

Old Mother Bear's Happy New Year

by Laura Roundtree Smith

Old Mother Bear sat in the chimney corner one New Year's Eve sighing:

"I have four naughty Bears, oh dear,
How can I have a Happy New Year?"

Lady Wind peeped in a crack under the window and said:

"The night is bright, the stars are clear,
Old Mother Bear, Happy New Year!"

Old Mother Bear shook her head sighing:

"It sounds very sad in song and rhyme,
My Boxer is never in school on time."

Old Mother Moon peeped in the window next singing:

"I wonder if my voice you'll hear,
Old Mother Bear, Happy New Year."

Old Mother Bear shook her right paw and said:

"I have my troubles, Drowsy-Head
Never wants to go to bed."

Then a snowflake Fairy called:

"January is drawing near,
Old Mother Bear, Happy New Year."

Old Mother Bear answered:

"It is very well for you to sing,
Bruin never picks up anything!"

Then Fairy See-It-All came bouncing into the room shouting:

"There's something wrong inside I fear,
Old Mother Bear, Happy New Year."

Old Mother Bear replied:

"Bright Eyes does not mean to tease,
But never says, 'Thank you, or if you please'."

Old Mother Bear began to growl, and growl, and growl, and finally she said, “How can I have a Happy New Year when Boxer is always late to school, and Drowsy-Head never wants to go to bed, and Bruin leaves his things around, and Bright Eyes is always impolite?”

Fairy See-It-All had a wee little carriage that ran by itself, and in the twinkling of an eye she tucked in those four naughty little Bears and they rode away, away, away until they came to a wee little house in the woods on New Year’s Eve.

She said to Boxer:

“You can’t get out however you climb,
Unless you learn to be on time.”

Then for one whole year Boxer had to practice being on time to breakfast, dinner and supper, and he said:

“On time to-day, on time to-morrow
On time, will save me from my sorrow.”

So, he stayed in the wee little house in the woods a whole year and learned to be on time.

Fairy See-It-All said to Drowsy-Head:

“You must learn to like to go to bed,
Dear little, queer little Drowsy-Head.”

Then Drowsy-Head had to practice doing useful things in the wee little house a whole year until he was tired enough to go to bed.

Fairy See-It-All said to Bruin:

“You’ll never get out of here I’ll be bound,
’Till you pick up things you’ve left around.”

All day long and every day for a whole year Bruin had to pick up his things and the belongings of the other Bears.

Fairy See-It-All said to Bright Eyes:

“You’ll have to practice words like these,
‘Thank you, thank you, and if you please’.”

Of course after that Bright Eyes tried to be polite.

Every night the four little Bears flattened their noses against the window panes and cried out:

“We are four little Bears, who don’t like to roam,
We want Mother Bear, we want to go home.”

Lady Wind blew around the wee house and Mother Moon peeped in the window, the Snowflake Fairy danced lightly down and at last, a year later, on New Year's Eve, Fairy See-It-All brought her carriage that ran by itself, and tucked the four little Bears safely inside and away, away, away, they rode homeward.

They all were happy as happy could be, shouting:

“We’ve learned our lessons never fear,
Old Mother Bear, Happy New Year.”

Old Mother Bear was happy, for Boxer had learned to be on time, and was always on time at school, and Drowsy-Head liked to go to bed, and Bruin picked up his clothes and toys and Bright Eyes said, “Thank you,” and “If you please.”

After some children had read this story 99 times *the most surprising things happened!*

One little boy got to school every day for a whole year on time, so his teacher had a Happy New Year. One little girl went happily to bed every night, so one mother had a Happy New Year, and one little boy began to pick up his toys, so one father had a Happy New Year.

So many children learned to say “Thank you” and “If you please,” that people everywhere in town smiled and shook hands on the street when they met, and called, “A Happy New Year, A Happy New Year.”

Source:

Smith, Laura Roundtree. “Old Mother Bear's Happy New Year.” *The Gingerbread Boy and Joyful Jingle Play Stories*. Chicago: Albert Whitman Company, 1923. 80 – 86. Electronic.