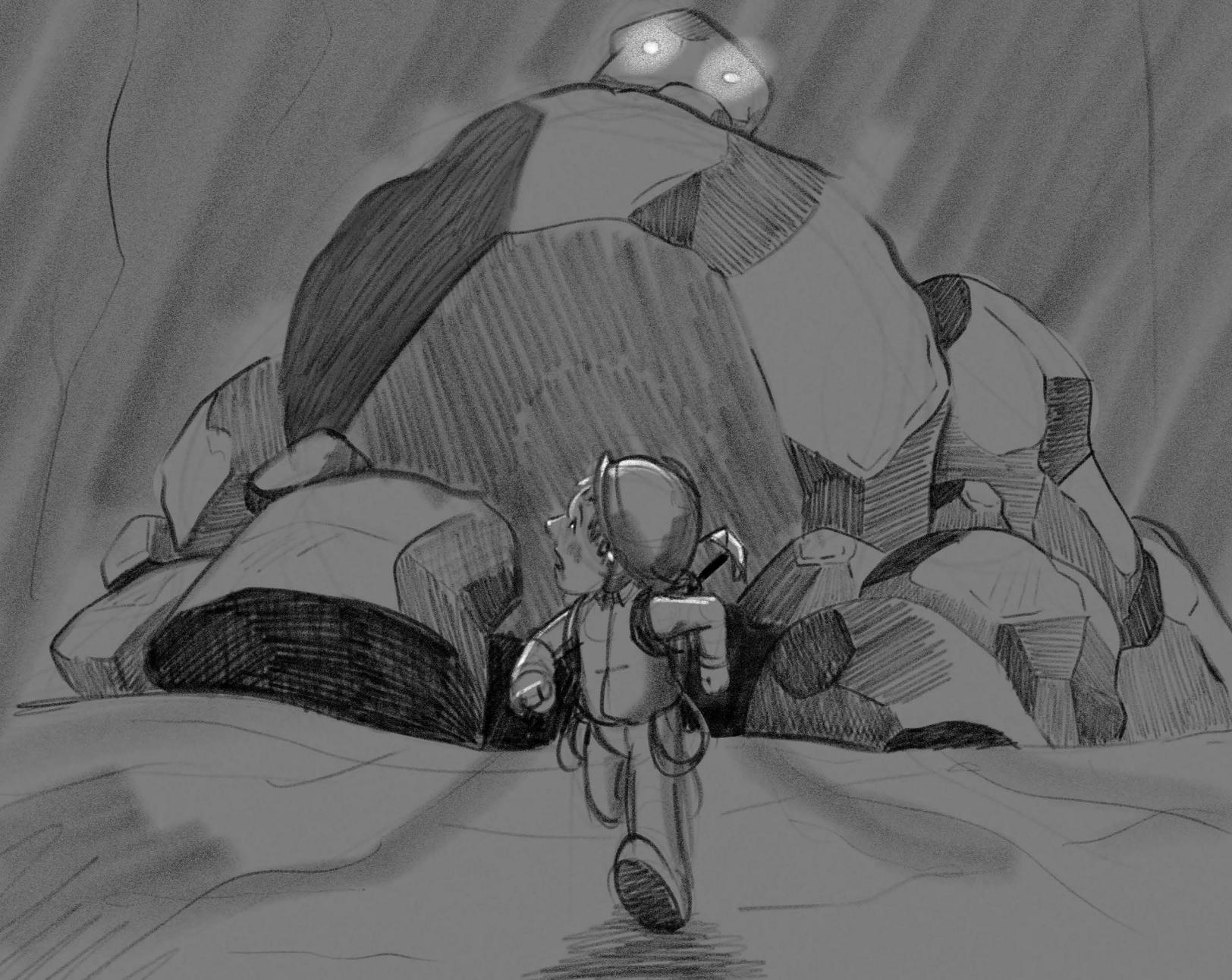


# PROTECTOR OF THE CENTER OF THE EARTH



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EXT. MINING CAVE - PHILADELPHIA - DAY, 1893

A MINING DRIVER pulls his cart up to the mine's doors. He waits for the door to open.

