



The bear has built himself a fortress to keep out any possible enemies, yet it is not enemies but water that one day breaks his fortress asunder. The furious bear marches off with his sword to dismember the perpetrator, but as each suspect points back to a further cause—the beaver damkeepers to the pigdeer, the pigdeer to the fox, the fox to the birds—the bear unexpectedly finds himself in a very invidious position. For the birds that ostensibly started the chain of disasters have done so because they have been made homeless: someone has come along and chopped down their forest. In a pose redolent of deep and mournful realisation the bear accepts his responsibility and sets about doing what he can to repair the situation through a double page of furious and enlightened activity. Finally he plants a new forest and uses his sword on his chopped down timber to build a new and far more hospitable house.

Although the National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication entry suggests Environmental Degradation as the book's main focus, **The Bear with the Sword**, originally published in Italy in 2008, is actually a magical, non-judgemental, wonderfully persuasive parable about thinking before we act, taking responsibility for our actions and making appropriate amends to those we have inadvertently injured or inconvenienced: its environmental application is really a side issue, although admittedly a topical and useful one.

Foli's illustrations—which, apart from the large, realistic furry brown bear, tend to be tiny black-line drawings on white, patched with fragments of colour and full of tiny visual comments and conversations—reward poring over, revealing more enriching emotive and informative detail at each examination.
Katharine England

The Bear with the Sword (2010)

Davide Cali, ill. *Gianluca Foli*,
Wilkins Farago, 28pp.

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Our hero is a fine brown bear with a fine sharp sword, and like any small boy—or human being, if you want to take it that far (and you should)—he enjoys demonstrating its potency by slashing at everything in sight. The pristine white page is scattered with dismembered line and coloured-pencil stars, pumpkins, coffeepots; slashed rivers, mountains and clouds and eventually an entire cut-to-pieces forest: displaced birds and small animals among the debris fly tiny, blue, sad-face thought-balloons.