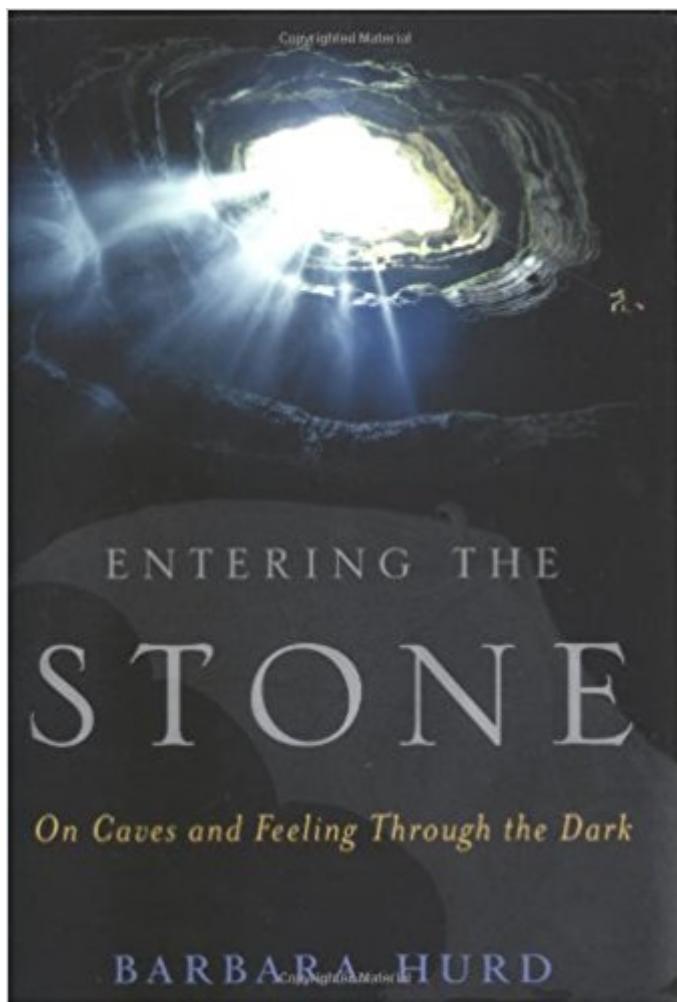


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Entering The Stone: On Caves And Feeling Through The Dark



Synopsis

Barbara Hurd begins her foray into the increasingly popular pursuit of caving as we all would -- with a panic attack. Nevertheless, as her hunger to understand caves and caving increases, she lures the reader in deeper as well, to the extraordinary fascination of these dark spaces. Hurd illuminates the natural history and spiritual territory of caves as powerfully as Kathleen Norris portrayed the Dakotas and Barry Lopez the Arctic. She ranges from sacred caves in India to secret caves in Arizona and, with passionately informed prose, makes these places -- with their stalactites and blind cavefish and ancient galleries of white flowstone and soda straws -- come alive. Characters weave in and out of her story as well: a childhood friend dying of cancer, a wildlife biologist who specializes in bat guano, an elderly Indian guide, and the disembodied voice of a fellow caver, never seen, with whom she spends a profoundly illuminating half-hour. Entering the Stone is both a rich and a compelling natural history of some of the most extraordinary places on earth, as well as a stunning investigation of dark interiors, both terrestrial and human.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Using a venerable literary device, Hurd explores her inner life through her fascination with caving. Her meditative, flowing prose pauses on sundry people and events in her life, which she illuminates through descriptions and comparisons with her physical surroundings in the subterranean world. Although they are the settings for her musings on vulnerability, solitude, or death, caves also scare Hurd: she opens with an account of a panic attack she once experienced while descending into one.

She faced her fear and got right back to spelunking. She also gives rein to thoughts about her deceased father and faces up to the fact that one of her oldest friends is dying. Confessing to a natural reserve, Hurd explains that caves allow her to give in to emotional exuberance: in the dimness fading to darkness, she becomes an intimate perceiver of sound and shape and of the quietude of danger that caves present. Always, Hurd considers why caves draw her in, and though markedly digressive and personal, her essay reveals a questing spirit that will intrigue similarly contemplative readers. Gilbert TaylorCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

"The first book in years that, finished, left me of a mind to start it all over again." (The Baltimore Sun)"Not a sensationalist adventure story but rather a sometimes mystical journey of discovery into the hidden recesses of the mind." (Library Journal Starred)

A group of women, who happen to all be naturalists, and I read this as a selection for our book club. It was a good choice. Some women didn't enjoy it that much, said it had too much touchy feely stuff and not enough about caves. Some of the women loved it, they commented that Barbara Hurd's insight into her own psychology contributed to making the book very readable. They could connect with the author. So if you want a book strictly about caves ad caving, this is not for you. However, if you want an enjoyable, readable, foray into the "basics" of caves, you will enjoy this. Honestly, it's a book by a woman, for women.

Thanks!

A beautiful meditation on searching and growing through difficult situations

It is a strange blessing that I ran across an excerpt of this book online and sought it out. The local library had a copy. I wondered about the experience of a novice spelunking. What I found was one woman's meditation on sorrow and loss and fear and awareness, and how reason and passion, how space and solid, how dark and light criss-cross and make the liminal experiences telling. Please don't fault her beforehand if I sound too intellectual about it, too. It's a beautifully written exploration of the meaning of life, but it's sometimes very down-to-earth, too.

Very seldom do I read a book twice. ENTERING THE STONE is one of those books. Barbara

Hurd's reflections seep under your skin and take you places you've never been. It is frightening and revealing and profound. Hurd has discovered that in our deepest journeys a secret space may emerge, a white dog, the shape of emptiness, a spacious room.

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