

Little Bear  
by Adrienn Vadadi

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## Wake up, Johnny!

The winter dreaming had come to an end. Spring had sprung! The swallows had returned, the bees were buzzing, the squirrel was dusting off his coat. But there was no way Little Bear was getting out of his nice warm bed. In his paw he clutched his favourite toys, old Uncle and Auntie Corky, and he was yawning away like nobody's business under the covers.

'Wake up, my little bear cub.' Mama bear kissed the top of his head.

'Out of bed, my little sleepyhead.' Papa Bear squeezed him gently, but Little Bear just clenched his eyes even more tightly shut.

Mama Bear had already put the porridge on the table, cups of milky coffee steamed, but Little Bear just carried on snuffling and snoring away. Then Papa Bear opened the window wide. Fresh air swept into the room.

'Wake up, Johnny!' he shouted to Little Bear.

Little Bear lazily opened one eye, then the other, and asked in old Auntie Corky's voice 'How long have I got?'

'Two blinks of an eye.' Papa Bear replied.

'Tip-top!' replied old Auntie Corky and clutched in Little Bear's paw she took two tiny steps on the covers.

'Wake up, Johnny!' Papa Bear replied.

'How long have I got?' asked old Uncle Corky.

'Three bunny hops.' Papa Bear replied.

'Hop-hop-hop!' old Uncle Corky hopped once on the pillow, once on the bed and once more onto the floor...

‘Wake up, Johnny!’ shouted Daddy bear.

‘How long have I got?’ asked Little Bear.

‘Four beats of a bird’s wing!’

Little Bear rolled out of bed and with paws a-flapping, rushed to the window...  
where spring was waiting!

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## Pyjamas

Little Bear does not like button-up shirts, or knee socks, or tights, or turtle-neck pullovers. Little Bear loves his pyjamas because they are soft and comfy for drawing, building, jumping and rolling about in.

‘Come on, let’s get dressed!’ Mama Bear said.

‘I’m having a pyjama day today,’ said Little Bear, stretching hugely.

‘We’re going to your nursery school!’ explained Mama Bear as she pulled open a drawer. But Little Bear just whistled to himself and completely ignored the little striped bundles in the drawer.

‘I’m going to wear my pyjamas to nursery!’ he shouted and somersaulted once for the sheer joy of it.

‘Pyjamas are not allowed,’ said Mama Bear.

‘Why not?’ asked Little Bear and started to jump up and down.

‘Because nursery is not like home,’ Mama Bear replied, ‘at nursery school you draw and build things, you jump about and... and... do somersaults.’ and with that she opened the cupboard and took a nice, clean, freshly washed pair of pyjamas off the top of the pile. The trousers were sea-blue, and on the top, little fish were swimming in circles. Little Bear shuffled over to the sock drawer, picked out the best pair, and then pulled them on up to his knees, and then he yanked them down to his ankles again to make the stripes ripple. Mama Bear helped him to put on his zip-up sweater, tied his shoelaces and, before they left the house, they paused for a moment in front of the mirror. Where they saw a Little Bear jumping about in pretty linen trousers, with fish secretly swimming around his tummy.

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## **Do you love me?**

Mama Bear heard a crashing noise in the pantry. But since it was not followed by crying or shouting, she carried on stirring the raspberry jam. There was a pause, and then the pantry door slowly creaked open, two paws were placed gingerly onto the kitchen floor, and Little Bear's nose appeared around the door. First one ear, then another, but his tummy stayed out of sight.

‘Do you love me, Mama?’

‘I do love you, my dear little cub!’ Mama Bear glanced over her shoulder in his direction.

‘Even when I am bad?’

‘There’s no such thing as a bad bear,’ replied Mama Bear, turning from her bubbling saucepan of jam, ‘just naughty ones.’

‘But do you still love me when I don’t eat my greens?’

‘Even then’ said Mama Bear, stirring, ‘although I do worry that you will be hungry later.’

‘But do you still love me when I go into the larder instead of cleaning my teeth?’

‘Even then,’ said Mama Bear smiling to herself, ‘but since you are there now, could you bring out the jar of honey!’

