

BEAR AND RABBIT
STANLEY DAVID GEDZELMAN
Told 31 May 2014 Written 01-03 June 2014

Bear was very hungry - famished. He had not eaten anything for 6 months. All winter long he had slept in his bear den. He was hibernating. All winter long he slowly lost weight until he was so skinny you could see his ribs sticking out of his mangy fur. Bear was so hungry that everything looked like food to him - even his good friend, Rabbit.

Bear came to Rabbit's briar patch. Rabbit was small and weak, and she needed the protection of all the sharp, spiky thorns. Bear said, "Rabbit, come out and play with me!"

When Rabbit looked into Bear's eyes she got very nervous. Bear looked like he only wanted to eat her. So Rabbit said, "I am not coming out, Bear. You are so hungry that all you want to do is eat me."

"Oh, no!" said Bear, "It is not true that I want to eat you. I only want to play with you."

"If you really want to play with me, then make me a mud and straw ball so we can play." Bear ran down to the stream. He clawed some dirt and some tundra grass. He dipped the ball in the water and squeezed out the extra water between his great paws. Bear then ran back to the briar patch. Rabbit was outside the briar patch. But she was out only a short distance.

When Bear saw Rabbit, he couldn't resist. "Food", he thought. He dropped the ball and raced to catch Rabbit. But Rabbit suspected this all along and hopped quickly back into the briar patch.

Bear ran so fast that he could not stop in time. He crashed into the briar patch so hard that the sharp, spiky thorns stuck into his face and shoulders and broke off inside him. Now Bear was not only hungry, he was hurt and angry. He tore the thorny branches with his great claws. Rabbit was so scared that she raced down her rabbit burrow. Bear tore and tore and tore but he didn't get very far. He only ripped a few branches, but many thorns stuck in Bear's tender paws.

Pain made Bear whine. When Rabbit heard that she came out of the Rabbit burrow and said to Bear, "You see, you didn't want to play. You are so hungry that all you want to do is eat me."

"That's not true", whined Bear.

"Oh yes it is", said Rabbit. "I am not going to play with you until you have eaten tons of salmon and berries and you are fat again."

Bear's front paws hurt so much that he had to stand on his hind paws and waddle away slowly, like a giant penguin. He looked so clumsy that Rabbit laughed. Bear was very sad. He waddled slowly to the stream and soaked his paws. They began to swell. In a few hours they swelled so much he could hardly move. The pain made Bear want to cry. He wanted to put on band aides but bears don't have band aides.

Bear's paws hurt so much and so long, even after he soaked them in water and mud, that he fell asleep. When he was snoring, Rabbit came up and tied a bell around Bear's neck very tight so that everyone could hear him coming.

After a week, Bear's paws began to feel better. But he was hungrier than ever. It was much too soon for the salmon to swim up the river. They did not come until July. Bear remembered a year ago when the salmon had come. He only had to wait on a large rock by the side of a little waterfall that the salmon tried to jump over. When they were up in the air Bear could catch them in his mouth. They were delicious and there were so many of them. Bear would eat until he was stuffed. But it was much too soon for salmon, so all Bear could do was to think about them.

When hungry Bear saw rabbit eating in the tundra grass, he raced over to catch her and eat her. But the bell started ringing. Ring, Ring, Ring, Ring. Rabbit heard the bell ring when Bear was still far away. She had so much warning time that she easily hopped back to the briar patch.

Bear tried to take the bell off but it was too tight on his neck. All the animals could hear Bear coming so he couldn't catch any of them. It was too soon for salmon and it was too soon to eat berries, which Bear really loved. The berries were still green and hard and very bitter. They gave Bear a stomach ache. So Bear had to eat the tundra grass, which he hated. Every time he looked up he felt sad. So many delicious animals were all around him but he couldn't catch any of them. That nasty bell kept on ringing every time he moved, even if he moved his stubby little tail.

Bear had one hope left. He would catch Beaver. Beaver would always hide in her large beaver lodge in the middle of the pond. Beaver built the pond and her beaver lodge. She spent many days cutting down trees and branches with her two sharp front teeth. Beaver dragged the logs and sticks to make a dam. Water piled up behind the dam. She piled other sticks together with mud to make her Beaver lodge. Beaver made two doors to her lodge at the bottom of the pond. The doors were too deep for Bear, so Beaver was safe in her lodge.

Bear swam to Beaver's lodge. He stood up on his hind legs and started ripping the beaver lodge with his long sharp claws. The loose sticks and mud of Beaver's lodge slid into the water. Bear made such a mess that the water began to get muddy.

Beaver was scared and angry. Sooner or later, Bear would break into her lodge and then try to eat her. So Beaver swam out from her back door at the bottom of her lodge. Beaver stirred up more mud by swishing her tail. The water was so muddy that Bear could not see anything in the water. Beaver could hide. She swam to Bear's back left foot and bit it with her two large front beaver teeth. Bear screamed and danced his back feet as fast as he could but as soon as he stopped, Beaver bit his other back foot. Bear felt like crying. He swam away as fast as he could. Beaver followed him and bit each hind foot again, because bears don't move them much when they swim. The pond was full of mud and blood. Mud and Bear's blood. Bear's hind feet were so sore that he couldn't walk for two weeks, and he got even skinnier.

