

SMOKEY AND THE CARELESS CAMPERS

Nancy T. Smuck

- NARRATOR: It is a summer morning and the sun is climbing up the sky from under its blanket of dark green hills. The forest animals and birds are coming out of their burrows and nests to greet the bright new day. Let's watch and see what's happening. Over there in a big maple tree two robins are having a bit of an argument.
- MRS. ROBIN: Wake up, Mr. Robin. It's time to get busy.
- MR. ROBIN: Busy doing what?
- MRS. ROBIN: Busy getting twigs and leaves for our nest.
- MR. ROBIN: Oh, I thought you meant something more important.
- MRS. ROBIN: What's more important than building a home for your children? Now go on. (*Pushes Mr. Robin out of nest.*) Shake your lazy wings and get busy.
- MR. ROBIN: (*Looks back up and shakes his head.*) Sometimes I wish you weren't such an early bird.
- MRS. ROBIN: Robin!
- MR. ROBIN: Sorry. I'm going, but first I'm going to get some breakfast. (*Mr. Robin leaves and Mrs. Robin hops about gathering twigs and leaves for their uncompleted nest.*)
- SQUIRREL: (*Squirrel enters carrying a large nut. He turns it over and over in his paws and then pretends to crack it and eat it. Every so often he stops and listens, and then goes on eating.*)
What a morning! (*Looks all around.*) Not a cloud in the sky. What a day for storing nuts! I'd better find a storage bin in one of these trees. (*Scampers behind a tree.*)
- RABBIT: (*Hops on stage, wiggles nose, and flops ears. He stops to nibble grass, listens when deer poke their heads out from behind some bushes. The rabbit jumps and then hops off to hide.*)
- FIRST DEER: I think we've used up all of the food here. Let's go look in another place.
- SECOND DEER: If only those campers hadn't caused such a bad fire last year, we'd have more places to get food right now.
- FIRST DEER: How can people make such messes and be so careless?
- BLUE JAY: (*Comes in, terribly upset.*) Wake up, you lazy wood folk, and pop right out of bed. There is danger in the forest—the kind that we all dread. Ohhh, dear, oh dear, ohhhh dear!
- MRS. ROBIN: (*Hops down and comes to blue jay, and other animals gather around him.*) We are awake, Blue Jay. What are you so excited about? (*Mr. Robin returns with others.*)

BLUE JAY: It's really most alarming, and I'm in such a state. I'm so upset. We must do something before it's too late.

SQUIRREL: Calm yourself and tell us what you are talking about.

BLUE JAY: They're here again!

FIRST DEER: Who is here?

BLUE JAY: Those awful people. I mean people like the careless ones that came last year.

SECOND DEER: You mean there are some careless campers in the forest?

BLUE JAY: Yes, yes! Ohhhh, what shall we do?

MRS. ROBIN: We have to think of something.

SECOND DEER: Let's make so much noise we'll frighten them away.

BLUE JAY: That might work.

SQUIRREL: I could throw nuts on top of their heads.

MRS. ROBIN: Don't be ridiculous. That won't work. We need help.

MR. ROBIN: I know. I'll get Smokey.

BLUE JAY: I should have done that right away.

MR. ROBIN: Yes, we better get Smokey before it's too late.

MRS. ROBIN: Hurry, Mr. Robin, go get Smokey. Hurry, hurry, hurry! (*She pushes him across the stage.*)

MR. ROBIN: I'm going. I'm going. (*Mr. Robin goes off stage, left, and the animals hide as sounds of campers can be heard off stage, right.*)

NARRATOR: Just as Blue Jay said, there are some careless campers in the forest and here they come. With them is one camper who knows the right thing to do, but, as you will discover, no one pays any attention to him.

EDDIE: This looks like a good place to camp.

PETE: Yes, it looks like someone has used this spot before.

CARL: Let's get a fire going and fix something to eat. Boy, am I hungry!

JOHN: So am I. Whoever had the idea of climbing way up here before breakfast on a hot summer morning?

EDDIE: Poor Johnnie didn't get his beauty sleep. Let's get a fire going. I'm hungry.

PETE: Don't you think we ought to pitch our tent and find a safe place for our fire before we fix our food?

CARL: Well, if someone else has used this spot, it's good enough for me.

PETE: Yes, but look at all these dry needles, twigs, and leaves. Campers and picnickers are supposed to clear the ground all the way down to the soil before starting a campfire. (*Goes about business of clearing the ground.*)

JOHN: What a fussy camper. You sound like a worry bird to me.

