

BREAKFAST TALES FOR CHILDREN

BY THORNTON BURGESS

MOTHER BEAR EXPLAINS SOME THINGS.

For a while Mother Bear was too busy to answer questions and Cubby was wise enough to know it. So he stored up his questions in his little head and waited. Mother Bear had led Cubby and his twin sister deep into the Green Forest, where a great tree had been blown over and in tearing up its roots had made a great hole. Other trees had been blown over at the same time and had fallen in such a way that this hole was partly roofed over. With her big claws Mother Bear had scratched and dug away the earth at the back and then she had raked in a lot of dead leaves to make a bed. It wasn't very much of a bed, but it was enough to cover the ground and all that a bear needed.

When Mother Bear had everything fixed to suit her she called the two cubs inside. "This is our winter bedroom," said she. "We are going to bed now, the three of us together, and we are going to sleep until old Jack Frost decides it is time to go back way up North where he came from."

"But," protested Cubby, "won't the snow cover us all up?"

"I hope so," replied Mother Bear. "The sooner it covers us up the better suited I'll be."

"But it'll make us cold and shivery," whined Cubby.

"Nothing of the sort," replied Mother Bear in her big deep rumbling-grumbly voice. "It'll make us all warm and comfy."

"Well, how can we sleep all that time without eating?" asked Cubby.

"Did you ever eat in your sleep?" growled Mother Bear. "Didn't I tell you we would be asleep all that time? It isn't a question of how we can sleep without eating; it is a question of how we could possibly eat while sleeping."

"But I should think our empty stomachs would wake us up," protested Cubby.

"They shrink," replied Mother Bear.

"What does shrink mean?" asked Cubby.

"It means to grow smaller," replied Mother Bear.

"And our stomachs really grow smaller?" asked Cubby.

"That's what I said," replied Mother Bear. "They keep growing smaller and smaller until they get so small they wouldn't hold anything if we wanted to eat. So it wouldn't be any use to try to eat. Therefore we keep right on sleeping until Mistress Spring comes to waken us."

"Don't we feel the cold?" asked Cubby.

Mother Bear fairly snarled. "Cold!" she exclaimed. "What do you think we have these big fur coats for? What do you think we have been stuffing fat beneath our skins for all these weeks? Cold! You'll never know, my son, that Jack Frost is around."

Cubby sighed. "I wish," said he "that my stomach would shrink right off quick."

"Why?" asked his sister.

"Because I'm beginning to get hungry right now just thinking of having nothing to eat for so long."

The next story: "Buster Bear's Disappointment."

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