress me, but other times…"

Wormsworth in fear of scalding, jumped in:

"Better not spoil it by mentioning the "other times", ok? Friends are always bound to squabble at one point or another. It would be rather boring if we liked the same things or thought the same thoughts. That aside, now tell me, what did you get up today?"

"Well, I began with blowing up a few more rock faces and as I was clearing the shards with my shovel, I suddenly noticed something shiny and absolutely spectacular…"

"Shiny? What color was it?", asked Wormsworth rather impatiently, he hated when Digby toyed with him with all these riddles.

"It was yellow and shiny all over-just like gold."

Wormsworth squealed down the phone:

"Hurrah! You've discovered a gold mine-golly! Won't you be fi lthy rich!"

"Calm down, calm down, buddy-you'll give yourself a premature heart attack-it wasn't gold, I tell you!"

Digby's attempts to settle his friend were futile, but never the less, he continued with his explanation:

"What I found was actually a copper ore, you know that brassy metal we make electric wires out of?"

Wormsworth was suspicious that his friend was hiding such a discovery from him and crossly retorted:

"Then explain why it was yellow-maybe there's a little gold in it?"

"No, it's yellow because the ore contains Sulphur."

Digby was straining not to lose his temper, which in this case was not an easy task. He wouldn't admit it if you had asked him, but he found himself rather enjoying trying to calm down Wormsworth. It fi lled him with feelings of self-pride, maturity and wiseness. He was rather glad to have a friend like Wormsworth who always wanted to discover and learn new things. It motivated him to do the same.

"If you were to melt down this particular ore at a metallurgists, sulphor gas would be released. That's the yellow smoke you see blowing out of factory chimneys. This smoke is very bad for our health. That's why they have to

place special fi lters over the openings to protect the air we breath…

Look, I'll level with you, there is gold running through the ore, but the nuggets are as small as mosquito heads, you'd have to melt the whole ore down to get a smidgen or not even a handfuls worth of gold, so it's nothing to get excited about."

Arrogantly, as if he had proven his point, Wormsworth ordered his friend to list the other elements he had detected in the mine, but on a friendlier note added full of regret:

"I wish more than anything in the world that I was there with you to see the ore."

"I wish you were here with me, too-but I'll describe it as best as I can.", sighed Digby, sweeping away shards of rock as to make room to sit and rest his aching muscles.

"The ore is in fact layered with rock. Imagine your favorite fruity sponge cake with layers of sponge, cream and fruit, now picture the layers are made of different types of rocks and elements and that's what this ore resembles, see where I'm getting at?"

Wormsworth was quite puzzled, he just couldn't seem to get the picture of a lovely cake out of his mind.

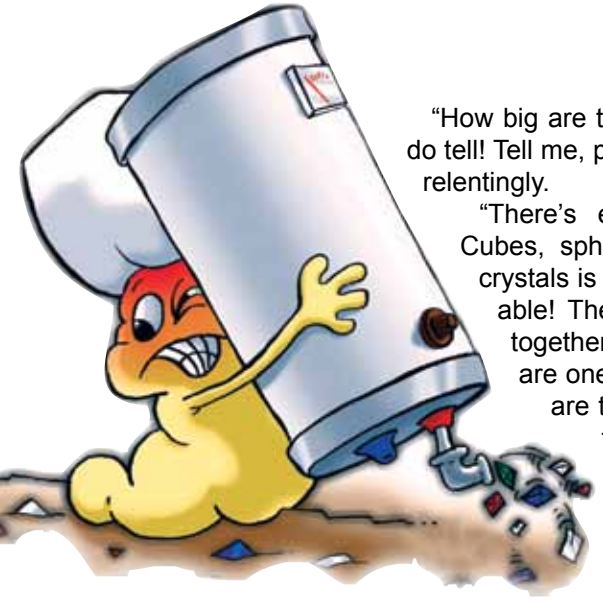
"Yummy…eh, um-I mean, how thick are the layers?"

"Well, I haven't excavated a lot of the ore, but as far as I can tell, the layers had the width of approximately your study desk. Scientists who research how many and where the ore's are located are called geologists. My friend's father is a geologist. I shall rather enjoy telling him all about this when I get out on the other side of the Earth. I wonder what conclusion he'll come up with on all this… Hey ho! Wait a minute, hold the fort, what's this? !", Digby bellowed ecstatically down the phone.

"Wow, my oh my, isn't this something, fantastic! In a cavity in the rock face, not so big-big enough for me to crawl in and take a nap-well, I can't believe my eyes! I just can't believe it!"

"What? What?! Oh, do tell, don't keep me in suspense!", cried Wormsworth getting all in a bother again.

"Boy, isn't it a shame you're not here with me to enjoy this beauty. The cavity I found is chock-a-block full of crystal minerals of the most spectacular shapes and colors-green, yellow, white, red and even blue one's. My, they all sparkle so brightly, just like the jewels in that tale about Aladdin and a magic lamp."



“How big are they? What do they look like? Oh, do tell! Tell me, please.”, pleading Wormsworth unrelentingly.

“There’s every shape you can imagine! Cubes, spheres, pyramids-one of the white crystals is all spiky like a hedgehogunbelievable! The one’s next to it are all stacked together like leggo, no order at all. There are one’s resembling globes while others are tiny marblelike spheres, one’s that fan out like peacock tails and one’s that are shaped like someone’s teeth. Boy! I feel like I’ve walked into a toy store full of goodies!”

Envy burnt Wormsworth to his core-but he was at least happy his friend could see the spectacle and he was just as excited as Digby.

“My word! However did the crystals get in that cavity?”, he exclaimed.

“The cavity is situated in an ore containing copper, iron, lead, cink and other metals-you see, it’s formed from the sediment out of hot springs.”

Envy in him still raging, Wormsworth spat out accusingly:

“Yeah right-whatever you say, hot springs indeed! You’re always trying to muddle up my thoughts, Digby! I can bet your telling fi bs and making half of it up. What, you want me to believe that there’s an invisible water heater that heats the water fl owing into the ore-ridiculous!”

Digby shuddered rather astonished-even a little offended at Wormsworth’s reply-but he endured and continued explaining attempting to smooth things over.

“Of course there’s no invisible water heater, silly! The water comes from magma that has cooled in the depths of the Earth. The magma contained diluted ore and as it fl owed to the surface of the Earth it cooled down hardening and depositing ore in the in the surrounding cracks of the rock.

You see, ore can be only diluted by the heat of hot springs and as it cools, it separates and builds up in layers, it resembles, how can I put it? Oh! Like when you eat hot and cold soup…”

Wormsworth calmed some what and eagerly replied:

“Oh, now I get it! I just adore soup when it’s nice and steaming hot-but when it cools-yuck! All that icky, oily fat is pushed up and fl oats around the top of your bowl because it isn’t melted nicely in the water anymore. Ech! It’s ever so horrible! Wow, it’s amasing when you use food metaphors, I understand the information better, maybe because I’m such a greedy guts! Oh, but the crystals, how did they come about?”

“When hot spring water with its diluted ore fi nds a cavity in the rock, it gets trapped there and cools down more slowly than usual. In the cavity there is enough room and perfect conditions for the deposits to crystallize. The ore sediments will continue to crystallize as long as there’s enough room… oh, there are glamorous! I must take myself a few.”, added Digby in haste.

“Oh, please, save some for me, too! I want a yellow one that looks like a big, fat cube.”, begged Wormsworth.

“It’s a done deal! I’ll give it to you as soon as I get back as a token of gratitude for being there for me like a true friend, but you have to be patient.

Now, off to bed, old chum, just think your friend will sleep among all these crystals like a crystal king Midas! I feel like I’m on far away planet composed entirely of gems. Call me as soon as you get up tomorrow-I would call you, but down here I have no idea what time of day or night is! Sleep tight, buddydon’t let the bed bugs bite!”

“Hello?... Hello?... Hello?!”, Wormsworth shouted down the phone, his face stricken with panic.

“Oh, dear! I hope nothing dreadful has happened to poor, sweet Digby! Hello!? ... Hello!?”

“Yes, yes… hello, buddy, here I am, everything is a-ok, everything is just fi ne.”, replied Digby fi nally-soothing Wormsworth’s racing heart, fl ooded with relief. Wormsworth replied:

“Don’t ever do that to me again! I was ever so worried. I thought something dreadful happened to you. I’ve been calling since the crack of dawn and now it’s nearly lunch time. Where on Earth have you been?!”

“Sorry, mate!”, Digby replied like an ashamed school boy in front of a scowling headmaster.

“I’ve been having a little trouble with this special suit of mine. I can’t seem to get it on properly, because it’s all creased and frumpled from being packed in my backpack. It looks like one of our pa-jamas we leave all strewn on the bed, chair or floor for mother to pick up.”

“Did you say suit? I haven’t the faint-est what you’re talking about!?”, was Worms-worth’s perplexed reply.

“The suit I brought along with me.”

“What do you need a suit for? You’re not planning to attend a banquet, are you?”

“What banquet, silly!”, Digby began to loose his patience and added rath-er agitated.

“I’ve already told you there’s no one here to banquet with! And besides, you know I’ve never fancied wearing suits, they bother me so! I feel like a stitched up mummy when I wear one, you can’t run or play and they stain so easily. Mother than notices I dirtied the suit up before I get a chance to wash it and I always end up in a lot of trouble. Now, enough suit talk- it’s giving me the creeps! The suit I mentioned is a heat-resistant suit that will protect me from the heat, because it can get sweltering down here. The deeper you go, the nearer to the Earth’s Core you getthe hotter it becomes. The Earth is actually made of melted metals.”

“How do you know it will get hotter and hotter-you’ve never been there! I think you’re trying to tell me another of your fi bs again!”, Wormsworth snuffed. His relief had now subsided to anger.

“I’m not telling fi bs, old friend! Believe it or not, I’ve been telling you facts from my Atlas. It’s amazing how much we seem to know about the Earth, there’s always so much more for us to learn. Did you know that people once thought that the Earth wasn’t round, but fl at, as a board and that she wasn’t very old at all-which we now know is wrong as well thanks to a nature researcher some 250 years ago from Scotland. You do know where Scotland is, don’t you?”

Wormsworth knew, to the astonishment of Digby. How he knew was a little embarrassing, so he shyly shuttered:

“Y-yes, o-of course I kn-know! It’s up north, near Eng-land. T-they m-make that famous sco-sco-scottish whiskey my fa-fa-father likes so m-m-much.”

“Bravo! Well done!”, praised Digby in approval.

“This researcher founded a science that studies the Earth. This science is called Geology. Imagine how smart he must have been to even 250 years ago state that the Earth was very old. This statement is proven time and time again by the researches of scientists who study the Earth-geologists.”

“Really? But, do you know how old the Earth is?”

“I do-roughly 4 and a half billion years old-but, I don’t know how long a time span that is or how they managed to calculate it-oh, listen up, I found an interesting paragraph on the age of the Earth in my book.”

Wormsworth groaned with boredom.

“You know, that book is really starting to get on my nerves. That’s it! I’m going to buy one right after school today to stop you from reading to me all the time.”

“No, don’t! I was planning on giving you this book for your birthday. Oh, drat! Now, I’ve gone and spoilt the surprise. It’s not polite to talk of gifts in advance-but we’re pals, you’ll forgive my slip up, won’t you?”

“Yes, I’ll forgive you-but nevertheless, the book still annoys me. Let’s talk about something more interesting like those crystals you found. Did you fi nd any more? Is there any water where you are? Is there anyone living there?”,

Wormsworth bombed Digby with a new pile of questions, desperately trying to change the subject.

“I’m at the Upper mantle now. It’s situated right underneath the Earth’s crust. It’s made up of large, very tough and very black rock, no one lives here and there aren’t anymore of those lovely crystals to find.”

“I’m curious to know, how you know you’ve hit the Upper mantle and are no longer in the Crust? I suppose there’s no door or sign telling you where you are like at principal’s offi ce with that brass-lettering on the door. I’ve been there many a time…”

“The book says…”

“No! Please, anything but the book!”, Wormsworth pleaded in a whiney voice as if Digby were planning like the head master to punish him.

“Very well-no book!”, said Digby and continued to read from the book, he just pretended he wasn’t.

“Entering the Upper mantle, you will realize it’s no longer the Crust due to the fact that you will be surrounded by black rock. This particular rock isn’t as speckled as the rocks found in the Crust and is twice as tough… This I fi nd to be correct, for I have to drill twice as hard and twice as long to cover the same distance as I did in the Crust… The exact spot where the Crust ends and the Upper mantle begins was discovered by a very talented scientist-Andria Mohorovichich…”, Digby had to spell out Andria’s last name, it was a bit of tongue twister!

“He was born in Croatia near the Adriatic sea… Hey! That’s where you and I go on holidays!”

“Wait a minute there, it sounds like you’re still reading the darned book!”, Wormsworth suspiciously proclaimed.

“I’m not, I tell you!”, replied Digby in defense.

“It’s just… just, um, I may be talking funny because the… the… the air here is stuffy and… and I get a dry throat, you see? It’s not crisp like in your room.”

Wormsworth shrugged “Whatever.”, still not convinced.

“What did this Adrian Moho… Moho…”

Digby leapt in and assisted:

“Mohorovichich? He discovered that, as you tunnel through the Earth, fi rstly you’ll pass through the Crust-formed of many different rocks which aren’t as hard or fi rm as the ones in the Upper mantle.”

“Oh, but what are these rocks composed of?”

“The book says…uh, um…I mean, the fore mentioned rocks are of the same composition as those you can fi nd on every mountain-but don’t mention this to a geologist or he might get crossed or something-who knows! The area in which the rocks in the Crust end and where the hard black rocks begin is called the Moho-Mo-Mohorovichich d-d-discontiti-nuit-ty, the Moho-whatever.”, shuttered Digby-this was a diffi cult word even for someone as smart as he was.

“Ok, I admit, I have been reading from the book, sorry, mate.”, giggled Digby apologetically. Wormsworth however didn’t fi nd the fact that Digby had fi bbed quite as funny and spurted out rather impatiently:

“Hmmmm, I thought as much! Well, what else does the darned book say?”

“Nothing much… The Moho-Moho… darn it, is the border between the Earth’s CRUST and the Upper mantle. Due to diffi culty, the name has been abbreviated, that is, shortened to the Moho discontinuity. Discontinuity simply means the art of “cutting off”… Well really! That’s just silly, why don’t they just call it the Moho cut-of and save us all a headache! Sometimes scientists can be just plain show-offs!”

