Ug

Uggg! Dad was shouting.

Ug responded with his own grunt. He couldn’t understand why he couldn’t have a name like Bob, although no one seemed to use words like that, maybe in the future they would, but right now everything was ugh, ig and ogg.

Ug was a cave boy. He lived many of thousands of years ago in a cave in the mountains. His people had a few bowls and spoons that they made from clay and bone. They had weapons, spears made from sticks and stones. It was a very different world to the one we live in now. There were no computers or phones, no YouTube, Internet or chocolate, but one thing Ug did have were paintings.

The walls of his cave were covered with paintings drawn by hunters using there fingers and crushed plants to make paint. Each picture told the story of a hunt and the warriors battle with beasts. When you managed to hunt and bring back food for the first time you were and lowed to tell your story in paint on the cave walls. Ug loved to the look at the pictures and as did he imagined them coming to life like little cartoon characters moving across the cave wall acting out their story.

Now it was Ug’s turn to go hunting for the first time and his dad was calling.

As Ug got to the entrance to the cave the other hunters were already walking across the valley below. He walked out into the right sunshine and smelt the fresh mountain air flow into his lungs. He was just about to run out into the sunshine when he heard a snort and growl. It was the noise that every cave boy and girl knew, the unmistakeable sound of a sabre tooth tiger.

As Ug stood glancing sideways he could see the tiger a few metres away. Ug froze, not that it was cold but his body seemed to go stiff and wouldn’t move. His brain was moving though. It was racing around in circles thinking of all the bad things that could happen if the tiger saw him.

He thought about fighting the tiger like the heroes on the cave wall, but the tiger was huge, with teeth and claws.

He thought of running but tigers could easily outrun a man, and he was still a boy.

He thought of doing nothing but staying as still as possible like to rocks around him.

As the thought swirled around in his head a big scared feeling was growing in side him and it was now so big it seemed to have taken over everything. He couldn’t think anymore. He was stuck, unable to move, he felt frozen like an icicle hanging from the cave entrance on a snowy day.

Being frozen still did seem to be working, as the tiger hadn’t seen him but as his brain starting whirlìng agin he began thinking of all the things people would say if they knew he was frozen still. Maybe they would laugh and tease him, saying he would never be worthy of a painting on the cave wall. They might think he was scared and not a hero like the other warriors.

As Ug wrestled with his thoughts he noticed something moving out of the corner of his eye. It was Umm, a girl about his age. She was walking towards the tiger. Ug watched in horror as she got closer. He could imagine the mighty tiger roaring and with one mighty gulp swallowing her whole. Still Ug’s legs and arms wouldn’t move. He could now feel his heart pounding in his chest, it was like a drummer in a rock band. his tummy hurt, he needed to go to the toilet, he was breathing really hard and getting very hot. What was happening to him. The feelings in his body got bigger and bigger and louder and louder until they burst out of his mouth in a single shout, “Umm!!!!”.

Umm looked around, she wasn’t scared she was smiling. Ug couldn’t believe what he saw. In Umm’s hand was a rope and the other end was attached to the tiger. It didn’t make sense. Ug’s brain was now whirring again, thoughts were going around like clothes in a washing machine, shame they hadn’t been invented yet.

Ug tried to think what this could mean and more importantly whether he, and Umm were in danger of becoming the tiger’s breakfast. His thoughts were now having a battle. On one side scary thoughts and fears were up against some new thoughts. These were saying that if Umm was holding a rope connected to a tiger then maybe the tiger wasn’t dangerous after all. Maybe, and this seemed really silly, but maybe the tiger was her pet. These thoughts seemed unbelievable to start, but they were getting stronger. They were starting to win the battle. As they did so Ug noticed that the drumming in his heart got quieter, his breathing slowed down and his tummy wasn’t hurting anymore. He was starting to feeling brave.

“Well done Ug.” It was his dad.

“What do you mean?” Ug stammered.

Dad smiled “You learned what it’s like to be afraid.”

“But I was scared I couldn’t move.” Ug replied, still confused that dad was not telling him off.

“Every warriors feels like that sometimes, You have been scared”. Ug looked surprise as his big brown eyes continued to look in astonishment at dad. “It’s part of knowing what your body can do when you are in danger. Our brains help us to decide whether we should run, fight or freeze. None of them are wrong it’s just away your brain and body works to keep you safe.” Dad smiled again exposing his broken teeth, dentists hadn’t been invented then either. “How do you fed now?”

Ug noticed his body. It had changed, his heart wasn’t beating like a rock drummer anymore, his breathing was gentle and that strange sick feeling in his tummy had gone. “I’m OK”, he said.

It took a little while longer for Ug to bring back food for the tribe and get his own cave painting, but when he did his was the best of all. There was no fight with a huge scary beast but a picture of himself, with scary thoughts and feelings in his body, understanding them made Ug a true hero.