This should be instant, but it takes longer than expected. The door creaks open slowly, as if the person opening it is struggling.

Finally it opens all the way and the driver drives in.

INT. MINING CAVE - CONTINUOUS

The driver pulls past the DOOR-BOY, a small kid no older than 10. He obviously doesn't know what he's doing. Maybe it's his first day? He struggles to close the door.

Once he finally gets it closed it's almost pitch black except for the dim light from the oil lamps.

The sound of clanking pickaxes is overwhelming.

The cart pushes deeper and deeper into the cave. The clanking sound getting louder.

We see various MINERS setting up shocks and loading up carts with coal.

Beyond their work is a small tunnel. Not too different from one made by one of the miners, but somehow it looks more amateur. We push into the tunnel.

INT. SMALL TUNNEL - DAY

Following it's path takes us down further than what even seems possible.

At the very bottom is HARVEY, 12, adventurous and clever but brash, sitting hunched in the tunnel of his own making.

He's absolutely covered in dust and holds an oil lamp up to a small book. He's trying to read but the dim light is making it almost impossible.

HARVEY

Th..e..s-sky...was-er, uhm...ba...bright?

He sighs and puts the book down in frustration.

Harvey grabs a makeshift DOLL (THE GENERAL) out of his bag. It's clear he's made it from other toys and household objects. It's face is just a wooden block with a smile drawn on.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
(to the doll)  
General.

He salutes the general. Then makes the general salute him back. He pretends to have a conversation with the doll.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
(as the general)  
Can you read me a passage  
lieutenant?  
(as himself)  
Aye, sir, I'm trying. But  
accounting for the fact I've never  
been taught how, I'm not sure I  
can.

Harvey picks up the doll and moves it around as he does it's voice.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
(as the general)  
Then tell me a story. A good one!  
(as himself)  
A story? Hm. I suppose we are in  
desperate need of a morale boost.  
Hm.

He closes his eyes and lays his head back.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
There once was a family, a big  
family, so big they seemingly took  
up a whole street. And in that  
family was a young boy, who knew no  
matter where he looked he could  
find his family just around the  
corner. This boy loved his home,  
the sky was bright, and the air was  
clear, and the sun just felt warmer  
there.

Harvey's smile slowly disappears from his face.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

But one day, out of the boy's control, he was pulled from his family, from his home, and brought to a new one, not that he would call it home. And here the air in this new place was filled with sulfur, and the sky cloudy, and everything became survival. But then the boy came up with a plan to return home, his real home. And he would get back at any cost.

Harvey's face fills with determination.

He pulls a slip of paper out of the book. It's a poorly scribbled map of the world detailing a plan to dig down from Philadelphia and up into Poland.

He stares hopelessly at the map for just a moment. Then folds it up. A small PHOTOGRAPH falls out. He grabs it.

It's a house with a family standing in front. A WOMAN, who in one hand holds a BABY, and has the other around her YOUNG DAUGHTER. A MAN stands behind them.

Harvey puts the photo, map and book into his backpack.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Well general, we ain't gonna get there unless we get a movin'.

He musters up the energy and starts digging.

After not too long he hits something different. It's harder than the rock he's used to, but he persists.

CLANK.

CLANK.

CLANK.

Finally it gives in, taking him and all of his stuff to the ground.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - CRYSTAL CAVERN - DAY

Harvey opens his eyes to the beautiful sight of crystals, large and untouched by human involvement for seemingly centuries.

He stares at them in wonder, where could he be?

The crystals shimmer in his dim lamp light.

He looks at himself in the glimmer of the crystals. Seemingly hundreds of his reflection everywhere he turns.

Harvey's never seen anything like it.

HARVEY

Wow.

His voice echoes through the cavern. Harvey giggles to himself.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Echo!

He notices a warm glow coming from the end of the cavern, and goes to investigate it.

