

Otto's Tales



An
Let's Visit
ALASKAN GLACIER

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ALASKAN GLACIER



“This is the best way to travel!” Smidge stacked her plate with lots of yummy food. “I’m so happy Dennis’s family invited us to come on this Alaskan cruise! I’m going to eat and nap all week long.”



“**Ruff Ruff!**” Otto barked. “You already do that at home. We should go on a fun adventure, like an **excursion**. Dennis gave me a list.” The bulldog showed his friend a colorful paper with pictures.



Smidge looked for a place to sit instead. “There’s so much to do on the ship—like eating snacks and sitting by the pool.”

“But we’re only in the city of **Juneau** for one day,” Otto insisted. “Alaska has so many different things to see—like mountains, forests, and lakes.”

The kitten pushed open a door and nearly fell backward from a quick, chilly breeze coming across the deck. “Alaska is COLD!”





“Do you want some of my hot chocolate?” Otto asked. Smidge eagerly grabbed his mug but lost control of her heavy plate. “Woah!!”

The bulldog caught her plate, but the paper slipped from his paws. The wind blew it over the edge of the ship.

“That was close!” the kitten exclaimed.

Otto sighed. “Now I have to find another list.”



“Did someone drop this?” Someone called from the sea below.

The friends peeked over the rails and saw a sleek orca whale waving a giant fin.

“That’s ours!” Otto barked. “Meet us at the dock!”

Smidge was eating a delicious cookie as the bulldog pulled her away. “My lunch!!”



Down on the docks, they searched the crowd.

“Over here!” the whale shouted.

“Thanks for saving my list. I’m Otto, and this is Smidge,” the bulldog greeted.

“Hi! I’m Sita. Do you need some ideas for where to visit?”



Smidge snatched the paper. “All of these are outside. Are there any cozy, indoor things to do?”



Sita laughed. “This state is known for its outdoor activities! Many people come every year to explore our beautiful forests, mountains, and **glaciers.**”

“What’s a glacier?” the kitten asked.

“A giant piece of ice,” Sita explained. “We have a famous one nearby called **Mendenhall Glacier**. The Native Americans from here once called it the ‘Sitaantaagu,’ or ‘the glacier behind the town.’ That’s where my name comes from, and I know you’ll love it.”



“Oh, I’ve seen pictures of glaciers before.” Smidge nodded. “I thought they were melting.”

Sita replied, “The ice is always changing and moving. It would take hundreds of years for these glaciers to completely melt.”

“Wow!” Otto barked. “We’ll definitely check it out.”

With a wave, the orca belly-flopped back into the sea. **SPLASH!**

Smidge pointed on the paper. “Look, we can take a helicopter there! I can’t wait to sit back and enjoy the view.”



Hovering over a big, white field of ice and snow, the friends leaped out of their helicopter and thumped onto the top of the glacier.



“I thought we were going to *stay* in the helicopter.” The kitten shivered.

“We could, but it’s more fun to explore the glacier for ourselves,” Otto said.

Smidge plopped in the snow and began digging. “How much ice do I need for ice cream?”

“Excuse me?” A mysterious voice bellowed.

“Who’s there?” The friends looked around.

A white polar bear was suddenly before them. “I think I lost my tour group. Have you seen anyone?”



Smidge froze. “You’re a polar bear?! I thought you were all **extinct**.”

