Tall Tales

We sit on a carpet during literacy hour in our class. On a Monday morning, we sit there for Show-and-Tell as well. Our teacher asked us if we wanted to tell about our holidays. My hand was the first one to shoot up in the air because I love to tell stories. Telling stories is my favourite thing to do in the whole world. Miss didn’t ask me to tell straight away. I know why she doesn’t like to choose me. You see, I have a habit of telling tall tales. I know that it’s a wrong thing to do, but I just can’t stop myself. Don’t get me wrong; I don’t tell tall tales all of the time. It’s just that, from time to time,
a tall tale just comes out of my mouth without me even thinking about it.

I waved my hand about as though my life depended on it and shouted, “Miss! Miss!”

In the end, she asked me to tell my story.

My dad took me and my little brother, Josh, to Europe for our summer holiday. My name is Tanya, by the way. Because of my little habit of telling tall tales, people sometimes call me Tanya Tall Tales. I don’t mind it when they call me that. It’s my own fault really. I wish people didn’t think that I tell tall tales all the time, because I don’t. Not all of the time.
Well, that’s me anyway. I am Tanya. My little brother is called Josh and our dog is called Smudge.

Europe was great. We went potholing. I wasn’t very keen at first. To be honest, I get a bit frightened in the dark. It wasn’t that dark to begin with. You don’t have to do much climbing down for the first half an hour or so. You have a helmet on that has a torch on it, so that stops you from feeling that you are completely in the dark. Josh is quite small, so Dad kept a close eye on him all of the time. There were about twenty of us altogether. I was one of the last. There was nothing too difficult; to
begin with we gradually climbed deeper and deeper down into the cave. You could tell that you were getting deeper underground because the passageways got tighter and more difficult to get through and it got a lot colder.

I was lagging behind a bit because I had my headphones on. I wasn’t taking as much notice as I should have been and I ended up going down the wrong passageway. By the time I realised that I had got split up from the others, I was completely on my own. I had lost track of how long I had been on my own. I took my headphones off and shouted for help, but there was no response. It was very dark and
there was a lot of water on the ground. There were some stalactites hanging from the top of the rocks as well. It was extremely cold and more than a bit frightening, I can tell you. I couldn’t tell which passageways I had taken to get where I was, and so I had no way of knowing if I was going in the right direction to get back to the others, or if I was going further away from them. I just kept on the way that I was going and hoped that I would see or hear them before too long.

The passageway in front of me got very tight. The rocks were sticking out in an awkward way and I could see that I would have some difficulty
crawling past them, but I could see that there was a much bigger passageway just around the corner. So I pressed on and forced my way through. The only problem was that the new passageway was a dead end. I was in a tricky position because I had nowhere to go forward. I had to go backwards. There was no choice in that. The only choice I had was whether I should try and turn round in the small space I was in or crawl backwards through the gap that I had first squeezed through. The only problem with going backwards was that I would have to stay going backwards for about twenty metres. I decided
that I would do my best to turn round.

I pulled on the rock in front of me to try and drag myself up. To my absolute amazement, the rock creaked backwards and a huge great opening became visible in front of me. There before me was the brightest and biggest room that I had ever seen. I couldn’t believe my eyes. There were hundreds of small men in smart, brightly coloured suits. All of them were busy working, but, when the rock opened up, they all stopped to look at me. I just stood and stared at them and they just stood and stared back. I rubbed my eyes and looked again. It was amazing. It was astonishing. I had
never dreamt that anything like this ever existed.

One of the small people came running up to me. He wasn’t a child. He was an adult but he was just smaller than adults usually are. As he got closer to me, his eyes lit up and he threw his arms into the air. He shouted to all of his friends to tell them that I was human. Then he came closer and shouted that I was a human child. When he told them that I was a human girl, they all cheered. He said that they hadn’t seen a human girl in over a thousand years. It was a fantastic sight. All of the small people were
jumping up and down and hugging each other and dancing.

