

Deep underground, in a dull, dark cave, lived an atom named Carbon. It was quite lonely down there, with the exception of some silicon atoms. They were all bunched up together in the rocks. They were too boring, and never said anything besides the occasional, “Meep! Silicon!”

Carbon decided life was too monotonous down in the underground cave. After two days of planning with his best (and only) friend Gold, they embarked on a remarkable journey, to escape the dark, boring world below.

After the two friends set off, they started to converse of things to come.

“Thanks for coming, Gold.” Carbon smiled with gratitude.

“You’re welcome, Carbon.” Gold said. “You know how I love adventure, and always wondered if the legends of a world up there were true.” Carbon nodded.

“Up there...” He was about to continue but was immediately drowned by his own thoughts. Gold was always kind to him and was very humble, especially for an atom of nobility. Carbon, on the other hand, was common, a peasant in the eyes of many.

Days into their travels, more carbon atoms joined with Carbon, forming a compound. Gold formed a compound as well. In the underground pathways, there were many hardships. Pressure grew, and the two felt like turning back. The ceilings grew tighter and tighter, narrower and narrower. But Carbon and Gold encouraged each other to press on.

A few times, they encountered hostile atoms, such as radon, who threatened to take their electrons. Carbon and Gold had good times, sad times, and moments marked by fear as they followed their dreams to the “Up There”. All of these times ended when they came to a fork in the tunnel, which was heavily guarded by iron atoms.

“I’m afraid we must split up here.” Gold said sadly. “This way to the left, guarded by those iron atoms, seems to be calling me... It reminds me of some old place.” Gold neared the iron guards with caution.

“Excuse me, may I enter the passage?” The guard on the right nodded with a slight bow. Gold was confused, but said his farewells anyways. Despite being sad, Carbon gathered up his courage and continued the journey alone. He came upon another division and followed the passage that appeared to go up, but looks can be deceiving. He unknowingly traveled deeper and deeper underground. It seemed even more abyssal than it had been in his cave. By the time he realized what he did wrong, the heat had grown immense. Carbon felt as though he was going to melt away. The heat was joined by intense pressure from the depth and extremely narrow pathways. Carbon jogged across what he thought was the final stretch. He gazed down into where the passage had brought him- a pit of searing magma.

To correct his foolish mistake he backtracked to the second fork in the path. This time he took the right passage, the one that eventually led him upward. He saw a bright light at the end of the long tunnel. Carbon had found his destination! The skies were blue and towering stalks of plant cells were all around him. Sounds of chirpy songs filled the air. This new world was glorious!

Carbon’s joy was short-lived. On the horizon, Carbon saw something huge running towards him. It was a horde of radon, recklessly charging him to exact revenge for their previous defeat. Carbon remembered fighting off radon atoms with Gold back in the caves. It occurred to him that radon only has one weakness- their radiation only lasts so long.

The radon horde got closer and closer. Carbon formulated his defensive strategy. All he had to do was wait them out, being as evasive as possible. After the radon used all of their radioactive power their half-life would end, and Carbon would be victorious. Carbon stared at the advancing mob with confidence. He scanned the individual radon warriors; they would be easy to defeat, but looking towards the rear of the charging atoms, he noticed something different. It was a huge radium compound, many times larger than Carbon. Before Carbon could think of anything else, he heard shouting behind him. It was the Gold and Silver army! Carbon was reunited with Gold, now Prince Gold, who had found his old kingdom which had united under King Platinum.

“It is very nice to see you again, Carbon.” Prince Gold smiled, “but we must save the rejoicing ‘till later. We must defend ourselves!”

Prince Gold and Carbon charged into battle to fight radium’s forces. Most individual radon warriors were taken care of by the Gold and Silver Army. The survivors withdrew back into the shadows of the cave. Even after this, the radium compound forced the metallic army to retreat. Prince Gold and Carbon stayed behind to fight. Carbon told Prince Gold his perilous strategy.

“I’m afraid that would not work” Prince Gold said gravely. “A single radium atom would take 1,600 years to decay. This radium compound we are dealing with consists of many atoms, so it will take even longer.” A bold expression came over Carbon’s countenance.

“Then we must rely on our courage.”

They charged forward. The radium seemed to be indestructible. After an intense clash of battle, the radium jumped onto Carbon with an evil laugh. Prince Gold let out a yelp of terror.

“Surely Carbon is doomed” he thought.

There were a few moments of silence. All of a sudden, the radium was catapulted off of Carbon. Carbon had changed. No longer dull and common, he shone like glass. Sunlight reflected off him in beautiful ways with the exception of a battle scar, turned green from his exposure to radium. He was now Diamond. Gold clapped in excitement.

“Wow! All of your hardships have molded you into something better. Carb- I mean Diamond! You are a hero!” Diamond flashed a brilliant smile at Prince Gold.

“Thank you, but I would not be here without your help along the journey. Now let us claim our victory over radium!”

The two best friends looked to the area where radium had been flung, right into a pool of water molecules. But where radium might have been, stood a belching protozoan.

“It appears radium will be serving his punishment in the stomach of that single celled organism!” Diamond said, as they broke into laughter. Their good spirits carried the two friends all the way home to the Gold and Silver Kingdom, Realm of King Platinum.