Digby mumbled rather agitated at the diffi culty of the paragraph.

“Is there any water in the Upper mantle?”

This question irritated Digby even more. All Wormsworth did was to remind him of his water ration.

“No, no, there isn’t-not a drop in sight…”, he hissed as he heaved his pick to break through the rock before him-suddenly as if out of a tap, lava came fl ooding through the crack at an immense speed, luckily Digby was protected by his suit!

“Oh, heck! Lava, lava everywhere! How on Earth did lava get here in the depths of the Earth when you usually see it erupting out of volcanoes?!”

“Are you sure it’s lava, though? Maybe it’s just some really thick, red water?”, insisted Wormsworth.

“You and your water! No, believe me, it’s lava, well actually, it’s magma, which is the name we give to lava if it’s deep inside the Earth. The temperature is extreme where I am at the moment and this causes rocks to melt and blend together. That’s how magma is created. It escapes out of the Earth through the entire length of the crack in the rock face or in this case-the volcano. The magma we see bursting out of volcanoes is what we call lava. Wait just a second so I can refer to my trusty book-oh, yes! I understand it all perfectly now. At the moment, I’m located at the area of the Upper mantle called the astenosphere… Geez, where do they come up with these horrid words!

Anyway, the Astenosphere is partly composed of rock and partly of magma, all mixed up like a bowl of cereal and milk.

Now, listen up carefully to what it says next… The area above the Astenosphere to the Earth’s surface, where you are now, is called the Lithosphere Blah! Again with the long words, though this one’s a little easier to read. Hang on, let me just read this paragraph over to make sure I’ve got it right… yep, all clear. The Lithosphere Lithosphere is the area of the Upper mantle above the Astenosphere. The Lithosphere also includes the Earth’s crust where your house is.”

“Above what Crust are you speaking of in particular-The oceanic or the Continental.?”

Wormsworth’s intelligent question startled Digby leaving him totally unprepared to answer.

“Oh, brother! How should I know-I’m only a kid! Wait a minute, just to check…”

“Yeah, yeah, I know-just to check that awful atlas of yours and to showoff as usual. No matter-one day I too shall have an atlas and then look out, Digby-look out, world!”, snickered Wormsworth triumphantly.

“Cut it out, Mc Crawlford and listen carefully. There in fact is a Continental and an Oceanic lithosphere in addition to a Continental and a Oceanic crust”

Finally Wormsworth jumped up with an answer-he was fi nally getting his 5 minutes of fame:

“Ha! I know! The Continental lithosphere includes the Continental crust and the area of the Upper mantle to the Astenosphere.“

“It’s roughly 10 km thick. Where as the Oceanic lithosphere includes the Oceanic crust and the area of the Upper mantle to the Astenosphere.”

“Does that mean the Upper mantle only goes up to the Crust, that is the Moho di….di…thingy?”

“You’re right. The Upper mantle prevails only up to the Moho discontinuity…”

Digby paused in thought, then added:

“I was just wondering, if you remember the time that teacher with the funny glasses came to visit us at school to talk about volcanoes? I recall he was mentioning something about the Mantle, Core, Lithosphere, even the Ccrust. Do you remember? Ha! I bet you a million dollars you don’t!”, teased Digby with regained confi dence after having his confi dence shattered, to Wormsworth’s dismay, it felt good to pick on his friend, so he continued to do so:

“… A lazy bones like you probably slept through the whole thing. Well, allow me to refresh your memory. He was the one who had mentioned the fact that the nearer you get to the Earth’s Core, the hotter it becomes and that there’s a strip of magma and rock in the Mantle called the Astenosphere.”

Wormsworth couldn’t even remember the teacher, let alone what he said-but he was tired of Digby’s teasing and forced himself to answer rather unsurely:

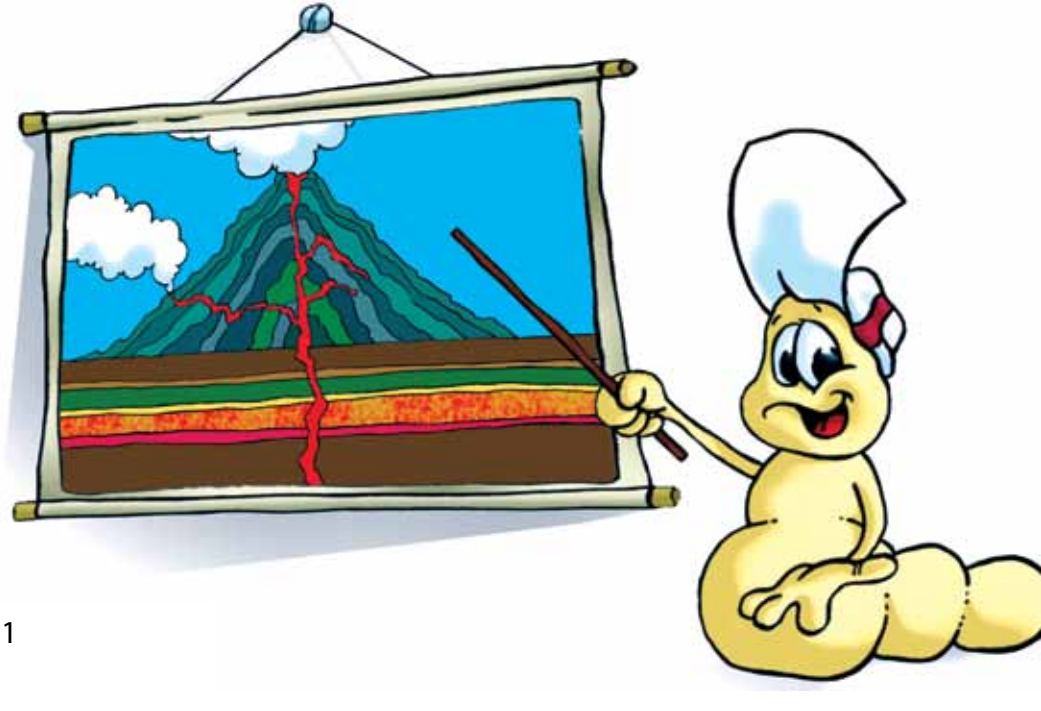
“Oh, yeah… I kind of remember…”

Digby chortled boisterously-but didn’t tease, the heat was getting to him and he complained:

“Oh boy, it sure is hot down here. It’s a good thing I have my suit on, otherwise I’d have been burnt to a crisp!”

“I’m a little worried about you, Digby, I hope nothing unpredictable should happen… I really wish I was there with you. What’s that I hear? Is anything exploding? It sounds like volcano exploding!”

“No, it’s just a bad line. There’s no chance of anything exploding here because in the depths of the Earth everything is compressed or plugged up-like a lid on the bottle of coke-a-cola, so no gasses can be released volcanoes are formed here. When magma fl ows to cracks in the surface, all the water and gas from it is released, resulting an eruption dangerous for all of us. Do you remember when we watched that documentary on TV about volcanoes? They showed footage of one activating-my word! Wasn’t it just dreadful!? All the surrounding houses burnt or demolished. Thankfully, everyone had survived and managed to re-built their town-but it was a close call!”



With all this talk of volcanoes, Wormsworth began to fret immensely for Digby's safety.

"Oh, please, take care of yourself, Digby! If you can't go further, turn back. Maybe I should come and help?"

"Don't worry, I'll be careful. Thanks for the offer, but I don't think it's wise for you to catch up with me. We're too far away from each other now and you don't have the proper equipment for travel. Just sit put and I'll give you a call as I get out of this magma."

"Hello? Hello? Can anyone hear me? Hello? Somebody-anybody?"

"I hear you…", mumbled Wormsworth in reply, "… I'd just nodded off-it's night time here, you know!"

"Oh, dear, I'm ever so sorry. I should've checked the time. I've gotten used to the constant dark here that I had clear forgotten to make difference between day and night… Boy, do I miss daylight, to see the colors of the forest, vibrant lakes and rivers and our street. Instead, I'm facing, once again, those hard black rocks which are diffi cult to drill through. There is nothing here… absolutely nothing! All around me is just pitch, black and hot-ever so hot… oh, boy! I'm as sweaty as if I've just fi nished a game of football at school. I could really use a nice cold shower, but there aren't any here. Oh, brother! I even miss showers… not that I really liked them much-but still! I miss the feeling of Mum ushering me off the bed, making sure I had a shower and brushed my teeth fi rst. Gosh! It's so hot, everything trembles from heat-waves before me. There is no way I would've survived without my suit…"

Digby mournfully scratched at the black rock before him, then all at once, unable to hold his excitement, he let off a boisterous squeal, causing poor Wormsworth to fall out of his bed.

"Hurrah! You'll never guess what I've found-a diamond-a real diamond! YIPEEE!"

Digby gapped at the sight of the diamond, unable to believe his eyes.

"How lucky am I!!? What are the odds?! Wow, you should see it, it's all transparent and shaped like a prism. It's roughly the size of one of the dials

on your mobile phone…"

When Wormsworth came to from the fall, he grew absolutely astonished and as excited as Digby:

"Can you be positively certain it's a diamond? How remarkable! How did it get there? Maybe someone dropped it?"

"I'm 100% sure it's a diamond. Oh, it's ever so beautiful! And rather tough. Did you know that the diamond is the hardest mineral around? It's used for jewelry and is very expensive. When a less-than-perfect diamond is found, it's attached to a drill and used to drill and fi le other minerals, rocks and stones. I even have diamonds on my drill.", Digby boasted, then continued as if he were a teacher giving a lesson.

"… Diamonds are rather peculiar minerals. It can only be formed where there are high pressures and temperatures, like here, in the Upper mantle. A diamond, by its composition, is carbon, just like graphite. You know what graphite is, don't you? You can make pencils out of it-even tennis racquets. Some factories make diamonds out of graphite in special furnaces where the pressure and temperature is just so-of course, fake diamonds can never be as nice as the real, McCoy, but they are just as tough. Fake diamonds are the kind used for drilling etc… Have I lost you?"

"Yeees…", Wormsworth admitted bashfully, "What's the difference between a diamond and plain old graphite, if they have the same composition? How is it that graphite can be changed into a diamond? If that were true, everyone would be changing graphite into diamonds all they long like alchemists and we'd all be fi lthy rich!?"

"That's true, but there's a catch. The furnaces used to change graphite into diamonds are very expensive…"

"So, in any case, diamonds end up still very expensive.", piped in Wormsworth.

"Good. I'm glad you fi nally understand. Now, back to how graphite is similar to diamonds. The difference between them lies solely in their atomic arrangement. Do you know what an atom is?"

"No, but I'm sure you'll tell me. Whatever you do, don't tell me it's written in that Atlas your, so fond of!", grumbled Wormsworth.

"All right, all right-no need to get your knickers in a knot! Now, where was I? Aha! Atoms are the smallest particles known to man. When atoms are arranged in a prism-like structure, a diamond is formed, where as they are arranged like sheets of paper-graphite is formed. You see, Wormsworth, nature can be a puzzling subject, but if only you decided to pull your socks up and read a little on the subject, it would all become much clearer to you."

"Spare me the lectures, will you? Geez! You're like a broken record-books, books, books!"

Wormsworth didn't appreciate being treated like a toddler and continued to snipe:

"… I don't know what's the matter with you sometimes, can't you realize that I believe, Digby-books or no books! Now, cut it out and tell me what you're planning to do with the diamond?"

"I'll just tuck it away safe in my pocket and when I get out, I'll probably donate it to a museum. That way everyone gets to see what a natural diamond looks like…"

"What!?", shrieked Wormsworth, "Why don't you sell it and be as rich as Bill Gates, even richer!?"

Wormsworth was taken aback by his friend's generosity.

"Still, I won't sell it…", confi rmed Digby, "It's true I can get a lot of money for it-but the diamond will end up on some rich madams' necklace and who would get to see it? Only she and a few selected friends. This way, at a museum, anyone who loves nature and has a will to learn will be able to gaze at its splendour."

“Darn, now I really wish I was there with you. What would you say to me if I decided to pack and start out early tomorrow morning-then we could end the trip together?”, Wormsworth was longing for adventure.

“I would say I don’t think that’s such a good idea, what would happen if we fell into danger? Who would help us? No, this way you’re there to assist me, it’s much safer…

I tell you one thing, at the moment I would trade places with you. I’m so tired of this heat and endless drilling, but I guess I shouldn’t complain. I must be one of the luckiest worms alive, I’ve seen things most couldn’t dare to dream of. Well, I’m off to take a break now, have a little nibble and a nap and pick up where I left off.”

Wormsworth took a hint, he knew it was time to hang up.

“I’ll call you tomorrow as soon as I get up, ok?”

“Hello? Digby? Are you awake? What are you up to? Tell me everythin-geverything!”, Wormsworth anxiously paced up and down his cozy room awaiting a reply.

“I’m awake, I got up bright and early at 5 this morning-how’s that for an early bird? That’s even earlier than when my parents have to get up for work. Good for me! Tell you what, Wormsworth, it’s hard work down here now, worse than you can imagine! I have to wear my heat-resistant suit constantly, because the temperature is now unbearable. It’s so hot that if you even attempted to set up a TV or computer here, it would just melt away to nothing!”

Wormsworth was curious to know what type of rock was he drilling through now.

“I’ve made it to the Lower mantle, it’s composed of the same rock you can fi nd in the Upper mantle, except they’re, if possible, even blacker. There’re as black as…as… as the night sky! They feel weird too, sort of glassy: when I drill through them, they shatter into tiny pieces, because they’re tougher than the rocks from the Upper mantle. Now I can offi cially say I’m getting closer and closer with every step to the Earth’s Core…”

“Oh, so by the rock is how you know where you are! Can you spot any magma?”

“Yes, but only a little. Down here it’s as hot as a baker’s oven. This causes the rock to melt-this is the magma that shoots up straight to the surface in search of less pressure and temperature. “

“Oh, dear, I hope it doesn’t erupt right near me!”