At first the crystals look almost purple in the light, but as he gets closer to the glow, the crystals appear more red and densely packed.

Harvey reaches the source of the glowing, and sees a bright red crystal protruding from the wall.

It simmers beautifully, and almost feels like it's calling to Harvey.

The light moves in a hypnotic way. He inches closer, extending his hand out to touch.

A strange pebble rolling sound stops this trance.

He turns around to see a small pile of rocks. They're bright orange, completely different from the grey, igneous rocks of the cavern.

Harvey's sure they weren't there before. He just came from this direction.

He approaches the pile with caution. When suddenly the pebbles begin to move on their own, revealing themselves to be PEBBLE SPRITES.

The first sprite is just a head made from one pebble. It has a little face.

The other has formed a body out of several pebbles.

They look at Harvey with excitement. He can barely believe what he's seeing.

Harvey gets down on his knees, trying to get a closer look.

The sprites investigate him as well. One rolls up Harvey's arm to get a closer look.

They share a moment like that, face to face, before it rolls down the other arm and continues down the cavern. The second sprite follows.

Harvey gets up quickly and runs after them.

The sprites move gracefully through the crystal cavern.

Harvey is much more clumsy, barely keeping up with them.

The cavern gets tighter and tighter as they go.

Until finally they reach an entrance to a small cave.

Harvey stops for a moment. It's dark inside, should he really follow these strange creatures?

After a moment of thought, he enters.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - ROCK DEN - DAY

There's no more crystals, just green rock. How did the environment change so quickly?

Inside the den is a small collection of human items: a rusty pickaxe, a broken lamp, and an OLD DOLL of sorts.

Harvey looks at them in confusion, similar to his own. He puts his pickaxe away.

The pebble sprites play with the items. Harvey approaches them.

HARVEY  
Are these yours?

The walls are adorn with writing, a language or something Harvey can't understand. He's never seen any text like it.

He rubs his hands along the wall, feeling their indentation. It's old. Ancient even.

The walls of the cavern shake. Harvey hits the ground covering his head.

The sprites do the same, stopping completely in their tracks.

The shakes bypass.

Harvey looks and the passageway he entered through is now closed with some new dust and rock covering it.

Before he can panic the pebble sprites take his attention.

One urges him to stand, and the other to follow them around a small bend.

Behind it is a new passageway. A shockingly bright light shines out.

Harvey's adrenaline is subsiding and in its place fear is growing.

What's going on here? Can he get out? Can he get back? What do they want with him?

He clutches the general closer to his chest.

The pebble sprites run through the passageway.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Hey, wait!

Being left alone seems worse than the unknown, so Harvey follows after them.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - LAVA CAVERN - DAY

This cavern has a completely new geography, full of red rock and lava hot spots.

The heat is sweltering but just barely manageable.

The pebble sprites wait for him at the end of a corridor. There's a large pile of rocks behind them.

Harvey approaches.

Another pebble sprite forms out of the pile, much to Harvey's delight.

Then the rest of the huge rock pile moves.

Rocks pile on top of rocks, rolling of their own fruition.

Harvey falls backwards. The figure in front of him forms larger than seems possible. Seemingly unending.

The scraping of rock on rock is grating.

Until finally the pile has formed into a HUGE ROCK CREATURE (KOSMA).

The pebble sprites jump around the huge rock creature with joy. Was this a trap?

Finally breaking his shock Harvey runs.

He refuses to look back, only hearing and feeling the earth shaking footsteps of the beast.

He has to think fast, where can he go?

He looks around frantically.

He notices a small hiding spot behind some rocks to his left and makes a run for it, swiveling behind a pillar to confuse the creature.

He dashes in and remains quiet, hoping his plan worked.

Before he can catch his breath the rocks, one by one, roll away, blowing his cover.

They roll into a new by lava pit, the glow filling his face.

He looks up and the creature is almost on top of him, towering above.

The creature reaches his hand towards Harvey, who quickly pulls out his pickaxe and jabs it straight into it's palm.

