Crow and Little Bear

A long time ago, there was a crow who lived by a big river. It was a very big river, with a strong rushing current and fierce rapids. The river was full of fish, but the current was too fast for Crow to attempt fishing. If she fell in the river, she would be swept downstream.

One morning, Crow awoke to find a little bear on the beach by the river. Little Bear was a stranger, and looked lost. Crow watched Little Bear curiously. Little Bear spent several days lying on the beach, watching Crow. Crow spent her time sitting in a big tree, dreaming about the fish she could catch and watching Little Bear.

One day, Little Bear was crying. Crow saw this, so she flew down to the beach to see what the problem was.

"Hello," said Crow.

"Hello," said Little Bear.

"I'm sorry I didn't introduce myself sooner. I am quite shy," said Crow.

"That's okay," said Little Bear. "I am shy, too."

"Why are you crying?" asked Crow.

"I miss my home," said Little Bear. "I'm not from this part of the woods."

Little Bear explained how he had arrived at this beach. One fine sunny day, his parents had gone fishing. Little Bear had wandered off to find an adventure. What he found was a big river. Little Bear thought he would catch a big fish and bring it home to impress his parents. But as soon as he took one step into the swirling rapids, he was swept away downstream. He would have drowned if he had not grabbed onto a log. The log carried him far down the river, for days and nights, until he came to rest on the beach.

"So, that is how I ended up here," said Little Bear. "And I miss my home because there is such good fishing there."

Ahh haa, thought Crow to herself. Good fishing! Crow was always eager to find easier ways of fishing.

"Why don't you go home?" asked Crow. It seemed like a pretty obvious question.

Little Bear shook his head vigorously. "Oh no! I will never set foot in that river again!" Little Bear sat down and began to cry again when he thought of all the good fishing at his home.

Crow sat quietly until Little Bear finished crying. "I think I can get you home," said Crow.

"How?" asked Little Bear eagerly. Little Bear was running around in circles, he was so excited.

"It would involve climbing some trees and rocks."

Little Bear fell onto his rump and started to cry again.

"What's the matter now?" asked Crow.

"My parents tried to teach me, but I was never very good at climbing trees or rocks," said Little Bear. "I don't know how."

Crow shook her head. "That's not the right attitude, friend. Let's go give it a try."

Crow and Little Bear walked toward the mountain. When they came to the first set of big rocks, Crow flew to the top and called down, "Come on up, Little Bear."

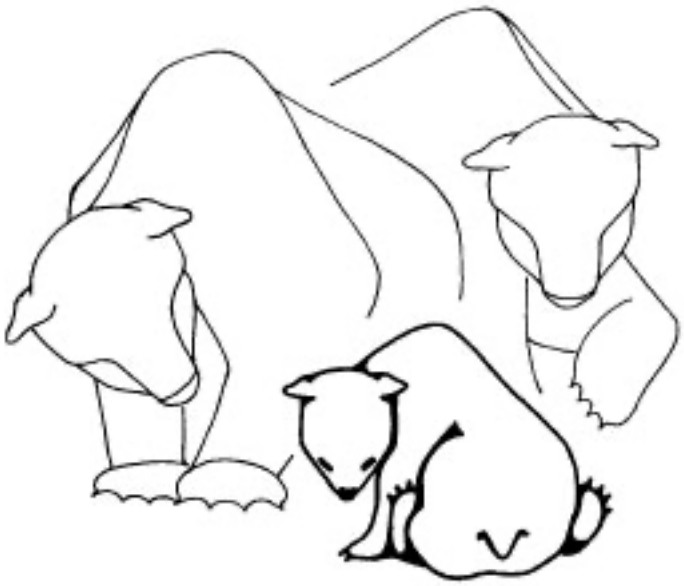
Little Bear jumped on the rock, and slid straight to the bottom. He jumped up and tried again, with the same result. Little Bear looked like he was about to cry again.

This could be harder than I thought, said Crow to herself.

Crow flew back to the beach, and filled her claws with sand. She spread the sand all over the rocks. "Try it now, Little Bear."

Little Bear shook his head. "No way," he said.

"It will be easier this time, Little Bear," said Crow. "I promise."



