

A PORTION OF "THE GRIZZLY MOTHER"
FROM WILD ANIMAL HOMESTEADS BY ENOS A. MILLS

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Two hunters and a number of dogs made camp one evening near the headwaters of the St. Vrain River. They were after grizzly. There were grizzlies in the surrounding rugged country, but with numerous high, rocky ridges, deep canyons, and miles of forests, most of them avoided being seen and escaped the hunters even when dogs were used.

Off to the north, up a steep mountain, a mother grizzly had her cubs. The bayings of the dogs or the scent of the far off hunters reached her the morning after they had made camp. A grizzly mother takes no chances with her cubs. Generally her keen senses warn her of the approach of a man while he is still far off. The instant she scents the enemy she hurries her young far away out of the danger zone. But one of this bear's cubs had recently been crippled by the fall of a tree limb and could not travel.

The mother grizzly appeared in the hunters' camp just as they were finishing breakfast. Instantly everything was in an uproar and twenty dogs were after her. Away she fled to the south—to lead the dogs away from the cubs. She did not succeed, did not after an all day struggle lead dogs and hunters away.

The following morning Mother Grizzly reappeared near the camp. Again hunters and dogs pursued. Miles to the south she ran. This time, however, she succeeded in getting them far from her den and cubs. She zigzagged, circled, waded three miles up a mountain stream, concealed her trail, and escaped. The noisy, bewildered dogs were left at the foot of the mountain.

Unable to keep up with the dogs, the hunters left them to their fate and climbed the mountainside. On a cliff they sat listening, and searching the treeless slopes of the summit with their glasses. When the bear came out above the uppermost trees they had

glimpses of her. She stood on hind legs to listen. Then, hurriedly, she turned back to the last tree clump and stood on tiptoe again, listening. Satisfied that she had eluded the dogs she set off northward along the timberline toward her far-away den. She probably had been away from it thirty-six hours or longer.

She should be safe now. A grizzly ever assumes itself followed and ever is watchful for ambush. The breeze was behind her. Coming to a low ridge, she stopped. Before showing herself, she peeped over. The way appeared safe.

The instant she reached the skyline the hunters opened fire. She was out of sight in a few seconds. Miles she ran toward the southwest, away from her home. Late in the afternoon her pursuers paused on a high spur. In the distance with their glasses they saw her pacing back and forth on a pass.

She was more than twenty miles from her den, over the territory through which she had escaped both dogs and hunters. The cubs were not yet safe. These hunters and dogs must be led farther off. It was possible for her to cross to the other side of the Continental Divide, and over a rough and roundabout way which dogs could not follow come back to the den. This would mean perhaps fifty miles of travel.

She stopped pacing. She had made up her mind. While the hunters were watching, she crossed over the Divide.

An enormous landslide slipped from the mountainside and carried the bear den and its surroundings into the bottom of a canyon. From my camp I heard the slide and saw the dust it threw up. I did not then know that the mother was away seeking to lead the dogs off. I feared that the entire grizzly family had been carried down and started up the mountain to make a search. A stupendous pile of chaotic wreckage lay about. Uprooted trees, boulders, broken rocks, many of enormous size, were flung together in wildest confusion. In this debris and along the slide's destructive way I searched and searched for the cubs and the bear.

The second morning following the grizzly returned. I was on the mountainside near where her den had been. She probably had traversed the western slope of the high Divide to a point opposite it, then climbed over the summit. Through the glasses I watched her shuffling rapidly down the long, treeless slope. While still a quarter of a mile from the place her den had been she appeared to know of a change. Perhaps she saw some of it and scented the fresh surfaces and crushed trees. She stopped, stood on hind legs, drew paws up to her breast, leaned forward and with nose pointing here and there, looked over the change in the place.

She showed surprise and interest in the landslide, but no fear, no alarm. She approached the torn edge cautiously, looked at it for a moment, then plunged down into the canyon and began looking right and left for the den. Then she raced here and there, her nose down like a dog, searching intently for the cubs.

She caught my scent, smelled in one of my tracks, rose up on hind legs with neck bristling. She recognized man danger for the cubs. Ordinarily, man scent causes a grizzly to rush from a locality. Her attitude was defiance, not retreat. Intent on the search, and steaming with warmth, she passed near without detecting me. Hurrying along the broken landslide channel she galloped. Down she went, searching in the vast dump with eyes and nose.

I hurried on down to where the slide had plunged wildly over the canyon rim.

At the bottom, almost on the edge of the stream, the grizzly unearthed a lifeless cub. She fondled it, licked its body clean, then laid it down and looked at it with puzzled expression. She lifted it to the bank. Gently, ever so gently, she pawed and shoved if about as though trying to awaken it. Pushing it against a boulder she backed away, watching it. Then she turned and climbed back up the landslide's torn track as though to search farther for the other cub.

Fearing that Mother Grizzly might come upon me in one of her wild dashes, I made

haste to leave the region. I started rapidly for camp, but about a mile down the mountain stopped to rest and look around.

While I was standing by a log, a dirty little cub came from among the trees and walked slowly toward me. Neither sight nor scent warned him of my presence. After smelling and sniffing by the side of the log he began digging. He found nothing and raised his head and whined. He took a few short steps, then stopped as though tired and uncertain which way to go or what to do. He was a lost, hungry cub—the one for which the mother was now searching.

I grabbed him. He fought me, clawing, biting, and struggling. Weak, since he had not nursed for two or three days, he weighed only a few pounds. In the big pocket of my coat he at once snuggled down.

There I stood with a grizzly cub in my pocket. Any instant the mother might appear, trailing me down the mountain, or, more likely, trailing the cub to this place.

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