

The Bears on Hemlock Mountain



Alice Dalgliesh

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On
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by ALICE DALGLIESH

illustrated by HELEN SEWELL



ALADDIN PAPERBACKS

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The outline of this story was kindly given to me by
Colonel Henry Shoemaker, State Archivist of Pennsylvania,
who collects "tales told by the people."

He has granted me permission to use it, and I have given it
more detail and form. The central element, however—the story
of the boy, the bear and the iron pot, is unchanged. It is, of
course, a small "tall tale."

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Summary: A young boy sent on an errand over Hemlock Mountain is not so sure he
likes going alone, because there may be bears on the mountain, but with the help of
the big iron pot he borrows, he completes his errand.

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TO JONATHAN NOON



CHAPTER 1

About Jonathan

Jonathan lived in a gray stone farmhouse at the foot of Hemlock Mountain. Now Hemlock Mountain was not a mountain at all, it was a hill, and not a very big one. But someone had started calling it Hemlock Mountain, and the name had stuck. Now everyone talked about "going over Hemlock Mountain."

It was the year when Jonathan was eight that he went over Hemlock Mountain. He was a fine big boy for his age. That was why his mother could send him over the Mountain all by himself.

The winter had been a cold one. Even now, in early spring, there was snow on the ground. The birds and the squirrels and the rabbits had a hard time finding anything to eat, so every day Jonathan remembered to feed them. Jonathan loved animals and birds. He knew the tracks that each one made in the snow.

The small creatures could not find enough to eat, but it was not so with Jonathan's aunts and uncles and cousins. All they had to do was to come to the gray stone farmhouse and there was always plenty of food. Jonathan's mother was a fine cook and all



the aunts, uncles and cousins knew it. They liked to drop in for supper and to sit around the table in front of the big fireplace.

Such good suppers! There would be roast chicken or roast duck or roast goose, brown and done to a turn. There would be potatoes and turnips, carrots and corn. And of course there would be pies—pumpkin and apple and squash. While for those who like cookies, there were crisp brown ones cut into every shape you can imagine.

Jonathan's mother liked company but sometimes—oh, once in a while—she wished they did not have so much of it. Or that the aunts and uncles and cousins were not quite so hungry.



CHAPTER 2

Young Uncle James

Jonathan was very fond of his uncles. He was fond of his cousins and his aunts. It was pretty fine for a boy to have so many uncles and aunts. If all his uncles and aunts stood side by side they would go all the way from the house to the gate—or very nearly.



He liked all the uncles, but best of all he liked young Uncle James. Young Uncle James was only fourteen years old, so he and Jonathan were friends.

Young Uncle James had eyes that saw and ears that heard.

"Look," he would say to Jonathan. "Down by that tree stump is a cottontail."

Then he and Jonathan were very still.



They could see the little brown rabbit washing his face and his ears.

"Listen," young Uncle James would say. "There is a song sparrow. Do you hear what he says?"

Then he and Jonathan were very still. They could see the song sparrow singing on a branch. And the song sparrow was saying, over and over again,

"Put on the kettle, kettle, kettle!"

Once Jonathan and Uncle James went down to the brook. It was late in the day and the shadows were long.

"What are we going to see?" asked Jonathan.

"Wait and you will find out," said Uncle James.





So they waited and listened. It was hard for Jonathan to keep so still.

They waited and listened. And at last a raccoon came down to the brook. He had an apple in his mouth.

"Look!" said Uncle James. "Look carefully, Jonathan."

Jonathan looked. The raccoon took the apple in his two front paws. He dipped it in the water and dipped it and dipped it and dipped it again.

"'Coons like their food wet," said Uncle James.

That was the way of it. Every day Jonathan and Uncle James listened and looked. They never threw sticks at the animals, or scared the birds. Soon all the animals and



birds were their friends. The squirrel was the best friend of all. He came very near to get nuts from Jonathan.

"Uncle James," said Jonathan. "Did you ever see a bear?"

"Well, now," said Uncle James, looking important. "I believe I did. But it was years ago, Jonathan."

"How many years ago?"

"Before you were born. Yes, it was before you were born."

"I would like to see a bear," said Jonathan. "I would rather see a bear than anything in the world."

"Maybe you will!" said Uncle James.

That was all he said. But Jonathan kept on thinking about bears.

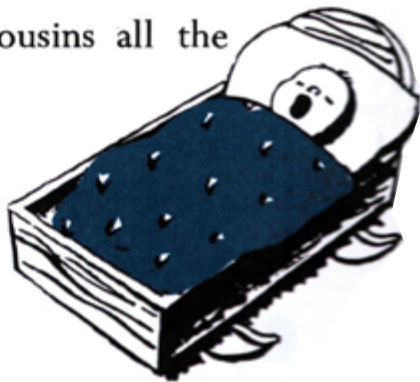




CHAPTER 3

The Iron Pot

Now if there are lots of aunts and uncles there are likely to be lots of new cousins. Jonathan kept having new cousins all the time.



People have always told



Jonathan that there are no bears on Hemlock Mountain, no bears at all. So he isn't afraid to set out alone over the mountain. But as Jonathan discovers one cold winter night, people aren't always right. . . . There are bears on Hemlock Mountain!



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