

THE WREN AND THE BEAR

The sun was shining on a summer afternoon as Bear and Wolf strolled through the serene forest. Bear was listening to a beautiful bird singing and said to his friend,

“Brother Wolf, what a majestic tune that is! What bird sings so well?”

Wolf replied, “That is the King of Birds, before whom we should bow.” But in reality it was just a willow-wren.

“Well then I would love to see his royal bird palace. Take me to this king!” Bear requested.

“It is not that simple. We must wait for the Queen of Birds to come first,” Wolf explained to him. Not long after he said this, the queen arrived with some food for her young ones. Moments later, the king joined her. Bear began to walk towards the royal couple, but Wolf stopped him. “Wait. You must wait for them to leave again,” Wolf said to his friend.

As soon as the king and queen had left, Bear hurried over to see the royal palace to look inside. When he saw the five baby birds inside, he was disappointed and said “This is the royal palace? You are not the king’s children! You are just disreputable children!”

The little wrens were angry at Bear for this and yelled “We are not! Our parents are honest birds! Bear, you will pay for saying such things!”

Bear and Wolf got nervous and hurried away, but when the birds returned to their children with more food they refused to eat. They swore they would not eat until they punished Bear for his insulting words.

“He shall be punished,” the king promised and he and his wife flew to Bear at once. He asked, “Why have you insulted my children? You shall be punished and we shall bring a bloody war!” And so, war was announced against all four-footed animals. The oxen, cows, deer, and others were summoned. The king called upon all the animals that flew - all the birds (large and small), the hornets, flies, and bees were to join too.

The willow-wren sent out spies. A gnat flew deep into the forest and found where the enemy had assembled. Bear said to Fox “You are the most cunning animal, Fox. You should lead us!”

The fox agreed, but asked “What should be the signal? When I lift my tail up high, it is going well and you should attack. However, if my tail is low you should turn around and retreat.”

The gnat returned and told every detail to the willow-wren. When morning broke, the four-footed animals charged. The willow-wren and his army came at them, high in the air. However, the hornet was sent to fly beneath the fox's tail and sting him as hard as he could. The hornet stung one, but the fox took the pain and continued to attack. The hornet stung again. The fox screamed and put his tail between his legs. When the animals saw this, they thought the battle was lost and begun to flee. It was over and the birds had won.

The king and queen returned to their children and told them they could eat again. They had defeated Bear and his army. However, the children said they would not eat until Bear came and apologized in person.

So the king asked Bear to come speak to his children. He agreed and came to see the children again. He apologized and sat with them, eating and drinking far into the night.