



THE BEAR
WHO NEVER
WAS CROSS

Title: The Bear Who Never Was Cross

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Language: English

Subject: Fiction, Literature, Children's literature

Publisher: World Public Library Association

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THE BEAR WHO NEVER WAS CROSS

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Published in the Shop of
P.F. VOLLAND & CO.
CHICAGO U.S.A.



THIS LITTLE STORY IS TOLD
AND THE LITTLE PICTURES
WERE DRAWN FOR A GOOD
LITTLE CHILD NAMED



THE BEAR WHO NEVER WAS CROSS

THERE was once a big brown bear, and he lived in a hollow tree on the edge of a wood. The big bear was very fond of his house, for it was a nice big hollow, high enough for him to walk in at the front door without stooping, and with plenty of room inside.

In the summer-time, when the woods were green and cool, he did not use his house very much. But when winter came,

and the days grew dark and cold, and the woods were white with snow, then the big brown bear liked to stay inside his house. And so, for the winter-time, he had made it warm and cosy. In one corner he had a jar of honey, which the bees who work in the wild roses had made for him. And in another corner he had a soft bed of dried leaves and sweet fern where he could curl up on a dark day and take a long, long nap.

The big brown bear took good care of his house and kept it very neat and clean. Every morning he swept up the hearth and dusted the jar of honey, and nothing was ever out of its place.

He was a kind-hearted old bear, too, and never was cross as most bears are, and because he was so kind everybody liked him and came often to see him.

But it was little White Rabbit who came oftenest of all. She said she liked to sit in the big bear's house because it was

always so neat and clean. Little White Rabbit had a house of her own, but somehow she never could keep it in order. She said it was because her children were so naughty, but, whatever the reason was, her house was always in a dreadful state!

The big bear was always very polite to little White Rabbit whenever she came to see him. He always took her bonnet and shawl, and gave her his best chair by the fire, so that she might be very comfortable while she told him her troubles. Then little White Rabbit would tell him how Bunny Rabbit, the youngest, never would mind her, and how her oldest child, Cotton Tail, had run away from home just the day before and hadn't come back yet, and many more troubles besides.

She always explained to him how she tried to do her duty by her children,—how often she had shut Bunny into the dark closet, and just how many times she had spanked Cotton Tail.

Then the big bear would try to teach her how he thought naughty children should be brought up. And because he was such a kind-hearted bear, and did not know how to be cross, he told her not to shut little Bunny into the dark closet and never to spank poor Cotton Tail; for he was sure that if only she were very kind, the children would surely be good.

Little White Rabbit always did whatever he told her, for she thought the big bear was very wise and knew everything. Every day the little rabbits grew naughtier, yet still she did not lose faith in what the big bear had said.

