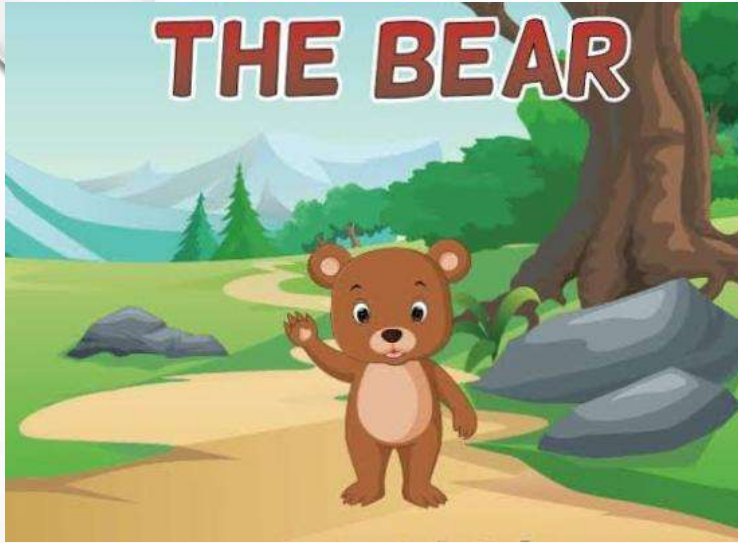




THE BEAR STORY

-BY AXEL MUNTHE

Once upon a time, there was an old manor-house on the border of a big forest, in which a lady used to live. The lady had a pet bear which she had found half dead due to starvation in the forest. The small and helpless bear, which had to be brought up by the lady and her old cook, grew up into a big and strong bear. He had the strength to defeat creatures of massive size and weight, but he was not interested in violence. In fact, the bear was the most amiable bear to ever exist. He had small intelligent eyes. He had a good bond with numerous other animals and humans – mountain ponies, children and dogs. The three dogs he was friends with used to play with and tease him, but the bear did not mind it.

He had never eaten or even tasted meat, and would eat bread, porridge, potato, cabbage and turnip. The cook was the bear's friend, and she would be very particular that the bear's stomach was full. Bears are vegetarians if they get something vegetarian to eat, and they like fruits the most. In the autumn season, the bear used to sit and look at the apples in the orchard. He would sometimes climb the tree and grab a handful of apples. But he had stopped doing that when he learnt that it was against the law. The bear had caused some difficulties with a beehive. He was punished for this by being put on a chain. Otherwise, he was never chained up. When he was chained up, he would get ill-tempered like any other animal.



He was also chained up on Sundays, when her mistress would visit her married sister's house. She would not take the bear along because he would make the journey towards the house difficult. However, he could not be given the freedom to roam about in the forest as he could get tempted to harm the other animals of the forest. One Sunday, the mistress was on her way to the sister's house when she heard a tree-branch crack. She looked behind and was horrified to see that the bear was coming towards her at top speed. The bear stopped and panted and sniffed her. The lady strictly told the bear to go back to the manor-house but the bear did not listen. The lady got angry because she was late for lunch,

she could not go back to the manor-house and tie the bear with the chain again and she could not let the bear roam in the forest or come with her. She then noticed that the bear had lost its new collar. She got so furious that she hit him on the nose with her umbrella with such strength that the umbrella broke in two pieces. The bear understood that the lady was annoyed with him and he returned to the manor-house. In the evening, when the mistress returned to the manor-house, she was still angry with the bear. She was scolding him when the old cook came out running. The cook always thought the bear to be her son, so she was angry to see that the mistress was scolding someone who was always so obedient, amiable and caring.



We should always react with one's eye open rather than directly ending up with any immediate conclusion without thinking as misunderstanding leads to wrong decision making.



