



Lil' Bobby Bear and the Snowbirds' Sleigh Ride

A Little Story for Cut-Outs—By Harrison Cady

MY! WHAT'S that?" exclaimed Lil' Bobby Bear as he awoke with a start and sat up in his bed. "Something tickled my nose."

Bobby rubbed his eyes with a clumsy little paw and blinked and blinked, while his funny round head turned this way and that as his half-opened eyes tried to pierce the darkest corners of the rocky cave beneath the ledges where Ol' Father Bear and his family made their home. He looked as hard as he could, but saw nothing that might have disturbed his slumbers. Ol' Mother Bear, tucked snugly away beneath her gay patchwork quilt, was sleeping peacefully, while Ol' Father Bear, a crimson nightcap roguishly balanced over one eye, was the picture of contentment; and beside Bobby, in a cradle similar to his own, was his little sister Betty.

"H'm! Seems to be nothing about," mused Bobby. "I must have been asleep"; and so he snuggled down in his little bed and in a moment more was deep in slumber.

A few minutes passed, when suddenly a peculiar thing happened, and it happened in just this way: At the very top of the old cave and opening through its roof was a tiny hole, which acted as a chimney and was also just large enough to serve as a ventilator during the long winter's sleep, when the Bear family, following their long custom, hibernate during the season of ice and snow.

THROUGH this tiny opening mysteriously appeared a slender hemlock branch which came slowly downward until it reached a level with little Bobby's head, where it hesitated and then slowly commenced to move to and fro. At the very end of the branch a few needles still clung, and as it moved back and forth they brushed right over Lil' Bobby Bear's upturned nose. One of his nostrils gave a twitch and then the other, and he moved slightly in his bed, but that was all. Several times this was repeated until suddenly the branch stopped short and rested squarely on the very tip of Bobby's nose.

Bobby Bear jumped right up in bed, and this time he was very wide awake, for both of his bright little eyes settled right on that branch and then slowly rolled upward to where the other end disappeared through the opening in the roof.

"My! Somebody's making mischief here. I'll have to see about it," he said, and hastily throwing aside his coverlets he scrambled quickly to the floor. "Somebody's on our roof, and I'm going to peep out and see what's up," Lil' Bobby muttered under his breath as he tiptoed his way to the door, pushing it ajar and cautiously peering out.

Outside the cave lay a broad expanse of snow which sparkled and glistened under the light of a full moon. Lil' Bobby Bear, however, wasn't concerned with the view, for his sharp little ears had detected sounds which came from somewhere above him. He pushed his head out still farther, until finally he could see the roof top.

And what do you suppose he saw? Nothing except two tiny Snowbirds in caps and tippets, who were busily engaged in poking a long branch down the chimney hole.



Bobby jumped out into the moonlight with a loud "Woof! Woof! Hey, you fellows! What are you doing on our roof?"

The two little birds hopped with surprise until, seeing that it was only Bobby Bear, one exclaimed: "Well! If it isn't that little sleepyhead, Bobby Bear"; and the other cried: "Rip Van Winkle."

Right then Lil' Bobby began to lose his temper. "You tell me this minute what you are doing on our roof, or I'll wake my daddy."

The little Snowbirds evidently did not favor this, for one of them said: "We're just poking around in your old cave trying to find a mitten which fell through your chimney hole. And we've got to have it right now."

"Why be in such a hurry?" queried Bobby.

"Hurry!" exclaimed both in unison. "Don't you know we Snowbirds are holding our annual sleigh ride to-night, and the sleighs will be along right away to pick us up?"

"Oh, that's it!" piped up Bobby, an idea creeping into his head. "What will you give me if I find your mitten?"

"We'll let you go on our sleigh ride, Bobby Bear."

"Huh, that's nothing," returned Bobby.

"Nothing!" peeped the Snowbirds in chorus. "Why, don't you know that it's the greatest event of the winter, and that everybody that is anybody is going and that there's going to be a grand spread at the end of it, with hot birdseed and tender suet and a whole lot of other good things to eat?"

Bobby began to show interest, while the corners of his mouth curled upward.

"Perhaps you're afraid to go?" one Snowbird remarked.

"That's it," chirped the other. "He's afraid he might miss a moment's sleep."

"Tain't so," retorted Bobby; "and just to prove it, I'll go right in and get that mitten and go on that sleigh ride with you."