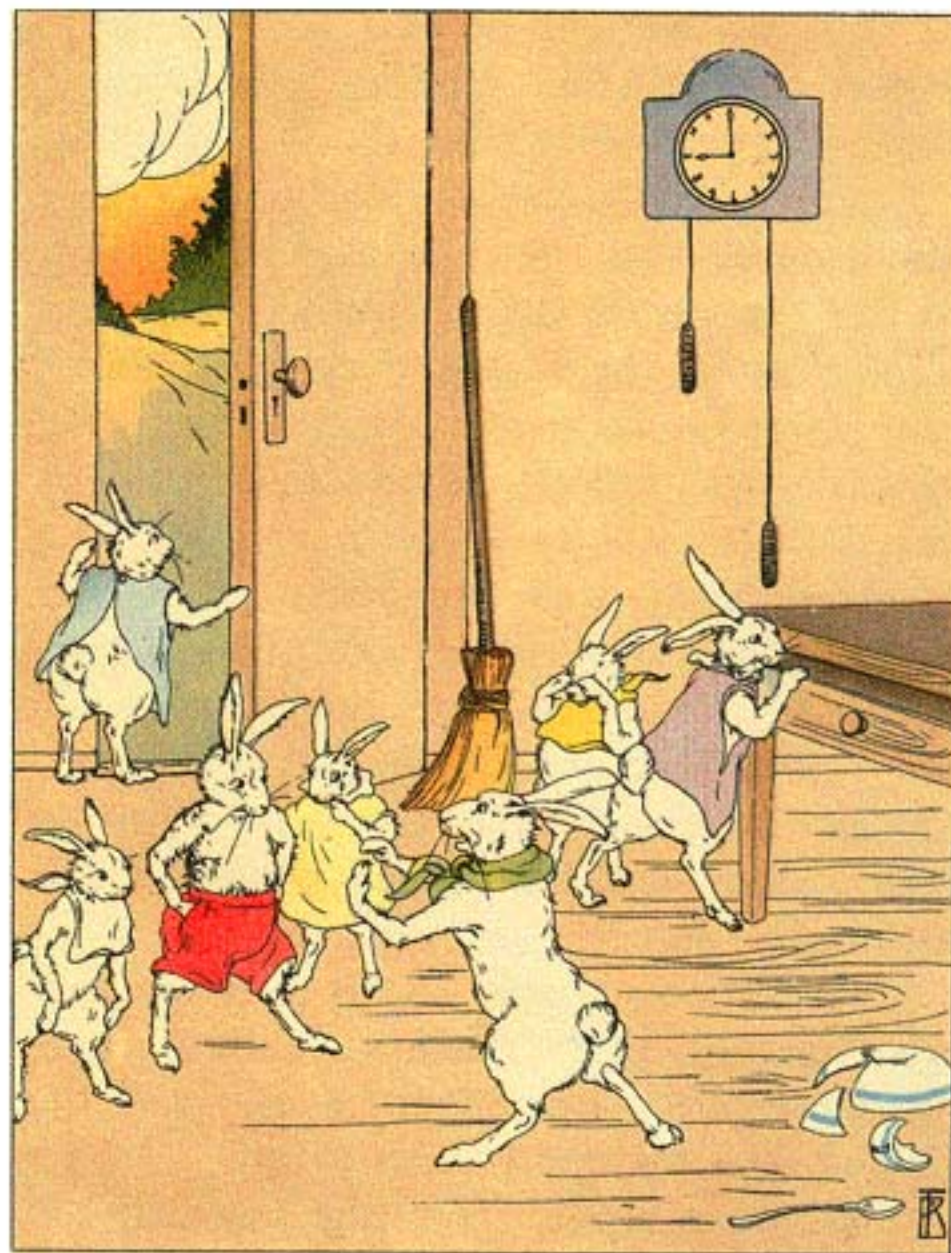
She even called Cotton Tail to her one day and told him that if ever anything should happen to her, he was to take all his little brothers and sisters to the big bear's house; for he was so wise and so kind that she was sure he would take care of them and do it just right.



Now, not long after this, it happened that little White Rabbit went out into the woods to find something for her children to eat. She was gone a long time, so that the babies cried for her to come home. But poor little White Rabbit could not come home again, for she had been caught in a trap, and a little boy had come and taken her away for a pet.

Then at last, when the baby rabbits had grown so hungry that they could not stand it any longer, Cotton Tail remembered what his mother had told him, and he called his little brothers and sisters around him and said to them:

"Little White Rabbit will not come back to us any more. She is lost. And if we stay here alone we shall starve. So we must do what our Mother said. We must go to the big bear and ask him to take care of us. He is very wise and very kind, and he will do it just right. I will ask him because I am the oldest, and you must all do just as I say."



"Yes, we will all do just as you say," answered the little rabbits. So Cotton Tail told them what they should do.

That very same day they all put on their best clothes and went through the woods to the big bear's house. When they had come close to the house, they saw the big bear himself standing in his door way. He looked very much surprised to see so many little rabbits coming through the woods, but he was even more surprised when they all stopped in front of his house.

"Little White Rabbit, our mother, is lost," said Cotton Tail in a very high, squeaky little voice, for he was trying to be very polite, "and she will never come back to us any more."

"Never come back to us any more!" cried all the little rabbits, holding their handkerchiefs over their eyes, just as Cotton Tail had told them to do.