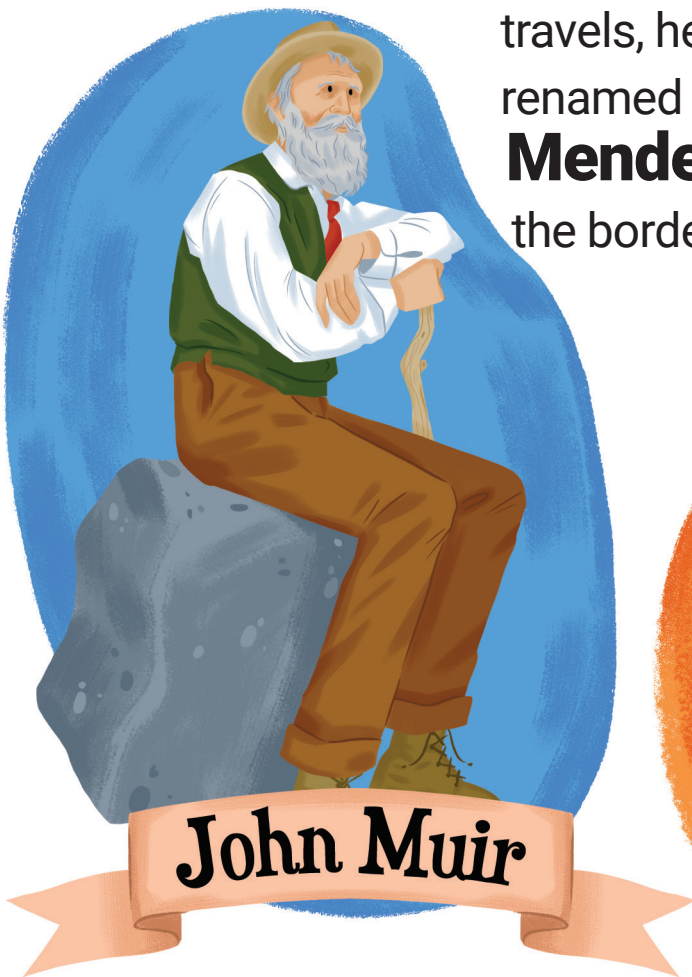
“That’s just a myth.” The bear smiled. “We still live where it’s cold. But I’m on vacation! I love traveling south to enjoy the warmer weather.”

“You think this is warm?!” The kitten was shocked.

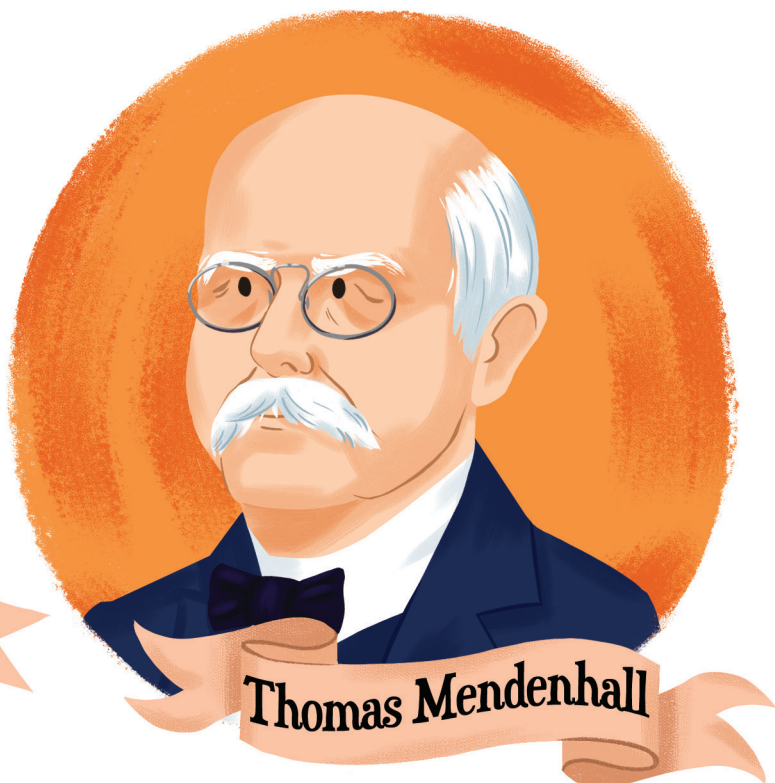
“Compared to where I live, oh yeah!”

“Good thing you have all that fluffy fur.” The bulldog grinned. “By the way, I’m Otto, and this is Smidge.”