Little Bear hopped onto the rock, and to his surprise, he did not slide off. Slowly, he inched his way up the rock until he had reached the top. He and Crow celebrated. They began to make their way up the mountain, with Crow spreading sand on the rocks and Little Bear climbing inch by inch. By the time they reached the top, Crow was not using any sand at all.

"Congratulations," said Crow. "You did that quite well."

"My stomach is kind of sore," said Little Bear. "But I learned how to climb rocks!"

"You should never stop learning."

"I guess that is true."

They took a rest and gazed out at the scene. "I still can't see my home," said Little Bear.

Crow hopped onto the branch of a nearby tree. "If we climb up here, you will be able to see your home."

"I can't climb trees!" said Little Bear. Crow shook her head at him.

"Oh, okay. I'll try," sighed Little Bear.

Little Bear grabbed Crow's wing and hopped onto the first branch. He started to climb, but lost his hold and nearly fell out of the tree.

This could be harder than I thought, said Crow to herself.

"Little Bear, do you see this bark on the tree? Dig your claws into the bark. That is what you have claws for."

Little Bear was very scared. He tried digging his claws into the bark. To his surprise, he got a very good grip. Slowly, he became more confident in his claws, and he began to make his way up the tree. Crow hopped from branch to branch, encouraging him along the way. Finally, after a

great deal of climbing, they reached the top of the tallest tree on the mountain. Little Bear was very excited.

"Thank you, Crow. Thank you for teaching me how to climb trees! And look, over there. There is my home!"

Crow looked to the lakes in the west where Little Bear was pointing. She could almost taste the fish.

"But how are we ever going to get from this tall tree to my home?" asked Little Bear.

"Little Bear, we are going to fly," said Crow.

"Crow, my friend, you have taught me quite a lot today. But I think you're getting a little carried away."

"Little Bear, trust me!" cried Crow. "Think of your home and all those tasty fish."

Bear closed his eyes and began daydreaming about all the fish in the lakes. As soon as he closed his eyes, Crow flapped her wing in the air and pushed Little Bear from the tree.

"Yooouuu puuusshed meeeeee!" yelled Little Bear as he fell through the sky, legs flailing in the air.

Suddenly, Crow swooped below him and caught him on her back. "Wrap your arms around my neck or you'll fall off," she said.

Little Bear did as he was told. The shock wore off and he realized that he was flying. "Hey, we're flying!"



Little Bear was enjoying the flight. He looked around at the trees and lakes and the big river far below.

Crow kept her wings outspread as Little Bear clutched onto her neck. They flew along the wind currents, rising and falling as they drifted to Little Bear's home. "Flying is pretty neat," said Little Bear.

"Yes, I guess I take it for granted," said Crow.

As they got closer to Little Bear's home, Crow was getting quite tired. "Little Bear, you are getting very heavy. I think we should land."

"Good idea, Crow. Take us by that lake. It is good fishing there."

Crow and Little Bear landed by the lake. Now that their long journey was over, they were hungry. Fish began jumping from the water in great numbers right in front of them.

"Look at all those fish!" exclaimed Crow. She grew so excited that she dove into the lake and began flapping around, trying to snap up fish in her beak. She splashed and spluttered, and did not catch one fish.

Little Bear began to laugh at his friend. "No wonder you are hungry all the time. Come here and dry off."

As Crow shook all her feathers, Little Bear crept to the shore of the lake. He knelt down and slipped his paw into the water. Little Bear began quietly to sing a song.

Crow watched Little Bear. He is taking an awfully long time, thought Crow to herself. Why is he just sitting there? I am getting hungry.

Suddenly, Little Bear scooped his paw and a large fish came flying out of the lake. Minutes later he repeated the action, and another fish landed on the shore. Little Bear turned to Crow and smiled. "That should be enough for dinner. We don't need any more."

The two friends had a meal of fish. "My father taught me that it is important to sing that song when I go fishing. It makes the fish sleepy," said Little Bear.

"Well, it is a much better way of fishing than my method," laughed Crow.

They ate most of the fish, and wrapped the rest as a gift for Little Bear's people. The pair travelled to Little Bear's home. Little Bear's people were overjoyed to see him again and they threw a huge feast for Crow. Crow was happy with Little Bear's people and the good fishing in the lake, so she decided to stay. She never went back to the big river again.

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