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A cheerful old man and a cheerful old woman decide to make a gingerbread man. They make him and bake him, step by step. Then, to their consternation, he pops out of the oven and runs away. No longer cheerful, they race after the smiling little cookie, who shouts, "No! No! I won't come back! I'd rather run than be your snack!" He runs from everyone _ a butcher, an elegant cow, a muddy old sow _ until, at last, a sly, bookish fox tricks him and gobbles him up.

Jim Aylesworth, well-loved author of more than 20 books, joins forces with award-winning illustrator Barbara McClintock to create a traditional yet fresh rendition of this favorite tale. Aylesworth's ear for language (the result of 25 years as a first-grade teacher) ensures generous doses of good read-aloud sounds, rhythms, and rhymes. McClintock's pictures, in watercolor, sepia ink, and gouache, are traditional in style and setting, reminiscent of early Mother Goose, but are also full of humor: Children will delight in the final scene, in which all the pursuers, human and animal, stand fuming and helpless while the fox licks its lips, leaving not so much as a crumb for anyone else.

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