“**John Muir**, nice to meet you,” the bear replied. “I share a name with the man who spent his career studying nature and **preserving** it for us to enjoy. When he found this glacier during his travels, he named it Auke Glacier. It was later renamed Mendenhall Glacier after **Thomas Mendenhall**, the man who helped decide the border between Canada and Alaska.”



John Muir



Thomas Mendenhall

“Wow, this glacier has had a lot of names!” Otto marveled.

“I want to name something,” Smidge piped in.

“You’ve got to discover something first,” Otto replied.

The kitten lifted her snow pile. “Fresh glacier ice cream!”

Mr. Muir smiled. “I think you’re missing a few ingredients, but it’s very smart to think of ways to use the things around you. Since the beginning of time, people and animals have had to rely on nature to get the resources they need for daily life. Did you know that when glaciers melt, they provide water for both people and animals to drink?”

“Really?” Otto asked. “I thought glaciers melting was a bad thing.”





“Sometimes melting can cause problems for people, like when there’s flooding,” the bear said. “But nature changes all the time for many reasons. Did you know that much of North America was under glaciers in the last ice age? Now, we have mountains, rivers, lakes, forests, and even cities in their place. As the Earth changes, we do too.”

“I didn’t realize how powerful nature is,” the kitten admitted. “If nature is so big and hard to control, then how can we protect it?”

Mr. Muir looked them in the eyes. “Through **stewardship.**”



“What’s that?” Smidge wondered.

“Stewardship means to take care of something,” the polar bear explained. “You take care of your body by giving it food and water so it can stay healthy. You keep the environment healthy by picking up after yourself and leaving any place you visit better than you found it. A great way to help our Earth is to focus on the things that are *your* responsibility.”

“Right!” Otto nudged Smidge.

“Yeah,” she agreed, dropping her pile of snow back onto the glacier. She began stomping the snow back into place with Otto’s help.



CRUNCH! CRACK!

“Stop!” Mr. Muir warned, but it was too late. The ice broke, and the three fell through...down, down, down!

“Oof!” Smidge dusted snow off herself. “Where are we?”