Whereupon he disappeared into the old cave and soon returned, holding the lost mitten. He came out just in time, for far in the distance came the merry chime of sleigh bells, and the Snowbirds shouted: "Here they come now."

Soon over the top of the snowdrifts came a long line of flying sledges filled with laughing groups of forest people, who greeted Bobby with jolly shouts of welcome. In a moment he had scrambled aboard the largest of the sleighs and, surrounded by a lively group of merrymakers, went speeding away behind a team of spirited young foxes.

The Squirrel Band, drawn by a comical mouse, led the procession, and was followed by a nestful of little Snowbirds.

BOBBOY'S sleigh came next and behind came sleighs holding the chipmunks, the woodmice, the bunnies, the owls and a score of others, all gleefully shouting or blowing horns, while every little sleigh bell rang its loudest. The sleighs sped madly down hills, over meadows, past stone walls and under overhanging boughs; and little Bobby thought that he had never enjoyed anything so much before.

Recklessly standing, he was waving his cap and shouting at the top of his lungs, when suddenly, just as the sleigh was passing over a bridge, there came the sound of a rooster crowing in a distant farmyard. Without a moment's warning the spirited team of foxes stopped short and Lil' Bobby, unable to help himself, was hurled right into the air. Turning

over and over, he finally landed on the very edge of the bridge, where he balanced for a moment and then toppled onto the ice below.

He crashed through and disappeared for a moment, only to bob up again just in time to grasp a floating ice cake. After great effort he managed to raise himself to its top where, frightened and cold, he sat and listened to the sound of the disappearing sleigh bells.

In the meantime things had been happening in the cave, for Ol' Father Bear, who was contentedly sleeping, suddenly sneezed so hard that Ol' Mother Bear awoke with a start and her nightcap flew right into the air.

"Land sakes!" she exclaimed. "I believe some one is catching cold."

JUST then Ol' Father Bear sneezed again. It was too much for Mother Bear and, reaching out, she gave him a great nudge with her paw. Father Bear slowly opened one eye and then the other.

"What are you nudging me for, Hepsy?" he sleepily inquired.

"Why, you're sneezing, and there's a strong draft from somewhere. Our babies will take a heavy cold."

Father Bear stepped out of bed, and his eyes fell upon Bobby's empty cradle. "Woof! Woof!" he shouted as he rubbed his eyes in amazement. "Bobby's cradle is empty"; and just then he caught sight of the open door.

In another moment Ol' Mother Bear was out of bed, too, and together they rushed out of the cave.

"Here are his footprints now," cried Ol' Father Bear, "and here are the tracks of sleighs too. I believe the little rascal has run away. I'll just have to go after him."

Leaving Mother Bear to watch the house, Ol' Father Bear started off on a dead run as he followed the tracks in the snow. He ran and ran, faster than he had ever run before, but never caught a sight of Bobby. He began to grow warm, and he began to grow tired, and he puffed and puffed, and his throat grew parched and dry, until finally, when it seemed that he could go no farther, he reached a bridge over a frozen brook and decided to scramble down its bank in the hope of a cooling drink, for his thirst was almost unbearable.

Just as he had dropped to his knees and was about to quench his thirst, he was suddenly startled by a plaintive cry of "Daddy! Daddy! I'm here."

Jumping to his feet, he looked downstream and was just able to discern the pitiful little figure of Bobby sitting on a floating ice cake.

IT TOOK only a moment for Ol' Father Bear to break a branch from a tree, and, passing its end to Bobby Bear, he drew the ice cake to the shore. With a great hug of joy and leaving the explanations for later, Ol' Father Bear started rapidly for home.

Ol' Mother Bear, anxiously awaiting his coming, gave a great sigh of relief when she saw her little Bobby again and started right off to prepare hot gruel, while Ol' Father Bear carefully attached a strong leather strap to Bobby's cradle.

"We'll just fasten the little rascal in this time, Hepsy," he explained, "so that he can't slip away to join another Snowbirds' sleigh ride. We can't run the risk of having him drown."



If you want to see how Lil' Bobby enjoyed the Snowbirds' Sleigh Ride, print the color pictures on cardstock. Or print out the pictures on regular paper and mount the cut-outs on some lightweight cardboard using paste or glue. Cut carefully around the tabs at the dotted lines and bend them back so the pictures will stand upright. Line up the pictures as shown above.