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Why The Bear Has A Stumpy Tail

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Once upon a time, in the far away days, when the beasts walked the land, and talked like real people, the bear had a long, beautiful, bushy tail, as fine as the tail of any other creature, and you may be sure he was very proud of it.

One winter day the bear was out traveling, and whom should he meet but Brother Fox, hastening along with a string of fish dangling down his back.

“Ah,” said Bruin, “stop a bit, friend; where did you find such fat fish?”

Now, very likely Brother Fox had helped himself to the fish from some one’s larder, but he never told the bear; not he.

“It is a secret, about these fish,” he said to Bruin; “come close, and I will tell you.”

So Bruin went close to Brother Fox, and Brother Fox said:

“You must go to the river where the ice is thick, make a hole in the ice, sit down with your tail in the hole, and wait for the fish to bite. When your tail smarts, pull it out, quickly. That is the way to fish.”

“Oh, is it?” said Bruin. “Well, if you say it is so, it must be true, Brother Fox,” and he walked toward the river swinging his tail as he went, and Brother Fox hid behind a tree to laugh up his sleeve, and watch.

Well, poor old Bruin got a stick, and made a hole in the ice. Then he sat down with his long, beautiful, bushy tail in the water and waited, and, oh, it was very cold indeed.

He waited, and waited, and then his tail began to smart. He gave a quick pull to bring up the fish, and, alas, the ice had frozen fast again.

Off came the bear’s beautiful, long, bushy tail, and he never was able to put it on again.

And that is why the bear has a short, stumpy tail, because he tried to fish, as Brother Fox told him to, through the ice.



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