‘What if I can’t find the honey?’ Little Bear’s voice trailed off, and he glanced down at his sticky fur.

‘I still love you even then,’ Mama Bear whispered, rolling her eyes skyward: ‘I seem to remember putting a big jar of honey behind the walnuts. To make jam with...’

‘Behind the walnuts?’ Little Bear’s face lit up. ‘I’ll take a look!’

Little Bear trotted back into the pantry, climbed up onto the stool and peeked behind the walnut basket. Then he pushed the basket aside, carefully lifted the big jar off the shelf, and took it to Mama Bear for the raspberry jam before clomping off into the bathroom. While Mama Bear was drizzling honey into the jam, Little Bear did the same with water. Onto his toothbrush.

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## **Kneading the dough**

Mama Bear was baking milk loaf. Little Bear was helping her. He stood on the stool and sprinkled flour into the big bowl, digging a well in the middle with his paw. Mama Bear poured warm milk into a cup. Little Bear spooned some sugar into it. And then popped a spoonful into his mouth as well. Little Bear adored cooking and baking with Mama Bear because then he could taste everything. Let me crumble the yeast as well!

One bit plopped into the milk, then another bit into Little Bear's mouth. One into the milk, one into his mouth. Yum yum!

'Stop scoffing it all!' scolded Mama Bear. 'You will get tummy ache!' Then she put the cup to one side for the yeast to get going.

Little Bear stuck his nose up to the cup and noticed how the yeasty mix had begun to wake up with froth growing on top. Mama Bear got out butter and eggs.

'Which would you like to do, the butter or the eggs?' she asked.

'The eggs!' Little Bear's eyes lit up, and with a clink, he tipped one into the flour in the bowl.

In plopped the butter, and then the yeast, too. Little Bear licked his lips.

'Mmm, it smells delicious!' He stuck out his paw to try it.

'No, you can't taste it yet!' scolded Mama Bear. 'It's full of raw egg!'

'Go on! Just a little taste! Just one lick!' Little Bear pleaded.

'No way! It could even make you ill!

Since there was nothing left to taste, Little Bear began to feel bored.

'Play with me!' he begged, but Mama Bear didn't have time for anything but



kneading and working the dough.

‘Play with me! Play with me!’ shouted Little Bear, and began to shove her. Papa Bear picked up his son, curled him up in his lap, and began to knead him with his big paws, palms and feet.

‘First, I knead the dough, I knead the dough,’ he grumbled. ‘Then I slap it, slap it,’ he slapped him gently. ‘I weave it into a loaf,’ he folded Little Bear's legs back and forth. ‘Then I slice it,’ he sliced across Little Bear's waist, ‘and spread it with butter,’ he said, smoothing Little Bear's tummy. ‘Then I dribble honey all over it,’ and he began to tickle little bear. ‘And then... munch! I gobble it all up! Little Bear chuckled, laughed, did a somersault, and while the milk loaf was baking in the kitchen, he started to knead Papa Bear, too.

## On the road again

Little Bear and his family were visiting Grandma Bear. Papa Bear was driving, and Mama Bear sat beside Little Bear on the back seat of the car. It was a very long journey, so they read some storybooks, played with old Auntie and Uncle Corky, and ate some treats. Carrot rings, popcorn, and honey lollipops. But the road was long, and the journey seemed never-ending. Little Bear began to fidget about in his seat.

‘Can I stand up?’

‘Only when we stop’ said Papa Bear over his shoulder.

‘Then can I kneel?’

‘That wouldn’t really be safe, why don’t you sit cross-legged?’

‘This bloomin’ safety belt is so uncomfortable! Take it off! Take it off!’ said Little Bear, impatiently.

‘Look!’ Mama Bear pointed at the sky ‘There’s a stork!’

‘I’m not interested’ grumbled Little Bear.’

‘Is that a frog in its beak?’

‘I’m not interested in that, either.’

Little Bear buried his face in his paws.

‘See if you can spot two storks,’ suggested Mama Bear, ‘then I will look out for three red cars!’

Little Bear peeked out between his claws.

‘No, I’ll look out for the red cars, you can look out for storks!’

They kept their eyes peeled. Little Bear watched the road, Mama Bear watched the sky, the meadows and the nests.

