



Ririro

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Lazy Gray

Abbie Phillips Walker

All the other squirrels called him Lazy Gray, which was really not a very nice name for a squirrel to have, but it fitted this squirrel, and I am going to tell you how he came to be called by such an unpleasant name.

When Lazy Gray was born there were three little squirrels in his family, but he was the youngest and his mother thought he was the prettiest, and all the rest of the family used to wait on him a great deal, and his mother did not ask him to do errands or to climb trees or any other of the hard tasks that most squirrels have to do. And Lazy Gray took advantage of the kindness of his mother and his brothers and sister, and used to ask them to wait on him. When he was thirsty and wanted a drink of water he would call to his mother and say, "I am thirsty"; and she would take a nutshell and go down to the brook and fill it with nice cool water and bring it to him for him to drink. And sometimes he wouldn't even say "Thank you" when he had finished.

And he used to make his brothers go on long journeys through the woods to get a particular kind of nut of which he was very fond; and if they happened to bring him one that was not good he would find fault with them and tell them that they did not know good nuts from bad ones.



All through the summer he fooled away his time sleeping and lying in the sun and never a single nut did he gather for himself. But when fall came and his two brothers were taken ill, his mother said that he would have to help her gather nuts because she could not gather enough to last the whole family through all the long winter. Lazy thought it was very hard that he should be called upon to work for his brothers even if they were sick, and he complained very bitterly about how hard it was for him to climb trees all day and store nuts. Whenever he could he stole away and lay down behind a rock and kept hidden until his mother came and found him. And then she would tell how, when it got cold and there was snow all over the ground and he was hungry, he would wish that he had been a good squirrel and had gathered the nuts while he could.

But he did not believe her and said, "Oh, I have gathered all the nuts I shall want and am not going to work any more," and then he would go to sleep again.

Weeks passed by, and it grew colder and colder and the snow came, and all the squirrels began to draw on their stores of nuts. Lazy found that he got pretty hungry sometimes and that the habit of eating and drinking all he wanted in the summer made him want to eat and drink all he wanted in the winter. And as he had never taught himself self-denial, he ate all he wanted, and very early in the winter he began to see that the nuts he had gathered would not last him half-way through the winter, and almost before he knew it his whole store was exhausted and he had nothing to eat.

Then he asked his mother to let him have some of the nuts that she had gathered, and being a kind mother, she let him have just as many as she could, but she still had to keep some for his sick brothers. When she would not give him all he thought he ought to have he decided that he would go over to a neighboring tree and ask a squirrel over there for some of his nuts, and for weeks he went from one tree to another begging nuts, until every squirrel in the woods hated to see him coming, for they knew he was going to beg food that he should have gathered for himself.

At last he became so much of a nuisance that all the squirrels in the wood held a meeting and decided that each one of them would give two nuts to "Lazy," as they now all called him, and that he would have to live for the rest of the winter on the store they contributed or else starve.

When Lazy saw what a small store of nuts he would have to live upon until spring he was frightened, for he had eaten almost as many nuts as there were there in a week.

But he knew he had to make them last, so he ate very sparingly, and his sides began to be less plump and his cheeks less full, and by springtime he was a pretty sorry-looking squirrel, with his ribs showing plainly through his sides and his bushy tail looking bigger than the whole of the rest of him.

But it taught him a good lesson, and early in the next summer, just as soon as there were any nuts to be had, he began to store them away, and when winter came again he had a big hole in the tree filled full and his mother was much pleased.

"You see," she told him, "how wicked it is not to provide for the future and store up things that are necessary against the time when you will need them."

And Lazy agreed with her and told her that never again so long as he lived would he merit the name of "Lazy."

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