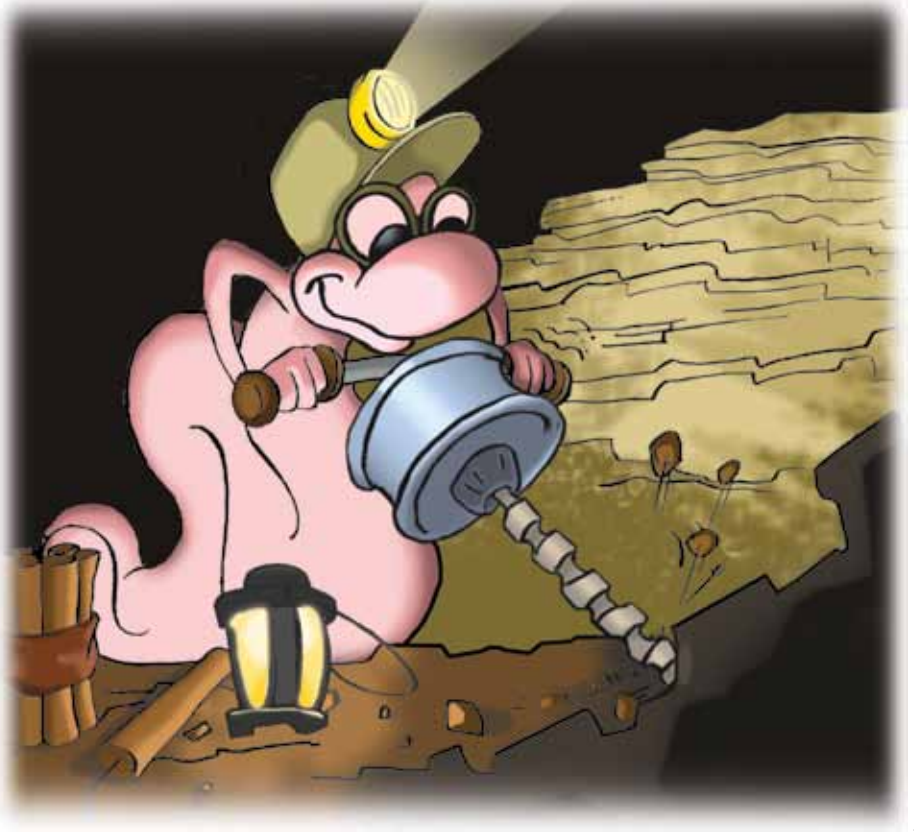
“Well, it could in a matter of speaking-but there’s no need to worry. Magma usually erupts through the cracks in the Earth and most of the cracks lie in the ocean. My gosh! Can you believe how tough these rocks are? Whilst drilling through them, I managed to break off two of my diamond drills! Luckily, I have spares or else I’d be in a fix!”

A piercing, hissing sound could be heard from the drill as Digby attempted to surge it through the rock with all his might, so as to drill twice as fast, when all at once he exclaimed:

“Heavens above! What’s this? It’s not rock any more, it’s all gooey. Half liquid, half solid, like plasticine… You remember what plasticine is, don’t you?”

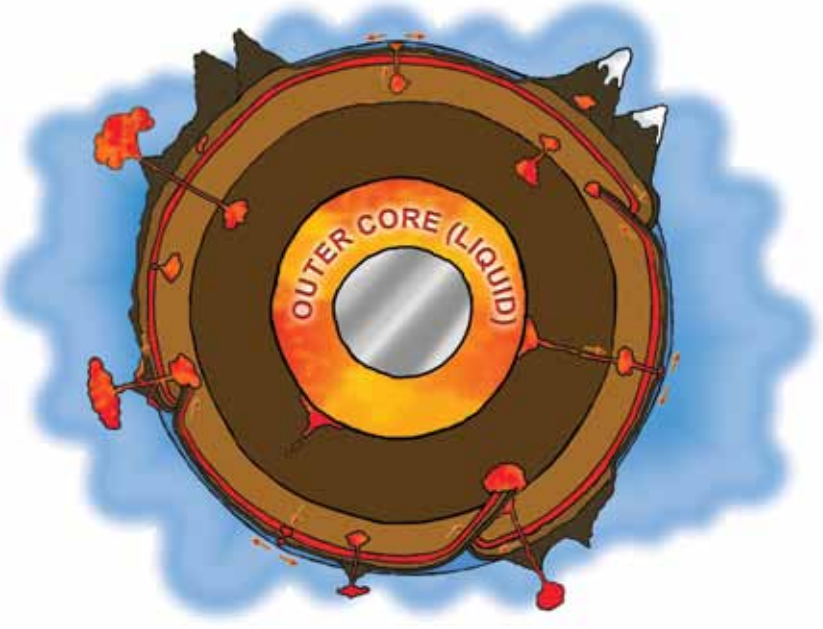
“I believe I do.”, answered Wormsworth rather aloftly and continued, “When we were in pre-school, we used to make doughnuts, balls and funny little shapes out of it. It’s wonderful to play with-all soft and doughey. You can mold anything you want out of it by using your own two hands.”

“Marvelous! You remembered! He, he, he, do you remember the time in pre-school when we made a whole bag full of plasticine marbles and declared war on those chattering girls in the corner by showering them with plasticine marbles. I pegged most of them at Sandra-even though I had quite a crush on her at the time-sometimes we all do the strangest things… Oh, no! What’s going on?! I can’t stop the drill, all my instruments are going haywire, turning on and off. Now my drills conked it, help, help!”



Digby was quite alarmed by the circumstances he was in. To make matters worse, a strange humming and whirring sound came from his phone.

Wormsworth voice, though slightly audible was breaking up a double speed, sending Digby rushing around like a mad dog to fi nd a place where



the signal was clearer, he couldn’t bare the thought of being alone at a time like this! Finally he succeeded and with tears of relief in his eyes began to spaek with a slightly strained voice:

“Thank God! I thought I lost you! Phew! That was close… Aha! Now I see what’s going on.”, declared Digby, nodding to himself as if he was confi rming to his person what he saw.

“I’m now at the Outer Core of the Earth which is composed of liquid. It’s made up entirely of liquid metals-iron, cobalt, nickel. Their colors are quite breath-taking, dark red, pinks, a spot of yellow here and there, just like a beautiful sunset over Hawaii, by the way-are you clear on what metals are?”

“Oh, dear, I seem to be losing you again, my phone keeps hissing and beeping. Did you ask if I knew what metals were? Of course I do! Remem-berwe discussed metals when you discovered that copper ore, but I’ll tell you again just the same. Metals can conduct electricity, cars are made of metal, stoves are metal, water heaters are…”

“Ok, ok, I get the point, you know what metals are… no need to be smart Alek.”, broke in Digby to stop Wormsworth from listing all things made of metal.

“Boy! The heat’s unbearable, I’m going to have to put on an extra shield. Good thing I brought it along jut in case. My golly, looks like I’m going to have a swim through the mass before me, paddling with both my arms and legs, because it’s too soft and gooey for digging, I’ve tried no avail. Whatever I dig up-more goo just oozes into it, I feel like I’m getting nowhere. It’s just like plunging a spoon into a jar of honey. A magnetic shield has formed in this part of EARTH. This magnetic shield aids orientation on the Earth’s surface. It helps and gives direction for compasses in airplanes, compasses climbers use, geologists and many more. I was wondering if you knew what a magnet was.”

As if in reply, the phone to whir and hiss again, which made conversation between two eager minds a nearly impossible task. Wormsworth, quite un-sure as to what Digby had asked him, managed a broken-up.

“Y-yes-ss.” Down the receiver, just in case, he was tired of not knowing the answers.

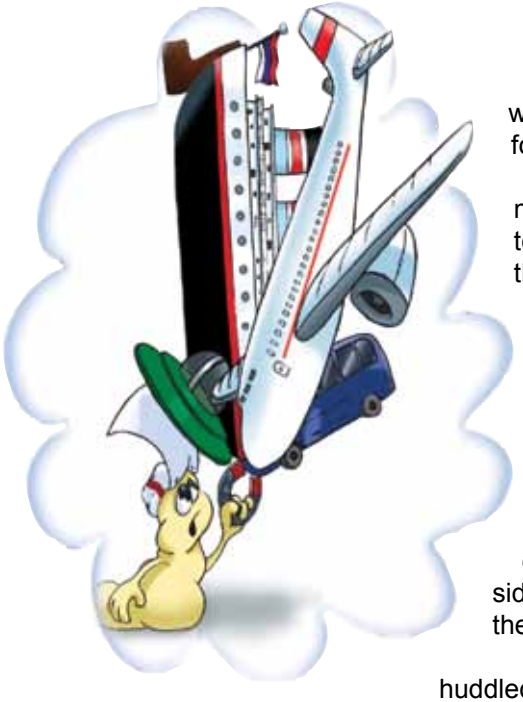
“Are you sure you know what a magnet is?” Digby asked suspiciously.

Wormsworth sighed a sigh of relief - Now this he knew!

“Aren’t magnets those odd black rectangles nails and tacs fl y and stick to if they get too close to its fi eld?”

“Bravo! Well done! Do you mind talking a little louder though. I can barely hear you! The line is dreadful. Hello? Hello? Can you hear me?”

“Barely, your words are all chopped up as if you were speaking to me be-side the helicopter!”, shouted Wormsworth, silently praying the line wouldn’t be cut.



“Hello… Hello!?”, Digby struggled with the line trying to cram more information down the failing line.

“I just want to add quickly, that magnets are also an important part to all electrical motors we use, like the one in my drill or in the car Dad drives, the washing machine, everywhere, absolutely everywhere! My jolly! It’s so diffi cult to paddle through this mass, aren’t my muscles going to ache tomorrow. Listen chum, I’m going to have to hang up now, it’s too hard to do two things at once. I’ll give you a call as soon as I break to the other side.”, Digby huffed and puffed with the effort, it was going to be a long day.

Later that afternoon, Wormsworth huddled tight in a small ball on a kitchen stool, desperately tried to contact his best friend to know avail, over and over he called Digby’s number. Shouting down the receive – but it was no good, it just couldn’t get through.

“Oh, I hope nothing terrible has happened. Now I understand why Mom and Dad worry, fuss and fi ckle when I’m not home on time!” White in the face from fear, he gathered the strength to call one last time – when at last: success! His call fi nally got through and to his amazement he could hear Digby as though he was next door instead of deep down in the pits of the Earth. No longer was the buzzing and hissing to be heard, the line was clear as a bell, how odd!

“Ah! At last! You don’t know how good it feels to be standing on something fi rm.”, Digby chuckled down the phone full of self-satisfaction.

“Oh, thank heavens you’re safe! I nearly had a heart attack trying to call you. Please, try to call more often so I know you’re safe! You’re my best friend and I can’t bare to think of anything happening to you!

“Now, that that’s over, tell me what you’ve been up to! Where are you? How are you?”

Wormsworth, from excitement, fl ailed his arms about like a school girl.

“Phew, wasn’t that a rough ride! But my efforts have paid off because I passed the Outer Core and I’m fi nally in the Inner Core!”

“Congratulations! What does it look like?”, asked Wormsworth all a fl utter.

“It’s entirely made of metal, unlike the Outer Core. You have iron, cobalt, nickel… But in this case they’re solid. Everything has a silver shine to it. It all sparkles, like it’s been rapped in alluminium foil. Like I said thankfully, it’s all solid – not like that horrid goo that awaited me in the Outer Core. Luckily, all my instruments have normalized so now I know exactly how far I am from you, what pressure and temperature is.”

“Yeah, what is the pressure and temperature down there?”

“They are both so high that whatever you brought down here from the surface would either blow up or melt away to nothing. You name it, it will melt it, from cars, planes to trains, even!”

Digby was still amased at the fact that he hadn’t burnt to a crisp down there.

“Taking all that into account, how do the metals then stay solid?”

“The book says that in the Core there exists a special state of matter, which basically means that the metals down here are so very thick and so very heavy, they are solid or even more solid than a rock itself. I tell you what, Mc Crawlford, it’s a wonderful feeling being half way…”

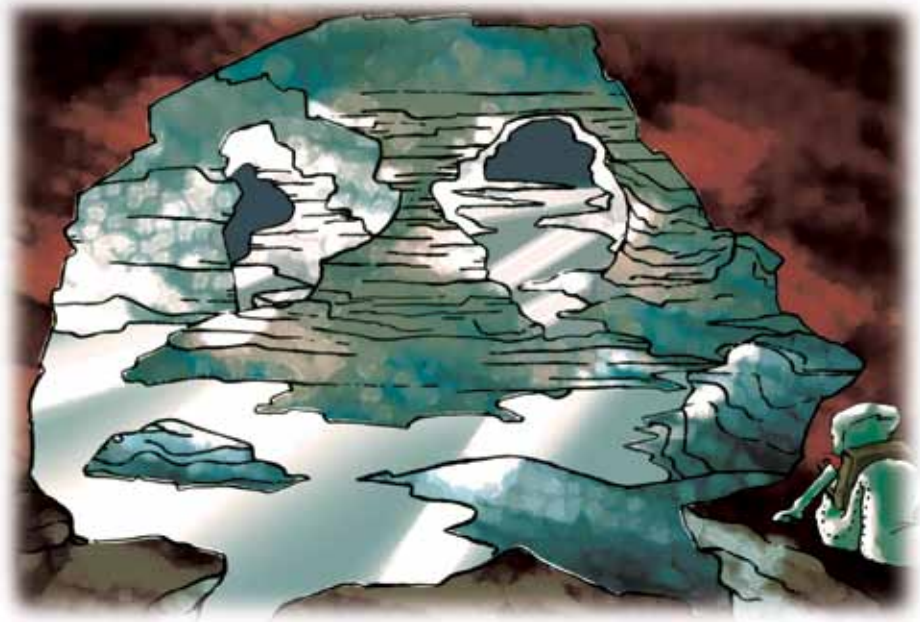
Wormsworth was forced to cut in, because the previous statement had rather vexed him.

“Whatever do you mean, half-way?”

“Right now I’m at the centre of the Earth, you see? Now imagine a large ball that I’m right in the middle of it. Well, I have to travel as far out as I did coming in… Get it?”

“To tell you the truth, not really.”

Mathematical logic was never Wormsworth’s strong point.



Digby began slowly and patiently to explain the concept to his puzzled friend:

"Listen up good: heading towards the other side of the Earth, you have to fi rstly exit the Inner Core of the Earth, after which you'd once again have to tunnel through the gooey Outer Core. Next, you'd have to re-cut through the tough black stone of the Lower and Upper Mantle, remember where I found the diamond? And away to the Crust you go. It might be a good thing having to re-do my route, who knows? I might be lucky enough to fi nd another diamond, I could give it to you as a momento of my long, strenuos but magnifi cent journey to the centre of the Earth."