The creature pulls back. Harvey gets up and runs away.

The creature behind him watches then follows suit.

The general falls out of Harvey's backpack without him noticing.

The rocks to the sides of the cavern begin to move around Harvey, going behind him towards the large creature.

He looks forward and notices a giant lava pool then 2 large rocks heading towards one another.

An idea forms.

He diverts off his path to run between the two rocks as they are just seconds away from colliding.

The monster follows him.

HARVEY

3, 2, 1-

The rocks crash into one another, and the creature trips over them.

Harvey runs into a small alcove in the wall and takes cover.

CRASH.

A huge splash of molten hot lava goes everywhere.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - SMALL ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS

After everything settles, Harvey looks out and sees the creature emerging from the pool, it's eyes glowing and covered in lava. It's terrifying.

The creature looks directly at him.

Harvey notices a piece of loose rock in his tiny hiding spot. He uses all of his might to pull it from the wall and use it to cover the opening.

It's a tight fit, but it works.

Only a tiny bit of light comes out from the crack between the two pieces of rock.

Then the loose rock begins to wiggle. Moving back and forth, slowly at first and then getting a little faster.

The creature is trying to call the rock to him, but he can't. It's caught on the wall between them.

Harvey breathes heavily, horrified. He tries to ignore the rocking sound.

Which gets slower and slower until finally...

It stops.

Harvey sighs. He maneuvers his backpack off and puts it in front of him.

He reaches for the general but can't find him. He searches the bag and the doll doesn't seem to be anywhere.

A slight panic settles in.

Harvey uses the crack in the wall to look for the general.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - LAVA CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

From Harvey's perspective he can just barely see out into the cavern.

He scans the room when he sees something that shocks him.

The large rock creature is now a forth the size, probably only 2 feet larger than Harvey. It sits off to the side of the lava pool. It's holding the general.

Well not just holding him, but playing with him. Just like a little kid would: moving the doll up and down to mimics walking.

Harvey watches him in confusion.

He then scans the rest of the room, which is filled with the remains of the creature's much larger form.

Closer to the entrance of Harey's little alcove is the creature's palm, with his pickaxe still in tact.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - SMALL ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS

Harvey considers. He could grab the pickaxe and try to surprise the creature, try to overtake him.

He looks out once more.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - LAVA CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

He sizes up the creature as it continues to play with the general. He seems non-threatening, sweet even.

Some of the pebble sprites run up to the creature and dance around the general. Together they're playing some sort of game.

Harvey looks between them and the pickaxe one more time.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - SMALL ALCOVE - CONTINUOUS

Harvey slowly, and as quietly as possible, moves the rock away from the hiding spot's entrance.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - LAVA CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Harvey slowly creeps out of the alcove. The creatures don't notice him.

He looks to the pickaxe, but he doesn't grab it.

Instead he slowly walks over to the creatures.

HARVEY  
(as the general)  
And who do we have here?

The creatures turn to look at him. Harvey cautiously sits down next to them.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
(as himself)  
Why, general, it looks like you've made some new friends.

The large rock creature hands the general to Harvey. The pebble sprites follow the doll, they dance with him.

Harvey laughs, trying to keep up with the sprites.

Before too long the sprites each grab an arm of the doll and take the General away from Harvey, continuing their dance.

Harvey delights in watching them.

He looks over to the rock creature and notices him doing something that resembles smiling.

They look at each other, a quiet understanding between them.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - ROCK DEN - NIGHT

Harvey studies the human items as the rock creature messes with the pillar in the middle of the room.

HARVEY  
Are these yours? Or maybe...

Harvey remembers the creature can't talk. Instead it just stares at him before turning back to it's work.

Harvey takes this moment to size him up, still not fully trusting him.

The creature finally gets a good grip and moves a large rock from the pillar, revealing a small treasure trove.

It's a collection of human items. Toys, mining gear, books, etc.

The creature grabs a toy horse, sits, and then puts the general on the horse.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
How did you know soldiers rode horses?

