

Adventures of Blackie and Ginger

The Story of two Little Bears



On a day in summer two little bears were playing together on a hillside.

“What can we do, Blackie?” Ginger asked her brother. “There must be lots of things we’ve never done yet.”

“I’ll tell you,” Blackie answered, “Let’s hide in the bushes so that mother can’t find us when she comes back.”

“You know very well that mother will find us!” Ginger said. “She’ll smell us right away.”

“I can hide so mother won’t find me,” Blackie boasted. “I can hide so she couldn’t ever find me!”

“You can not!” Ginger said quickly. “Mother can find anything anywhere just by smelling it.”

Blackie did not answer. Going over to his sister he gave her a push that sent her sprawling on her little back. Ginger got to her feet and rushed at Blackie as hard as she could. She loved a rough-and-tumble just as much as he did.

Blackie saw her coming and was ready for her. Rising to his hind legs, he gave her a smack. This time Ginger did not fall; instead, she rose to her hind legs too and cuffed Blackie on the ear.

The two little bears were so busy scuffling that they did not see the mother bear coming toward them. Suddenly her big paw reached out and..

“Wooff!” said Blackie, sitting down on the ground very hard.

“Wooff!” said Ginger, landing near him.

“Stop it!” said the mother. “Listen to me! I have a treat for you. I know where there is something specially good to eat - something that you both like very much.”

“What is it? What is it?” cried both little bears.

“It is honey!”

“Oh-Oh-OH!” Blackie and Ginger stood on their hind legs and waived their paws joyfully.

“Where is it, mother? Where is it? How did you find it?”

“I smelled it,” she answered. “I think it is in an old tree on the other side of the hill. It won't take us long to get there. Come along! Single file!”

She started off, rolling her great body from side to side. The little bears followed, trying to walk just as she did. They lifted both feet on one side at the same time, first the right and then the left, then the right and then the left. And they put their feet down flat just as she did, leaving tracks that showed the prints of their claws.

“Look! mother!” Ginger called out, “Blackie isn't coming! He's back there looking for grubs under a stone!”

Mother bear stopped and turned her head. “Blackie!” she called sharply, “come along! You can hunt for grubs any time, but you don't get honey every day.”

“But I'm hungry now,” Blackie said, turning over a large stone with his front paw, “and it's a long way to the honey tree.”

The mother bear started back towards Blackie. He gulped down a large fat grub and came running toward her. “I'm coming, mother,” he called. “I'm hurrying as fast as I can.”

Then for a while the two little bears followed her without a word.



Presently Ginger whimpered, “It's hot and I'm tired. We've walked a long way, haven't we?”

“I'm not tired,” Blackie said. “I can walk ever and ever so far and not get tired.”

“I wish the honey tree wasn't so far away,” Ginger complained. “I wish we were back in our nice den, with mother to feed us.”

“Ho! I don't,” Blackie said scornfully. “We're too old to drink milk now. And anyhow, I like grubs and fruit and berries better-and honey,” he added. “I like honey better than anything.”

“I do too, only I don't like to walk so far to get it. Do you remember how dark the den was, Blackie?”

“Of course I do. I remember all about it. We were born there, and for a good many days we didn't open our eyes.”

“You don’t remember that at all, Blackie Black Bear! Mother told you that - I heard her! And I heard her tell you that we didn’t go out of the den until we were three months old! I don’t believe you really remember anything about the den.”

“But I do!” Blackie said crossly. “I remember that it was cold.”

“That’s because we didn’t have nice thick fur then,” Ginger said, “Mother told me that we didn’t have much fur at all when we were born. We weren’t very big either - we weren’t much bigger than squirrels!”

“I was never as little as a squirrel!” Blackie said, very angry at the thought of this. “Was I, mother?” he called. “Was I ever as little as a squirrel?”

“Yes you were,” his mother said, “but you children had better hurry up. We are getting near to the honey now. It’s in that old hollow tree stump right over there.”

“The two little bears forgot everything else and ran to catch up.”



“Um-m!” Blackie said, sniffing the air, “doesn’t it smell good?”

“Yes,” Ginger answered “Only I hope the bees won’t sting us the way they did last time.”

The mother bear went straight to the stump. The bees buzzed and swarmed angrily, but she paid no attention. She began to scratch and tear at the rotting wood to make a hole big enough for her paw.

“Oh, dear!” cried Ginger, holding her paws to her tender little nose!”

“Ouch!” Blackie cried at the same time, “a bee stung me on my head.”

The mother bear kept on tearing at the stump with her strong claws. Her fur was so thick that the bees couldn’t sting her easily. Even though one or two did sting her nose, she didn’t mind much; she was so eager to get at the honey.

When the hole was big enough, she put in her paw and brought it out dripping with honey. “Delicious!” she said, as she licked off the sweet sticky stuff, Blackie and Ginger stretched up on their hind legs and put in their paws too. They gobbled down the honey as fast as they could. The angry bees stung them and the little bears whined and whimpered but still kept on eating.

“wasn’t it good?” Blackie said when all the honey was gone. “I wish we had honey every day.”

“Well, I wish the bees wouldn’t sting so hard,” Ginger said, rubbing her sore nose.