"I still don't get why'd you go through all that bother again, surely there's a shortcut?", asked a rather perturbed Wormsworth.

"Now, really, Wormsworth, you really should have an Atlas to study more carefully.", Digby tisked, a little disappointed.

"Again with the book! We had an agreement! No mentioning the book until I get one for my birthday. When that time comes, I'll pay you back!", teased Wormsworth playfully, he just wasn't in the mood to learn.

"Settle down! Now, allow me to put it in simple terms. Now, imagine the Earth is a boiled egg which we're going to slice in half. First you have the shell, or the Crust in Earth's terms, second, the egg-white or the Mantle and last but not the least, the egg-yolk or the Core-where I am now.

Now, let's say you had to cut it from the inside-out. Firstly you'd cut through the yolk, then the egg-white and fi nally the shell. No shortcuts, no nothing-just simple logic. Now do you see how when I fi nish my journey, I'll end up on the other side of the Earth?"

"Why didn't you say it like that in the fi rst place-now I get it! So, tell me what are your plans for tackling the and half of your travels?"

Kaboom! All at once an explosion rang out in the distance after which another and yet another sounded off like fi re-crackers on New Year's day. What on blazes was going on!? When Wormsworth recovered from the shock, a feeling of panic crept over him, was Digby alright? With his heart racing, Wormsworth hollered down the phone repeatedly.

"Digby?! Digby! Answer me! Can you hear me? Oh, do answer!"

His voice began to tremble along with his chin, he wanted to help, but he didn't know how.

Wormsworth, petrifi ed still sat curled on the kitchen stool, gripping fi rmly onto the receiver. His face resembled a prune-all shriveled with terror as the fi rst of his distraught tears slithered down his face. He couldn't bare the thought of not seeing Digby – his best of friends – ever again. Their time spent together fl ashed before his crystal blue eyes, maybe to others this was all but a brief period, a fl eeting moment, but to Wormsworth it was an eternity and just as he was about to say his fi nal farewells to his dear friend, a familiar voice whispered through the receiver…

"Wormsworth? Wormsworth, cen you hear me?"

"Oh, yes, yes, I hear you loud and clear!" sniffled Wormsworth thankfully, his eyes fl ooded with tears, but in this case tears of joy over the fact that his friend was alive and unharmed.

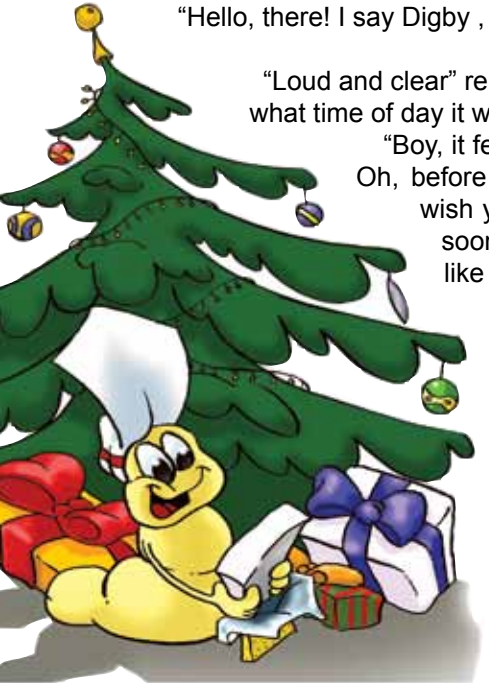
“Please, forgive me for not answering – but a bother of a thing just occurred. My mobile slipped out of my hands and fell into a crack. It was so diffi cult to retrieve the darn thing…

After this he continued explaining the odds and ends of the world as if nothing has happened.

“… I must check my instruments to make sure they weren’t damaged. While I’m at it I should change my battery and it would be a good thing to put ma heat-resistant suit again so as to be bale to get through gooey Outer core of the Earth which is, as I’ve explained, the same consistency as molten lava. Due to the strong magnetic fi eld there, my mobile phone will be out if range and my instruments will be going hay-wire again. I’ll give you a bell as soon as I reach the OMOTAC. Wish me luck! And take care. You mentioned it was winter up there? You should go sleighing. Oh, boy, would I love a bit of winter down here now. You just can’t imagine how hot it is…”

Calling Digby on such a occasion was a special treat for Wormsworth, it was the 1st of January – which meant…

“Hello, there! I say Digby , can you hear me?...”



“Loud and clear” replied Digby calmly for he had plum forgotten what time of day it was, let alone the date.

“Boy, it feels like an eternity since we’ve spoken last. Oh, before it slips my mind – HAPPY NEW YEAR! I wish you all the best and a safe, happy return as soon as possible so we can play together, just like old times. I have a thousand questions to ask you, but fi rst I must tell you what my Dad got me as a Christmas present? A computer! That’s right – a computer! Now I can play video games and e-mail anyone I want to all over the world. It’s so easy with one click of a button, they get your message the same instant – not like in the old days having to walk all the way to the post offi ce, mail it and pray they get your letter.”

“Uh, I know, don’t remind me. When I get back I have a ton of friends I have to e-mail. Oh, I miss them so, but not as much as you.”

“I miss you too, Digby. Never mind, you’ll be back soon. So, tell me, how are you? Were there any misshaps along your travels?”

“Not anything to fuss over, except for the fact that my food and water supply has slowly depleted.”

“Oh, no! Will you have enough for the rest of your trip? If needs be I can somehow bring some to you…”

“No, no. It’s quite alright, thanks. I’m just paranoid. It happens to anyone that goes on a longer trip – they worry if they will have enough supplies to last them a whole duration… but I still have more than enough. If I need anything I know I can always count on you!“

Wormsworth butted in, urging to change the topic of conversation. All this talk of food was making him hungry.

“So, where are you now?”

“Buddy, I’ve passed the Outer core and all of the Upper mantle. It’s been quite a long journey very hard but gratifying work because I got to see, touch and feel it all over again. But that Outer Core is a killer! I had such a diffi culty trying to dig something that is exactly like the dough Mum kneads to bake her delicious cakes, you dig and dig and dig and get nowhere. I couldn’t call then because I was so busy working. Gosh, it was horrendous, but at least I can proudly state that I’ve made it to the outer part of the Earth, the Crust which is – as I’ve told you – formed from many different types of rock. You see, many, many years ago, the Earth was a large fi reball of molten rock which was slowly cooling through time. By the cooling of the rock is how the Crust was made.

“Ha! Yeah, right Digby – pull the other leg! It’s impossible, how? And when? If it occurred, it happened well before we were born…”

“How illiterate of you, McCrawlford! I seriously believe getting you an atlas for your birthday is money well spent. Geez, it’s embarrassing how little you know of this subject.”

“You’re driving me crazy with that atlas of yours! Atlas, Atlas, Atlas… It’s all you ever talk about!”

Wormsworth was rather crossed and a little hurt at Digby’s remark.

Furthermore, he had no intention of mentioning that wretched book again.

“Ok, ok, I’m sorry, please, don’t be upset. Anyway, if you want to know, the

Earth is one of the planets formed by a gradual cooling of its molten iron and rock. It may also interest you to know that Earth revolves around the Sun…"

Wormsworth, still brooding due to the criticism he took, snapped:

"Sun? What of it?"

He felt pleased with himself for asking a question that Digby might have trouble answering. Digby, maturely, was once again in the position of soothing his friend.

"Be patient, I'll fi nd it…" then with an air of triumph added.

"… The Sun lies in the centre of the solar system. Thankfully, it is large molten mass. Unfortunately, one day it will inevitably cool and become a mass resembling Earth. When that happens, we will have no means of heating which means everything will freeze over and a new ice age will reign. This saddens me because I know how much you and I adore the Sun. So do plants and animals and everything around us. The Sun brings forth life and when the Sun cools, there probably won't be anymore life on Earth, well any form of life we're used to now. It's dreadful!

"It is, indeed – how awful!" Wormsworth, too was saddened by the prospect.

"… This should cheer you up…" he added

" Yesterday, I took your advice and went sleighing. Snow fl akes fell on me from the sky like confetti. I had the most wonderful time! Today is another beautiful, sunny and crisp winter day. Even though it's still snowing, the sun somehow makes it feel warmer. I tell you, I love sun far more than I love snow. Tell me, do you have enough food, water and batteries for your lamp to tie you over?"

Wormsworth had long forgiven his friend and was now full of consideration for Digby.

"I do, so don't worry that pretty little head of yours about it. What's more, my work-load has become much easier due to the softer rock I'm drilling through in the Crust. It's much easier now that I've passed the black rock in the Mantle. I feel so much better now that I've nearly reached the end of the 2nd part of the journey…"

Digby scratched contently at the rock before him, when all at once he felt something harsh beneath his fi ngertips. With great concentration he dusted away the debri's attached to the hard surface and let out a cry of surprise:

"My golly! Wormsworth, I've just excavated my fi rst fossil. Of what seems to be some sort of pre-historic fi sh. How about that, ey?"

Wormsworth would have gladly joined in on his friend gaity if it wasn't for one simple thing…

"What's a fossil?" he asked timidly. He couldn't be excited if he didn't know what it was to be excited about!

"A fossil is the remains or bones of an animal that used to roam or in this case – swim in the EARTH a long. Long time ago…"

"Are you sure you're not mistaken? How could a fi sh can get inside a rock so very deep in the EARTH?"

"I'm absolutely positive. Wow! Sorry, it's just I'm still thrilled to have discovered it. I'll fi nish excavating the bones so that I can hand them over to a museum when I get back. These other smaller bones I see scattered in the rock I'll dig up for our teacher to show during class and explain to other children what a fossil is."

"That's got nothing to do with how a fish-prehistoric or not-got stuck in a rock in the middle of the Earth!"

"The Earth, as I've mentioned, is a cooling ball of fi re…

"Wait a minute there, don't you mean-cooled?"

"Nope, you're mistaken my friend, for the Earth hasn't cooled entirely. How can it be cooled if it's Outer core is liquid, remember? We couldn't be in touch, because of it's strong magnetic fi eld. Don't forget the fact-in the Upper mantle there's a thin layer of magma and rock-now, how could these areas be liquid if the Earth was cold?"

"Oh, yeah, I forgot-sorry. Though, Digby, whatever you've said still explains nothing about the fi sh and rock incident."

Digby calmly persisted:

"… As the Earth cooled the Crust was formed, just like an egg shell which began very thin and fragile and through time became thicker and tougher. Now if you recall there is an Oceanic and Continental crust… Wormsworth, I have the distinct feeling you're paying absolutely no attention to what I'm saying!", Digby exclaimed rather sharply.

"Oh, I have, I have! It's just… Well, you see… Oh! I have the best news and it's jiggled me up inside! I'm in an emotional relationship."

"A what!? Whatever are you talking about?", Digby was fl abberghasted at his friend's statement.

"I have a girlfriend, Digby-can you believe?! I'm in love big time and I'm thinking of marriage. You see, they call what I've entered an emotional relationship on television … Oh, but forget about it now, I'll tell you all about my sweatheart when you get back…"

Wormsworth was blushing red as a tomato and no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't stop talking about it.

"Boy, is life a wondrous thing when you're in love… Oh, you needn't fret, I haven't forgotten anything you said about the Crust. Actually, that's how I got my fi rst kiss. I told my sweat heart all about it and all at once, she leapt up, kissed me on the cheek and ran away. Uh! I was so shocked I nearly fainted!"

After blurting out the whole incident, Wormsworth felt quite embarrassed and after clearing his throat, did his best to change the subject.

"Ehem, hm, the Continental crust is tens and tens of kilometers, where as the Oceanic crust is much thinner. A lot of volcanoes can be found in the Oceanic Crust because the surface is much easier to crack their, due to it's thinness, lava has a much easier task of erupting…"

"Bravo, McCrawlford!", praised Digby with a smile lingering in the corner of his mouth. The topic of relationship was rather new to him and he was just as shy about it as Wormsworth was. To stop himself from giggling out loud, he quickly added:

"Whilst the Earth cooled, its crust was formed on which life prevails. In the beginning, living things were scarce and they mainly survived in and around water…"

"What about humans?"

"Oh, they came much later. First formed were creatures called bacteria. They're so small, you can't see them with your naked eye, you can only see them through the microscope. After bacteria, came fi sh, then dinosaurs, birds…"

"Yes, but when did humans come into the picture?"

"They came last, but defi nitely not least, because they now rule over all other living things… whish isn't as wonderful as it seems, because they haven't taken proper care of other life-forms, instead they viciously and light-handedly killed off to extinction several species and doing so they've thrown the whole food chain out of balance!"

"I'm sorry old boy, but I don't understand what balance means."

This was a though one to explain even for Digby.

"Balance is… is… Ah! I know! It's like when you're walking down the street and trip up on a crack or something and you fall-fall or lose your balance. Balance is a vital factor in nature, it means you should never have to much or not enough of anything."

"I'm so confused, what are you trying to say with all this?!", Wormsworth just couldn't concentrate, his thoughts kept drifting to his strawberry blonde sweat

heart and their fi rst rather clumsy and bashful kiss.

"Dear, oh, deary me-have we made a muddle of things! Listen and listen up good. In nature you can't have incidents like having a forest full of plant-eating bugs for only one bird to eat…"

"Oh, now I get it! You can't have one bird to eat up all the bugs-one's not enough! You have to have as many birds for the job needed or else the bugs would eat the whole forest up."

"Finally! You're getting the hand of it. The same rule applies to humans. You can't have as many as you want roaming willy-nilly over the Earth, I mean, what would they do? What would they eat? Where would they play even? We have to concern ourselves with these matters as blunt as they seem, so as to live in harmony with nature… Have you understood what balance means now?"

"I sure have! Well done, Digby, you poured your heart and soul in that explanation. Just one more question-how many years have passed since the fi rst human evolved on Earth? Was he or she older than Grandma and Grandpa together?"

"Oh, mush, much older-older than you could ever imagine."