(MORE)

HARVEY (CONT'D)

(then)  
Or what a horse was?

The creature pushes a book towards Harvey, he picks it up.  
The front cover has a solder on a horse.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Wow.

Harvey looks up at all of the treasure.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Why do you have all this? How-How  
do you?

Harvey looks to the creature as if expecting an answer. It  
just extents the toy horse out to him.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

No, thank you.

Harvey opens the book.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

This has to be ancient.

He opens it up, pulling his oil lamp closer to get a better  
look.

Upon studying it he blurts-

HARVEY (CONT'D)

This looks like polish!

Harvey flips through the book and lands on drawing of a  
landscape. He holds the book closer to the creature.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Do you know how to get there? To  
Poland?

The creature just looks at him.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

You see I thought I was almost  
there, and then-Where am I?

No response.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Oh, right.

(then)

I thought if I dug far enough, I'd  
find it.

He pulls his map out of his backpack and shows it to the creature.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

I had it all planned out. See?

His childish drawing doesn't really look like any sort of plan.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

I'm a real miner, well actually I'm a doormen, which I'll have you know is a whole step above a breaker boy. You have to be real strong to be a doormen. I mean they call me a door-boy but ain't no boy's job. Little kids can't do it.

Harvey is getting excited.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

The general and I-oh this is the general.

He grabs the doll and makes it salute.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

We're more than up for the task. Mines couldn't run without us.

Harvey gently puts the general down. The creature scoots the book closer to Harvey, as if to say "read more".

HARVEY (CONT'D)

I can't read it.

Kosma pushes it closer. Harvey gives in and grabs the book.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

I have been trying to teach myself, but it's so dark in the mines, well you know that, so-anyways. I don't need to know either, to be a miner.

He looks at the photo of the beautiful polish countryside again. He's filled with wonder.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

It's more beautiful than I remember.

(then)

What is this place?

Kosma just continues playing with his toys.

Harvey lays back and sees it: murals lining the walls of the cavern. The light of his lamp illuminating them just enough.

He gets up and tries to decipher it.

It shows humans digging.

Digging down, down, down.

Then a drawing of what looks like the earth, with three smaller circles inside. An X in the very middle.

Harvey holds up his own map, they look surprisingly similar.

Then he realizes it.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Is this? Are we? At the center of  
the earth?

Harvey traces his "route" on his map.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

I must've messed up. Gone too far  
down.

He looks up at Kosma.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

(excited)

I can't believe it.

There are drawings of a large rock creature. It looks just like the one he's in the room with.

Below the drawing is the word "Kosma" in several languages.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Kosma.

He looks back at the creature.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Is that your name? Kosma.

On the mural the pebble spirits stand in front of Kosma.

They all stand in opposition to some other sort of beast. It's hard to tell what it is.

Red, splotchy, and giant. It looks horrifying.

Harvey just stares at it, when it strikes him. This looks like just Kosma when he fell into the lava pit. Is this...him?

Harvey tries to play this suspicion off.

He sits along the wall further from Kosma.

Kosma rolls his head off his shoulders and over to the pillar in the middle of the room.

There's an indent in the pillar, which Kosma rolls his head into. It looks almost like it was made for him, or from him.

Kosma closes his eyes.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Oh yeah, I'm pretty tired too.

Harvey watches Kosma nod off to sleep and eyes one of the exits, it appears to lead back out to the crystal cavern.

Harvey waits a moment then, as quietly as possible, gets up and sneaks out the exit.

Before he can get too far the whole cavern shakes, just like before.

Harvey loses his balance and Kosma's eyes shoot open. He maneuvers the rocks that were making up his body to grab Harvey just in time.

The pebble sprites jump up and hide anywhere they can find.

Harvey catches his balance.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

What was that?

By the look on Kosma's face this is serious.

The cavern shakes again.

Any pebble sprites that had come back out hide again.

Harvey fills with fear.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

I have to get out of here.

Harvey moves towards an exit of the den, but rocks cover his way before he can get there.