‘A red car!’ shouted Little Bear. ‘And a second! And a third! I won!’ he did a celebration dance in his seat. ‘And now’ he whooped ‘you have to look out for four mice!’

‘Mice?’ asked Mama Bear flabbergasted. ‘Where on earth will I find mice on a main road?’

‘Mice!’ repeated Little Bear, stubbornly. ‘Four of them!’

‘Very well then’ said Mama Bear, raising her eyebrow. ‘But then you have to spot ants! Five ants!’

Little Bear was in luck again. Not much later a lorry overtook them that had soldier ants painted on its side. He quickly counted five and shouted out:

‘I won! I won! I won!’

Then they spotted flags, planes, rubbish bins, an old lady in glasses, a dog on a leash, and then, when Papa Bear had stopped the engine, a grandmother bear.

## Grandma

Little Bear climbed up onto the sofa so that he could get a really good look at Grandma.

‘Wow! Your coat is getting grey!’ Little Bear stroked Grandma’s fur.

‘It’s almost white. When I was a cub, it was as brown as yours!’ Grandma recalled.

‘Oh! My goodness! How wrinkly your paws are!’ Little Bear ran his fingers all over Grandma’s paw.

‘Yours are so smooth, and soft!’ Grandma patted Little Bear’s paws.

‘Can you see anything at all when you take your glasses off?’ enquired Little Bear.

‘I see what I want to see!’ said Grandma, winking.

Grandma put her glasses down on the table, and Little Bear did a handstand on the sofa.

‘Then show where my head is!’ whooped Little Bear.

Grandma started to fumble around. First, she found two paws, then a little back, and a tickly neck, and then at last she came across Little Bear’s head.

‘That was easy because you were feeling with your hands!’ Little Bear declared.

‘But I’m certain you can’t tell me a story without your glasses!’

‘Well, we’ll see about that!’ said Grandma.

Little Bear took a big book from the bookshelf and settled into Grandma’s lap while Grandma began to tell him a story. She read and read. An enchanting story about a magical grandmother, who lived far away, and about her magical jam, her magical sofa, her magical grandson and even her magical autumn coat! The

story went on and on and she completely forgot to turn a single page!

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## The right paw

Little Bear felt like being alone, so he built himself a den in his room. He spread his quilt over the table so it would be nice and dark inside. He took in a pillow for a carpet. He asked Papa Bear for the Christmas tree lights for lighting, they made little dashes of red, yellow, blue and green all over the place. Then, finally, he moved in. And then didn't show his face again all morning! Mama Bear heard Little Bear playing with old Auntie and Uncle Corky. She had listened for a while, and then she called into the den:

'Breakfast is ready!'

But Little Bear didn't feel like coming out of the soft, cosy cave, and besides, he wanted to have breakfast alone.

'Can I have my breakfast in here?' he asked.

Mama Bear put the milk loaf and cocoa on a tray, lifted up the quilt cover, and tucked the food in through the doorway. Little Bear closed it again. And then, when his tummy was full, he just lay there, lounging about in the stripy darkness. He was looking at his right paw, and then his left paw. He stuck both paws in the air and examined them closely. Then he felt his ears, probed his nostrils, and a thought suddenly occurred to him.

'Mama!' shouted Little Bear from inside the cave. 'Which is my right paw?'

'The one with a spot on it!'

Little Bear looked for the spot on his palm. There it was, just where he remembered.

'And which is my right leg? Is it the one under the paw with a spot on it?'

'That's the one!' replied Mama Bear.

‘But then which is my right nostril?’

‘The one on the side where your right paw and your right leg are!’ replied Mama Bear.

Little Bear poked his head out of his den.

‘Mama, do I have a right cheek and a left cheek as well?’

‘You could say that,’ Mama Bear squatted down and planted a great big kiss on each of Little Bear's cheeks.

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## Confusion

Little Bear's friends from nursery school came to visit. Squirrel, Bunny and Boar. They all trooped into Little Bear's room. As soon as they saw all the pretty toys, they rushed to play with them.

'What's this?' Squirrel took the snow globe down from the shelf.

