

Too Close

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As rain pelts down outside, two children watch the monotonous drumming of water on window. Boredom had long ago taken over the minds of the brother and sister, who both are yearning to play outside.

A clap of thunder sounds, and the boy falls backwards, startled.
"Don't be a wuss!" taunts his younger sister.

He gets up, and stares around at his bleak surroundings. Two bluish-grey couches face each other, one pushed up towards the windows; a large mat, coloured green, red, and black, is sprawled between; and the old desk on which they were sitting, no longer used, sitting in the corner by the windows.

Before the boy's eyes, the couches sprung up into towering peaks, and the mat sunk into a deep ravine, gaping like a hideous mouth. The mountain valley had presented itself. Imagination had run wild.

The valley was tempting them, begging them to cross. We can do it, thought the boy, I know we can! Yet these mountains had never been successfully traversed before; could it be done?

Yes, it could, he concluded. Surely something special would await them on the other side. Maybe even treasure.

"Let's go!"

"Sure?"

"Sure!"

The steep ascent would be tricky. The sheer rock wall was loose, with limited secure foot holes. Carefully they select their path, and begin the climb.

"Don't look down!" The boy called to his sister. Suddenly his foot hole came loose, and he had to scramble to make the next small ledge. He gave a sigh of relief, and then continued climbing.

The summit was in sight, and with a final heave he reached the top, panting. He lay against a boulder to catch his breath, and then saw his sister's arms reach over the edge. They had made it.

An alarming crack rang across the valley. The edge of the cliff was giving way. Her arms were slipping.

He had do do something. Quickly. He dives desperately, and the hands clasped. The boy pulled up his sister, and they both lay exhausted on the ledge. That was too close.

The peak was an isolated cliff top, and behind them were the lower reaches of the valley. Snaking its way through the valley was a deep ravine, which fell vertically through the earth. To get down to the valley, they must go down a steep, winding path, consisting of loose gravel and grit.

As they started down, they looked across the valley they were to cross, and conquer. Below the track was another edge, this time to the canyon.

The path snaked down the hillside. Both children were sure-footed, though try as they might, the stones beneath their feet crumbled. They both tumbled helplessly down, sliding towards the gorge, which was waiting to gobble them up.

Their slide came to a halt inches from the edge of the cliff. Both sore and dirty, they got up and looked down as stones fell into the darkness below. Once again, way too close.

The boy looked along the ledge. The rock narrowed towards the bend. Looks unstable, thought the boy. We will have to be more careful.

The pair kept close to the wall as they cautiously continued along their journey. One false step along the brittle ledge and both would go over.

Their trail continued around the bend, and here it was less than a metre wide. It was getting two narrow. Up ahead a small section of the track was missing; where someone else may have fallen.

With a run-up, they both jumped clear over the hole. Upon landing, the section began to crumble. The boy dived, the girl followed, and the landed just safely on the other side.

This section was highly deteriorated; they now had to tread very lightly. However, around the next turn, the path abruptly ended, cut off where a rockslide had destroyed the rest of the walkway. They looked around for another way; they had come too far to go back now.

The other side of the gorge was not too far away, perhaps within jumping distance. It was the only option.

"We'll have to jump," said the boy.

"But we won't make it!"

"We have to try."

With a limited run-up, this would be close. He jumped. For what seemed like an eternity, he hung in the air, before crashing heavily onto the other side. He had just made it.

"Your turn! You can do it!"

The girl followed her brother's example, and flung herself out over the black. She began to fall. She was not going to make it.

"Help!"

The boy reached as far as possible, though his sister just clipped his hands. She fell, and having lost his balance, he fell too.

A loud scream echoed through the house.

"Em! Daniel! What are you doing? What did I tell you about jumping on the couches!"

Their mother rushed to aid her fallen daughter.