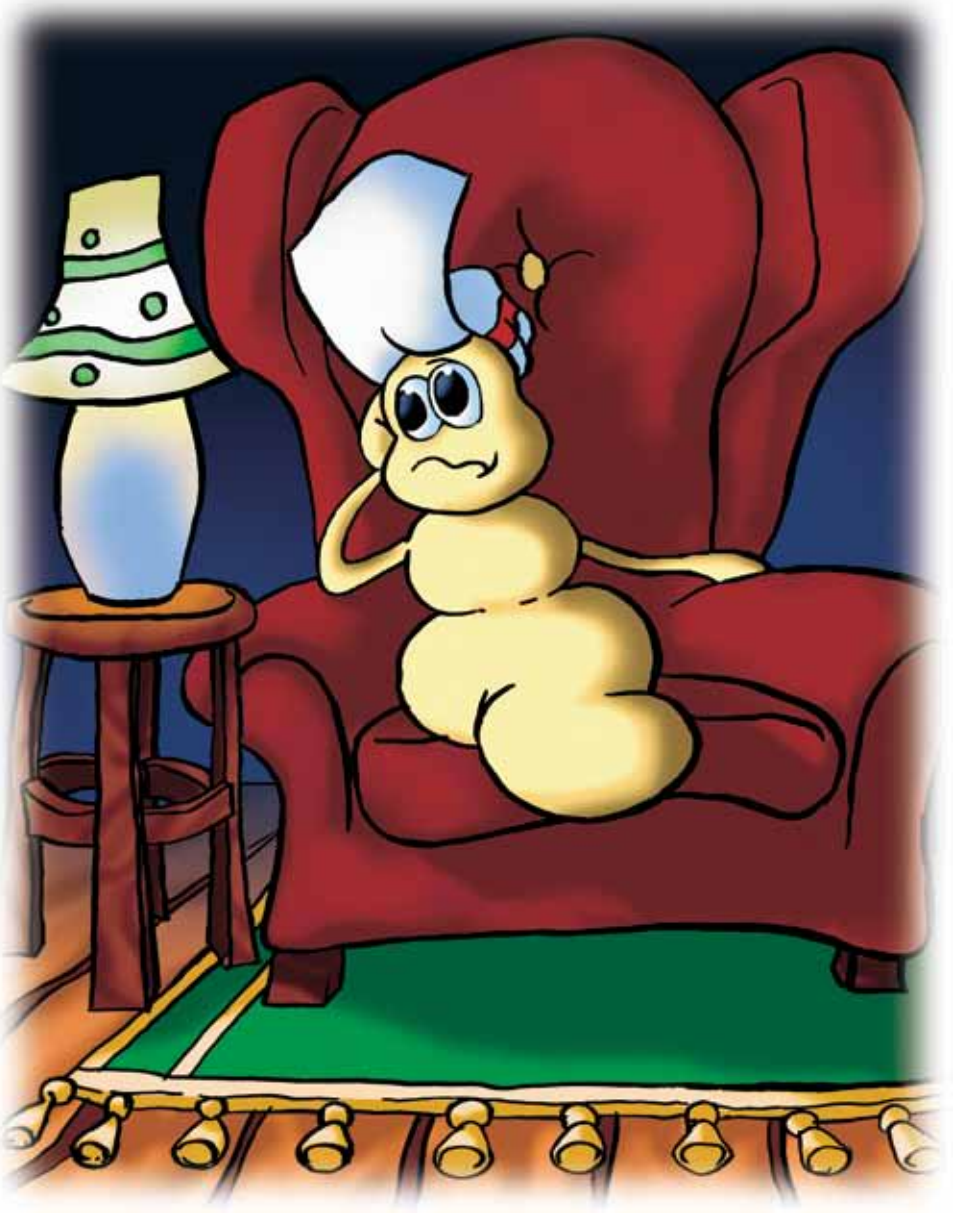
"Very well, now would it be rude of me to ask you the question I asked on the fi rst place? How did the fi sh end up in the middle of a rock in the middle of the Earth?"

"Good question. Ok, let's summit up for a second. So far as we know, the Earth hasn't cooled off entirely. We know that it has Crust, Mantle and core. We know that the Earth oscillates around the sun whilst oscillating around itself as well…"

"No, we don't! It oscillates around itself!? Isn't it rather odd to spin around and around the whole time!?"

"It's not odd-it's actually rather logical. Her "spinning", as you put it, makes it possible to have night and day. The sun is the centre of system that planets orbit around. Think of it this way, when you turn on the lamp and face it the front of you is lit-up, if you turn around it's your back that gets light. Night and day, work in the same fashion…"

"Now the half that the sun shines on has day-time while the other half has



the night-time. As long as Earth spins, time will move on…"

"Fair enough, whatever. What does all this have to do with that fish being in a rock?!"

"Hold your horses-I was just getting to that part!"

Digby found a smooth pile of stones to sit on, for he knew explaining the whole fi sh in a rock scenario to someone like Wormsworth was going to take a looooong time.

"At the very centre of the Earth, we have it's CORE which is solid. After the Core, we come to the Outer core which is liquid after which come the Lower and Upper Mantle which are both solid and don't forget the Asthenosphere which is half a liquid and fi nally the Crust which is solid…"

Wormsworth jumped in:

"That is where I live, right?"

"Correct.", continued Digby, "Now whilst the Earth orbits the Crust and GORNJEG OMOTACA orbit along with it at the same pece, because they're solid and both swim around the half-liquid Astenosphere…"

"Fascinating! What happens to the little part of the Upper Mantle that lies underneath the Astenosphere and the Lower Mantle? Because they too are both solids, so do they also fl oat around? Underneath them is half-liquidy Outer core, in the middle there's the Outer core ? Which are also both solid you see?"

Wormsworth, in one breath, shot out one question after the other at the pace of a race horse. He was so muddled at this point he didn't know his own name – let alone what part of the Earth oscillated where!

"Wow! What a question – I'm impressed! How did you manage to remember all that? Hold on a tic…"

Digby quickly rummaged through his bag in search of his trusty Atlas. Such a wonderful question deserved a wonderful answer.

"… Ah! Here it is, now let's see what it says. Due to the Earth's layered form, orbiting…"

"Huh? Now do tell, what in bless is a layered form?"

"Oh, really! I've already explained it to you, Wormsworth. Remember the egg?"

"Of course! That's right – the egg, layer, slicing, … got it."

"Because of the fact that the Earth is layered, whilst orbiting this means that not all areas move along with it at the same speed… seems fair enough to me…" added Digby as if to himself.

"The solid areas orbit slower than the others and this slows down the half – liquid parts…"

"Seems logical so far…" breathed Wormsworth, full of concentration.

"Now, make sure you can hear me properly – this part is important."

"I can hear clear as a bell" answered Wormsworth, fi ddling with a piece of string he found on the fl oor. He was a little distracted now from all the information.

"The EARTH is still cooling… Geez, well, we know that!" snapped Digby irritably, then continued to read.

"… The hot, liquid or half – liquid areas of its depths (magma from the Astenosphere, The Lower and Upper Mantle are lighter than the solids and move towards the surface of the Earth in search for less pressure…"

"Pressure? What's pressure?" asked Wormsworth.

"Pressure is like something is squashed, pumped or squeezed into another thing tightly. Like, for example – the air in your bicycle tires or the air pumped into your soccer ball…"

"Oh! Well really, why don't I think of that! That's why I pumped my tires. If I get a hole in one of them the air released hisses because it's under pressure and is trying to escape out of the hole into the open air where there is less pressure and more room for it. My Golly, you have to know far too many intricate details if you really want to know this Earth of ours!"

"Now to continue. The actual movement of magma towards the surface is called its current.

It moves similarly to the boiling water in the kettle your parents boil to make their tea… Genius! Look how they explain things so descriptively. It's much easier to understand… Are you paying attention to all this McCrawlford?"

“I’m all in tears… “ breathed Wormsworth somberly whilst rolling his eyes.

“As I was, a current can be seen a boiling kettle of water…“

Digby began to sound out the next paragraph, for, believe it or not, he too was having diffi culty grasping its contents.

“… The water at the bottom of the kettle heats up much faster than the water at the top because it’s nearest to the stove… so, what’s new?” muttered Digby to himself and continued.

“… Boiling water has a lighter density than cold water so it fl oats to the top, whilst the cooler – heavier water sinks to the bottom to be heated and so on in a circle. That’s how its current is formed. Wow, this is really interesting! I hadn’t a clue on all this – did you?”

“No, but it seems easy enough to follow”
“When I get back I’m going to explain all this to my parents. Maybe they didn’t know either…“

“Well, I’m certainly not telling my parents…” sarcastically chortled Wormsworth rather defensively which left Digby god-smacked by his behavior.
“Why, in blazes won’t you?”

“Because, they’ll force me to explain the matter to all our guests and relatives and there’ll be no end to it. All they want to do is show me off like a party trick and I won’t be a part of it! I won’t tell them – I won’t and no one will make me!” Wormsworth’s face reddened with anger, he tightened his fistand stamped on the ground.

“Temper, temper! Take it easy! No one is forcing you to explain anything to anyone. Now, let’s get back to the subject… Due to the Earth current, parts of the Ccrust and the Upper Mantle, which is in fact the Continental and Oceanic Lithosphere move or fl oat around the Lithosphere.

“Wait a moment, it will all sink in if you’re patient. Molten hot parts of the Earth – magma from the Astenosphere, Tne UpperMantle and The Lower Mantle, fl oat to the surface of the Earth because of their lighter density. Wormsworth still in a spiteful mood shot out question just to annoy Digby:

“What do you mean by lighter?”

“Lighter, oh brother, lighter! You know like when you throw a stone in a river. The stone sinks to the bottom because it’s heavier than the water, but if you throw a twig in the river, it fl oats on the surface because it’s lighter than the water.” Wormsworth has cooled off and became ecstatic over the fact that he had fi nally began to understand something.

“Of course, how basic! So, that’s why I sink when I try to swim – because I’m heavier than the water!”

Well, not really pal, you sink because you’re a bad swimmer, you’ll fl oat when you learn to keep your balance.”

“You again with balance , just so you know I’ve already forgotten what it means. Just stick to your reading and cut the smart comments!”

Digby chuckled and smirked to himself.

“Hold on, where was I? Aha, here it is: magma from inside the Earth pushes towards the surface where there is less pressure. It escapes through the fore – mentioned cracks situated mainly in oceans. This is how the new Crust is formed - do you know how?”

“You just said how. The Ccrust in areas of the ocean is signifi cantly thinner, it breaks and cracks much easier. Magma fl ows out of the cracks, cools there and a new Crust is formed…” Wormsworth shot out the answer as if in class.

“These areas are where the Earth spreads…” Digby tried to explain before his friend burst in with yet another half – happed exclamation.

“Oh, Dear, if the Earth keeps spreading so, one day it will burst like a balloon!”

“No, it won’t, don’t worry your pretty little head about it…” Wormsworth announced rather proud of himself.

“I suppose the only explanation possible is that if it’s doing all that spreading - it must be doing some gathering as well.”

“I wouldn’t say gathering” replied Digby unsurely, he too couldn’t grasp what was happening. With a sigh of determination he once again picked up his beloved book and began to read again.

“The cracks which allow magma to escape are quite long. They are often thousands of kilometers long… Geez, do you realize how long that is?”

I’m not really that sure, but I guess if you tried to drive along-side of one of those cracks you’d drive a whole day and whole night, maybe even more. I bet I’d have to ask my Dad several times to pull over so I would be sick – with my stomach and all.”

“I was thinking how much of a pity it was that we can never see these cracks, what with them being in the ocean and all.”

“Maybe people who travel on boats get to see them.”

“Good point! I hope to get the chance to ask a boat Captain if he’s seen any… Huh? No, this can’t be right! I can’t believe what I’m reading! It looks like these scientists have their wires crossed – listen to this… The entire Earth’s surface is separated by large cracks or gaps, if that were true, lava would be fl owing out everywhere like Niagara falls! No, that can’t be right and Full stop! … but then again who knows? I don’t. I don’t know, you can

never fully depend on the work of a scientist who reads, write and types all days – it must muddle them a lot. Maybe he has a few sheep stray from his flock, he could be fi bbing or imagining things…"

Digby tried to convince himself.

"Well, I believe the scientist. After all, he must be smarter than you and I put together. But, you still haven't answered, if the Earth spreads in some areas whilst gathering in others?"

"Patience, Wormsworth! I can't, you see I can barely understand it myself? Ah, forget it! Let's have a break and continue a bit later, my brain is about to burst like a gap in the Earth's surface!"

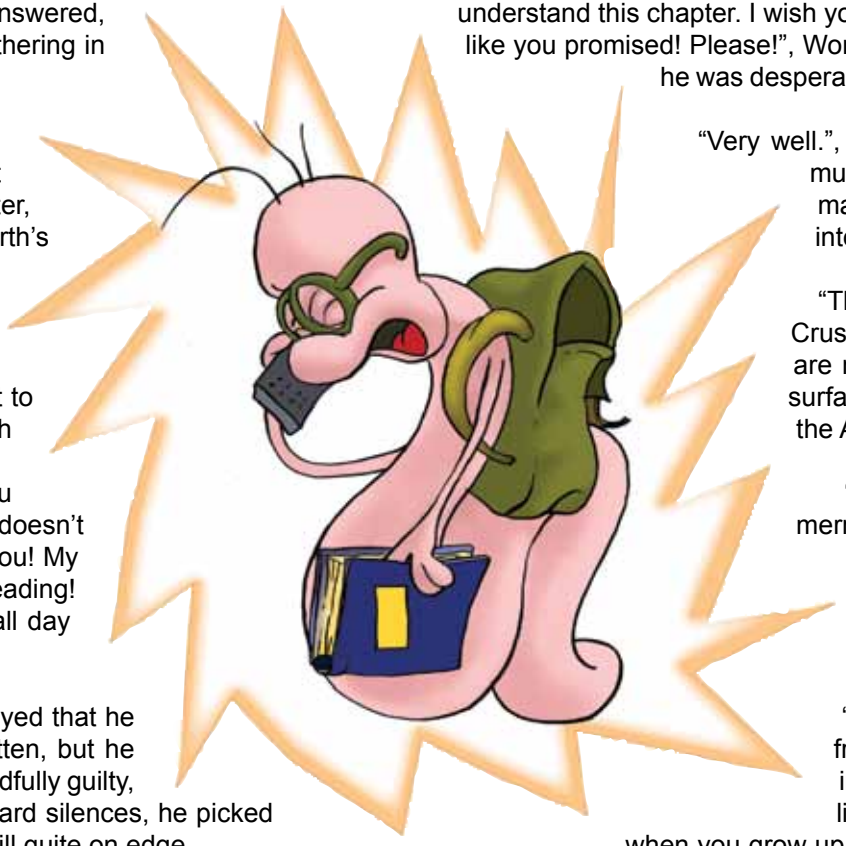
"Oh, no! Why now when it's the most interesting! How can you break now? Especially when something isn't clear to you-it's not fair, Digby, I tell you! How could you do it to your best friend!?", Wormsworth pleaded with Digby, which rather agitated him.