He heads for a different exit, Kosma does the same thing again, covering the exit.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Let me out.

Harvey heads for a third one, pickaxe now in hand, and before the rocks can close him in he digs his way out.

And runs.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - MUSHROOM CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

He finds himself somehow in another new environment, completely different from all the others.

Mushrooms line the walls. At first all he can see are green mushrooms.

But the further he runs the mushrooms start to transition to red.

Just as Harvey is about to make it to the other end of the cavern, rocks quickly cover his path.

HARVEY

Kosma!

He turns around and Kosma is standing there, bigger than before.

The pebble sprites surround Harvey on all sides except one.

The red mushroom side.

The cavern shakes.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

You're the beast right? In the mural. That's you isn't it?

Kosma steps closer.

HARVEY (CONT'D)

Stop! You can't keep me here.

Harvey looks his pickaxe and does something none of them expected.

He digs into the one un-guarded wall.

The rock quickly gives away, much easier than what seems possible. Harvey falls forward with it.

INT. EARTH'S CORE - CONTINUOUS

What he sees beyond the rock is horrifying.

Some large, writhing mess of hot lava. It moves in an unnatural way. The heat is intense.

Kosma quickly sweeps in and grabs Harvey, pulling him back from the hole in the wall.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - MUSHROOM CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Rocks quickly move to cover the opening.

Harvey looks up just in time to see the lava raise up, revealing a face.

It's the same one from the mural, only much worse in person.

So it wasn't Kosma after all.

Kosma's face fills with fear, and he uses all of his might to push the rocks over the hole.

Using his whole body to cover it.

The pebble sprites help as well.

THUMP

The lava creature is trying to get out.

THUMP

Kosma and the sprites wince in pain.

THUMP

It look like they can't hold it much longer.

Then silence.

Everyone sits there, anticipating.

But nothing happens.

Rocks roll past Harvey, as Kosma attempts to more permanently deal with the opening.

Harvey watches feeling guilty. This is all his fault. He realizes they just wanted to protect him.

The cavern shakes.

Kosma's head rolls over to Harvey.

HARVEY  
I'm sorry. I-

Kosma simply rolls back to the den, Harvey follows.

INT. ROCK DEN - CONTINUOUS

Kosma forms a new body from nearby rocks.

As he does so, Harvey rushes in and starts gathering his items into his backpack.

Kosma watches him with curiosity.

HARVEY  
(to himself)  
I have to get out of here.

Harvey opens his map.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
(murmuring)  
If I just-

He looks up, then rotates the map.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
(murmuring)  
No- maybe?

He shakes his head and looks up at Kosma who stands across from him.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
I'll figure it out on my way.

Harvey grabs the last of his items then looks up at the mural.

He stares once again at the face of the monster.

Then he looks at the map of the earth, with three defined circles in front of it.

Suddenly it strikes him.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
If this is the center of the earth.  
Then that's the core? Right?

Kosma turns to him, he's holding the general. He extends the doll to Harvey.

The cavern shakes.

HARVEY (CONT'D)  
I'm leaving.

Harvey grabs the general from Kosma.

Then he exits to the crystal cavern.

INT. EARTH'S CENTER - CRYSTAL CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

He retraces his footsteps.

He walks further than he remembers but still doesn't see his original tunnel.

He stops. The glowing red crystal in front of him. This had to be where he landed. Why does nothing stay the same in this place?

He looks right where it should be.

CRASH.

Rocks fall down in that same spot.

Harvey jumps, grabs his pickaxe, and approaches the rubble ready to strike.

The dust is heavy. He can't see through it.

Harvey raises his pickaxe higher.

A silhouette forms in the dust.

Harvey gets ready to strike—

NELLIE  
Where have you been?

He stops dead in his tracks. NELLIE (14F) sits covered in dirt and grime and looking worse for wear.

HARVEY  
Nellie?

Kosma appears behind them.

Nellie's turns, her eyes widen with fear, and she opens her mouth to scream.

CUT TO BLACK.