

The Little Bear and the Prickly Porcupine



By Arthur Scott Bailey

*Based on Cuffy Bear Stories and adapted
by Madeline Walton-Hadlock for LibraryCall.*

To listen call:

This story begins on the very first day of spring. The snow was melting, flowers were blooming, and the birds were singing. In her cozy cave, a mama Bear woke up. She rose slowly to her feet. Her bones felt stiff because she had been sleeping for a very long time. And she was hungry—so hungry! She hadn't eaten anything for months and months, since before she went to sleep at the beginning of winter.

The bear went to the entrance of her cave and looked out. She saw that the weather was warm and lovely. So she stepped back into the cave and gently roused her children, two cubs named Cuffy and Silkie. They had also been sleeping all winter.

“It's time to wake up, little ones! Run out and play and get your lungs full of nice, fresh air. But please don't wander too far!” she said.

For a few minutes, Cuffy stood in the doorway and blinked and blinked. He rubbed his eyes, doing his best to adjust to the bright sunlight. Before long, he was tumbling about outside with his sister Silkie.

After a little while, Cuffy remembered that there was an old tree over in the pine woods. It was the best climbing tree a cub could possibly imagine!

“Let's go over to the old tree and play,” Cuffy said.

“But Mama told us not to go too far away,” Silkie reminded him.

“Don't worry,” Cuffy said. “We'll be back before she even notices we're gone.”

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Silkie refused to go with him, so naughty Cuffy made his way to the pine woods on his own. He finally found the old tree. It seemed smaller than he expected because Cuffy himself had grown taller during the months he had spent sleeping.

He climbed the tree to the very top. As he looked down over the melting snow, he saw something move a little way off. Whatever it was, it was much smaller than Cuffy himself, so he wasn't afraid. He was curious though. So, he scrambled back down the tree and ran to the place where he'd seen the small thing moving.

When he got there, Cuffy found a little animal covered with stiff, sharp quills sniffing around in a bush. He knew it was a porcupine. All at once, Cuffy noticed how hungry he was. He remembered the delicious taste of the porcupine meat his mom sometimes brought home, and he smacked his lips! His mom said it was rude to smack his lips, but sometimes Cuffy forgot his manners.

As Cuffy approached, the porcupine rolled itself into a round ball and lay perfectly still. Now, Cuffy remembered his mom telling him never to touch a porcupine, because if he did, he would get his paws stuck full of sharp quills. But Cuffy was brave! So, he decided to try and catch the porcupine anyway! He stepped close to the little round, prickly ball and gave it a good, hard whack.

"Ow!!!" Cuffy yelped in pain. This made him so angry that he hit the porcupine once more with his other paw.

"OW!!" Cuffy howled again! Now both of his front paws were full of sharp quills. Cuffy began to cry. He wanted his mama, so he decided to head for home.

All the way, he had to walk upright on his back legs because it hurt him terribly whenever he put one of his front paws on the ground.

Cuffy cried hard as his mama Bear pulled out the quills, one-by-one. For days, his paws were so sore that he couldn't do anything fun.

After that day, although Cuffy did many more mischievous things, he never, ever touched a porcupine again.