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READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

Mikkel Fox And Bamsa Bear

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One day, when old Bamsa was walking along, eating the blueberries that grew so plentifully on the hillside, he unexpectedly came upon the entrance to Mikkel Fox's den.

Bamsa, considering deeply, said to himself, "Ho, ho. See this. Now, at last, I have caught him, that rascally fox that has played me so many tricks and fooled me so often and so thoroughly that there have been many stories told and written about it."



Thus talking to himself, he sat down and began to consider deeply how best he could make use of his good luck.

Bamsa Bear had never bothered himself to study the ways and habits of other animals, but he knew very well that he was the strongest creature in the forest. Therefore, he came and went as he chose and wherever he chose. It was for other animals to keep out of his way. If one happened to be where he wished to go, Bamsa only said, "Don't you see who is coming? Get out of my way as fast as you can. I won't have anyone here staring at me."

Because Bamsa was so proud and cared nothing about the other animals or their ways of living, he had not the least idea that Mikkel Fox had more than one entrance to his den. Indeed, he sometimes had many, so that he could always slip in or out when danger threatened him.

But now Bamsa had made up his mind what to do. He would close the den so thoroughly that Mikkel Fox would be imprisoned there, never to see daylight anymore and never again make a fool of a decent beast, stronger and more important than any fox.

All about on the ground lay big, heavy stones. These Bamsa Bear began to collect and put into the entrance to the den. He did not save his strength but worked hard and steadily. Just as he brought the last heavy stone, however, and thought that he had done a grand piece of work, he heard someone whistle behind his back. "Who can that be?" thought Bamsa. He turned around to find out. Well, of course, it was that saucy scamp of a fox, standing there, grinning.

"Good day, old fellow," said Mikkel Fox. "I must really thank you for all this help. I have been thinking that I should have to close this entrance; it makes the den so draughty. I have grown sensitive to draughts of late."

One moment, Bamsa stared at the fox as if he did not believe his own eyes or ears. Then he growled fiercely, took a big stone, and threw it after the fox. But Mikkel did not wait for it to hit him; he was far away in no time. Bamsa Bear, however, had noticed the direction in which Mikkel had disappeared, and now he knew that there must be another entrance to the den. So he began to sniff and hunt about.



Yes, sure enough, very soon he did find another door to the fox's hole. Bamsa had not enough patience to drag stones and pile them up against this entrance.

Now he would go into the den, get hold of the fox in there, and thus have a chance to vent his anger upon the impudent fellow.

"If you can dig yourself out, then I can dig my way in," he growled. "I haven't less strength and weaker claws than such a miserable creature as you."

Bamsa now began to dig so vigorously that stones, gravel, and roots flew about him as if a small whirlwind were at work.

While he was digging, he kept growling angrily to himself about all that he would do to that rascally fox when he caught him.

"I shall make an end of you, I promise," he threatened. "You shall not escape me alive this time."

The ground was now very hard, and the farther he dug into the den, the harder it was, but that did not bother Bamsa. He kept on digging as furiously as ever.

Ow! Ow! What was that? Someone outside had begun to beat him on his back, the only part of him that was out of the den.

Ow! Ow! He really had to groan, and as the thrashing kept on, there was nothing to do but to go out and see what this meant.

"Ow! Ow! Stop that!"

"Ow! Ow! Stop that!"

But the one outside there did not stop. It was again Mikkel Fox, this time wielding a big stick.

The fox had been in the farther end of his den and had heard Bamsa digging. Waiting until the bear had dug his way so far into the narrow passage that he would find it hard to get back, Mikkel sneaked out of a third door to his den, picked up a big, heavy stick that lay there, and began to beat the old bear to his heart's content.



"I'll tan your bear's hide for you!" he shouted, and kept on beating poor Bamsa so that his hair flew in every direction until the air seemed full of it.

"Is this the proper way to visit folk?" called Mikkel. "Couldn't you be polite and knock at the door?"

Swish, swish! The blows fell swift and hard, while Bamsa found it slow work to wriggle himself backward out of the narrow passage. He was getting very sore from the blows.

At last, he was out in the open air again.

There he stood, looking ragged and miserable and anything but clean. His coat was full of small sticks, gravel, and bits of roots, and there was so much dirt on his face that he could scarcely see out of his eyes. Oh, how his back hurt!

The worst of all, however, was to see Mikkel Fox standing there looking at him and laughing so loud that the laughter could be heard a long way off. Were all the forest folk to know that that impudent fox had again made a fool of him, Bamsa Bear, the strongest creature in the forest? Oh, yes, Mikkel Fox would be sure to tell everyone about it.



Bamsa walked heavily home, very quietly, though sometimes groaning. He was no longer full of courage and pride.

"Never will things be any different," he thought. "There is such an outrageously clever head on that fox that all my strength is of no use with him."

From back on the hill, Mikkel Fox called after him: "Yes, old fellow. That's the

way it goes when one has strength without cleverness. Why didn't you learn before now how many doorways a fox has to his den?"

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