'Nothing!' Little Bear dashed over and snatched the snow globe out from Squirrel's claws.

'They are so sweet!' Bunny was cooing over old Uncle and Auntie Corky.

'Don't touch them!' shouted Little Bear before tucking them away in a draw.

'These roll really well!' Boar was pushing the toy cars along with his snout.

'Leave them alone!' growled Little Bear, and he rolled them back into the garage. But whatever the guests touched: the marble, the wooden ball, the polka dot ball, Little Bear jealously took everything away!

'That's mine!' he squealed. 'I'm not letting you have that!' he screeched.

Squirrel, Bunny and Boar became very sad and gloomy. Then Mama Bear crouched down beside Little Bear and asked him:

What would you like to give your friends to play with?

Little Bear looked around the room until he found something.

'This!' he poked at a tiny die.

'I see' Mama Bear nodded. 'Anything else?' she asked, pointing at the ruined castle. 'Perhaps your building bricks?'

Little Bear stared at the heap of bricks and thought very hard.

'Well... okay... those, too' he agreed.

Mama Bear settled in between the children and threw the dice. 'Five!' She



picked up five bricks and began to build. Then it was squirrel's turn.

Three!' Squirrel pointed to the dots on the dice and placed one red, one blue and one green brick onto the castle.

After Squirrel, Bunny had a go, after Bunny, Boar, after Boar, Little Bear rolled and built. The castle kept getting more and more colourful, taller and wider. And when the die showed a six the tower collapsed into a heap, but no one was sad! Because Little Bear threw the dice again.

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## At the market

Little Bear and Mama Bear went to the market. They were looking for beans, carrots and celeriac to make bean soup. The shopping didn't take long, but Little Bear was very curious. He wanted to see all the goods that were on sale at the market.

'Let's buy some of those, too!' he pointed at some lentils. 'And those, too!' he dragged Mama Bear over to the walnut stall. 'And these!' he picked up some potatoes.

'Well, okay,' agreed Mama Bear. 'Lentil stew is delicious, we are running low on nuts after all, and Papa Bear would love potato cakes, they are his favourite. Mama Bear bought everything he suggested, but Little Bear hadn't finished. 'And let's get some honey for the honey pot, some jam for the rice pudding, some cheese just for nibbling, and a nice pumpkin to make a pumpkin lamp!' The basket was chock-a-block. Full to the brim! Little Bear skipped along contentedly. He was about to hop homewards but stopped on the corner because Mama Bear wasn't following behind. She was just standing in the middle of the market, not moving a muscle. Little Bear turned back to Mama Bear and glanced at the overflowing basket.

'Shall I help?'

Mama Bear nodded, and then she and Little Bear took hold of the basket's handles and they staggered home together, munching on some cheese as they went.

## Boredom

Little Bear was bored. Very bored. He walked up and down the garden, sighing loudly. Mama Bear was planting raspberry bushes by the fence.

Papa Bear was chopping the firewood with an axe. Little Bear trudged over to one of them, then wandered on to the other, sighing deeply.

‘I am so bored! Oh! I am so bored!’

‘Take the firewood into the house in your wheelbarrow!’ said Papa Bear.

‘Water the raspberry bushes!’ suggested Mama Bear, but Little Bear was not in the mood to do anything. Apart from sighing. And being bored.

‘I am so bored! Oh! I am SO bored!’

‘You know what?’ said Mama Bear. ‘Why don’t you take your boredom for a walk!’

Little Bear was surprised by Mama Bear’s advice. But he began to stroll about in a bored and listless sort of way. First, he kicked some earth, then a stone. He kicked it into the ditch, then out of the ditch. He kicked it into the ditch, then out of the ditch. Suddenly he spotted a bee that had got stuck in a puddle. Little Bear found a stick to help him out of the water, and since the end of the stick was now wet, he drew a big plum dumpling with it. Finally, he trotted up the little hill, then rolled down like a pancake, rolling over and over all the way to the bottom. Then he stood up and dusted himself off:

‘Yay! I have managed to un-bore myself!’

