

The Bear Tree

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The Bear Tree

by Peter

Introduction

This story is about a 13 year old boy named John. John purposely ran away from his New York home in the 1830's. He ran away because his dad could get very rough and only liked him for his work on the farm. John is the youngest of 8 children, all of which moved out. His dad is also a tanner and his mother died giving birth to him. He had to sneak out and could only take a hatchet and a knife. John didn't want to be found, especially by his dad. He already had to make a long journey to get to the Ozark Mountains. But that was a different part of the story, now he's just trying to survive in the wild alone!

The Bear Tree

Walking to my freshly shot doe in the middle of the Ozarks, I noticed something I never notice before. I saw the biggest possible birch tree in the world. Later I would call it the Bear Tree.

Once I field dressed and bagged my animal I made my way back to the crude lean-to I call home. Its OK I guess, Its got everything I need. It took me quite awhile to figure out how to camouflage it. Eventually I found out I had to make it on a hill.

I was nearly a mile from my house when I saw it, the perfect tree to make my new longbow. My old one is about to break since I had stepped on it while gazing at the huge birch nearly an hour before.

I thought I'd make camp for the night so I could cut the thing. I went to pick up my axe and decided I'd eat first or I'd run out of energy chopping. So I hacked a piece of the tender deer meat after I skinned it.

Once I was done eating I thought I would tan my rawhide. I grabbed my axe and smashed it as hard as I could to get the brains free of the head to tan my rawhide. After I got the brains out, I set them on the ground and scraped that hide. Next I stretched it and made it pliable. Once that was done I tanned it with the gushy brains like my dad taught me. Finally I smoked the hide and let it sit over a tree branch.

I would let it sit for at least a day and then stretch it to make some moccasins. Now though I had to chop some trees. It had been 3 hours already and was getting dark. I cleaned the brains and guts from my axe and started chopping. By the next day the small trees were chopped and I dragged the deer to my home.

Next I went back and got my log. After breakfast was finished I started carving the log into the shape of a bow. Stroke by stroke you could start to see the hidden potential of a bow. Once finished after hours of work, I started to rub the new bow with leftover bear fat and grease that I had managed to save from a dead bear that other animals had started to eat.

Now the hardest part, the sinew for the bow string. I grabbed the sinew from the carcass of my doe and let it dry, which could take awhile. Then I remembered my tanned hide. I went back to the tree where I had put my deer hide. Now it was all stiff so I had to stretch it and bend it till it was pliable.

Since I wandered off hunting or for any reason I carry my hatchet, knife made of stone, flint and a rock I found, and of course extra food, my bow, and arrows. The arrows are the hardest to make because of the fletching. Just as I was almost at home I heard a growl.

I thought of what it could be and came up with a bear. Now that made sense because I didn't hide or hang my doe. Now I was getting close enough I could see the thing. It must have caught my scent because it turned and looked at me. As I thought of this as one of my well taught lessons or bad times, I quickly ran up a tree for protection. Now I see that I'm actually a mile from camp and the bear had dragged the carcass out here to eat it.

The next thing I realized was that I was in that huge birch. The bear had seen me run and was now clawing at the tree!

I thought of killing the thing with a shot to the head with my nearly broken bow and decided no because its summer and most of the meat would go to waste and I might not kill it and only make it angrier. I usually kill a bear in the fall anyway for food in the winter.

For a second I thought I'd have to wait all night for the thing to go away. But then he started to forget about me and left. Though I thought I should wait at least an hour anyways cause with bears you just never know. It was just beginning to look like dark when I thought I should leave. I started my way down and realized that the bear had already eaten most of the doe. I took the remains of the carcass to salvage.



Back at camp I chopped off a chunk of meat and roasted it on a spit. The meat was still juicy and tender. I strung my new bow with the dried sinew. I decided I would go hunting tomorrow since I only had 1 or 2 meals worth of food left.

Tonight though I will make a new coat for the winter because I had fallen into a pile of guts while off balance awhile back which made my coat smell like the guts. Then when I left it out to dry a bear smelled the guts and chewed and ate little bits of guts and leather which ruined my winter coat. This time I'll try not to do that.

First I must cut the leather into 2 pieces. The front and back of the coat. I can't do much more until I get several more rabbit skins to line it. I'll keep the fur on to insulate the coat. Now I've got seven rabbit furs. I need at least 12 to 15 furs. Now to rabbit hunt. Usually I wouldn't hunt rabbits in the summer, because of the fleas and ticks. So I'll have to boil or pick out the bugs. I'll grab a little more supplies than I usually would since this hunt could take up to 5 days.

Right after I left camp I saw a small cottontail. I quickly fit an arrow into my bow and released. I missed by a little and the rabbit was already gone.

As I retrieved my arrow I started walking quietly and before long I was back at the tree. I tried to think of a name for it but nothing quite fit. Then there it was and I knew instantly what to call it. With those huge marks from a bear I should call it the Bear Tree. It fit it perfectly.

That same cottontail hopped by me but this time I killed it. I gutted it and put it into my pack. I walked another 10 miles before seeing this one jack rabbit. Right before I released the arrow it jumped and I missed. Then I quickly fit another arrow into the bow, released, and caught it in mid air. It was getting dark so I gutted it and set up camp.

Next I made a fire with my fire bow, stuck my 2 rabbits on a stick I found, and roasted them on a spit. They were a little burned when I dug my teeth into them. But they were still good.

After I finished eating I stoked the fire and went to bed. I woke up in the middle of the night, stoked the fire, and it took me an hour to get back to sleep. When I woke up, I packed my things, walked a mile and saw a small herd of deer. I knew this was my chance and I started to sneak up on them.

I was aiming at the small fawn and was true as could be because I hit her right in the heart. I gutted her and skinned her. Then I put the skin in my pack and carried the small thing back to my home. When I got there I was so tired and went straight to sleep.

When I woke up the next morning I hung the fawn in a tree and cut a chunk off for breakfast. I roasted it on a spit and quietly ate almost the whole thing.

Then I began the tanning process. When I was finished for the day, I put it on a tree branch. I had some more of the fawn for a small lunch and took my fish bow.

I then walked to the lake. When I got there I got pretty deep in the water and when the fish came I shot them, went under, picked them up, put them in my pack and waited for the next one until I had a good 15 fish. Then, I walked back home and put them in a little pond I made by home until I had time to smoke them.

For lunch I used my wood carved pot and put in some fawn and 2 fish. While they were boiling in some water that I'd put in the pot, I went to the tree to finish tanning the hide.

By now the skin had been scraped clean and was ready to be rubbed by its brain. That would have to wait until I was done eating. Once I was finished eating I started rubbing the skin thoroughly. Once it was tanned I'd have to wait for the skin to dry on a branch.

While that was drying I decided to cut some firewood. As I walked through the forest there it was again with its big claw marks which brings me back to the day I hid in that tree. Then it came to me The name for that tree, the Bear Tree. Yes, I thought that's it . Then I screamed it THE BEAR TREE!

I wandered how it had come down to this, just trying to survive one day at time. I wandered what my dad and brothers and sisters were doing right then or what they were thinking about.

Still fresh in my mind I thought about it as I chopped at a dead tree nearby. I loaded several logs in my pack and carried it in my arms. I dropped them off at camp and went back for more. It took 5 more trips before the 2 dead trees were gone and my fireplace had plenty of wood.

By now the hide was dry and it was near 9 to 10 o'clock PM. I would have to make the leather pliable tomorrow, I stoked the fire and before I went to sleep I decided to whittle. I whittled a tree, the Bear Tree.