BRAVE MEASURING WORM

 Once, long ago, Mother Grizzly Bear had two cubs she loved dearly. One day she went out to gather roots and berries. She took her cubs with her. The young bears ran here and there as they played. Their mother warned them, “Stay close to me.”

 The brothers ran on ahead, all the while racing, wrestling, and playing hide-and-seek. They forgot their mother’s warning and continued further and further down the river. From a huge boulder beside the stream, they dived into the water with terrific splashes.

 Weary at last, they scrambled up on the big flat rock and lay down. As the warm sunshine dried them off they fell asleep. As they dozed, the rock began to grow bigger and taller. For countless days and nights it continued to grow. The whole time, the two little bear cubs slept on peacefully.

 While the rock grew, Mother Grizzly searched for her missing cubs. In her wandering, the bear met Gray Fox, Mother Deer, Mountain Lion, and finally, little White-Footed Mouse.

 “Have you seen my cubs?” she asked each animal in turn.

 “No,” they all said, “but we will help you search for them.”

 The searchers looked everywhere a cub might be. They searched in caves and in hollow logs. They looked in thickets and in the tops of trees. They found no trace of the cubs.

 After days of searching, the creatures finally sat together to decide what they should do next. Suddenly Red-tailed Hawk swooped down. He called to Mother Grizzly, “I have seen your cubs. They are on the granite stone, which has become a towering mountain.” He continued on his way.

 The bear and her friends hurried to the base of what was now a huge wall of rock. They called and called to the cubs, but the bear cubs slept on.

 They, one by one, beginning with Mother Grizzly herself, the animals tried to climb the mountain. They tried and tried, but even Mountain Lion, the best climber of all, failed to reach the top of the rock.

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 “is there no one who can save my cubs?” asked poor Mother Grizzly.

 “I will try,” a small voice said. Looking down, the bear saw little Measuring Worm. The Miwok call him TU-TOK-A-NA, which means “little Curl-stretch.” He moves like a caterpillar moves.

 Most of the animals laughed at him. Even little Mouse cried, “Foolish Measuring Worm! Your name is longer than you are.”

 Mother Grizzly picked up the tiny worm and said gratefully, “I welcome your help.”

 So Measuring Worm began to creep up the rock. He curled himself into an arch, anchored himself with his short back legs, and then stretched out his body until his front legs could grasp another bit of stone. As he went, he marked a safe path with a sticky thread, for Measuring Worm can make silk like a spider.

 Once, Measuring Worm looked down and saw that the mighty river now seemed only a thin band of silver. The forests and meadows looked no bigger than twigs and moss. He grew afraid and could not move at all. After a time, he found his courage again.

He began to sing, “TU-TOK, TU-TOK!” as loudly as he could, and crept still higher up the granite wall.

 Finally one morning he reached the top of the vast stone. He softly whispered into the ears of the two cubs, “Wake up!”

 When the cubs saw how high up they were, they began to cry. Measuring Worm comforted them. “Follow me,” he said. “For I have marked a safe path with my thread.”

 “We are afraid we will fall,” wailed the two little bears.

 Measuring Worm challenged them. “Are the sons of Mother Grizzly, the bravest animals, such cowards?” he asked.

 Then, to show TU-TOK-A-NA how brave they were, the cubs started down on their own.

 “Wait!” cried the worm. “You must let me lead. There are many dangerous places where great care must be taken.”

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 Just then some loose gravel slipped out from under Younger Brother’s paw. Older Brother grabbed him and pulled him to safety. Measuring Worm moved carefully over the loose gravel. He insisted, “You must let me go first. My thread will guide us, but remember what dangers lie in wait.”

 This time the cubs heeded his warning. As they made their slow, careful way down the rock wall, Measuring Worm pointed out other places where stones were loose or the edge of the path was crumbling. When they complained about sore paws and empty bellies, he promised them they would soon be safe with their mother again. Measuring Worm even stood his ground against the bad-tempered Rattlesnake, who blocked their path. The snake shook his rattle and coiled himself back as if ready to strike. The cubs were afraid, but brave Measuring Worm, small as he was, spoke loudly. **“Snake, I have promised to return these cubs to Mother Grizzly. Let us by, and the creatures of the valley will know that you are our friend.”**

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 Rattlesnake, surprised by the bravery of the little worm, drew aside to let them pass. Measuring Worm thanked Rattlesnake and led the little bears on down the rock. They still had a long way to go, but the worst dangers were behind them.

 At last the cubs and their rescuer reached the valley floor. How joyfully Mother Grizzly gathered her cubs to her heart and hugged the.

 Then all the animals decided to call the rock “Tu-tok-a-nu-la,” which means “Measuring Worm Stone.” This was in honor of the heroic worm, who had done what no other creature could do. The towering stone kept this name for many years, until newcomers renamed it “El Capitan.”



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