

WHY THE BEAR'S TAIL IS SHORT

Did you ever go to a circus where there was a bear in a cage? Did you notice how short his tail was? I will tell you how the bear's tail came to be short.

One very cold day in winter, a fox saw some men taking home a load of fish. The fox jumped upon the wagon while the men were not looking. He threw off some of the best fish until he had enough for his dinner. Then Mr. Fox jumped from the wagon and began to eat the fish.

While he was eating the fish, Mr. Bear came along.

"Good morning," said Mr. Bear, "you have had good luck fishing to-day. Those are very fine fish. How did you catch them?"

"They are fine fish," said Mr. Fox.

"If you will go fishing with me to-night, I will show you how to catch even better fish than these."

"I will go with you gladly," said the bear. "I will bring my hook and line too."

"You don't need a hook and line," said the fox.

"I always catch fish with my tail. You have a much longer tail than I, and can fish so much the better."

At sunset the bear met the fox. They went across the frozen river until they came to a small hole in the ice.

"Now, Mr. Bear," said the fox, "sit down here on the ice and put your tail through the hole. You must keep still for a long while. That is the best way to catch fish."

"Wait until a great many fish take hold of your tail. Then pull with all your might."

The bear sat very still for a long time. At last he began to feel cold and he moved a little.

"Ow!" he cried, for his tail had begun to freeze in the ice.

"It is not time to pull out the fish?" said the bear.

"No, no," cried the fox,

"Wait until more fish have taken hold of your tail. You are very strong. You can wait a little longer."

So the poor bear waited until it was almost morning. Just then some dogs began to bark on the bank of the river. The bear was so afraid that he jumped up quickly and pulled with all his might, but his tail was frozen fast in the ice. He pulled and pulled until at length the tail was broken short off.

Mr. Fox ran away laughing and laughing at the trick he had played on Mr. Bear.

Bears' tails have been short ever since.