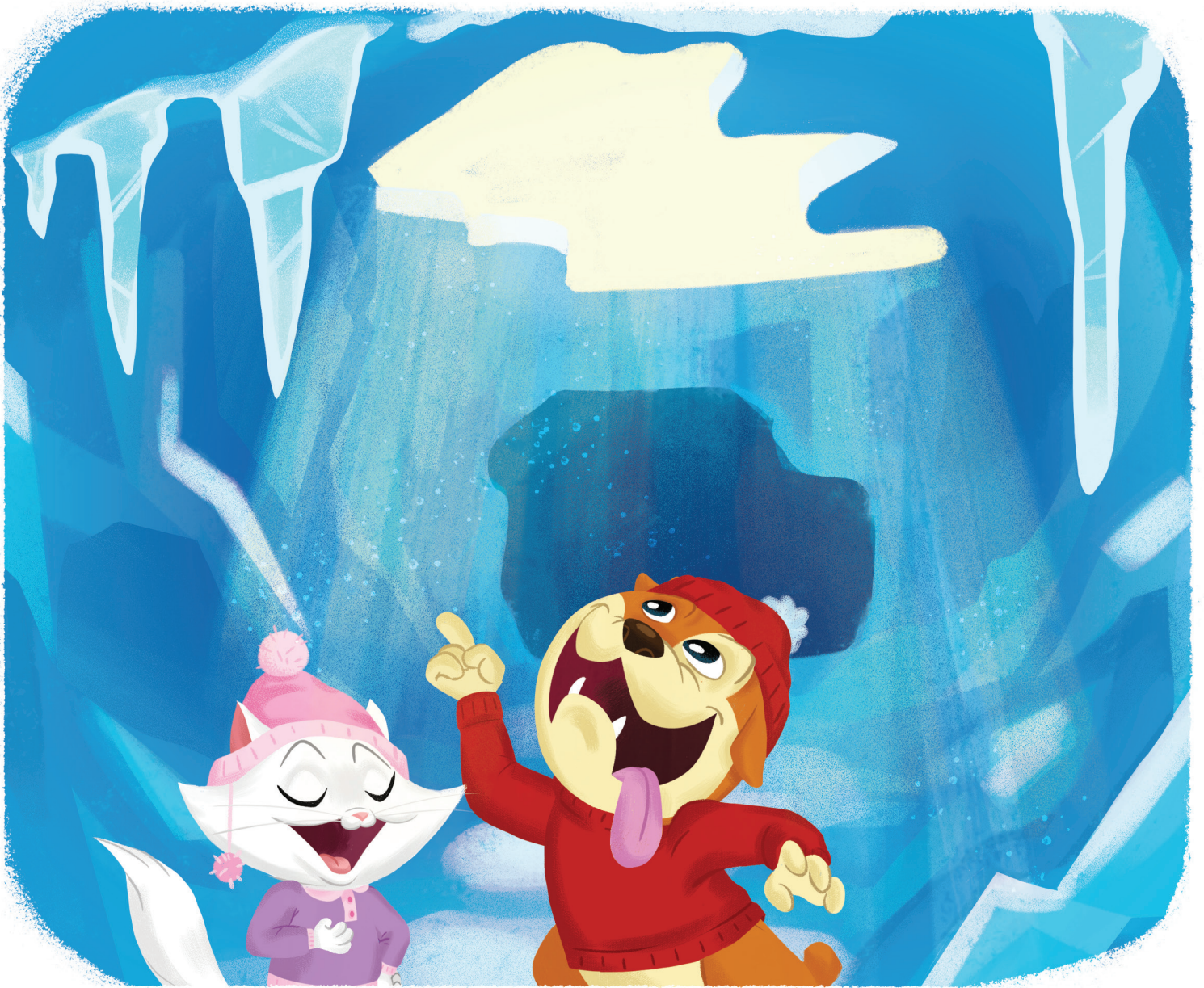
“In an ice cave,” Mr. Muir announced.

Bright colors glowed around them. “I didn’t know ice could be so blue!” Otto marveled at the sight.



“Ice absorbs all the light we can see except for blue, which bounces back for our eyes to see. Ice caves are special—always growing and shrinking. This one could disappear, and another could show up somewhere else,” the bear shared.





“So there’s always new things to discover!” the kitten exclaimed. “If we’re the first to fall in this one, I bet it needs a name. How about Smidge’s Secret Cave?”

Otto looked at the hole above them. “Well, the secret’s out now!”

“Good,” the kitten said with pride. “I want everyone to see this beautiful place.”

The bulldog smiled. “Alright Smidge the Explorer, we visited your cave. Now, how do we get out of here?”

The kitten spun around, searching the cave. “Hmm, well, there’s a couple of ways...”

“Follow me.” Mr. Muir patted her arm. “I’ve been in many ice caves before.”

The friends followed the polar bear, naming every new cave as they carefully made their way through the giant ice maze!

Finally, they came out onto a rocky area by the lake.



“Thank you for getting us out safely,” Otto told Mr. Muir.

The bear smiled. “You’re welcome. I’m going back to the visitor center to find my tour group. Enjoy the rest of your time here!”

The friends waved as Mr. Muir walked away.



“Are you ready to be stewards?” Otto winked at Smidge.

“Yes!” She looked around and picked up Otto’s scarf from the ground, helping him wrap it back around his neck.

“I can’t wait to tell Dennis about this excursion!” the bulldog barked.



