**bob cat and birch tree.**

**From blackfeet indian stories by george bird grinnell.  
Age Rating 8 Plus.**

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**Once Old Man was travelling over the prairie, when he saw far off a fire burning, and as he drew near it he saw many prairie-dogs sitting in a circle around the fire. There were so many of them that there was no place for any one to sit down. Old Man stood there behind the circle, and presently he began to cry, and then he said to the prairie-dogs, "Let me, too, sit by that fire." The prairie-dogs said, "All right, Old Man, don't cry; come and sit by the fire." They moved aside so as to make a place for him, and Old Man sat down and looked on at what they were doing. He saw that they were playing a game, and this was the way they did it: they put one prairie-dog in the fire and covered him up with hot ashes, and then, after he had been there a little while, he would say, "\_sk, sk\_," and they pushed the ashes off him and pulled him out. Old Man said, "Little brothers, teach me how to do that." The prairie-dogs told him what to do, and put him in the fire and covered him up with the ashes, and after a little time he said, "\_sk, sk\_," like a prairie-dog, and they pulled him out again. Then he did it to the prairie-dogs.**

**At first he put them in one at a time, but there were many of them, and soon he got tired and said, "I will put you all in at once." They said, "Very well, Old Man," and all got in the ashes, but just as Old Man was about to cover them up one of them, a female, said, "Do not cover me up, for I fear the heat will hurt me." Old Man said, "Very well; if you do not wish to be covered up, you may sit over by the fire and watch the rest." Then he covered over all the others. At length the prairie-dogs said, "\_sk, sk\_," but Old Man did not sweep off the ashes and pull them out of the fire. He let them stay there and die. The she one that was looking on ran to a hole, and as she went down in it, said, "\_sk, sk\_." Old Man chased her, but he got to the hole too late to catch her. "Oh, well, you can go," he said; "there will be more prairie-dogs by and by." When the prairie-dogs were roasted, Old Man cut some red willow twigs to place them on, and then sat down and began to eat. He ate until he was full, and then felt sleepy. He said to his nose, "I am going to sleep now; watch out, and in case any bad thing comes about, wake me up." Then Old Man slept.**

**Pretty soon his nose snored, and Old Man woke up and said, "What is it?" The nose said, "A raven is flying by, over there." Old Man said, "That is nothing," and went to sleep again. Soon his nose snored again, and Old Man said, "What is it now?" The nose said, "There is a coyote over there, coming this way." Old Man said, "A coyote is nothing," and again went to sleep. Presently his nose snored again, but Old Man did not wake up. Again it snored, and called out, "Wake up, a bobcat is coming." Old Man paid no attention; he slept on. The bobcat crept up to the fire and ate all the roasted prairie-dogs, and then went off and lay down on the flat rock and went to sleep. All this time the nose kept trying to awaken Old Man, and at last he awoke, and the nose said, "A bobcat is over there on that flat rock. He has eaten all your food." Then Old Man was so angry that he called out loud. The tracks of the bobcat were all greasy from the food it had been eating, and Old Man followed these tracks. He went softly over to where the bobcat was sleeping, and seized it before it could wake up to bite or scratch him. The bobcat cried out, "Wait, let me speak a word or two," but Old Man would not listen.**

**"I will teach you to steal my food," he said. He pulled off the lynx's tail, pounded his head against the rock so as to make his face flat, pulled him out long so as to make him small-bellied, and then threw him into the brush. As he went sneaking away, Old Man said, "There, that is the way you bobcats shall always be." It is for this reason that the lynxes to-day look like that. Old Man went to the fire, and looked at the red willow sticks where the roasted prairie-dogs had been, and when he saw them, and thought how his food was all gone, it made him angry at his nose. He said, "You fool, why did you not wake me?" He took the willow sticks and thrust them in the coals, and when they had caught fire he burnt his nose. This hurt, and he ran up on a hill and held his nose to the wind, and called to the wind to blow hard and cool him. A hard wind came, so hard that it blew him off the hill and away down to Birch Creek. As he was flying along he caught at the weeds and brush to stop himself, but nothing was strong enough to hold him. At last he grasped a birch tree. He held fast, and it did not give way. Although the wind whipped him about, this way and that, and tumbled him up and down, the tree held him. He kept calling to the wind to blow more softly, and at last it listened to him and went down. Then he said, "This is a beautiful tree. It has saved me from being blown away and knocked all to pieces. I will make it pretty, and it shall always be like that." So he gashed the bark across with his stone knife, as you see the marks to-day.**