## **Crocodile on the rug**

Papa Bear was tidying the bookshelf. One by one, he took the books off the shelf and dusted them off before putting them neatly back in their places. Little Bear was playing on the other side of the room. Old Uncle and Auntie Corky had got caught up in a storm out at sea. Their boat was a saucer, and the waves were tossing it about.

‘Heeeelp!’ screamed old Auntie Corky.

‘Hold on tight!’ bellowed old Uncle Corky.

‘Heavens above!’ they both exclaimed when a huge wave capsized the boat and they both ended up in the water.

‘I can’t swim!’ whimpered old Auntie Corky.

‘Hang onto me!’ yelled old Uncle Corky.

As the storm grew, Old Auntie and Uncle Corky got louder and louder. Little Bear was howling so much that it was difficult to stand being in the same room. Papa Bear decided that enough was enough.

‘Look what I’ve found!’ he hollered into the commotion.

‘What?’ Little Bear washed old Auntie Corky ever further from her husband.

‘A book about the Nile.’

‘What’s the Nile?’ Little Bear flipped the boat over. ‘Aaargh!’

‘The Nile is a river!’ Papa Bear chipped into the wailing.

‘Rivers are boring!’ Little Bear stormed on. ‘The sea! The stormy sea, now that is something!’

‘But the Nile is full of crocodiles!’ ventured Papa Bear.

‘Crocodiles?’ finally, Little Bear looked up from the tempest.

‘Nile crocodiles!’ Papa Bear flopped down into the armchair. ‘Come on, I’ll show you!’

Little Bear tucked old Uncle and Auntie Corky into his pocket, so that he could jump into Papa Bear’s lap and look at the book about the crocodile infested waters of the Nile, but suddenly he hesitated.

‘I can’t go there!’ he pointed at the rug. Papa Bear raised his eyebrows in surprise.

‘Because of the Nile!’ explained Little Bear.

Papa Bear tumbled some rolled up socks onto the carpet for Little Bear to use as stepping stones. He jumped from one to the next until he managed to reach the far side of the river. He was very careful because he didn’t want to fall into the water. There were crocodiles in there!

## The new umbrella

A rainbow-coloured umbrella sailed into the garden. It flew up and then it flew down again. Up and down. Little Bear clung to the handle. He was jumping up and down from a tree stump while he waited for the rain to come. He had got the umbrella three days before and had been waiting in vain for the rain to fall ever since.

‘When is it going to rain?’ he demanded from Papa Bear.

‘When it gets cloudy.’

‘And when will that be?’

‘When the wind blows the rainclouds in this direction.’

Little Bear began to rush about with the umbrella in the hope that he might stir up some wind. Hither and thither and back again until his tongue was hanging out, but the sky remained a cloudless blue. Then he began to sing. First some nursery songs about the rain, and when he had run out of those, he began to make up his own wandering, endless songs:

*‘Rain, rain, why don’t you fall? Little Bear’s waiting, umbrella and all!’*

But there wasn’t a drop.

It was almost dark when Little Bear finally went indoors. He was long-faced and dragging his umbrella behind him. Mama Bear herded the sad and sorry little bear cub into the bathroom. She sat him in the bathtub and turned on the shower. Little Bear opened his rainbow umbrella. Finally, it was raining cats and dogs!

## **Mama dragon**

Mama Bear had been bustling about all morning, and she was pooped! She flopped into the armchair for a rest.

‘I’m just going to take forty winks’ she told Little Bear ‘while I do that you can play quietly!’

‘No! Don’t go to sleep, Mama!’ cried Little Bear.

‘I’m not going to sleep. I’m just resting my eyes,’ replied Mama Bear.

‘Don’t sleep!’ said Little Bear, aghast, ‘I don’t want to be alone!’

‘You won’t be, I will still be here, but really, I just need to close my eyes for a couple of ticks.’

Little Bear started stomping about.

‘Stay awake! stay awake!’ he chanted loudly.

Mama Bear stood up. Stumbling to the door, she took the bunch of keys from the lock, brought them back into the room, rattled them loudly, tucked them under the sofa and said:

‘The dragon’s treasure is locked in its treasure chest. And the dragon sits on her keys so that no one can snaffle them while she is sleeping!’ With that she flopped back into the chair and began to gently snore.

