

The Demon Bear

Based on Wolf Brother by Michelle Paver – by Emma Johnston, age 10.

A mother bear grazed peacefully as rays of light trickled through the canopy and down her back. Her cubs tumbled amongst the high grasses, occasionally poking a wet snout over the tips. Squeals of joy rolled around the trees, the only noise in the dead quiet forest. The eldest cub pinned his brother to the ground, snarling menacingly over his sibling's chest. The weary mother sighed, and growled a warning to her firstborn to be careful of how he treats his victory. There was a rustle, and a deer scrambled out of a nearby patch of foliage, frantically tossing their head to see if their stalker was following. The deer's desperate eyes did not once glance at the bear. Its eyes slipped over the mother's bristled hide and stared into the bush it had scampered from. The mother bear peered into the green. The world rippled. Birds screamed, screeching their despair amongst the branches. The air burst, sending leaves scattering on the breeze. An instinct invaded the bear's brain, like a worm burrowing into fruit. She reared on her hind legs, bellowing in terror. Her fear ringed in her own ears, bouncing off the walls of her skull. The mother's senses deafened her, overwhelming the bear and sending her into a fit of confusion. She could feel her three souls drifting apart, like wood down rapids. She glanced around for her cubs, but her vision dimmed as she looked on. With a desperate moan, she slumped to the ground, her paws covering her nose. The whites of her eyes were grasped by bloodshot veins as they were swallowed by the inky pits of her pupils. A fire flickered in the black, flames licking the backs of her eyelids. The bear's bulk shuddered, all strength sapped out of her joints. A new, twisted desire to kill flooded into the bear's brain. She forgot about her whimpering cubs, she forgot about her old life. A different soul had joined hers. A soul who is hungry for bloodshed, the soul of a demon. The haunted bear lumbered to stand, towering over the undergrowth. A branch splintered on the bear's head, but no pain coursed through her skull. She barely flinched and roared to the forest of her strength. She thundered through the trees, slashing wildly with her claws. The trunks lay amid the grass, oozing amber blood. The leaves whispered of the demon bear as they settled in a deep footprint the size of a boulder.