"Oh, dear," said the big bear, much distressed, "that is very sad news indeed!



I was fond of your mother. She often came to see me."

"And before she went away," Cotton Tail went on, "she told us that if anything happened to her, we were to come and ask you to take care of us, because you are so wise and so kind, and never are cross."

"You are so wise and so kind and never are cross!" repeated all the little rabbits from behind their handkerchiefs.

"Well,—well," said the big bear, "let me see. So that was what your mother said?"

"Yes, if you please," answered Cotton Tail politely, and "Yes, please!" echoed all his little brothers and sisters.

Now to tell the whole truth, the big bear did not wish very much to take care of all of little White Rabbit's babies, for there were so many of them and they all looked very hungry. But when they put their handkerchiefs over their eyes and looked so sad, he could not tell them to go away, for he was such a kind-hearted bear.

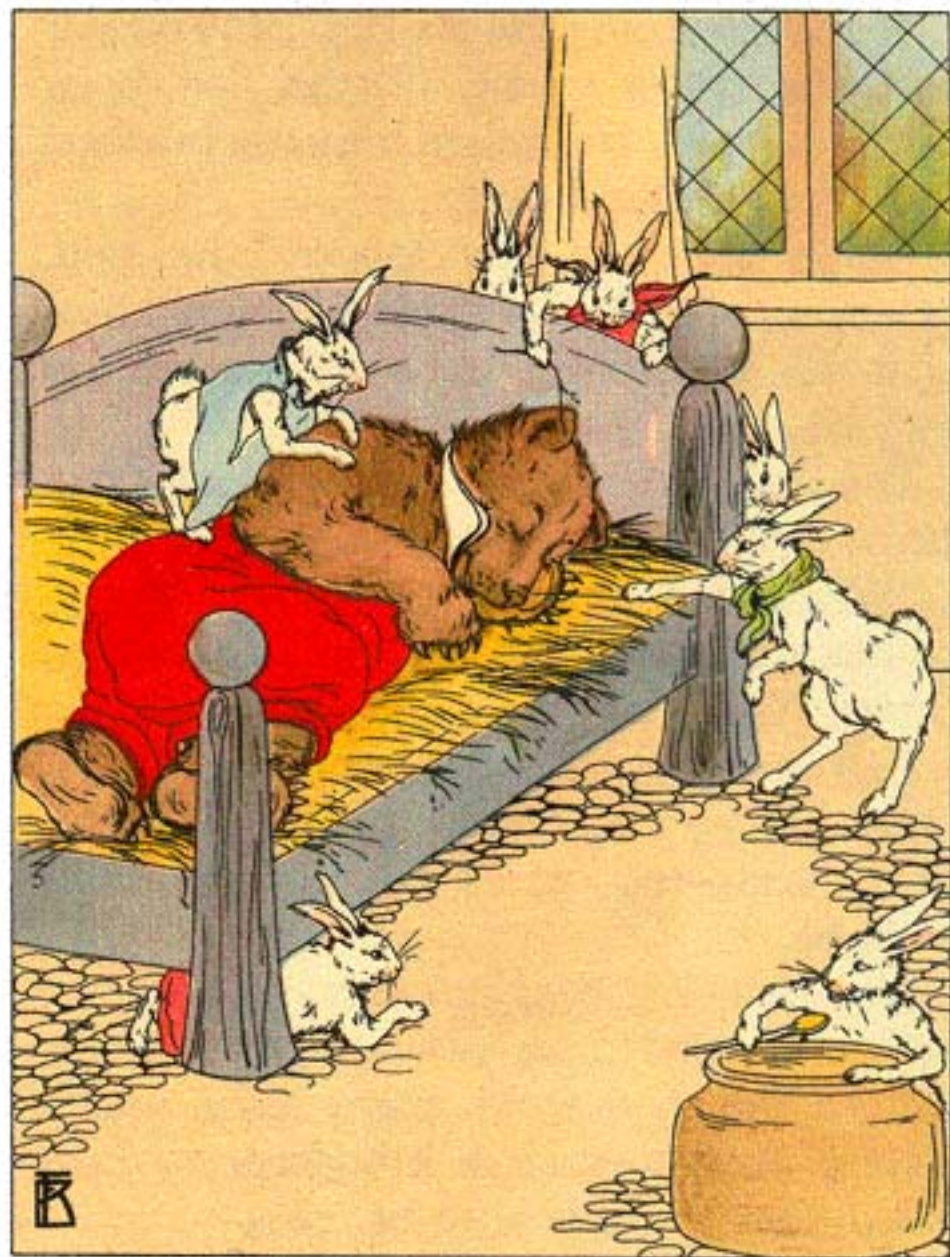


"Will you promise to be good children, and always do what I tell you to do?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed," answered Cotton Tail.

"Yes, indeed!" cried all the little rabbits.

So at last the big bear let them come into his house, and began to take care of them, and at first everything went quite well. Big Brown Bear took just as good care of all the little rabbits as he did of his house. He washed all their faces every morning and brushed their fur the right way. He mended all their clothes, too, and he even got books for them and began to teach them their letters. For a time the little rabbits were very good and did whatever he told them to do, because, just at first, you see, they were a little afraid of the big bear. But after a while, when they had found out that he was so kind-hearted that he really did not know how to be cross, they grew tired of being good.