Little Bear looked around the room. Then he stretched out on the rug and began to crawl, sneaking around the armchair. Very quietly so that the dragon wouldn’t hear! He crept closer and closer, and stretched his paw out under the armchair.

There he found the bunch of keys! Precisely where the dragon had left them!

Little Bear clutched them in his paw aiming to pull them out. But the keys clattered! The dragon awoke and peeked out between her eyelashes. Little Bear

quickly pulled out his paw, so that she wouldn't hear him, and scuttled under the table. There he crouched until the dragon was slumbering once more. Then he crept quietly, slinking silently across the room again to get the key ring.

**I'm not in the mood!**

Little Bear busied himself. He drew a new smile for old Auntie Corky because the old one had worn away. He plaited a scarf from yarn for old Uncle Corky so that he wouldn't catch cold. Then he did some somersaults on the bed and rolled around on the rug. Mama Bear bustled about the house. She cooked, washed and tidied.

'Why don't you come and help to make the mix!' she asked her little cub.

'Not now!' Little Bear shouted back. 'I'm too busy!' And he drew a long line onto old Auntie Corky.

Later, Mama Bear called out:

'The washing is done, let's hang it out!'

'I don't feel like it just now!' called back Little Bear as he wound another length of yarn around old Uncle Corky's neck.

Later Mama Bear growled:

'Let's crack walnuts!'

'Let's do it later!' Little Bear waved her away and began to roll around and do somersaults.

No matter what Mama Bear asked him to do, Little Bear just ignored her. He just played, somersaulted and rolled around. And played, somersaulted and rolled around some more.

Someone rang at the door. Twice! Little Bear stopped in his tracks. Who could



that be?

‘I’ll get it!’ he rushed out of the room.

He pulled on his shoes and ran over to Mama Bear so that she could do up the laces.

But Mama Bear just shrugged her shoulders.

‘I’ll do it later, I’m not in the mood just now!’

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## **Pow-pow-pow!**

Little Bear was at the table, waving a crescent roll around.

‘Pow!’ he aimed a big shot at the raspberry jam.

‘Pow!’ he fired at his fried egg.

‘Pow-Pow-Pow!’ He fired in among the tomatoes.

‘Why don’t you tuck into your food instead of playing with it?’ suggested Mama Bear.

Little Bear dipped the end of the crescent roll into the raspberry jam. He took a big bite and then started shooting again.

‘Pow! Pow! Pow!’ he fired into the Swiss cheese

‘Stop playing at the table!’ growled Papa Bear.

Little Bear swallowed a couple of mouthfuls, but he was still in the mood for a shoot-out. He grabbed a banana from the bowl and, while Mama Bear and Papa Bear finished their breakfast, he battled his way around the kitchen. Then he fired with his mug while Mama Bear and Papa Bear cleared the table, fenced with the butter knife while Mama Bear and Papa Bear did the dishes, and then, when everything was in its place, he stuck his index finger out and marched around like that.

‘Pow! Pow! Pow!’

## Candyfloss

Little Bear looked longingly at the shopkeeper: what a lot of stuff! There were lots and lots of biscuits, chocolate and raisins, tomatoes and pumpkins, a fridge full of milk, yoghurt and cream, and a whole shelf of pasta and raspberry syrup. At the market, he stared in awe at Mother Hen's basketful of eggs, and Mr Squirrel's sack brimming with hazelnuts. At the bakers, his mouth watered at the sight of all the loaves, and although they didn't go near the hive, the smell of honey lingered in the air.

Little Bear thought for a while. Then he pondered. And wondered. And wracked his brains! Finally, he did a somersault, rolled once and then cheerfully tottered over to Mama Bear.

'Would you like to know what I'm going to be when I grow up?' he asked her.

'A forester, like your Papa?' guessed Mama Bear.

'No, no, no!' smirked Little Bear.

'Then a lace-maker, like your Mama?' But Little Bear just shook his head.

'A hat maker, like your Grandpa? Or a jam maker, like Grandma?' Little Bear shook his head at all Mama Bear's guesses.

'Well, then what will you be, my little cub?' asked Mama Bear when she ran out of ideas.

