

Junior Bear's Decision

In a forest lived a happy bear family. There was Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and their young son, Junior Bear.

One sunny morning, Junior Bear found he had a little sister! Baby Bear had just been born. She was little and cute, with light brown fur, which Papa Bear said would darken as she grew older. Junior Bear went out and found some yummy berries for Mama Bear. He gave Mama Bear a big hug and blew Baby Bear a kiss.

Ever since Junior could remember, Papa and Mama Bear would take him to catch fish in the big river just outside the forest every afternoon. He would splash around in the water and jump from rock to rock while Papa and Mama caught fish for their dinner. Playing at the river was Junior Bear's favorite thing to do.

When the afternoon rolled around, Junior peeked inside the cave to see if Papa and Mama were ready to leave. He saw them talking quietly together, then Mama Bear patted Baby Bear, who was asleep in the corner, and Papa gave Baby a kiss.

"Junior, we need you to stay in the cave this afternoon and watch Baby Bear while Papa and I go get dinner," Mama Bear said to Junior. "Can you do that for us?"

"B-but going to the river with you is my favorite thing in the whole world!" Junior's eyes began to fill with tears. "I'm old enough to learn how to catch fish, too. Please, can't I come?"



“Junior, we can’t leave Baby Bear all by herself in the cave,” Papa Bear explained as he put his arm around Junior’s shoulders. “I know that you really like going with us, but we need you to watch Baby for a little while each afternoon this week while we catch fish. Soon we’ll be able to bring Baby along, and then all four of us can go to the river together. Won’t that be fun?”

“Yes,” Junior said, a tear running down his nose. He turned to go into the cave, but Papa Bear called after him. “Junior, when you obey, even when you don’t feel like doing what we say, you will be happier. And more often than not, because you obeyed, blessings will come your way, too.”



Junior shrugged his shoulders. He couldn’t think of anything more fun than playing at the big river with his parents. He sat down next to Baby, who was sleeping with a little smile on her face. She looked like she wouldn’t wake up for hours.

Then he had an idea! *Maybe I can just follow Papa and Mama to the river and play where they can’t see me,* he thought to himself. He stood up and left the cave. He could see Papa and Mama walking down the long path that led out of the forest. *I could still catch up with them,* he thought.

But then he thought about why Papa and Mama had asked him to stay and watch Baby Bear. If he disobeyed and something bad happened to Baby Bear, he would feel very sad.

Junior hurried back into the cave and checked on Baby Bear. She was still sleeping soundly.

Junior thought for a minute and finally made his decision. "Papa and Mama would be very sad if I didn't obey," he told himself. "And I should be happy to watch my baby sister." He looked over at Baby Bear who looked cute, snuggled up and content. He bent and gave her a kiss on her furry cheek.

Junior felt happy about his decision to obey. He decided that he would try to make a toy for Baby Bear to play with when she awoke.

A few hours later, Papa and Mama Bear came back with fresh fish for dinner. The fish was yummy, and Junior ate until he was full. Junior showed Papa and Mama the small round toy that he had made for Baby Bear that afternoon. Baby Bear loved it and played with it until she fell asleep for the night.

"Thank you for watching over Baby, Junior," said Mama Bear.

"And for making a fun toy for her," said Papa Bear.

For the next week, Junior stayed home in the afternoon and watched Baby while Papa and Mama went to catch fish. Each afternoon he kept himself busy while Baby slept. He gathered berries from the bush next to their den one day, climbed trees the next, made more toys for Baby, and even took a nap one day.





Finally the day came when Mama Bear said that Baby Bear was big enough to come to the river. Junior was so excited. When they got to the river, Papa Bear set Baby in a hollow tree trunk that had split open. She sat there and watched the water rush along the river, smiling and waving to Papa and Mama.

Junior splashed along the river's edge and then hopped along his favorite rocks. He skipped along the bank of the river toward a tall patch of grass that stood nearby.

When he got there, he looked down in amazement. Right next to the tall patch of grass was a shallow hole, filled with water. And what was inside?

"It's a fish! A fish! I'm going to catch my very own fish!" His eyes were big and bright and he carefully scooped the fish out and brought his prize over to Papa and Mama Bear.

"I caught my first fish!" he announced proudly.

"Junior, that is one big fish!" Papa said with pride.

"Papa, I'm glad I obeyed and waited till we could all come together. This is really special."

Papa winked at Junior. Junior walked off to show his fish to his dear friend, Baby. He felt that this was a special thing that had happened because he obeyed.

As he grew older, Junior Bear learned that each time he obeyed, even if the rewards wouldn't always come in a big way or something exciting that he could see or feel, he often just felt happier in his heart. But it was always worth it.