I told them that I got split up from my dad and little brother, Josh, and lots of other people. I told them that I needed to get back to them or they would be worried. The small people laughed and told me not to worry. They said that it didn’t matter how long I spent with them. When they returned me back to Dad and the others it would only seem as though I had been missing for a few seconds. They were all so very friendly; I just knew that they must have been telling the truth. I just seemed to relax straight away. I don’t know why but I just knew I was in a
safe place and that I was among new friends.

The first of the small people to come and greet me was called BB. He showed me all around and told me about his world. I introduced myself to him and we shook hands. BB was brilliant. He was a checker. His people were called Alphas. They lived underground in the caves. They never ventured out of their land except for the rarest of emergencies. BB didn’t think that any Alpha had left their world for well over five hundred years. He turned to the other Alphas nearby and asked them if they could think of an Alpha having to go up to Earth
recently. A group of about ten to fifteen little Alphas formed themselves into a little huddle and they all talked away at the same time for a while until suddenly they all stopped and stood up and turned back to face us. An Alpha called QB spoke up.

He said, “No, no, none of us can think of an Alpha leaving Alphaworld for over a thousand years.”

All of the Alphas began talking at once again and they said things like, “Yes, yes. He’s quite right. Quite right. Not for over a thousand years.”

They all stopped again and looked at me. I didn’t know what to do so I
just smiled at them all.

“Oh, isn’t she lovely!” QB said, and all of the others agreed. “Yes, yes. Quite lovely. Oh, yes. She has the sweetest smile that you could possibly wish for.”

BB walked me down the steps to get closer to all of the other Alphas. He held onto my hand and hugged my arm.

“This is Tanya,” he told them.

They all came forward to meet me. One by one they shook my hand and hugged my arm, or they held my hand up to their face. Some of them wanted to snuggle up for a bit too long, so BB hurried them along.
compared to all of the Alphas. I sat there with my boots and jeans and my orange jacket and my helmet. I took my helmet off and put it on my lap.

BB lifted up the tails of his bright yellow jacket and he sat down beside me. He put one leg across the other and sat back in his chair. His boots were made of bright patent leather and they had buckles that shone with bright diamonds. He stroked his long white beard and flicked his long white hair over his shoulders. He told me that he would show me around Alphaworld and tell me all about it, presently. He told me that I should rest first and that I should ask him
questions, if I had any.

As you can imagine, I had about a hundred million questions to ask. My problem was thinking about where to start. I began by asking about my dad and my little brother, Josh. BB told me not to worry. In Alphaworld, time has little meaning. It certainly doesn’t mean anything like it does up on the Earth. BB assured me that when they put me back into the cave, my dad and my brother would think that I had only been missing for a few seconds. Somehow I just knew that I could trust him and so I relaxed again. He wouldn’t need to explain it to me anymore. I knew that Dad and Josh
wouldn’t be worrying about me. I asked BB where they all got their beautiful clothes from. Do you know, they made them all themselves? Some of the Alphas were tailors. They designed and made all of the Alphas’ beautiful clothes. They all wore brightly coloured suits stitched with pure gold thread, and their shirts were made with ruffles and bows. All Alphas have beautiful long hair and tie it up with ribbons that match their suits.

A very energetic young Alpha stepped forward and did a little dance. He did a little tap dance and then he jumped in the air and clicked his heels together. He gave me a big bow and
“Honestly,” he said. “Anybody would think that you’ve never seen a little girl before.”

“But we haven’t,” they told him.

“Oh, dear me, yes. Oh, yes. Quite right. Yes, yes, quite right,” BB said.

He told me that he had forgotten how young some of the youngsters were. He said some of them were only a few hundred years old, so we should make allowances for them. BB realised that all of this was as big a shock for me as it was for all of the Alphas. He asked me to come over and sit down. He led me to a little wooden chair and I sat down. I felt very scruffy