'I am going to be a candyfloss seller!' announced Little Bear, proudly. 'I will sell strawberry candyfloss, and lemon, vanilla and raspberry, cherry and orange, melon and banana! And I will eat candyfloss all day long! Yummy!'

## **Sticky fingers**

Mama Bear's bag was hanging by her coat on the coat rack. Inside it was her clasp mirror, a pack of tissues, and her purse full of loose change. Mama Bear often let Little Bear pack and unpack her bag, but this time Little Bear wasn't planning to ask!

He sneaked over to her bag, carefully unzipped it and took out the first thing his paw settled on: her purse, rattling from all the loose change. Little Bear quickly opened the clasp and took two coins out of it. A shiny gold one and a shiny silver one, then he stormed into the room with his new possessions. He rolled around in glee, and then, clutching the coins in his hands, he skipped around and around the rug. He even did a somersault! Finally, he hid his treasure in the corner, burying it deep under a pile of wooden blocks so that his secret would remain undiscovered. Then he played. With old Auntie and Uncle Corky. He built a train track and a station, with a post office, a newsagent's and a bakery. But all the while, throughout his great construction project, his thoughts kept returning to the money. To the money lying in the corner, because he had taken it out of Mama Bear's bag. From his own lovely Mama's bag! He had secretly swiped it!

Mama Bear peeked into the room suddenly.

'You know what I was thinking?' she asked cheerfully. 'I thought that I would take you out for an ice cream, just the two of us!'

Little Bear gulped. Then he dashed over to the corner, scooped out the shiny coins from under the wooden blocks, and held them out under Mama Bear's nose in his sweaty paw.

‘Let me invite you instead!’ he croaked.

‘Well, well!’ Mama Bear just stared. First at the two coins, and then at Little Bear's downcast eyes. ‘All right, she said, you can invite me. But I want a big one!’

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## Catch me if you can

Little Bear and Mama Bear were on their way home from nursery school together.

‘Mama, why aren’t I a squirrel?’ asked Little Bear.

‘Because a mummy bear and a daddy bear can only have a baby bear, explained Mama Bear.

‘But if I were a squirrel,’ Little Bear cried, ‘I could swing around in the treetops!’

‘But since you are a bear,’ said Mama Bear, ‘you can jump on the ground, and jump very high!’

Little Bear leapt across a puddle, but he was still yearning for more.

‘If I were a bunny,’ he sighed heavily, ‘I could run zigzag and never get caught when we play chase...’

‘Instead of zigzags, bears run through bushes and thickets, through everything!’ said Mama Bear encouragingly, but Little Bear was downcast.

‘Boar said that I don’t have tusks,’ he complained to Mama Bear.

‘Why, do you?’ asked Mama Bear.

‘Well, no. But boar said that means I’m not strong.’

‘You have strong paws,’ said Mama Bear, turning to face Little Bear. ‘You are strong, so strong that you could carry me if you wanted to!’

Little Bear's face brightened.

‘Then watch out! I’m going to catch you, Mama!’ he cried.

Mama Bear took off at a trot. She ran, and ran, and ran as fast as her legs could carry her! Little Bear ran after her! He jumped over puddles, tore through

bushes, scampered and scooted until he caught up with Mama Bear. Then he put two strong arms around her and shouted: 'Got you! Now you are it! Catch me if you can!'

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## **Bundles and balls**

Mama Bear was knitting a warm sweater for Papa Bear. His old one was so worn out it was beyond repair. While Mama Bear's knitting needles clattered, Little Bear was playing with her ball of yarn. First, he rolled it into the kitchen. Then he threw it at Papa Bear. In the end, he had kicked it around the room so much that the ball of yarn completely unravelled. At which point the ball of yarn lost its interest because it was not a ball of wool anymore, just a tangled pile of yarn, which Little Bear abandoned. He was about to set off to find something else to amuse himself with when Mama Bear ran out of yarn.

'Where's my ball of wool?' She asked Little Bear.

'There it is, said Little Bear, pointing at the heap on the ground.

'I'd like to get it back in the same shape that I gave it to you,' said Mama Bear. Little Bear knelt down on the floor, gathering up the yarn snake, and piling it onto Mama Bear's lap.