PETE: You ought to move the fire this way a little, too. You're too close to that fallen tree.

CARL: Boy, would you listen to him. Where did you get all of these bright ideas?

PETE: Aw, quit it, boys. I know a ranger and he says you should always build a small fire and never build any fire right under a tree or against a fallen tree.

EDDIE: Let's stop the lecture. This place looks OK to me.

CARL: Sure, all we want is a fire to fry a few eggs and some bacon.

JOHN: And roast marshmallows.

EDDIE: Yes, and roast—do WHAT?

JOHN: Roast marshmallows.

EDDIE: For breakfast?

JOHN: Sure, why not? (*Starts breaking down branches of young trees. They won't break; so he pulls them up, roots and all.*)

PETE: Watch what you're doing! It's all right to use what wood you need, but don't destroy living things. You shouldn't destroy little trees that way.

JOHN: Don't be so picky! (*In the meantime Eddie and Carl have finished building an imitation fire and begin opening cans of juice, packages of rolls, etc. They throw all of the cans, wrappers, etc., in every direction.*)

EDDIE: I'm stuffed. I don't care what the rest of you fellows do, but I'm going to get some sleep. (*He lies down with his head on a rolled-up sleeping bag.*)

JOHN: Now who's taking his beauty sleep? I'm going to roast these marshmallows. (*Goes about business of roasting as Carl finishes cooking eggs in a frying pan.*)

CARL: Marshmallows for breakfast. That's awful. Well, you go right ahead with your sticky stuff. I'm going to join Eddie. (*Rolls out bag and flops on his stomach.*)

PETE: Look out! That marshmallow is on fire!

JOHN: Sure, that's the way I like them. The blacker the better. (*Waves stick around in the air.*) This one looks a little too black. Oh, well—. (*Throws the whole thing toward the back of the stage.*) Move over, Sleeping Beauty. (*Tries to put his head on Eddie's sleeping bag.*)

EDDIE: Hey, quit that! Go get your own sleeping bag. (*John goes over to his own sleeping bag and settles himself.*)

BLUE JAY: Look! That stick is still on fire! (*Other animals creep out to look at the stick.*)

SQUIRREL: I'd try to put it out, but I'm scared!

MRS. ROBIN: Oh, if Mr. Robin would only come with Smokey!

FIRST DEER: Here he comes. What if he couldn't find Smokey!

MR. ROBIN: (*All out of breath.*) What a hunt I've had. I thought I'd never find him.

SMOKEY: It looks as though I got here just in time. There's a stick smoldering over there. Would you look at this mess. What campers!

SMOKEY: (*Goes over and stamps on flaming stick and surrounding area. He picks up stick and brings it over and lays it on the campfire.*) Just wait until these fellows wake up. I'll have a few things to say to them. They ought not to be sleeping when they are endangering the lives of others. Grrrrrrrrr, wake up, careless campers! (*Shakes Carl by the foot.*)

CARL: (*Raises himself slowly and looks in amazement at Smokey. He rubs his eyes and then shakes John.*) Hey, wake up! Wake up! Bear! Bear!

JOHN: What's the matter? Why don't you let a fellow—. (*Pauses when he sees Smokey.*) Do you see what I see, or did I eat too many marshmallows? Eddie, Pete, wake up.

SMOKEY: (*As the others sit up and look at Smokey—.*) It's time you all woke up to what you're doing. If I hadn't come by just now, that burning marshmallow stick could have endangered your life and that of all the animals, trees, and people in the forest. When trees are destroyed, rain washes away topsoil. Tree roots help prevent river and stream banks from washing into and muddying the water.

JOHN: I'm sorry, Smokey. It's mostly my fault. Pete tried to tell us to pick a safe site for a campfire. I know it was crazy to throw that flaming stick.

EDDIE: Come on, fellows, let's start cleaning up the place. Wow, when I think what might have happened! (*All four campers start cleaning up the campsite.*)

PETE: Thank you, Smokey.

NARRATOR: When you and your family go camping, remember to build safe fires. Always be sure your fire is out—dead-out—before you leave it. Keep your fires small. Keep your camp clean, both for yourself and the campers who follow you.

Entire cast assembles to sing one of the Smokey Bear songs included in this unit. We suggest you ditto the words so that the audience as well as the cast may join in the songs.