**suitable for children age 6 to 8 approx.**

**Bear and the fox.**

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**Once upon a time there was a bear, who sat on a sunny hillside taking a nap. Just then a fox came slinking by and saw him. "Aha! have I caught you napping, grandfather? See if I don't play you a trick this time!" said Reynard to himself. He then found three wood mice and laid them on a stump of a tree just under the bear's nose. "Boo! Bruin! Peter the hunter is just behind that stump!" shouted the fox right into the bear's ear, and then took to his heels and made off into the wood. The bear woke at once, and when he saw the three mice he became so angry that he lifted his paw and was just going to strike them, for he thought it was they who had shouted in his ear. But just then he saw Reynard's tail between the bushes and he set off at such a speed that the branches crackled under him, and Bruin was soon so close upon Reynard that he caught him by the right hind leg just as be was running into a hole under a pine tree. Reynard was now in a fix; but he was not to be outwitted, and he cried:**

**"Slip pine root, grip fox foot," and so the bear let go his hold; but the fox laughed far down in the hole and said: "I sold you that time, also, grandfather!" "Out of sight is not out of mind!" said the bear, who was in a fine fury. The other morning, when Bruin came trudging across the moor with a fat pig, Master Reynard was lying on a stone by the moorside. "Good-day, grandfather!" said the fox. "What nice thing have you got there?" "Pork," said the bear. "I have got something tasty as well," said the fox. "What's that?" said the bear. "It's the biggest bees' nest I ever found," said Reynard. "Ah, indeed," said the bear, grinning, and his mouth began to water, he thought a little honey would be so nice. "Shall we change victuals?" he said. "No, I won't do that," said Reynard. But they made a wager about naming three kinds of trees. If the fox could say them quicker than the bear he was to have one bite at the pig; but if the bear could say them quicker he was to have one suck at the bee's nest. The bear thought he would be able to suck all the honey up at one gulp.**

**"Well said the fox, "that's all well and good but if I win you must promise to tear off the bristles where I want to have a bite," he said. "Well, I suppose I must, since you are too lazy yourself," said the bear. Then they began to name the trees. "Spruce, fir, pine," growled the bear. His voice was very gruff. But all these were only different names of one kind of tree. "Ash, aspen, oak," screeched the fox, so that the forest resounded. He had thus won the bet, and so he jumped down, took the heart out of the pig at one bite, and tried to run off. But the bear was angry, because he had taken the best bit of the whole pig, and seized hold of him by his tail and held him fast. "Just wait a bit," said the bear, who was furious. "Never mind, grandfather; if you'll let me go you shall have a taste of my honey," said the fox. When the bear heard this he let go his hold and the fox jumped up on the stone after the honey.**

**"Over this nest," said Reynard, "I'll put a leaf, and in the leaf there is a hole, through which you can suck the honey." He then put the nest right up under the bear's nose, pulled away the leaf, jumped on to the stone, and began grinning and laughing; for there was neither honey nor honeycomb in the nest. It was a wasp's nest as big as a man's head, full of wasps, and out they swarmed and stung the bear in his eyes and ears and on his mouth and snout. He had so much to do with scratching them off him that he had no the to think of Reynard. Ever since the bear has been afraid of wasps. Once the fox and the bear made up their minds to have a field in common. They found a small clearing far away in the forest, where they sowed rye the first year. "Now we must share and share alike," said Reynard; "if you will have the roots I will have the tops," he said. Yes, Bruin was quite willing; but when they had thrashed the crop the fox got all the corn, while the bear got nothing but the roots and tares. Bruin didn't like this, but the fox said it was only as they had agreed.**

**"This year I am the gainer," said the fox; "another year it will be your turn; you can then have the tops and I will be satisfied with the roots." Next spring the fox asked the bear if he didn't think turnips would be the right thing for that year. "Yes, that's better food than corn," said the bear; and the fox thought the same. When the autumn came the fox took the turnips, but the bear only got the tops. The bear then became so angry that he parted company then and there with Reynard. One day the bear was lying eating a horse which he had killed. Reynard was about again and came slinking along, his mouth watering for a tasty bit of the horseflesh. He sneaked in and out and round about till he came up behind the bear, when he made a spring to the other side of the carcass, snatching a piece as he jumped across. The bear was not slow either; he made a dash after Reynard and caught the tip of his red tail in his paw. Since that time the fox has always had a white tip to his tail. "Wait a bit Reynard, and come here," said the bear, "and I'll teach you how to catch horses."**

**Yes, Reynard was quite willing to learn that, but he didn't trust himself too near the bear. "When you see a horse lying asleep in a sunny place," said the bear, "you must tie yourself fast with the hair of his tail to your brush, and then fasten your teeth in his thigh," he said. Before long the fox found a horse lying asleep on a sunny hillside; and so he did as the bear had told him; he knotted and tied himself well to the horse with the hair of the tail and then fastened his teeth into his thigh. Up jumped the horse and began to kick and gallop so that Reynard was dashed against stock and stone, and was so bruised and battered that he nearly lost his senses. All at once a hare rushed by. "Where are you off to in such a hurry, Reynard?" said the hare. "I'm having a ride, Bunny!" said the fox. The hare sat up on his hind legs and laughed till the sides of his mouth split right up to his ears, at the thought of Reynard having such a grand ride; but since then the fox has never thought of catching horses again. That time it was Bruin who for once had the better of Reynard; otherwise they say the bear is as simple-minded as the trolls.**

**The end.**