“Come, children,” their mother said. “We will go over to the shade, away from the bees, and take a nap.”

The little bears were so full of honey that they were glad to lie down. Ginger dropped off to sleep at once. Suddenly Blackie raised his head.

“What’s that mother? What’s that queer scratching sound I hear?”

“That is something you ought to know about. Come with me I’ll show you.”

They waddled over to a clump of bushes near a tall smooth tree. The little bear looked through the bushes and saw a strange sight.

A huge bear was standing on his hind legs scratching on the tree as high as he could reach.

Blackie watched him a moment in silence. He couldn’t understand what the bear was doing. He wanted to know. So he walked straight through the bushes and called out: “What are you scratching that tree for, Black Bear?”

The black bear stopped his scratching and looked down at little Blackie. “This is a scratching tree,” he said in a gruff voice. “Don’t you know what a scratching tree is?”

“No I don’t. What is it?”

“It is a tree that he-bears scratch on.”

“Why do you scratch on it?”

“So that other bears that come along will know who has been here. Look! That is my mark - the one that is the highest up the tree. No other bear who has scratched this tree is as big and strong as I am.”

Blackie stared at him with big eyes. “He’s a terribly big bear, isn’t he mother?” he said. “I’d like to be as big as he is.”

“Maybe you will be some day,” his mother said.



When they got back to where they had left Ginger she was awake and ready to play again.

“Now what can we do mother?” she said. “I’d like to do something I’ve never done before.”

“How would you like to go fishing?” her mother asked.

“Is it fun?” asked the little bears.

“Lots of fun, and besides, fish are good to eat.”

“As good as honey?” Ginger asked eagerly.

“They have a different taste,” her mother answered “But they’re good.”

Their mother took them down the hillside, along a path that other bears had made when they went to fish. Presently they came to a little stream. “Now watch me,” she said “and do just as I do.”

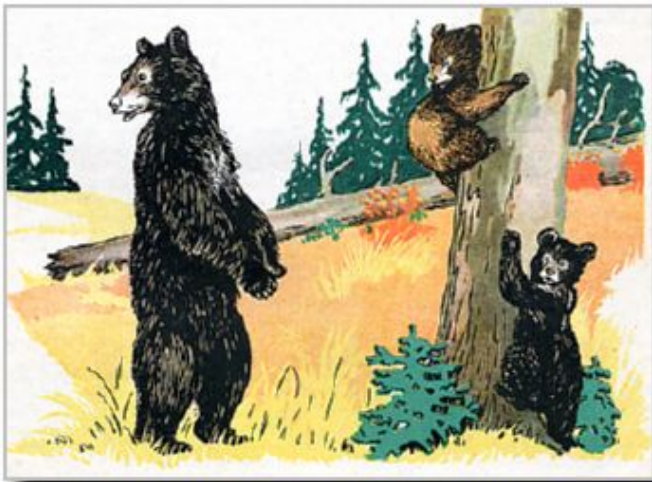
She stood at the side of the stream and put her front paw in the water. For a time she stood perfectly still, waiting. All of a sudden she scooped it through the water with a splash and brought out a handful of little fish.

“Oh let me taste them!” Blackie cried.

“No! You will never learn to fish if I feed you. You must catch your own food this time.”

So the two little bears stood beside the stream and tried to do just as their mother had done. At first they only brought up water in their paws, but by and by each of them caught a handful of little fish. They felt very proud of themselves.

Suddenly the mother bear rose to her hind feet and moved her head from side to side, sniffing the air.



“Climb this tree, children! Quick!” she said. “I smell danger!”

“I’m too tired to climb,” Ginger said.

“Go up this tree, as I tell you!” the mother said sharply.

“Ginger moved so slowly that her mother gave her a push. Blackie followed a little more quickly. The mother bear, behind him, prodded him on with her nose until at last they were all safely up.

For a while they lay still on a high branch and waited. The mother bear kept sniffing the air. Presently she said: “I think it was that cross old lynx we saw last week. But he’s gone now. Let’s go down.”

Then they all climbed down again - tail first. Blackie and Ginger were even slower coming down than they had been going up, because they kept looking down over their shoulders to see where they were going.

“I don’t like to climb trees,” Ginger said. “It’s too hard for little bears.”

“Coming down is worse,” said Blackie. “I can’t see where I’m going.”

“You must always climb a tree when you smell danger,” their mother said. “Remember that, both of you.”

The sun had set and the air was getting chilly. Blackie and Ginger were very sleepy.

“Can’t we go back to the den tonight, mother?” Ginger asked.

“No,” their mother said. “We will sleep out in the woods all summer. When it gets cold we will go into our old den or find a new one and stay there until it is spring.”

“What will we eat?” Blackie asked quickly.

“We will not eat,” his mother told him. “We won’t be hungry. Before we go into the den we will eat and eat and eat until we are very, very fat. Then we won’t need food all winter.”

“I like fish,” Ginger said sleepily.

“I like honey better,” said Blackie.

“Enough talking, children! Go to sleep!”

The two little bears were so tired with all they had done that day, that they were glad enough to cuddle close to their mother and close their eyes.

THE END