So, one morning, when Big Brown Bear had gone out for a walk, Cotton Tail threw down his books and called his little brothers and sisters around him.

"Let's not read any longer," he said. "The big bear is away and will not know what we are doing. Let's have some fun until he comes back!"

The little rabbits were ready enough to throw down their books.

"What shall we do?" they asked.

"Let's eat up his honey!" answered Cotton Tail.

And so they did,—every drop of it! Then they jumped on his bed and mussed it all up, and were just as naughty as rabbits could be.

When the big bear came home again he was very sorry to see what they had done, but he did not scold them very much, because he was such a kind-hearted bear and did not know how to be cross.

Only, when the next morning came, he said to himself, "I will stay at home to-day and watch these naughty rabbits."

And so long as he watched them, the rabbits were good. But after a time he grew very tired and lay down to take a nap.

Then, just as he had done before, Cotton Tail called his brothers and sisters around him, and he said to them very softly:

"Let's not be good at all any more. The big bear does not know how to be cross. He will never scold us very much."

Of course, all the little rabbits thought it would be very nice not to be good any more.

"And what shall we do now?" they asked.

"Let's tease him and see if we can wake him up," answered Cotton Tail.

And so all the little rabbits did all they could think of to tease the big bear. They jumped up and down on his back, and some of them pulled his ears, and one of

them even tickled his nose with a straw; for each one had started out to see just how naughty he could be.

