

CHILDREN'S STORY HOUR

Benny and Betty Bear

By Janaan Manternach
NC News Service

The forest was cool and damp. Benny Bear sat on a stump, warming himself in the one large ray of golden sun that slipped through the branches.

He was stuffing himself on all kinds of treats. He loved the crisp nuts from a squirrel's hidden treasure. Most of all he adored honey.

While Benny Bear was feasting, Betty Bear searched the damp earth for tender green roots. But Benny had dug them all up. She sniffed for hidden nuts. But Benny had been there first. She climbed the trees looking for honey. But Benny had licked up all the honey.

She sat shivering in a pile of damp leaves. There was just one dry stump. Benny was stretched out on it. Betty was hungry.

Betty began to cry. "It isn't fair!" she complained.

Benny, who was bigger, licked some honey off his paw, rolled over a little and asked, "What

isn't fair?"

"You have a warm, dry place to rest," Betty said. "You have all the roots and nuts and honey."

"What's unfair about that?" Benny asked with a feeling of hurt pride. He felt that whatever he could find belonged to him.

"But I'm cold and wet," Betty pleaded. "And I'm hungry."

"Here," Benny grunted. "Try this nut. And I'll put a little honey on it." He threw the honeyed-nut to Betty. Then he turned over and dozed off.

Betty ate the nut with very small bites so it would last longer. The sweeter the honeyed-nut tasted, the angrier she became. "It isn't fair! It isn't fair!" she said to herself.

"I'll show him," Betty finally said. "I'll scare Benny."

Betty remembered a hole — not too big, but big enough. Some campers made it during the summer. She ran through the woods to the hole. Without stopping to think whether Benny might get hurt if he fell into it, she covered it with branches and leaves. She

began to scream loudly. "Help! Benny, help me!"

Soon Benny came stumbling along.

"Oops!" Benny cried as he fell into the trap. Betty ran over. Benny lay stunned in the hole. Luckily he was not hurt, just in a state of shock.

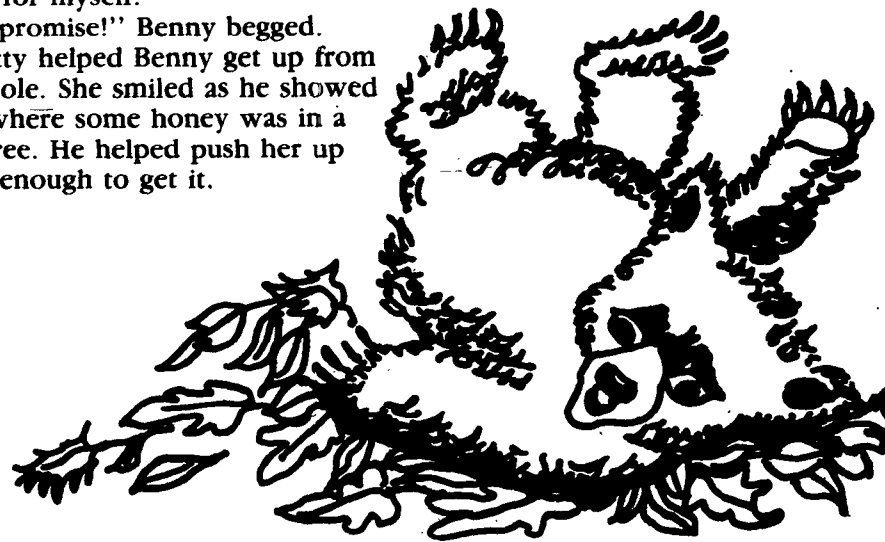
"Benny," Betty Bear said firmly. "I'll help you up if you promise to share your warm stump with me and if you help me find food for myself."

"I promise!" Benny begged.

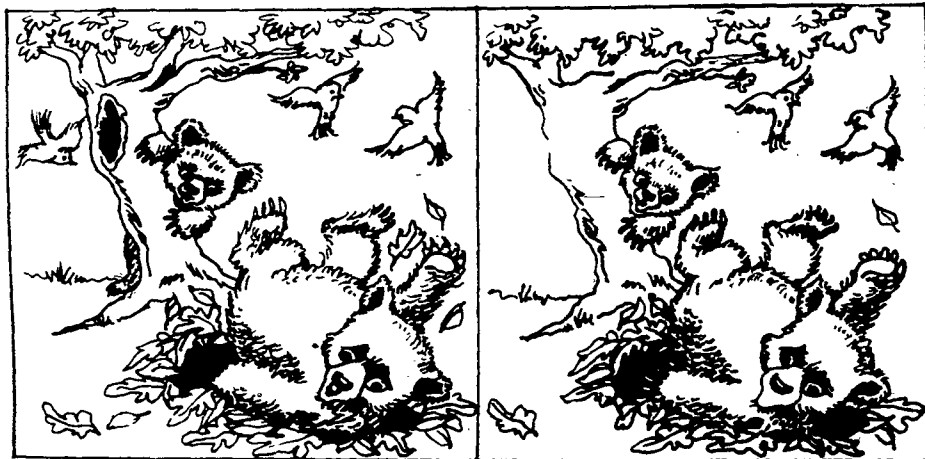
Betty helped Benny get up from the hole. She smiled as he showed her where some honey was in a big tree. He helped push her up high enough to get it.

Then Benny let Betty sit with him on the warm stump. "We are both Bears," he said. "Here, try some green roots dipped in honey."

(Ms. Manternach is the author of catechetical works, scripture stories and original stories for children.)



Benny and Betty



There are at least eight small differences between the drawing on the left and the one on the right. See how many you can find. Then color the drawings.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

□ What do you think about Benny's attitude in the beginning of our story? What do you think about how Betty tries to solve her problem? How do you think people should solve problems? Do you think it is important to be a person who shares?

Children's Reading Corner

"The Magic Tree" is a story based on a traditional African folktale retold by Gerald McDermott. Mavungu, an unloved twin, leaves his home. He obtains some good things. But if he wants to keep them, he cannot tell how he got them. And Mavungu finds it impossible to keep the secret; he loses everything. Read the story. Then talk about how hard it was for Mavungu to keep his secret and how hard it is for most of us to keep secrets. Talk, also, about different kinds of secrets — those that should be kept and those that should not be kept. (Penguin Books, 625 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. Paperback, \$2.95.)



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