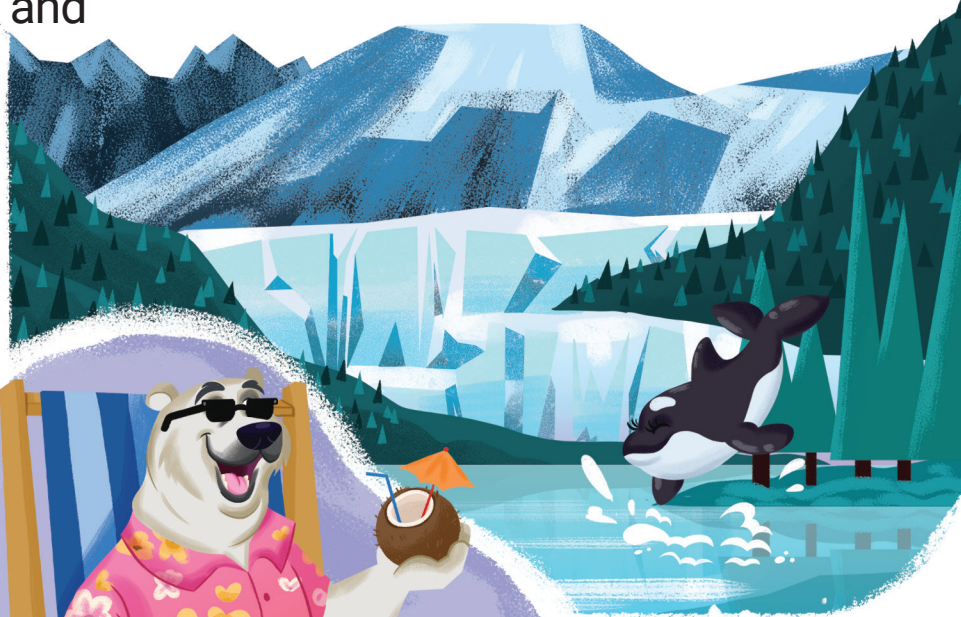


Back at the cruise ship, the friends found Dennis on his room's balcony—his nose in a book. "I was wondering when you two would get back. What'd you do today?"

"We visited Mendenhall Glacier and met a polar bear!" Smidge exclaimed.

"We learned a lot about Alaska and how powerful nature is."

Otto jumped in, "And one of our new friends taught us how to be good stewards and care for nature so we can all enjoy it. We should always be responsible and leave places better than we found them."



“That’s great.” Dennis was impressed.
“Responsibility is an important lesson to learn.”

“That was my favorite adventure yet!” Otto howled.

“You say that every time, Otto,” Smidge laughed.

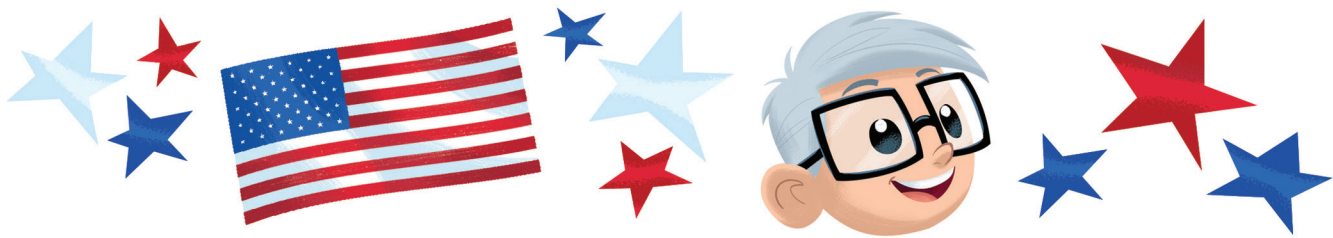
“Do you two want to watch the **northern lights** with me?” Dennis’s eyes lit up. “It’s going to be a clear night.”

The friends nodded and settled in as the sky grew darker. Dazzling stars and streams of colorful light danced across the night sky.

“I can’t wait to do another excursion wherever we stop next!” Smidge shared.

