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The Orchid Tower



The Orchid Tower

The leaf-map glowed violet and pointed at the tallest tree near the station. It was covered from top to bottom in flowers. "The orchid tower," said Uncle Bo. "At the very top, an orchid I've waited all year for is about to open."





Up We Go

Uncle Bo hooked the big basket to the tower's rope. Lina and Sami climbed in and clicked their straps. "Slow and steady," said Uncle Bo, and he began to wind the crank. Creak, creak. Up went the basket, past the first flowers.

A Red Jewel

Up, up, past pink orchids and white ones, past spiky plants with little cups of water in their middles. Then Sami pointed. High above, something shone bright red. "The orchid!" he cried. "It's like a jewel!"





Splash!

Tuki landed on a spiky plant to look. He poked his big beak into its little cup of water. SPLASH! Water sloshed right up into his face. Tuki shook his head, blinking, with a dewdrop on the end of his beak.

Something on the Rope

Creak, creak, the basket rose. Then Lina saw something on the rope, just above the pulley wheel. It was tiny, and red, and it was moving. In a moment, the wheel would roll right over it.





"Stop!"

Lina took a big breath and called as loud and clear as she could: "Uncle Bo, STOP!" The crank stopped. The basket stopped. Everyone was very, very still. "There's a frog on the rope," said Lina, her voice steady.

The Red Jewel Moves

The little frog climbed off the rope onto the tree. On its back was a tiny tadpole! Up it went, to a spiky plant's cup of water, and it slipped the tadpole in. "Some tiny frogs carry their tadpoles up trees, one at a time, to little pools in plants," whispered Uncle Bo. The red jewel was a frog!





A Nursery in the Sky

Sami peered into the plant. Wiggle, wiggle. The tadpole was swimming in its own tiny pond, high up in the sky. "It's a nursery," Sami whispered. "And you saved the mummy," he told Lina. Lina smiled.

The Orchid Opens

Uncle Bo wound the basket gently up to the very top. And there, in a shaft of sunlight, the violet orchid was opening, one petal, then another. "Two wonders in one day," said Lina. Tuki gave a soft, happy squawk.





A Violet Petal

Back at the station, a single violet petal had drifted onto Sami's satchel. Lina put it on the wonder shelf, beside all their other treasures. Seven wonders in a row. "Best shelf in the whole forest," said Sami.

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THE END

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