"I can, I will, and period! Just because you want to be like that Mr Know-it-all scientist, doesn't mean I have to slave away here reading to you! My bottom has fallen asleep from sitting and reading! I haven't got time to eat or sleep, because all day long I have to sit and read to you!"

Digby was furious, he was tired and annoyed that he didn't understand what the scientist had written, but he realized it wasn't his friend's fault. He felt dreadfully guilty, so after a few deep breaths and a few awkward silences, he picked up the book again, though his nerves were still quite on edge.

"… These large gaps that run along and separate the whole surface of the Earth are, in fact, the boundaries or edges of the Earth's plates…"

"What plates?", inquired Wormsworth.



"Oh, how the devil should I know! I asked you nicely to have a break, so I can get some sleep and you can go play or something…"

Now it was Wormsworth's turn to fl ip his lid…

"Well, I won't! I don't want to play-not ever again! Well, at least until I understand this chapter. I wish you would just read the chapter to the end like you promised! Please!", Wormsworth begged and pleased, because he was desperate to have an answer to all his questions.

"Very well.", a begrudging sigh was all Digby could muster and, for only the Lord knew how many times that day, he placed the book into his tired and clammy hands.

"These plates are actually parts of the Crust and Mantle. Their edges or boundaries are made by the large cracks in the Earth's surface. These plates fl oat or move around the Astenosphere."

"Two questions for you.", Wormsworth merrily piped in, "Number one-what's a boundary and question number two is-isn't the Crust and part of the Upper Mantle really the Continental and Oceanic lithosphere?"

"Wow, I never realized that I was best friends with undoubtedly the most boring person on the face of the Earth! It's like a don't even know you! My guess is when you grow up, you'll be a nutly scientist or adventurer who will spend the rest of his life prancing and dancing across the plates of the Earth.", stated Digby arrogantly.

"Hey! Who are you to call me an adventurer? If I knew what an adventurer was, I'm sure I'd be rather offended…"

“Well, I won’t tell you! I won’t, I won’t, I won’t!”

Silence fell amongst the two over-excited worms… Digby sighed, realizing that he had gone a little too far and offered an answer to one of Wormsworth’s questions as a peace offering.

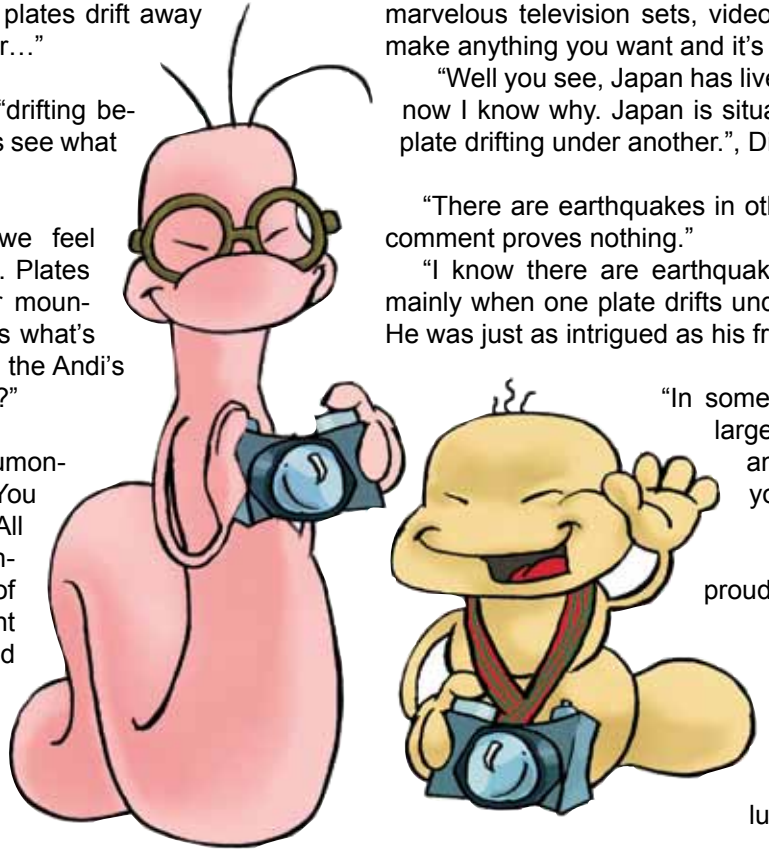
“Yeah… Well… Uhm… You know that question you had about the Lithosphere, or plates? Plates are actually pieces of the Earth’s Continental and Oceanic Lithosphere. Their edges are made by the cracks or gaps out of which lava fl ows. These plates (which fl oat around the Astenosphere drift apart, or better put-separate from each other in some parts of the Earth, usually in oceans. On the other hand, whilst some plates drift away from each other, others drift beneath one another…”

“What? That’s impossible. Listen to him-Mr “drifting beneath”! Pull the other one, Digby! Well go on, let’s see what other nonsense they wrote…”

“Where one plate drifts under another, we feel earthquake or see as a volcano on the surface. Plates drifting underneath each other is also how our mountain ranges are formed… Oh! You’ll never guess what’s written next… It states that this motion was how the Andi’s were formed! Do you know where the Andi’s are?”

“Nope, but I sure know that a lot of giant, humongous species of birds live there, like condors… You see, Digby? The scientists are telling no fi bs! All you do is whine and complain when you don’t understand something. You should learn the art of patience. If you ask me, I wouldn’t mind living right where one plate drifts under the other. It would be terribly exciting with all those volcanoes and earthquakes, you could even go mountain climbing…”

Wormsworth and Digby had switched roles! Now Wormsworth was the mature one.



Wormsworth drifted into a day dream of a far-away land where he fought-off earthquakes and fl ew over mountain tops like a super-hero. His maturity, as usual, didn’t last too long.

Digby ignored all this, he was focused on the atlas and his studying.

“Aha! Now I know the reason why in Japan… you do know where Japan is, don’t you?”, asked Digby-just in case.

“Well, of course I do! Japan is a beautiful country a long away from us. A lot of diligent and hard-working people live there and they make the most marvelous television sets, video-cameras, even mobile phones. They can make anything you want and it’s all of the fi nest quality.”

“Well you see, Japan has lived through a lot of earthquake incidents and now I know why. Japan is situated right on top of an area which has one plate drifting under another.”, Digby was slowly regaining his confi dence.

“There are earthquakes in other parts of the world too, you know? Your comment proves nothing.”

“I know there are earthquakes in other areas, but earthquakes occur mainly when one plate drifts under the other!”, Digby continued with haste. He was just as intrigued as his friend.

“In some instances two plates collide, forming the larger mountain ranges, the Himalaya’s, for example, is the result of two plates colliding. Do you know what the Himalaya’s are?”

“I know where you’re heading with this…”, proudly boasted Wormsworth.

“Each year we hear of how a group of brave mountain climbers accomplished the task of climbing to the highest mountain peak on Earth. You know what? I admit one day, I too hope to be one of the lucky people that conquer such a feat.”

“I was right when I said that when you grow up, you’ll end up either being a scientist or an adventurer and climb up and down mountain tops for the rest of your life!”

Wormsworth, who had locked in the dictionary and found out than being an adventurer was a good thing, turned bright red. He was genuinely fl attered by his friend’s compliment.

“Oh, come now, please stop. You’re making me blush!”

“So, have you understood so far? Where the Earth’s plates drift apart, the Earth there spreads and a new Crust is formed. Whereas one plate drifts under another or in geological terms-when the parts of the Upper Mantle and Crust intertwine, the Earth, as you put it, gathers because the plate that goes under is reheated and melted into magma. This magma fl ows up to those large cracks and erupts on the Earth’s surface to create new Crust, then back under again to be re-melted into magma. Do you see the cycle? This cycle prevents our Earth bursting and keeps in the same size constantly. My, isn’t Earth a wondrous planet? I’m not sure if you’ve realized that everything in it recycles itself!”

“Hmmm, you have a point there. Goody! Now I know what plates you were talking about and how they move and shape the world. I told you, if we stuck it out a little bit longer, everything would be made clear to us.”, Wormsworth triumphantly exclaimed.

“All right, all right-no need to rub it in. You were right, I was wrong, even I’m allowed to get a little cranky or upset if I don’t understand something.”, admitted Digby begrudgingly.

“It’s ok, now back to the subject. When the plates move, do the continents move along with them?”

“You should see this. In my atlas there are all beautiful illustrations showing what the Earth would look like if you cut it in half. The artist made it almost 3-dimensional. What a talent!”

“Oh, I can’t wait to get my hands on a copy!”, Wormsworth said in a high and whiney voice. Digby was surprised to hear Wormsworth changing his attitude towards the atlas!

“I promise I’ll read it ever so carefully. That way I won’t have to bug you with all my boring questions.”

“Oh, come now, old chum, your questions aren’t boring-I learn as much from them as you do and learning new things always makes me feel happy.”, answered Digby, then added:

“You know what? I think I too shall read the book again carefully, several times if needs be, so when that girl I like in second class asks me something about the world we live in, I shall be able to answer all her questions in a jiffy. She will smile with those big brown eyes of hers and maybe even give me my fi rst kiss. Maybe we’ll even… How did you put it? Enter an emotional relationship. But enough of all that now. Geez, sometimes when we get to a chatting, we can be worse than a pair of old maids! To continue… Are you sure you’re up to hearing anymore of this? Maybe it’s enough for tonight. You should get some sleep. It’s probably rather late…”

"No, no, it's not that! I may seem a little jumpy-not because I'm tired, but because I so desperately want that atlas now… you really will give it to me for my birthday, won't you?"

"A promise is a promise, rest assured! I will give you the atlas for your birthday… Ah! I found the answer to your question. The Earth consists of 5 continents, all separated by our oceans. This wasn't always the case, several million years ago all the continents were actually joined together - Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America…"

Digby was left with a feeling of amazement.

"Unbelievable!", he exclaimed, "… They came to this conclusion over three hundred years ago. Holy molly! Do you know how long that is? You'd have time to be born and grow old fi ve times and still have a few more years of spare. The very fi rst information of how the continents, or rather plates moved, came from a German meteorologist Vegener. Do you know where Germany is?"

"I sure do! My friend's parents work in Germany-Berlin, to be exact. Germany sounds so very far away, farther than the city to the country-side.", breathed Wormsworth, trying to imagine the distance between the fi eld from Germany. Digby insisted on questioning his friend to make sure Wormsworth understood everything perfectly.

"Do you know what a meteorologist is?"

"The weather guys? I unfortunately know them. All they do is sit around all day and talk about the weather. Then, on their own accord, they give reports which are usually wrong…"

"Don't be like that. Their job isn't as easy as you think. It's hard and complex. You have to measure the air's temperature, the pressure, direction and velocity of the wind just to give a weather forecast at the end of the day…"

"Still I don't see why we're bothering talking so much about them. What have meteorologists have to do with the continents and plates!", Wormsworth scratched his head in confusion.

“It has a lot to do with them, old boy. It was Vegener who came to the conclusion that rocks now situated at the South pole, were formely found at the equator. They slowly, through geological time, fl oated to where they are today…”

“How? Gosh, this is ever so hard to grasp…”, Wormsworth sobbed. His poor brain was all in muddle.

“Let me just read ahead for a bit, I’m fi nding it diffi cult, too… Oh, here we go. Some rocks are formed in areas where there’s draught, lots of sun and heat, like in the desert. Do you remember that documentary we watched on the Sahara desert with its wonderful sand dunes, camils…”

“Yes, I remember, but get on with the story now…”

“Well, when you fi nd a rock, formed in extreme heat in the place like the North pole, where it’s freezing, you can come up with two conclusions. One-that it was once hot on the North pole or two-the rock traveled to the North pole and all that with the aid of certain geological methods such as paleomagnetism, palientology, techtonics… what? I haven’t a clue what they mean, but that’s what it says in this book. They have proven that rocks from the equator have traveled, with the aid of geological methods, to the North pole.”

“Granted-though I don’t see any moving, quaking or shaking going ondo you?”

Wormsworth tried to make sense of it all, but the more he focused, the more confused he got.

“Well of course you can’t see any of this activity going on because little finy you is sitting on a humongous moving continent. If you were an alien flying high in the sky or galaxy, you would see the whole world, its continents and even what direction they’re moving in.”

