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An extract from

# A Boy and a Bear in a Boat

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## Smelly

Time passed. It got darker and a little colder but otherwise nothing much changed. The bear rowed. The boy fidgeted and fussed. He was stiff and restless and, despite his tiredness, longed for some activity. He wanted to stomp about impatiently but there wasn't room so all he could manage was some rather awkward shuffling and, still unused to the unsteadiness of the boat, he lost his balance. He lurched against the side and the boat





tipped, sending him further off balance. He arched his back, windmilled his arms and just managed to stay upright. Not only that, but he was pretty sure that the bear, head down and concentrating on his rowing, hadn't noticed anything. Then the boat rocked back the other way and the boy fell, landing on his bottom with a loud thump.

"Having a lie down?" said the bear, still not looking up. But the moon was full and bright enough for the boy to see him smiling.

"Hmf!" said the boy.

The bear pulled his smile in at the sides a bit.

"You should get some sleep," he said. "It's late."

"I'm not tired," said the boy, sitting tenderly back on his seat. Then he yawned noisily.

"No, I can see that. Are you hungry, though? Do you want anything to eat? I think we'd better save the chocolate for now, but there's a sandwich left."

The bear stopped rowing and reached beneath him for his lunch box.

"I thought we'd eaten them all already," said the boy.

"I thought so too," said the bear, "but then I cleared out all the tin foil and found this one at the bottom of the box. I think it must be left over from my last trip. So it's, um, a bit past its best."

"What's in it?" said the boy. He had tried a few of the bear's sandwiches by now and had grown wary of their eccentric fillings. There had been: tuna fish, peanut butter and pineapple; sprout and honey; chilli pepper, mustard and horseradish; and what the bear called his "Breakfast





Special": bacon, sausage, egg, porridge, cornflakes and coffee beans between two slices of toast. He didn't relish the thought of anything else along the same lines. But he really was very hungry.

The bear rummaged in the lunch box and pulled out something bready and triangular. He held it towards the boy.

"All yours," he said.

The boy looked at the proffered sandwich. He noticed that the bear was holding it rather gingerly in the tips of two claws and right at the corner. Despite this, the bread did not bend at all. The boy looked up at the bear. He looked back at the sandwich. It was very difficult to tell what colour it was by moonlight, but whatever colour it was it didn't seem right.

"What's in it?" said the boy again.

"I can't remember," said the bear.

"Well, open it up and take a look," said the boy.

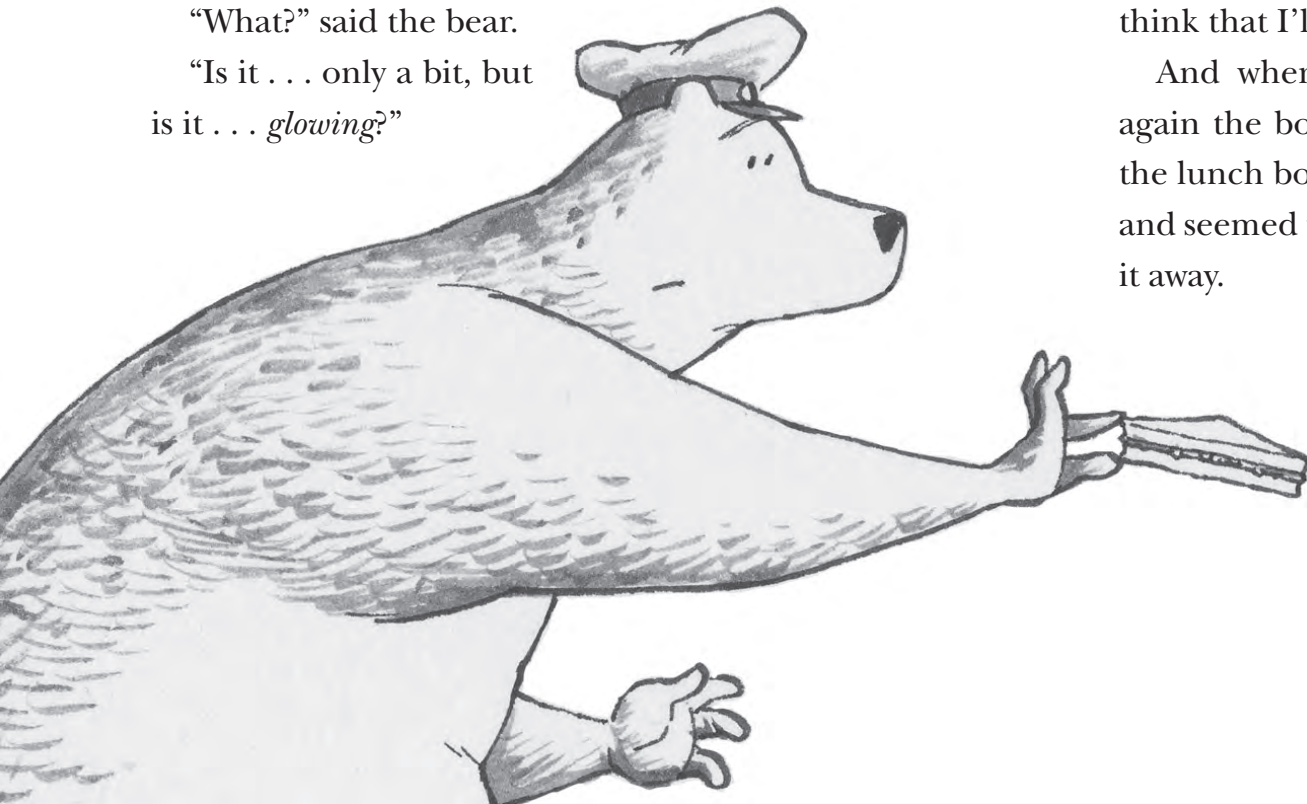
"I can't," said the bear. "It's stuck."

The boy looked up at the bear. The bear smiled thinly down at the boy. They both looked back at the sandwich.

"Is it . . ." said the boy.

"What?" said the bear.

"Is it . . . only a bit, but is it . . . *glowing*?"





"No," said the bear.

They each squinted at the sandwich and leaned in (cautiously) to look more closely.

"Hardly at all," said the bear.

"I'm not really that hungry," said the boy. "You have it."

"That's very kind," said the bear, "but I think that I'll save it for breakfast."

And when he put the sandwich away again the boy noted that the bear locked the lunch box, which he didn't usually do, and seemed to take extra care as he stowed it away.