'I can't knit with it like this, you'll have to wind it into a ball again!' Little Bear didn't like the sound of that much.

'Wind it up? What's the fun in that?'

But then Papa Bear pointed to the corner of the bookshelf, where a spider was lowering itself down. It was descending on an invisible thread. Papa Bear put Little Bear's paw underneath it, and the spider stopped halfway and began to climb upwards.

'How does it do that?' Little Bear was amazed.

'He's winding up the thread, Papa Bear lifted Little Bear up in the air so he could see the spider climb up into his web.



Then Little Bear rushed off to find the end of the yarn. Mama Bear got a beautiful big ball of yarn.

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## Ice-skating

The bear family were preparing for their long winter's sleep. They had stuffed their bellies, made their beds, brushed their teeth thoroughly, and by the time it was time for pyjamas, their eyelids were drooping, indeed they were almost shut. But then Squirrel banged on the windowpane.

'Little Bear! Little Bear!' he squealed through the glass. 'The lake has frozen! Come on! Let's go skating!'

'We're going to bed!' Mama Bear peered out of the window.

'And we won't get up until spring!' yawned Papa Bear. Only Little Bear's eyes had popped wide open.

'I'm not sleepy!' and he jumped out of bed. 'I want to go ice skating!'

It was no good Mama Bear telling him that bears don't skate in winter because they go to sleep; or Papa Bear insisting that they didn't have any skates and so couldn't go skating anyway, Little Bear was absolutely adamant.

'But I can!' he retorted. 'Of course, I can!'

And so it was that the family of bears crawled out of their bed, wrapped scarves around their necks, and headed for the frozen lake. There were lots of children skating on it. Squirrel was going round and round, Bunny was zigzagging, Boar was poking around in the snow, while Owl watched on, blinking sleepily and wondering why it was that he wasn't in bed. Little Bear borrowed some skates, but as soon as he stepped on the ice, oof! He fell flat on his face. He struggled to his feet, but then, splat! He was lying on the ice again. He tried to glide across the ice like the others, but the skates kept slipping out from under him. Splat! Oof! Bash!

‘It’s so slippery!’ Little Bear sniffled disconsolately while Squirrel was teasing him.

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## Sleep

Papa Bear finished the bedtime story. While she was tucking her little cub in and stroking his brow, Mama Bear whispered in his ear.

‘Squirrel is already fast asleep up in his dray...’

‘Tell me,’ Little Bear interrupted, ‘how he’s got his long fluffy tail wrapped around him.’

‘Squirrel has wrapped his long fluffy tail around himself,’ purred Mama Bear, ‘he’s closed his eyes and is up in the dray, napping. Bunny has made a leafy bed in his burrow and tucked himself up in it, he’s already snoozing away...’

‘He’s not snoozing,’ piped up Little Bear again, ‘he’s sleeping!’

‘Snoozing’ Mama Bear murmured softly and continued.

‘Boar has dug himself a comfy little pit by now, tucked himself in and is snoring like a train by now.’

‘Snoring!’ hooted Little Bear. ‘Boar snores?’

‘Shhh!’ Mama Bear hushed her restless cub, ‘all your friends are fast asleep, and it’s time you settled down, too!’

Little Bear closed his paws around old Uncle and Auntie Corky and rolled over onto his right side. And then his left. And then onto his tummy, then a little bit later onto his back.

‘Mama!’ he called into the darkness. ‘What should I dream about?’ Mama Bear yawned.

‘Dream about the spring!’ she mumbled sleepily.

‘That’s boring!’

‘Then...’ Mama Bear closed her eyes, ‘dream about skating...’

Little Bear thought about it for a moment before enquiring once more.

‘Mama, what do you think Boar dreams about?’

‘Well...’ yawned Mama Bear, ‘wild boars dream about acorns.’

Little Bear went quiet. Holding old Auntie and Uncle Corky tightly in his paw, he rolled over onto his right side. And then onto his left side. And then onto his tummy, and then after a little while settled down to lay flat on his back instead.

‘I’m going to dream about honey,’ he announced contentedly, ‘I’m going to dream about honey!’

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