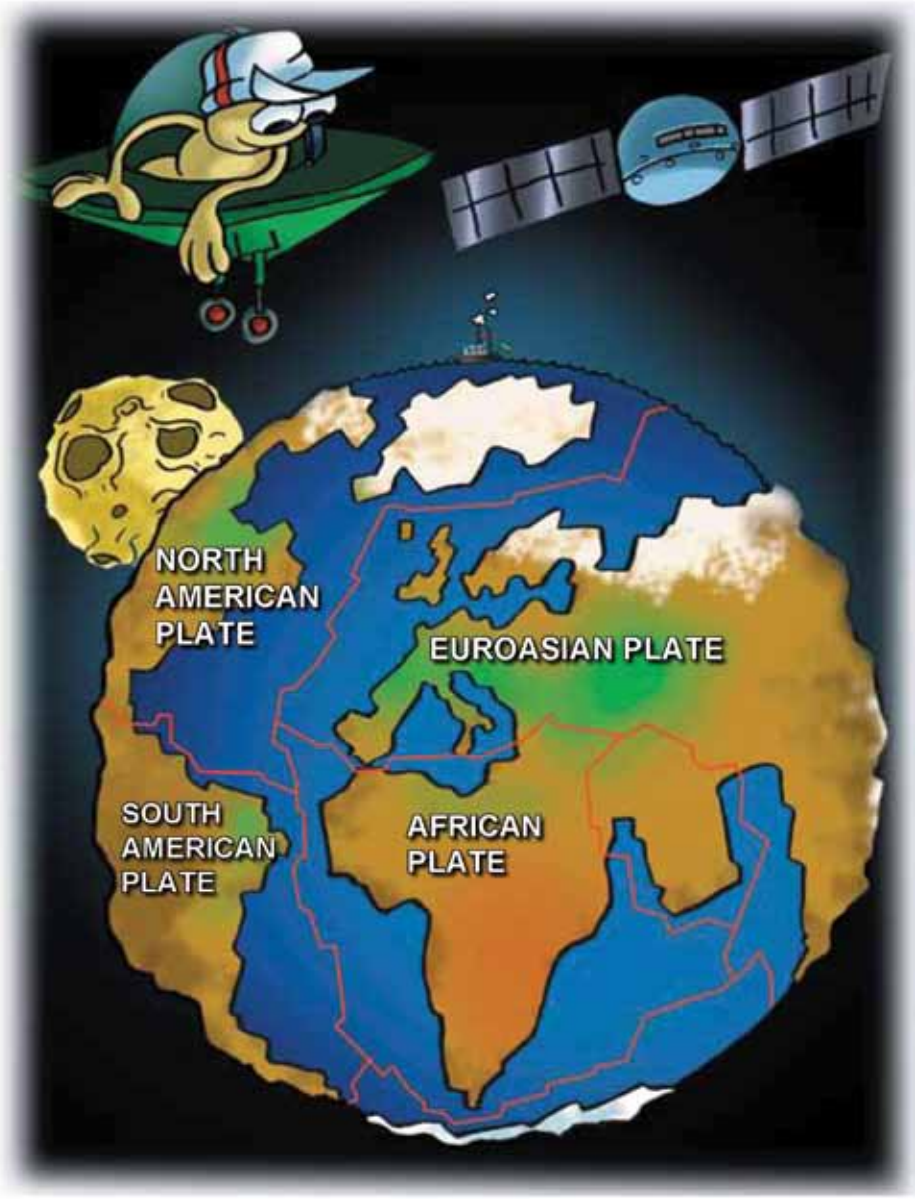
Wormsworth was rather worried over the thought that he wasn’t standing on firm, still ground.

“Are they moving now? Are they traveling faster than a speeding car? I’d better hold on tight to something!”

Wormsworth sniffed with fear and held on tightly to his bed post.

This annerved Digby who sometimes couldn’t believe how gullable his friend was. He detested explaining every little thing to him.

“Don’t be daft, McCrawlford, they’re moving but not as fast as you think!”



“They move very, very slowly. Slower than an turtle, an old and tired turtle even! A few centimeters annually is about as far as they move. With continents moving back and forth, up and down, mountains were formed… My golly! We’ve blabbered on for so long we forgot all about that fossil I found. We’re lucky, I’ve found a paragraph that might answer the question how fi sh got trapped in a rock. I’ll just adjust it, so it’s closer to what we’re talking about.

A long time ago, this very fi sh swam in one of our many seas. That is where it died. The continent or plate where its body sank had moved in time which caused sand, mud and debris to build up on top of it. Through time, the fi sh’s body decomposed leaving behind its skeleton. To bones continued to be buried with layers and layers of new sand, mud and debris-that’s why it can be found deep down in the Earth…”

Digby sighed, now that he had answered a such a tough question, he was tired, irritable and very aware of the work that awaited him, he quickly added before Wormsworth had a chance to complain:

“I must go dig some more. I’m tired of being underground and can’t wait to be free. Call me when you wake up tomorrow…”

…and with that he hung up without even waiting for Wormsworth’s reply. With a click of his tongue and shaking of his head, he returned to tunneling through our great Earth, no longer caring what he saw or felt. He just wanted to fi nally feel on his sore back the warm rays of sunlight and be free to crawl, as any worm should, on grassy surface of the Earth.

“Hey, Digby, what’s up? Where are you now? Did I wake you or you been digging all through the night?”

“Woah, what’s this? Oh, what a lovely surprise! I found some coal! It’s much softer than rock and all black, this is a perfect specimen can clearly see its remains of tree-see there, and there?”, Digby pointed at its petrifi ed branches quite contently.

“No, I can’t see-how? I have no idea what you’re talking about, you talk as though you’re talking to yourself!”, Wormsworth mumbled grumpily. He was a little jealous that he didn’t see what Digby did.

“What don’t you understand?”, interrupted Digby.

“Where coal comes from?”

“Don’t worry, I was just about to explain it to you. A long time ago, vast rainfall made it possible for large trees to grow, trunks as big as air balloons! These trees grew and formed a dense forest, since in those days there weren’t any woodsmen to chop down any of them to make room or destroy them. The forest grew thicker and thicker, basically choking itself. As the forest grew, continents moved and drifted away and the gap swallowed the forest. Through time, the forest was covered with sand and clay-just like that fossil fish. After a while the trees of the forest petrifi ed and turned to coal. What’s amazing is so far down here I can still see the intricate details of the trees-their bark, branches, leaves and on occasion even the remains of insects that used to occupy the tree…”

“I was also wondering, because it’s been bugging me for a while now-if you mind explaining to me where do things like gas and oil come from?”

Mind!? Digby’s eyes glistened at the opportunity to answer a question he knew the conclusion to so well. With a bit of dramatic pause and clearing of the throat, he plugged into it:

“The situation is similar with oil and gas. They are formed the same way coal is, expect they don’t derive from plant life-instead it comes from animals, creatures called plankton and one’s similar to them. In short, seabred creatures. A lot of people think that oil spurts out onto the surface from an underground source-but they’re wrong. Oil soaks up into the pores of a rock

the way water is soaked up into a sponge. Gas, being lightest of the two elements hovers over oil reserves like a sort of fumacious sun-hat. Sometimes it can escape through the large cracks we mentioned away from the oil-reserves. As you know, by manufacturing oil we get petrol for our cars and such. Gas is also very useful for things like heating and cooking. My mother actually uses a gas-stove to cook.

Just think, we have cars that run on gas now. I wonder what will be next. Do you know what part of the world contains the most oil?"

"Oh, I know this one! Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Arabic countries, right? But those countries have nothing but sand and huge deserts. There's hardly any rain fall and I can bet they get no snow either. The sun just keeps shining and shining. It must be dreadfully hot."

Digby interrupted before Wormsworth got carried away.

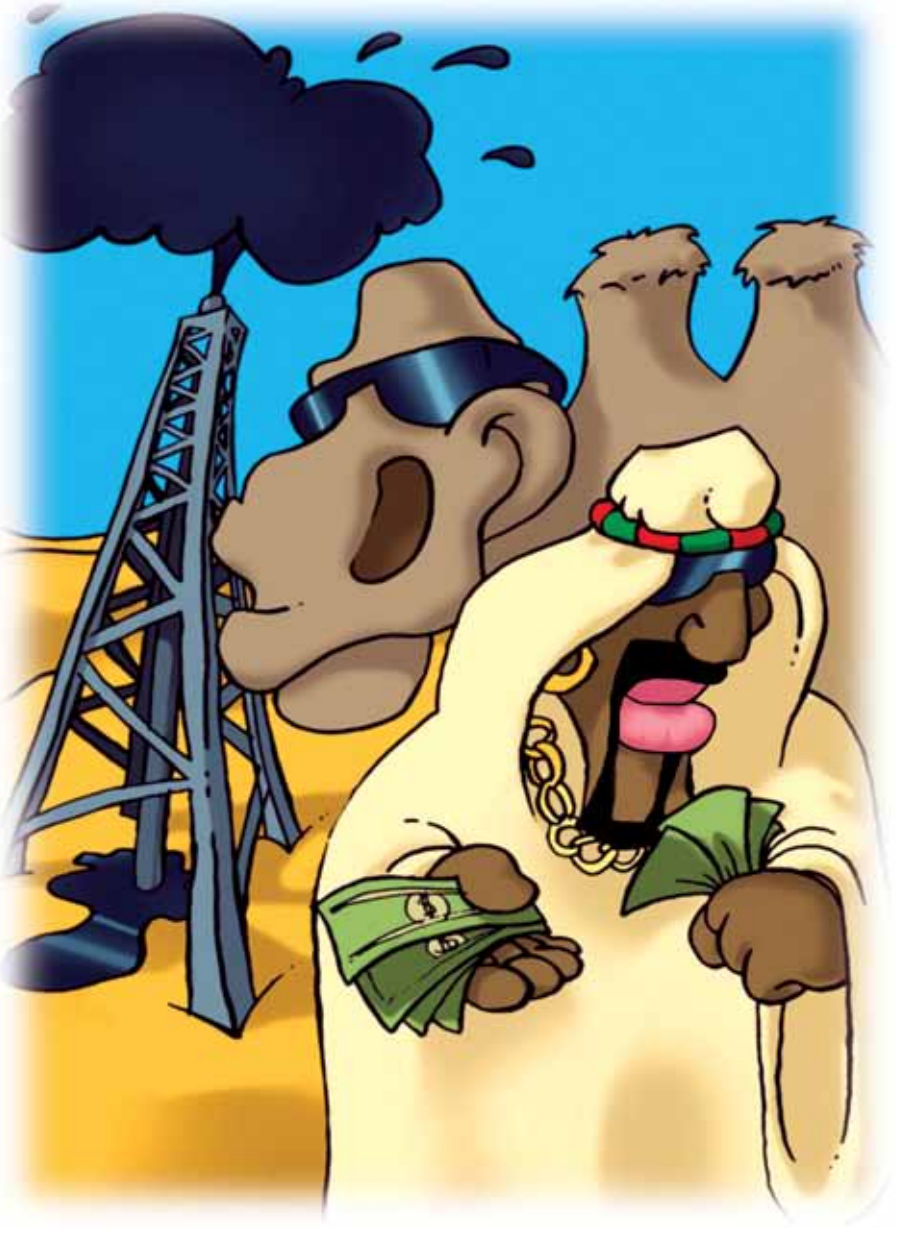
"Ok, ok, settle down. Do you know sheiks live in these countries and they're ever so wealthy."

"I know, so very wealthy, because we're in a constant need for oil, petrol. Everyone loves to drive around in cars just like we do. As long as people enjoy driving, we'll need petrol and we'll keep making people richer and richer. Finally, a topic that's interesting and easy to understand… But then, who knows, maybe it isn't as simple as it seems, doesn't matter if we don't grasp something, we'll just look it up in that book of yours and… Oh, no! Now, I've began mentioning the book! I suppose I can admit, reading books can be very useful. Guess what? My father says that you can get all the answers to all the questions you have via the internet. Even questions on the top of your head like "What do children in China and Africa play with?", it will answer anything about basket ball, even mobile phones!"

"Wait for me! I'll be home in a few days, then we can surf the net together. Is it a deal?"

"Deal? You bet ya! I'm already counting down the days to your arrival!", answered Wormsworth cheerfully, trying to be as supportive for his friend as much as he could.

"Thanks, buddy. Listen, I won't be calling as often now because I'm really close to the surface… See you soon…"



“What if something interesting happens?”

“If anything interesting pops up, I’ll call you lickety-split. Who knows, you better be on stand-by, because I still might need your help…”, said Digby encouragingly.

“Hello? Hello! Can you hear me? Happy birthday!”, Wormsworth squeeled excitedly down the phone. Digby was fl ushed and pleased with the surprise.

“Thanks, old pal-thank you so much for the remembering.”

“How are you? What’s new? How far have you gotten?”

“I’m right at the end of my journey now. I’m surrounded by a hot spring, it’s wonderful and ever so inviting, because I’m at the point where I’d really appreciate a hot bath, but I guess it’s a form of compensation.”

“Gosh! How did hot water get there? Who’s heating it? How deep is it?”

“Who heats it? Don’t tell me you’ve forgotten already? Remember, magma erupts over the surface of the Earth, when it’s out in the open, it’s called lava. Now, they don’t call it molten for nothing-it’s boiling hot! Now, when magma gets in contact with water below the surface, it heats it up…”

“Ok, then how did water get there, though?”

“You’ve forgotten that as well? Geez, you’re worse than my Granddad!” This comment didn’t help, it just made Wormsworth furrow his brow in confusion even more.

“When it rains, you see it falling on roof tops, sloshing down the street, spilling into our rivers… Now, only a part of the rain water does this. The other half sips into cracks in the Earth’s surface. Now, don’t go looking for them, you won’t be able to spot them because most of the cracks are up high in the mountains, or down low in river beds. Water drips through and erodes the cracks in the rock face, rock we call limestone, making wider gaps, then cavities, holes and fi nally caves, remember? Now, some of this water goes deeper into the Earth.”

“What happens next? How does water heat up?”

“When that water, well a part of it comes in contact with magma… You do remember what magma is, don’t you?”

“Yes, yes, I do. Don’t worry.”

When that water gets near magma, it heats up and a part of it is turned into steam. The steam creates pressure, that's the force that wants to push it up to the surface again…"

"Does it push out through the same cracks it seeped in or…"

Wormsworth defi nitely had his thinking cap on. There was no doubt about it, for every answer Digby offered, he awaited readly with a new question.

"No, no, such high pressures enable the water to make its own cracksalmost made vertically from the force of it. The water is able to burst up out onto the surface and the pressure is released."

"So that's how geysers are formed! You know, those hot water springs that often smell like rotten eggs?", exclaimed Wormsworth.

"How do you know they smell like rotten eggs?", inquired Digby rather suspiciously.

"What's with the attitude?! I am knowledgeable of certain topics too, you know? Even if I don't have that atlas of yours, which I hope I'm still getting for my birthday… So, Digby, do you know why the water smells like rotten eggs?"

Wormsworth didn't even pause to breath hoping Digby didn't know the answer and fi nally get the opportunity to explain something to Digby for a change, instead of vice versa. Digby was taken aback by the change in Wormsworth. So as not to spoil the moment he waited quietly and wisely for his friend to continue.

"It's because…", Wormsworth continued, beaming with pride, "A gas called hydrosulphate is mixed or diluted in the water. This gas smells just like rotten eggs. Hydrosulphate originally derives from volcanoes…"

"Hold your horses! You're going too fast." Digby interrupted him, jealous of the fact that his friend knew so much about the subject. Feeling quite inferior, Digby reversed roles again and became the teacher. He hated when his intelligence was undermined. As the teacher, he continued to explain the topic:

"Yes, yes, Wormsworth. I was just testing you out there. So now we know how geysers are created-sources of hot water burst out onto the Earth's surface at such a high speed that they look like giant fountains…"

"That's a lot of water, come to think of it. Does it all come from rain?"

