

THE MAN WHO WAS RAISED BY A BEAR

The man who was raised by a bear was no ordinary man. He came from the mountains and was so strong that he carried a sword which weighed more than a hundredweight, which he wielded with one hand. Many years before, in the spring, he had been found alone and crying by a mother bear. The mother bear took pity on the child and nursed him like one of her own cubs. Under her care the boy grew into a healthy and strong young man, and he roamed in the mountain forests with his bear brothers and bear sisters.

When he reached adulthood he left his bear family in the high mountain forest to make his way among the people of the valleys. In all his adventures, he never met anyone who was as strong as himself, until one day he met the charcoal burner. The man who was raised by a bear watched as the huge soot blackened man ripped giant trees out of the ground and tore them into tiny pieces before starting his great fire. He thought that here was somebody who would be good company on his adventures, and told him so. The charcoal burner agreed.

The man who was raised by a bear and the charcoal burner continued their journey together. In all their adventures, they never met anyone who was as strong as themselves, until one day they met the miller. The two friends watched as the huge broad chested man stood on a hill and turned seven great windmills with one breath. The man who was raised by a bear thought that here was somebody who would be good company on their adventures with the charcoal burner, and told him so. The miller agreed.

The man who was raised by a bear, the charcoal burner, and the miller continued their journey together. In all their adventures, they never met anyone who was as strong as themselves, until they were kept from their dinner.

One day, the three friends came across an empty castle in the middle of a forest, and they all decided that it would be good place to stay for a while. They slept the whole of the first day and the first night and were not disturbed. On the second day, the man who was raised by a bear went hunting in the woods with the charcoal burner, while the miller was left alone in the kitchen. As he was busy at the stove preparing the meal for himself and his two friends, a boney skeleton came out of the chimney, and beat him black and blue. He was still lying on the floor when the man who was raised by a bear and the charcoal burner returned.

His two friends were both very hungry and very angry that there was no meal ready, but the miller didn't like to admit what had happened. Instead, he complained that he had a terrible stomach ache which was so bad, that it twisted all of his insides and he couldn't work for the whole of the day. So, they ate a poor cold meal, and went to bed early.

On the next day, the man who was raised by a bear went hunting in the woods with the miller, while the charcoal burner was left alone in the kitchen. As he was busy at the stove preparing the meal for himself and his two friends, two boney skeletons came out of the chimney, and beat him black and blue. He was still lying on the floor when the man who was raised by a bear and the miller returned. He also didn't like to admit what had happened, so also he complained that he had a terrible stomach ache. It was so bad, that it twisted all of his insides and he couldn't work for the whole of the day. Once again they ate a poor cold meal, and went to bed early.

On the third day, the man who was raised by a bear stayed behind in the kitchen, while his two friends went hunting in the woods. He was standing in front of the stove preparing dumplings for the meal, when a boney skeleton came out of the chimney. He carried on working, but as he put the next dumpling in to cook, he said "One more for the pot." Then the second skeleton flew out of the chimney. Again, he carried on working and said "Another one for the pot." When a third skeleton came out of the chimney, the man who was raised by a bear decided that enough was enough. He dusted the flour off his hands, grabbed all three spirits and shook them so hard that all their bones rattled. Then he threw them in the corner behind the stove, where they stayed shivering and were too afraid of the great strong man to fly back up the chimney. They were still lying on the floor when the miller and the charcoal burner returned, and while the three friends enjoyed a good hot meal.

On the next day, the man who was raised by a bear, the charcoal burner, and the miller continued their journey together. After many adventures, they decided that they had seen enough and done enough, and that it was now time for them to marry and settle down. But, all the maidens and young ladies who they had met on their travels seemed much too small and weak for three such great strong men as themselves. After much thought, they decided that they should seek three strong handsome women in the underworld as wives. No sooner than they had decided, they had a plan.

The charcoal burner would lower his two friends deep into the underworld on a long rope, where they would seek a wife for each of them. Then the miller would return with the two ladies, and the charcoal burner would descend to join the man who was raised by a bear in finding a third bride. At first everything went well. The charcoal burner lowered his two friends deep into the underworld. There, the man who was raised by a bear and the miller met two big strong handsome young ladies, who agreed to marry them. They returned to the place where they had been lowered down on the rope. One by one, the charcoal burner pulled up the miller and the two ladies. But he didn't lower the rope again. When he saw lady who was engaged to the man who was raised by a bear, he had decided that it was better to marry her than to search the underworld for a third who he might not like as well.

So, there was nothing for the man who was raised by a bear to do except to find another way out. After wandering through the underworld for a long time, looking for another way out, he met an old crone who asked him what he was

doing. "I have lost my way here, and have been searching for a way back to the overworld for a long time" he told her.

"I can bring you to the overworld" she replied. "If you can feed me enough meat to stop me being hungry on the long journey, I can carry you on my back."

The man who was raised by a bear happily agreed, and told the old woman to wait while he went hunting. He hunted for two days and two nights before he returned to the old woman, carrying a huge sack full of fresh meat on his back. There was enough to fill two wagons, but the woman immediately ate half of it. After she had eaten, he said to her "Now that I have fed you, carry me out of here as quickly as you can so that I can see the sun again."

She replied "Jump on my back, and bring what's left with you in case I get hungry again", and off they went. They had got less than halfway on the long upward journey when the old woman was hungry again. In a short time, she had eaten all of the rest of the meat until there were only dry bones left. There was still a long way to go, but not long after she shouted "More meat! Or I'll let you fall here and now." There was nothing left in the sack, and the man who was raised by a bear had to think quickly. Using his knife, he cut a thick piece of steak from his own side. It didn't hurt and the wound healed immediately, leaving no scar. The woman greedily wolfed down the meat and walked on a little way. Then, she again demanded more meat, and the man who was raised by a bear fed her in the same way. This happened many more times on the way, but he was able to satisfy her impossible hunger, and eventually they came out of a cave in the forest far from where he entered. As soon as she dropped him, the old woman turned and sped back into the dark underground.

The man who was raised by a bear searched for a long time for the soot blackened charcoal burner who had left him in the underworld. He never found him, but, after some time, he did find the broad chested miller and the two strong handsome maidens from the the underworld. The two friends married the two ladies, and each couple had many children. All of their children were giants, and it is said that all giants who have ever lived are descended from them.