“**Ruff Ruff!**”





We Love Our History

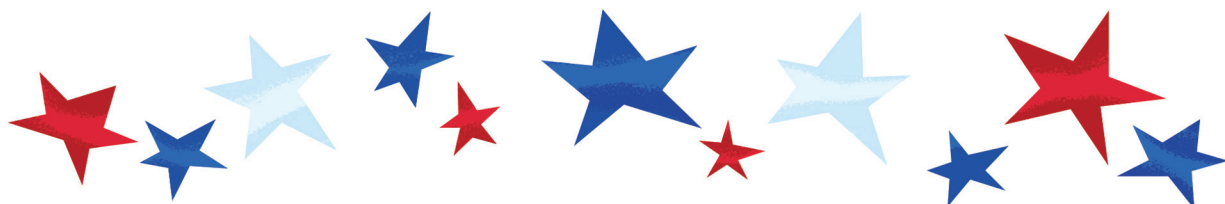
Excursion: A short trip, usually taken for pleasure or sightseeing.

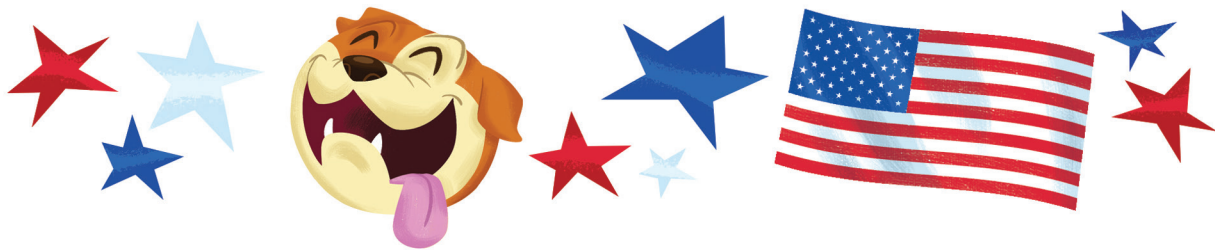
Juneau: The capital city of the U.S. state Alaska. Juneau was named the capital in 1906. It's the third most populous city in Alaska. There are no roads connecting the city to the rest of the state or North America, making it unique among the 49 other mainland U.S. state capitals.

Glacier: A massive body of snow and ice that forms on land when falling snow gets compressed into sheets of ice over many centuries. These bodies of ice move slowly downward due to gravity.

Mendenhall Glacier: A glacier located 13 miles northwest of Juneau, Alaska. It is 12 miles long, 1.5 miles wide, and more than 100 feet high where it ends. The Tlingit Native Americans originally named it "Sitaantaagu," meaning "the glacier behind the town." They also called it "Aak'wtaaksit," meaning "the glacier behind the little lake." It's part of the Tongass National Forest and the vast Juneau Ice Field.

Extinct: An animal or plant species that is no longer in existence.





John Muir: A Scottish-born American naturalist, author, environmental philosopher, botanist, zoologist, glaciologist, and a prominent supporter of preserving the nation’s forests. He is also known as the “Father of the National Parks.” Before Mendenhall Glacier got its name, he called it the Auke Glacier, after the Auk Kwaan band of Tlingit Natives.

Preserve: To ensure something continues to exist by protecting it from injury, damage, or destruction.

Thomas Mendenhall: An American physicist and meteorologist. He was the superintendent of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey from 1889 to 1894, and he helped determine the border between Canada and Alaska. In 1892, Mendenhall Glacier was named after him.

Stewardship: A value that involves responsibility and management of resources. In an environmental context, this involves being both productive with and protective of Earth’s vast ecosystems.

Northern Lights: An atmospheric phenomenon that results in a unique display of lights in the sky. Also known as the aurora borealis, this light show is common in high-latitude regions of the Earth, especially the Arctic and Antarctic regions.



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**See you in
our *next* adventure!**

- Dennis, Otto,
and Smidge

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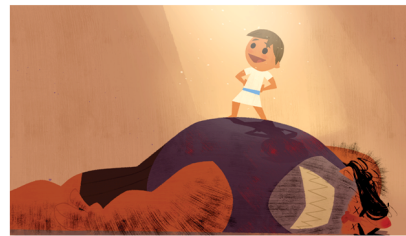
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