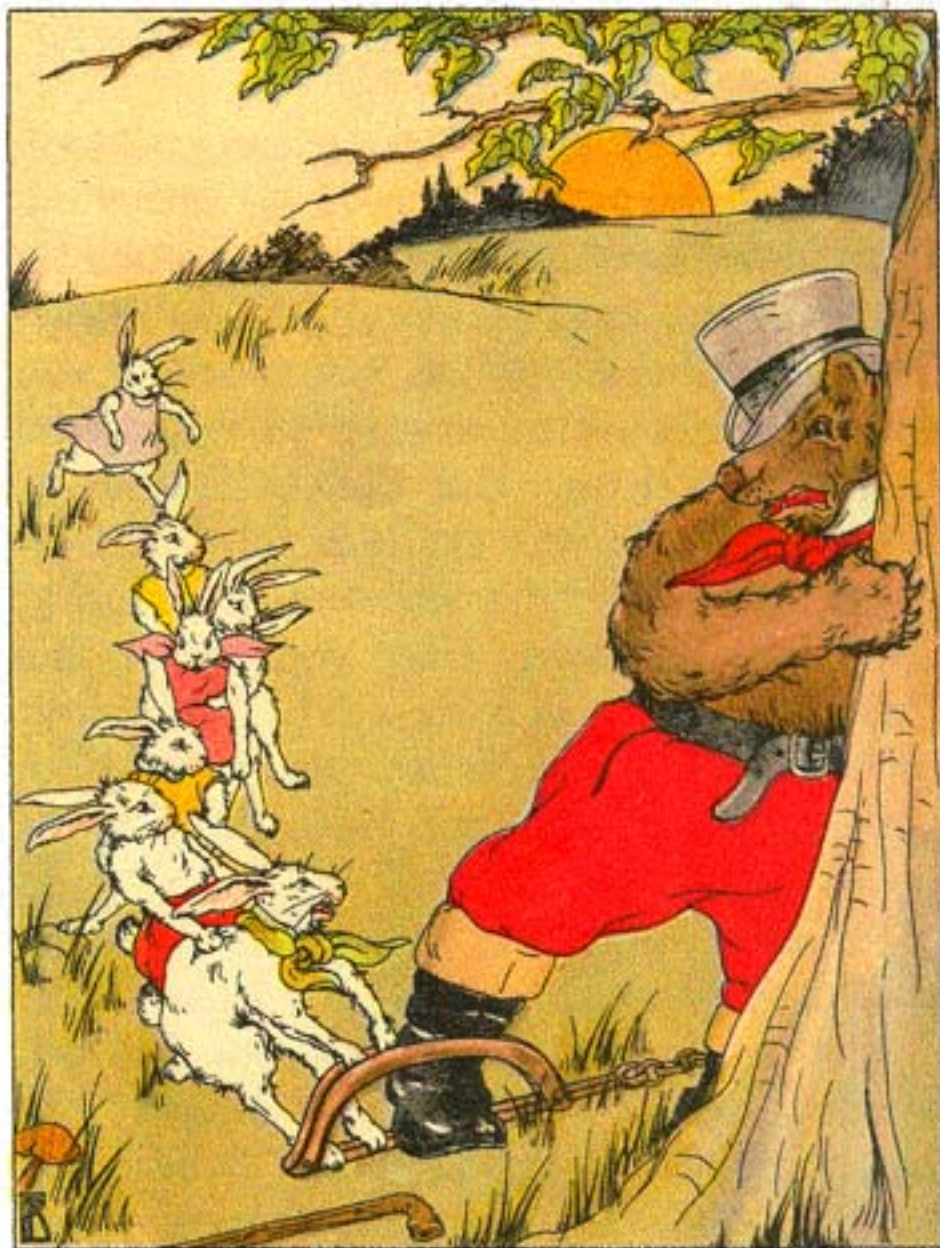
You may be sure that the big bear did not take a very long nap. But when he woke up, he did not scold them at all. Instead, he took his hat and his cane, and after he had said good-bye to them, he went out of the house, and though the little rabbits waited a long, long time, he did not come back.

Then Cotton Tail and all the other little rabbits were very sorry for what they had done, for they were all fond of the big brown bear.

So once more Cotton Tail called all the others around him.

"I am the oldest," he said, "I shall go out and look for the big bear and bring him home again."

The little rabbits were very glad of this. "Oh yes!" they cried, "and what shall we do?"



"You must come, too, and help me," answered Cotton Tail.

So all the little rabbits went out to look for the big bear. And where do you think they found him? He had been caught in the trap, too, and he could not get away. Then the little rabbits were still more sorry, for they remembered how good he had been to them. But Cotton Tail spoke first because he was the oldest.

"We are sorry that we were so naughty, and drove you away from your home, Big Bear," he said. "But we will help you now, for we love you because you have been good to us and do not know how to be cross."

"Of course we will help you," said all the little rabbits.

Then each took hold of the one in front of him, and Cotton Tail took hold of the trap, and all together they pulled and pulled. And there were so many of them, and they pulled so hard, that at last the

trap gave way and the big brown bear was free.

So they all went home again together, and when they got there, whom should they see standing in the door but little White Rabbit herself! She had run away from the little boy and come back to take care of her own babies again, and perhaps you won't believe it, but the big brown bear was really rather glad of it!



The End.

