

How Bear Lost his Tail

Retold by Sanjit

This is the story of Bear's tail. I've heard it told in Germany, and in North America by the Iroquois Indians.

A long time ago, Bear had a beautiful, long, furry tail. He thought it was really cool. He laid it out behind him and people had to walk around it. He asked everyone, "Don't you think my tail is the beautiful tail you've ever seen?"

People thought Bear was very vain, but they were frightened of his big claws and didn't want to make him angry. So they told him he looked totally cool with his big, black, shiny tail.

One cold winter's day, Bear went lumbering down to the lake. Fox was sitting on the frozen water, surrounded by fish. He knew that Bear was hungry, and decided to play a trick on him.

"Hello, brother Fox," said Bear, his mouth watering. "Where did you get all those fish?"

"I caught them," said Fox, pointing to a hole in the ice.

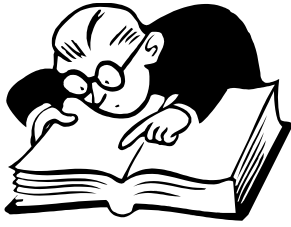
"But you don't have anything to fish with," said Bear.

"I used my tail!" said Fox.

Bear was totally blown away by this. "You used your Tail?" he shouted.

"Sure. It's the best thing for catching fish. Shall I show you how? Then you'll always have as many fish as you want to eat," coaxed Fox.

"Yes, please," said Bear in his deep, gruff voice. His mouth watered again.



How Bear Lost his Tail

- page 2

Fox pointed to the hole in the ice. "There's no fish left in there. Let's go to another part of the lake where there's more."

Trying not to laugh, Fox led Bear to a shallow part of the lake. Bear dug a hole in the ice with his claws.

"Now sit with your back to the hole and drop your beautiful tail into the water," said Fox. "You'll feel when a fish bites. Then you can pull your tail out with the fish on the end of it.

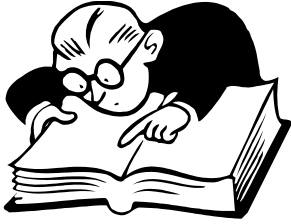
Bear wanted fish big time. He put his tail into the icy water.

"Now," said Fox, "this is important. You must sit very still and only think about fish. Pretend to count the fish you catch with your tail. The more you count, the more you will catch."

The Bear scratched himself with pleasure. "My tail will catch more fish than any other."

"Sit still," said Fox. "I'll watch from those trees so I don't scare the fish away."

Bear sat very still and thought about fish jumping onto his tail. He counted each one. It was very tiring. He fell asleep.



How Bear Lost his Tail

- page 3

It became very cold and started to snow. Fox went back to his house, taking his fish with him. A few hours later, Fox came back to the lake. Bear was still asleep and snoring. His black fur coat was white with snow.

Fox laughed so much he fell over on his back with his legs waving in the air. "This is such a cool trick," gasped Fox. Then he stopped laughing and quietly snuck up on Bear.

He shouted, "Bear! Bear! I can see a fish on your tail. Can you feel it?"

Bear woke up with a fright and felt a sharp pain in his frozen tail. "I can feel it!" he shouted. He leaped up and his frozen tail snapped off.

All that was left was a small stump where his beautiful long, black tail had been. "My tail! My beautiful tail!" he wailed. Fox, the trickster, ran away laughing.

And that's why bears now only have short tails. If you ever hear a bear groaning, it's because he remembers his big, black, beautiful tail. And it's the reason why you won't see Bear and Fox having lunch together! Fox knows he would be lunch!