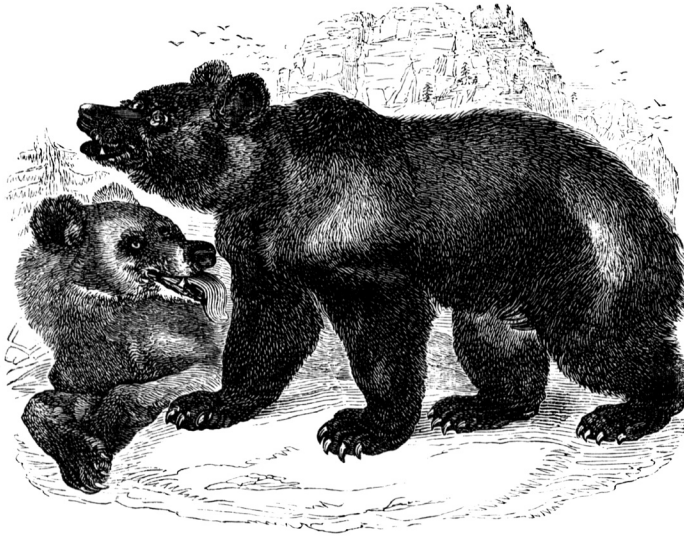


## LITTLE BEAR AT WORK AND AT PLAY

# When Little Bear Bragged


*by Frances Margaret Fox*



One rainy day the three bears were sitting by the fire in their comfortable house in the woods, telling stories. First Father Bear would tell a story, and then Mother Bear would tell a story, and then Father Bear would have a turn again. Between times Little Bear asked questions.

The three were happy and merry until Mother Bear told the old story about the race between the hare and the tortoise, and how the slow-going tortoise was the first to reach the goal because the hare took a nap and did not wake up until after the tortoise had passed him and had won the race.

“You see,” Mother Bear explained, “the hare was so sure he could win that he did not even try to reach the goal quickly. He was so swift-footed that he thought he could go to sleep if he chose and still come out ahead of the patient tortoise.”



“Wasn’t he silly!” exclaimed Little Bear. “If I were going to run a race with Grandpa Tortoise, I should go this way until I reached the goal!” And Little Bear pranced up and down the room until he made even the porridge bowls rattle in the cupboard. “I guess I should know enough to know that Grandpa Tortoise would keep stepping ahead and stepping ahead and get to the goal in time! You would not catch me taking any naps if I started out to run a race with anyone! No, sir-ree!”


Mother Bear laughed heartily, but Father Bear looked very solemn. He did not like to hear Little Bear brag at all.

“So you think, Son Bear,” said he, “that, if you should run a race with Grandpa Tortoise, you would be wiser than our old friend, Peter Hare? Is that what you mean?”

“I know I should,” bragged Little Bear. “I’d say, ‘Good-by, Grandpa Tortoise!’ and off I’d start, and I should beat him before he had time to think. Then, afterward, if I were sleepy and wanted to, I should take a nap.”

“Very well,” said Father Bear, “I shall see Grandpa Tortoise, and if he is willing to run a race with a silly little fellow like you, you shall have your chance, and Peter Hare shall be the judge.”

So it came about that, when the rain was over, the friends of the Three Bears and of the hare and the tortoise met in the woods to see the fun.



Little Bear noticed that, before the race began, the hare and the tortoise were laughing about something, but he did not even wonder what it was. He had nothing to worry about.

At last the word was given: "One, two, three, go!"


Away went the tortoise, slow and easy. Off started Little Bear, running so fast that he was out of breath before he had passed the first oak tree, and was glad to stop a second and have a drink of dew from an acorn cup that Friend Treetoad offered him.

"Thank you," remarked Little Bear, as he returned the cup, "but that was not enough. I shall have to step over to the spring."

"Remember how the hare lost the race," Friend Treetoad warned him.

"Oh, I shall not go to sleep," answered Little Bear, "and, really, Grandpa Tortoise walks slower than I thought he did."

Beside the spring were a number of Little Bear's old friends dressed in green satin coats, who were playing leapfrog. They asked Little Bear to play with them, and soon he was showing the frogs what long leaps he could make. And then, in a little while, many baby rabbits came and joined in the fun. The next that Little Bear knew, he was chasing baby rabbits over the rocks and catching nuts that the squirrels threw to him from the tree tops and having a joyful playtime.



An hour passed quickly, and then Little Bear suddenly remembered that he had started out to run a race. Back he ran to the path and away he flew toward the goal, while the baby rabbits laughed and danced and danced and laughed. Father Bear had sent them to play with Little Bear, but they did not know why he had sent them until that minute.

Stepping along, stepping along, slowly but surely, Grandpa Tortoise had reached the goal, just as he had in the long-ago day when he ran the race with the hare. Little Bear, as he came near the goal, heard the neighbors shouting, “Hurrah for the champion! Hurrah for the champion! Hurrah for Grandpa Tortoise!” Even Father Bear was shouting.

Little Bear remembered his manners and, as his father had told him what to do if he lost the race, straightway walked up and shook hands with Grandpa Tortoise. And the hare, although he must have been laughing in his sleeve, remembered his manners, too, and did not let anyone see him laugh.

After that the old friends and neighbors went home with the Three Bears to eat blackberries and honey and to tell stories round the fire. Grandpa Tortoise went too. He had traveled so slowly that he was not even tired. Little Bear asked a few questions, as usual, that afternoon when the stories were told, but he did not brag. And when Peter Hare winked at him once or twice he laughed.