"Well, not entirely. Magma contains a certain amount of water as well. This water is released through thinner areas of the Earth's CRUST also creating geysers…"

"Speaking of natural springs, my grandparents attend a health spa each summer and they have a natural spring there as well. I was just wondering, if that water came from the same source we're mentioning?"

"Good thinking, Wormsworth. The naturally hot spring water you find in health spas come from the same source geysers do. They sometimes contain diluted minerals that are considered to have a healing affect on us. Your grandparents and many others often go to these health spas to recover, or ease the pain from certain illnesses."

"Wait, I've just remembered, what about sparkling water? You know, like your club soda, how is that made?"

"My, you're talkative today, aren't you? Good, I rather fancy a chin wag myself today. Soda water is made in the same fashion as the hot springs we were just talking aboutexcept on its way up to the surface it had a chance to cool down, so it's drinkable. Some of them contain diluted gases-that's why after drinking a bottle of sparkling spring water you begin to burp right away. I remember a while ago, my Mum hosted a dinner party and served mineral water. Due to the fact that I was so nervous because of all the guests I had drank my glass of club soda a little too quickly. I couldn't stop burping all night in front of all those guests. I was ever so embarrassed and my Mum was furious to the point of explosion! She thought I was being rude on purpose. I couldn't help it. Since then I can't stand the sight of sparkling water and haven't sipped it ever since…"

“Enough of your embarrassing moments! Have you realized any time soon and we’ll be together again, I can’t wait! I have a great big hug to give you and presents galore… Oh, buddy! I have just come up with the most fantastic idea. My friend who lives on the second fl oor, his father is a pilot and I could ask him really nicely if he could fl y me up to the mountain side, so that I can wait for you. My boy, I can hardly wait to see you! To tell you the truth, I’ve been quite lonely here without you. I have no one to play with, talk to and even fi ght with up here, so hurry up!”

“I know what you mean, it’s the same down here for me. Your idea sounds marvelous. Oh, I wish we were together right this minute. We could’ve been planning a trip to the Solar system together. We could’ve visited Mars and Venus and had the best of times… No matter, when I get home, we still have time to plan it-what do you think?”

“Hurrah!”, shrieked Wormsworth, “It sounds awesome, you’ve always had the most wondrous ideas, Digby-now I really can’t wait for you to return! I’d better hurry and head off to my friend’s to make arrangements with his Dad, then it’s off to the mountains to wait for you to surface-excuse the pun. Oh, boy! Am I excited, see you soon, pal!”

“My, is it cold!” mutlered Wormsworth, his teeth a chatlering, to himself. He tried shoving his hands into his padded pockets as far as they could go in search of warmth for his frost-bitten fingers.

The chilling wind ferociously howled and moaned all around him, pinching at his nose and ears. It was a cheeky wind, because at certain instances it would settle down or whisk off somewhere, tricking Wormsworth into thinking the worst was over-then all at once it would return icier and fi ercer than ever. All about him snow-covered mountain tops poaked their sun-kissed summits to the sky like ice covered skyscrapers. Only at some points could one see the murmours of a luscious forest-thick, dark, unwelcoming and frightening. It reminded Wormsworth of forests in fairy tales his parents used to read to him when he was but a little toddler fresh out of the cucoon.

These mixed feelings of anxiousness, fretfulness and excitement weren’t due to the fact that he was alone on a mountain top and it was getting dark, it wasn’t the cold either.

It was because he would be seeing his very best friend after such a horribly long time. Just think, at the very place he was standing Digby would, after a hard and streuos journey, fi nally tunnel up out of the Earth to greet him.

Wormsworth clicked his tongue and paced back and forth in anticipation. It was as if time, out of spite, had decided to slow down or stop all together. He waited and waited…

Suddenly, there came a rasping, faint at fi rst as if someone had decided to mix the sounds of a jet plain and thunder.

Wormsworth jumped, the sound has taken him by surprise and he hadn’t the faintest idea what it could be or if he should run for shelter.

The sound grew louder and louder, clearer and more distinguishable. It was coming from the inside of Earth!

Wormsworth squeeled with delight as he watched the Earth, not two feet away from him mound, shake and lift up into the air as if a mole was at work.

Before you could blink out came Digby’s trusty drill followed by a familiar face…

Wormsworth’s heart raced, his eyes gleamed and sparkled at the sight before him and with a jump for joy he bellowed a welcoming:

“DIGBY!”

He ran with all his strength up to his best friend and gave him a good old bear hug. He would never forget this moment as long as he lived. Digby was

silenced from happiness he felt-he was home at last, with his best friend, the sunlight gleaming on his face.

All he could do was squint up at the sun and shake like a bowl full of jelly from the cold. He fraily hugged back Wormsworth. Relief had fl ooded Digby-he had made it, fi nally made it. They were still speechless, not because they had nothing to say to each other, but because there were no words needed here. They had simply shown their contentment and joy of seeing each other and that was enough.

They would've stood there in a fi rm embrace for who knows how long, if it wasn't for the fact that the snow began to fall stronger and stronger.

It was Wormsworth who fi nally broke the silence with a warm greeting:

"Welcome back, old chum…"

He gazed shyly at Digby-though his dazed expression turned to a worried frown as he peered at his long lost friend.

"My, you're looking thin and ever so pale, are you alright?"

"I'm fi ne, really, I am. I'm just tired and would rather fancy some sleep, that's all.", whispered Digby in reply rather weakly.

"Ah! This would cheer you up! A little welcome back present. I got all your favorites: cheese and ham sandwiches and a big bar of chocolate."

Digby held out his hand and bashfully excepted a sandwich, after which he began to gulp it down fast, barely bothering to chew, he was that hungry.

Wormsworth watched his friend, not saying a thing. Looking up at the snow and realizing it could cause them trouble he quickly began to busy himself with Digby's belongings.

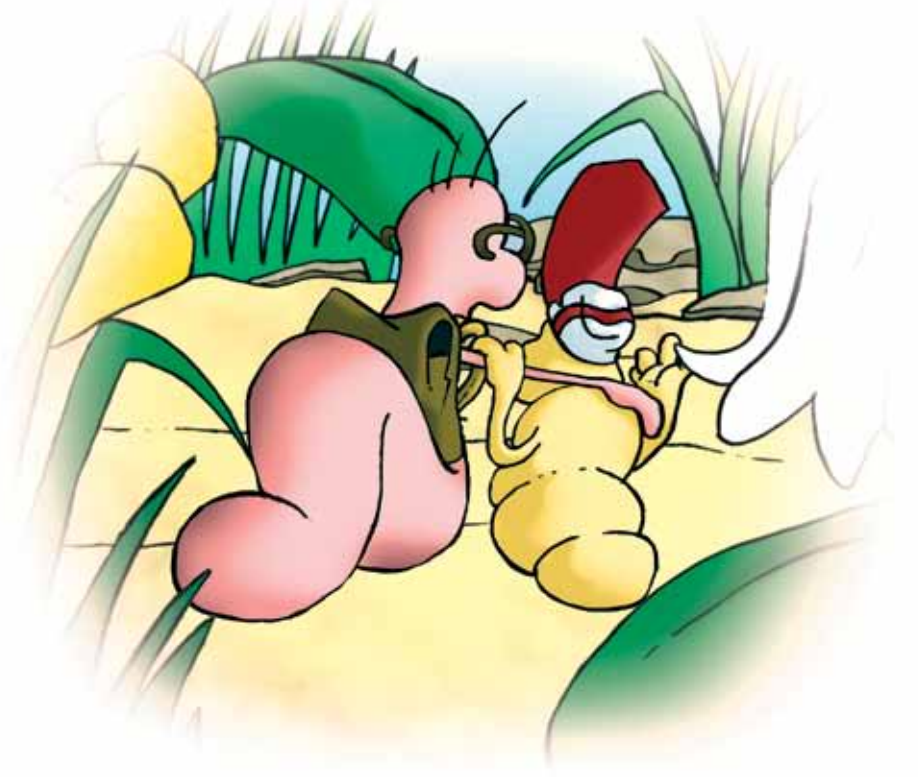
Dusting off his suit, collecting all the well-known instruments he had heard about on more than one occasion during Digby's journey-the drill, lights, battery charges and a dozen other trinkets and watchamacallits. Wormsworth fretted, they should hurry and get off down the mountain side to take their places on his friend's father's plane that was waiting for them below at the airport.

The other reason Wormsworth wanted to move on was to get Digby home quickly, so that they could commence to play and chatter away like in the good old days…

The way the habitants of the fi eld awaited and greeted Digby was a marvelous affair and not one easy to describe.

"The night had just began to fall, but not a soul was to head home for they were all in a fl utter over fi nally seeing Digby, they rushed and bustled around trying to get as close to him as possible. They all wanted to be the fi rst to shake the hand of the worm that had traveled longer and farther than anyone they knew. They all had questions for Digby, but when they fi nally had a chance to ask him, out of the thrill, they plum forgot what the question was! We can only guess what they wanted to ask: what it was like deep inside the Earth or how did he get to be so brave. Maybe a few of them, to Wormsworth's dismay, wanted to ask him, if he wanted to be their best friend instead of Wormsworth. Who knows?

Digby, although tired and confused was ever so happy to see them all. Wormsworth stood proudly and a little defensively beside him, tears of sheer joy streaming down his cheeks. He tried to cover his face from the others to no avail. He was trying to come up with a plan to sneak Digby away to have a good sleep and a nice hot meal, after which, that is if Digby wanted to, they could play and talk for as long as they wanted to-oh, what fun! Never before has Wormsworth felt such happiness.



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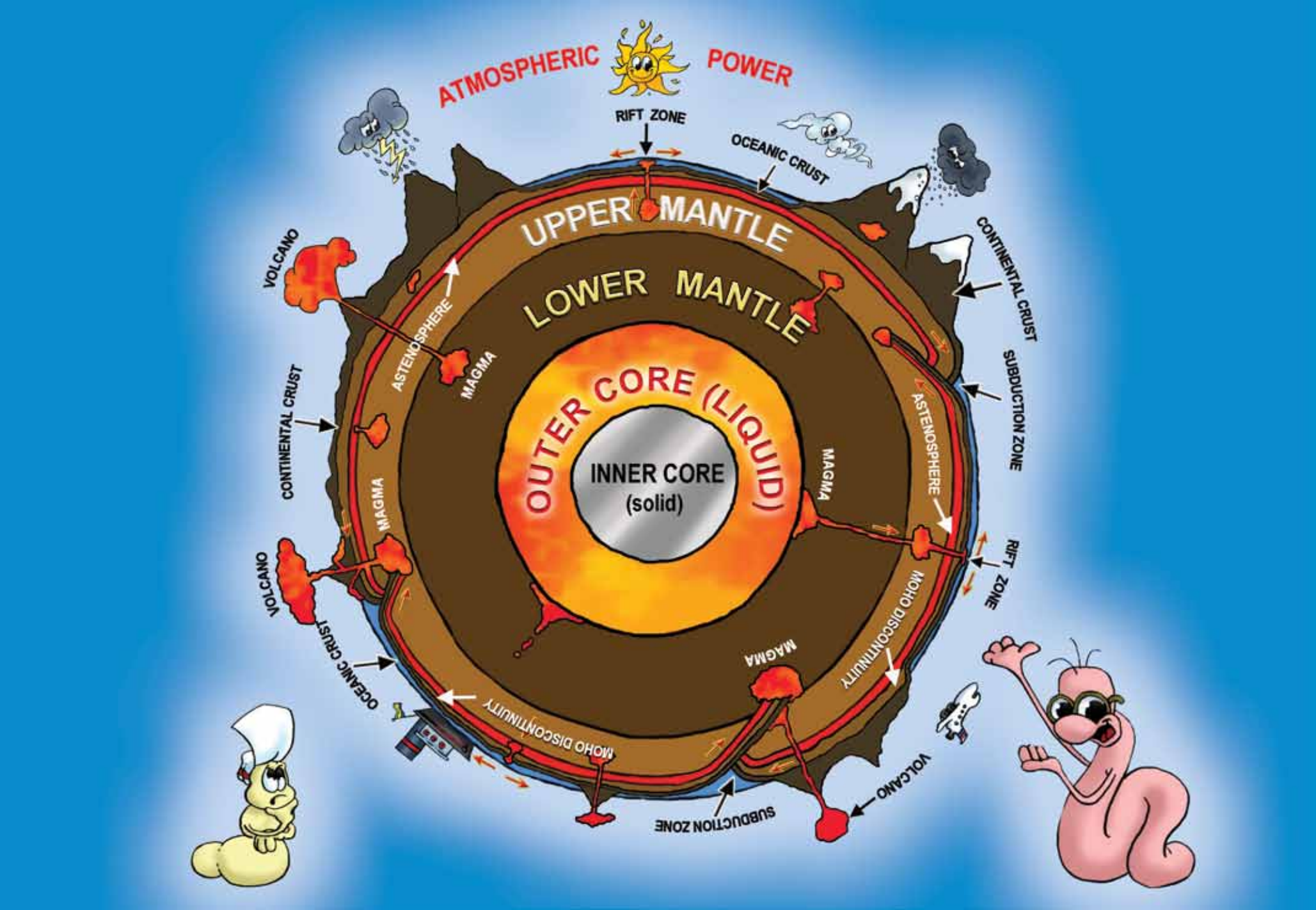
ATMOSPHERIC
POWER
RIFT ZONE
OCEANIC CRUST
UPPER MANTLE
LOWER MANTLE
OUTER CORE (LIQUID)
INNER CORE
(solid)
VOLCANO
ASTENOSPHERE
MAGMA
CONTINENTAL CRUST
SUBDUCTION ZONE
MAGMA
ASTENOSPHERE
RIFT ZONE
MOHO DISCONTINUITY
MAGMA
VOLCANO
SUBDUCTION ZONE
MOHO DISCONTINUITY
OCEANIC CRUST
VOLCANO
MAGMA
CONTINENTAL CRUST

DIGBY'S TRAVELS THROUGH THE EARTH

For the purity of a child's soul,
the curiosity and love we carry within...

There is nothing more beautiful than studying
about Earth. It truly teaches us about life,
giving it meaning and beauty...

For the joy of knowledge and beauty of the truth,
For the sun's beam and blue sky,
For the butterfly and the flower and the red apple,
And the stone in the mountain and the murmur of a stream,
For love, peace and wellbeing
Of both yellow and black friend
For their tomorrow and tomorrow of their children

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