Finally, it was July and the salmon swam up the stream. Bear hobbled slowly down to the stream. He found a huge rock to stand on, next to a small waterfall. When the salmon jumped over the waterfall they were easy to catch in mid-air. Bear caught one salmon, then another, then

another. He ate and ate and ate. In July, the berries also become beautiful. Some are red, some are blue and some are black. The bright colors mean that the berries are ripe and good to eat. So, Bear had dinner and dessert. Bear stuffed and stuffed and stuffed himself.

Bear ate so much that he got fat. You could not see his ribs any more. His neck got so fat it broke the string and the bell finally fell off. Bear was very happy.

Now that Bear was stuffed he was sorry that he had tried to eat his good friend, Rabbit. He came to the briar patch to apologize. He said, "Rabbit, I am very sorry that I tried to eat you. I am sorry that I lied to you and said I wanted to play when all I wanted to do was eat you."

Rabbit knew that Bear was telling the truth and that he was sorry. She said, "That's OK, Bear." Then she thought for a few minutes and added, "If you want to play, make me a mud ball."

Bear wanted to play too. He said, "OK, I'll do it." But he walked very slowly to the stream because he was too stuffed to run. He was so stuffed he just sat at the edge of the stream for an hour. Finally, he made the mud ball and brought it back to rabbit.

Rabbit was ready to run, but Bear was still too stuffed. When Bear tried to run he got tired very fast. So he sat down and Rabbit had to play ball by herself. Bear was so stuffed and tired he could not move the ball at all. He was so stuffed he could hardly even move his eyeballs.

As soon as he could move, Bear went back to the stream to catch more salmon. He felt very, very strange. Even though he was stuffed he was also hungry. Every day he ate. He ate more and more and more. He didn't know why he was so hungry and so stuffed at the same time.

Summer ended. The salmon stopped coming. The days were getting colder and Bear was feeling tired. He started to dig a new den to sleep in. Rabbit wanted to play but Bear was very busy. Dig, dig, dig. Rabbit said, "Bear, you are boring. You were too hungry to play. Then, you were too stuffed to play and now, you are too busy to play. Soon you will be too sleepy to play."

"Don't bother me, silly Rabbit", said Bear. "It's time to work. Anyway, Rabbit, you are too old to play. You are turning white. You are white and old and silly!"

"You are the silly one, Bear. I am not old. White fur is a camouflage for when the snow comes."

Bear could hardly listen because he was working so hard. He asked, "What is camel fudge?"

Rabbit was surprised that Bear didn't know what camouflage means. "Not camel fudge, Bear. Fudge is black. Listen carefully, Bear. Cam **ooo** flage! Camouflage means disguise. If my fur is white, Lynx, Fox, Coyote and Wolf cannot see me in the snow. That is why I turn white. I turn white every fall. I am not old."

Bear didn't care. Dig, dig, dig. Finally, he finished his den. He was happy and proud. He invited Rabbit to visit him. "Come look at my den, Rabbit!"

Rabbit looked into the den. The den was very big but it was ugly and very dirty. Rabbit did not want to get her beautiful, white fur dirty so she was very careful. "My rabbit burrow is much cleaner, Bear, but your den is much, much bigger. Your den is almost as big as a giant cave."

Bear was very proud of his den. He didn't care that it was dirty. Rabbit got some clean, dry straw to sit on and stayed with Bear for a long time. Bear started to yawn. Then he could not stop yawning. Then Rabbit said, "It is getting late and you are getting tired, so I am going home." But when Rabbit looked out of the bear den, Wolf was waiting to catch Rabbit and eat her. Rabbit needed Bear to protect her so that she could get home safely to her rabbit burrow.

Bear was falling asleep he was so tired. Rabbit had to poke him and poke him. Finally she had to bite his nose, but not too hard. Bear woke up and said, "Ow, why did you bite me, Rabbit?"

Rabbit said, "Bear, take me home. Wolf is outside waiting to eat me." Even though Bear was tired, he knew he had to help his good friend. Slowly he got up and walked Rabbit home to her briar patch. Wolf growled but stayed away because Bear was too strong and his claws were too long and sharp. When they reached the briar patch, Rabbit raced into it. "Have a good winter hibernation, Bear. I love you." But Rabbit was sad because he knew that next spring Bear would be so hungry he would try to eat her again when he woke up.

Bear walked very slowly back to his den. He was so tired he couldn't stop yawning. Yawn, yawn, yawn. He yawned so much that tears came out of his eyes. That's pretty unusual for a bear. Wolf saw Bear yawning and called for his friends. "Let's get Bear. He is very tired today." But Wolf came too close to Bear. Bear turned around and scratched Wolf with his giant, sharp bear claws. Wolf screamed in pain. Bear roared and the whole wolf pack ran away. Bear was always dangerous if you made him angry.

Bear finally reached his den. He climbed down into it and curled up in a giant ball. But a sharp rock poked into his side. He was very tired but the rock hurt him much that he had to move. The next place was too lumpy. He had to move again. Then Bear got thirsty, very thirsty. He wished Rabbit were there to bring him a cup of water. But rabbits do not have cups. Anyway, Rabbit was in her burrow and Bear was all alone. Poor Bear was very, very tired, but very, very, very, very thirsty. He just had to get a drink, even if he had to go all the way to the stream. At the stream he took such a long drink he almost fell asleep standing there and his head fell into the water. Bear started to choke. That woke him up just enough for him to walk back to his den. He finally found a comfortable spot. He curled up in a giant ball again and was asleep in a few seconds. Now, he would hibernate for six months.

Bear fell asleep just in time. Snow began to fall from the clouds. All the ground turned white. It was winter.