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The Bear Who Lost His Supper

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Once upon a time old Mother Red Cap was out walking in the forest and she came to a wild cherry tree, the branches of which hung low with cherries. She climbed up the tree to pick her apron full of cherries when along came Bruin, the Bear, walking under the tree. He looked up among the branches and there he saw old Mother Red Cap.

"Come down, Mother," he growled, "that I may eat you." Old Mother Red Cap did not want to be eaten by Bruin, the Bear, so she thought, and thought, and then she said:

"You do not want to eat an old woman like me. I will throw you down my shoe and you may gnaw upon that until I can come down to the ground and lead you to my house. I have two little kids there who will make you a savory meal. Have patience, Bruin, until I can climb down."

This was what old Mother Red Cap said, and she threw down her shoe. Bruin gnawed and gnawed upon the shoe, but he found it very dry eating, so he grew angry. He called up the tree to old Mother Red Cap:

"Come down, Mother, that I may eat you."

"Just wait a little longer, Bruin, until I have gathered a few more cherries," said she, and she threw down her other shoe. "Gnaw on this," she said, "and I will climb down in a few minutes and show you the way to my house."

Bruin gnawed upon the second shoe but he found it no better than the first. But he contented himself with the thought of the two little kids that he would soon be eating, and he waited beneath the tree until old Mother Red Cap climbed down.

Down she came, with her apron full of cherries; home she went, and Bruin tramped along behind her. When they reached her house, old Mother Red Cap took Bruin, the Bear, out to the barn and showed him the two little kids. He was in a great hurry to get his paws around them, but, "Wait," said Old Mother Red Cap. "First I must give the two little kids a fine supper that they may be fatter. Go back to the forest for the night and return in the morning. Then the two little kids will be fat enough for you to eat."



So Bruin, the Bear, went back to the forest for the night. Old Mother Red Cap gave the two little kids a fine, large supper and then she locked the door of the barn and went to bed. Very early in the morning she went out to the barn and unlocked the door and let out the two fat little kids. They scampered off to pasture and were soon so far away that neither hide nor hoof of them could be seen. Then old Mother Red Cap locked the door of the barn again.

Almost as soon as the sun was up, Bruin, the Bear, tramped back from the forest, growling:

"Open the barn door, Mother, that I may eat the two little kids."

Mother Red Cap stooped down to peep through the key hole of the barn door. Then she shook her head sadly.

"What a pity it is," sighed old Mother Red Cap, "that the two little kids are gone. Can it be that my two mischievous little grandchildren, Janko and Mirko, unlocked the door and let the kids out?"

At that Bruin, the Bear, was very angry. "Then I must eat your two little grandchildren, Janko and Mirko," he growled.

This frightened old Mother Red Cap greatly. She thought and thought, and then she said: "My two little grandchildren, Janko and Mirko, are very thin indeed. I must give them three fine meals or they will not be fat enough for you to eat. In the meantime, do you run about through the forest to get yourself a better appetite."

So Bruin, the Bear, went away and ran about in the woods all the rest of the day. When it was evening he came back with a fine appetite and rapped at the door of old Mother Red Cap's house.

"Send out Janko and Mirko," he growled, "and see what short work I will make of them."

“Oho, I’ll not do that,” laughed old Mother Red Cap from inside the house. “You are too late, Bruin. Janko has just bolted the door so fast that you will not be able to open it and I have put Mirko to bed, where he is fast asleep. You must go back to the forest and come some other day.”

So Bruin, the Bear, saw that old Mother Red Cap had got the best of him and he went back to the forest, hungry, to look for his supper there.

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