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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Mr. Bear's Farewell Party

It was about time for Mr. Bear to take his winter sleep, and as the deep-wood animals had been known to help themselves to Mr. Bear's well-filled pantry while he was in the land of Nod, he decided this year to give a supper the night before he curled up for the winter. He invited all the animals, the most important of which were Mr. Fox and his wife, of course, and Mr. and Mrs. Squirrel, Jack Rabbit and his wife, Billy Possum and Tim Raccoon.

Of course, there were many others, but these were the most prominent socially, as I said before.

Such a table full of goodies as Mr. Bear spread for them—pies and cake and puddings and ice cream and plenty of fried chicken and roast duck.

A great big dish of honey was at the end of the table, and Mr. Bear stood beside that most of the time. The guests all ate and ate till they could hardly move, and when it was time to go home, they voted Mr. Bear the most delightful host they had ever known.

One by one the guests took their departure, until Billy Possum and Tim Raccoon were the only ones left.

Mr. Bear was going about putting his house in order before he retired, for he liked to find everything in apple-pie order when he awoke in the spring.

Billy Possum and Tim Raccoon were talking together all evening, but no one noticed them, all were so busily engaged at the table.

Now they came from the corner where they had been sitting and said to Mr. Bear, "Dear friend, you have given all your friends a most delightful evening, and we think it would be cruel to leave you to do all the clearing up alone; we will stay and help you."

Mr. Bear was surprised at this display of thoughtfulness on the part of Billy and Tim, for they were never known to do anything for anyone.

"Yes, we will help you tidy up, Mr. Bear," said Billy Possum, "and we will wait until you have gone to bed and put out the candle, for I know it must be very lonely for you to begin your long sleep without a friend to say goodnight to you."

Mr. Bear lived in his house all but the part of the year he slept, and for this particular nap, he had a deep cave under his house.

So when all the dishes were washed and put in the closet and the room swept, Mr.

Bear put on his flannel wrapper, took his candle, and started for the cellar door.

"We will lock the outside door," said Billy Possum, "and drop the key down the chimney," for they insisted upon seeing Mr. Bear right into his cave.



No sooner was the door closed behind him than Billy Possum and Tim Raccoon began to laugh and wink at each other, and then Tim softly turned the key in the lock.

"He is safe for the winter," whispered Tim. "Now we will keep house for him. It can't harm his bed to sleep in it or his house if we live in it."

"Or his preserves if we eat them and the other things he has stored away," said Billy Possum.

"I am tired," said Tim, "I have not worked so hard in a long time. I am going to bed."

"Well, you can take it easy for the rest of the winter," said Billy. "I don't suppose we need to have locked the door. He never wakes up till springtime."

"I shall feel very much safer with it locked," said Tim, as he rolled into Mr. Bear's bed.

Billy jumped in after him and pulled Mr. Bear's soft blanket over his head and was soon asleep.

It happened that Mr. Bear wore a nightcap, and he had forgotten to take it with him, so after fixing himself for his long sleep, he suddenly felt a coolness about his head.

"My nightcap," he exclaimed. "I just cannot sleep without it. I should sneeze all summer, too."

Up jumped Mr. Bear and trudged up the stairs. "What is this?" he said. "They have locked the door; they must have made a mistake and locked this door as well as the outside one. Well, I will have to break the lock."

Mr. Bear placed his shoulder against the door and pushed, but Billy Possum and Tim Raccoon were sleeping too soundly for the noise to awaken them.

Mr. Bear stopped when he came to the door of his bedroom. Was somebody in his nice, soft bed? He looked closer, and on one head, he saw his nightcap, for Billy Possum had put it on.

Mr. Bear tiptoed to the bed and looked closer; he saw who was in his bed, and then he smiled a most unpleasant smile.

He reached for Billy Possum, took him right by the top of the head, and pulled him out of bed. He then reached for Tim Raccoon and took him the same way, growling all the time.

"Help! Help!" screamed Tim and Billy, thinking some dreadful creature was about to devour them.

"You can scream, you scamps," said Mr. Bear, shaking them until their teeth chattered. "No one will come, and if they did they could not help you. Take off my nightcap, Billy Possum!"

Billy untied the strings and took it off and laid the cap on the bed, then he gave a groan and over he went on the floor, just as though he were dead.

"You can't fool me, Mr. Possum," said Mr. Bear. "You may be able to fool Mr. Man or Mr. Dog, but not Mr. Bear.

"Get up this minute or I will throw a pail of cold water on you." Billy did not move, and Mr. Bear grabbed him again, and with Billy in one hand and Tim Raccoon in the other, he went to the window, putting Tim under his arm while he opened it.

Then he shook them again and threw them out of the window. "I guess they will remember that for some time," said Mr. Bear. "They won't play any more of their sly games with me; I am glad I forgot my nightcap," and off he went to his cave.

Tim and Billy picked themselves up, they were so sore and lame they could hardly get home, and for a week after they stayed in the house nursing their lame backs.

"It would have been all right if he hadn't forgotten that nightcap," groaned Tim.

"Yes, but he didn't forget it," groaned Billy Possum. "I had no idea he had such a temper either."