



How The Bear Lost Its Tail

A Native American Tale

Adapted by Susan LaBella

NARRATOR 1:

Many years ago, Bear had a beautiful long tail. Bear was very proud of his tail and he spread it out behind him for everyone to see.

BEAR:

Isn't my tail awesome? Don't you think I look great?

NARRATOR 2:

Everyone thought Bear was too full of himself, but they didn't want to make him mad. After all, he *did* have really huge claws.

NARRATOR 3:

So, everyone told Bear his long black tail looked really cool.

NARRATOR 4:

One very cold winter day, Bear took a walk to the lake. When he got there, Fox was sitting on the ice with a pile of fish beside him.

BEAR:

Hey Fox! Where did you get all those fish?

NARRATOR 5:

Fox decided to play a little trick on Bear.

FOX: (Pointing to a hole in the ice)
I caught them.

BEAR:
But you don't have anything to fish with.

FOX:
It was a snap. I used my tail.

NARRATOR 1:
Bear was amazed.

BEAR: (Shouting)
You used your *tail*?

FOX:
Sure. It's one of the best ways to catch fish. Do you want me to show you how?

NARRATOR 2:
Bear answered in his deep voice.

BEAR:
You bet, bro!

FOX:
Let's go to a part of the lake where there's sure to be lots of fish.

NARRATOR 3:
Fox laughed to himself as he led Bear to a shallow part of the lake. There, Bear used his claws to dig a hole in the ice.

FOX:
Now sit with your back to the hole and drop your tail into the water. When you feel a bite, pull out your tail, and -- presto -- a fish!

NARRATOR 4:
Bear was excited at the thought of catching fish so easily -- and he was hungry... So, he sat down and put his tail into the freezing water.

BEAR:

G-g-gee Fox, this water is really ch-ch-chilly.

FOX:

Bear, you have to sit very still and think about catching fish. Pretend the fish are biting, and count each fish you pretend to catch. The more pretend fish you count, the more real fish you'll catch.

BEAR:

This is great. This awesome tail of mine will catch tons of fish!

FOX:

Be sure to sit very still, Bear. I'll watch from the trees so I don't scare the fish away.

NARRATOR 5:

Fox trotted off to the trees, chuckling to himself.

NARRATOR 1:

Bear sat very still, counting the fish he pretended to catch.

NARRATOR 2:

But counting pretend fish was boring -- so boring that Bear soon fell sound asleep.

NARRATOR 3:

Bear slept so soundly that he didn't hear the other animals trying to warn him of Fox's sneaky trick.

BEAR:

1, 2, 3ZZZZZ

NARRATOR 4:

As Bear slept, the weather turned colder and snow started to fall.

NARRATOR 5:

Soon, Fox took his fish and went home. He warmed himself by the fire and cooked a wonderful fish dinner.

NARRATOR 1:

After a few hours, Fox decided to go back to the lake to see what Bear was doing.

FOX:

Hee, hee, hee, hee! I wonder what that fool Bear is doing.

NARRATOR 2:

At the lake, Fox found Bear still asleep. His black fur had turned white from the snow and ice had formed around his tail.

BEAR:

G-naugh, snort, snort. G-naugh ...

NARRATOR 3:

Fox laughed and laughed. He laughed so hard, he fell over backwards with his legs waving in the air.

FOX:

What a great trick I played on Bear! That'll teach him to strut around the forest showing off his magnificent tail!

NARRATOR 4:

Soon, Fox stopped laughing. He slowly snuck up on Bear. Then, he shouted as if the forest had caught fire...

FOX:

Bear! Bear! Wake up! Can't you feel that fish on your tail? Hurry or you'll lose it!

NARRATOR 5:

Bear was in a deep sleep -- so deep that he woke with a start. As he jumped off the ice in surprise, Bear suddenly felt a sharp pain -- and his frozen tail *snapped right off!*

NARRATOR 1:

All that was left was a small stump where Bear's long tail had been.

BEAR:

What happened to my tail? My wonderful tail! I'll get you, you sneaky character. I'll turn you into stew!

NARRATOR 2:

But the tricky fox ran off, laughing as hard as he could.

NARRATOR 3:

And that is why bears today have short, stumpy tails.

