

Goldilocks and the Three Bears

ONCE UPON A TIME, IN A LARGE FOREST, CLOSE TO A VILLAGE, STOOD THE COTTAGE WHERE THE TEDDY BEAR FAMILY LIVED. THEY WERE NOT REALLY PROPER TEDDY BEARS, FOR FATHER BEAR WAS VERY BIG, MOTHER BEAR WAS MIDDLING IN SIZE, AND ONLY BABY BEAR COULD BE DESCRIBED AS A TEDDY BEAR.

EACH BEAR HAD ITS OWN SIZE OF BED. FATHER BEAR'S WAS LARGE AND NICE AND COMFY. MOTHER BEAR'S BED WAS MIDDLING IN SIZE, WHILE BABY BEAR HAD A FINE LITTLE CHERRYWOOD BED THAT FATHER BEAR HAD ORDERED FROM A COUPLE OF BEAVER FRIENDS.

BESIDE THE FIREPLACE, AROUND WHICH THE FAMILY SAT IN THE EVENINGS, STOOD A LARGE CARVED CHAIR FOR THE HEAD OF THE HOUSE, A DELIGHTFUL BLUE VELVET ARMCHAIR FOR MOTHER BEAR, AND A VERY LITTLE CHAIR FOR BABY BEAR.

NEATLY LAID OUT ON THE KITCHEN TABLE STOOD THREE CHINA BOWLS. A LARGE ONE FOR FATHER BEAR, A SMALLER ONE FOR MOTHER BEAR, AND A LITTLE BOWL FOR BABY BEAR.

THE NEIGHBORS WERE ALL VERY RESPECTFUL TO FATHER BEAR AND PEOPLE RAISED THEIR HATS WHEN HE WENT BY. FATHER BEAR LIKED THAT AND HE ALWAYS POLITELY REPLIED TO THEIR GREETINGS. MOTHER BEAR HAD LOTS OF FRIENDS. SHE VISITED THEM IN THE AFTERNOONS TO EXCHANGE GOOD ADVICE AND RECIPES FOR JAM AND BOTTLED FRUIT. BABY BEAR, HOWEVER, HAD HARDLY ANY FRIENDS. THIS WAS PARTLY BECAUSE HE WAS RATHER A BULLY AND LIKED TO WIN GAMES AND ARGUMENTS. HE WAS A PEST TOO AND ALWAYS GETTING INTO MISCHIEF. NOT FAR AWAY, LIVED A FAIR-HAIRED LITTLE GIRL WHO HAD A SIMILAR NATURE TO BABY BEAR, ONLY SHE WAS HAUGHTY AND STUCK-UP AS WELL, AND THOUGH BABY BEAR OFTEN ASKED HER TO COME AND PLAY AT HIS HOUSE, SHE ALWAYS SAID NO.

ONE DAY, MOTHER BEAR MADE A NICE PUDDING. IT WAS A NEW RECIPE, WITH BLUEBERRIES AND OTHER CRUSHED BERRIES. HER FRIENDS TOLD HER IT WAS DELICIOUS. WHEN IT WAS READY, SHE SAID TO THE FAMILY:

"IT HAS TO BE LEFT TO COOL NOW, OTHERWISE IT WON'T TASTE NICE. THAT WILL TAKE AT LEAST AN HOUR. WHY DON'T WE GO AND VISIT THE BEAVERS' NEW BABY? MUMMY BEAVER WILL BE PLEASED TO SEE US." FATHER BEAR AND BABY BEAR WOULD MUCH RATHER HAVE TUCKED INTO THE PUDDING, WARM OR NOT, BUT THEY LIKED THE THOUGHT OF VISITING THE NEW BABY.

"WE MUST WEAR OUR BEST CLOTHES, EVEN FOR SUCH A SHORT VISIT. EVERYONE AT THE BEAVERS' WILL BE VERY BUSY NOW, AND WE MUST NOT STAY TOO LONG!" AND SO THEY SET OFF ALONG THE PATHWAY TOWARDS THE RIVER BANK. A SHORT TIME LATER, THE STUCK-UP LITTLE GIRL, WHOSE NAME WAS GOLDILOCKS, PASSED BY THE BEARS' HOUSE AS SHE PICKED FLOWERS.

"OH, WHAT AN UGLY HOUSE THE BEARS HAVE!" SAID GOLDILOCKS TO HERSELF AS SHE WENT DOWN THE HILL. "I'M GOING TO PEEP INSIDE! IT WON'T BE BEAUTIFUL LIKE MY HOUSE, BUT I'M DYING TO SEE WHERE BABY BEAR LIVES." KNOCK! KNOCK! THE LITTLE GIRL TAPPED ON THE DOOR. KNOCK! KNOCK! NOT A SOUND...

"SURELY SOMEONE WILL HEAR ME KNOCKING," GOLDILOCKS SAID HERSELF, IMPATIENTLY. "ANYONE AT HOME?" SHE CALLED, PEERING ROUND THE DOOR. THEN SHE WENT INTO THE EMPTY HOUSE AND STARTED TO EXPLORE THE KITCHEN.

"A PUDDING!" SHE CRIED, DIPPING HER FINGER INTO THE PUDDING MOTHER BEAR HAD LEFT TO COOL. "QUITE NICE!" SHE MURMURED, SPOONING IT FROM BABY BEAR'S BOWL. IN A TWINKLING, THE BOWL LAY EMPTY ON A MESSY TABLE. WITH A FULL TUMMY, GOLDILOCKS WENT ON EXPLORING.

"NOW THEN, THIS MUST BE FATHER BEAR'S CHAIR, THIS WILL BE MOTHER BEAR'S, AND THIS ONE MUST BELONG TO MY FRIEND, BABY BEAR. I'LL JUST SIT ON IT A WHILE!" WITH THESE WORDS, GOLDBLOCKS SAT HERSELF DOWN ONTO THE LITTLE CHAIR WHICH, QUITE UNUSED TO SUCH A SUDDEN WEIGHT, PROMPTLY BROKE A LEG. GOLDBLOCKS CRASHED TO THE FLOOR, BUT NOT IN THE LEAST DISMAYED BY THE DAMAGE SHE HAD DONE, SHE WENT UPSTAIRS.

THERE WAS NO MISTAKING WHICH WAS BABY BEAR'S BED.

"MM! QUITE COMFY!" SHE SAID, I BOUNCING ON IT. "NOT AS NICE AS MINE, BUT NEARLY! THEN SHE YAWNED. I THINK I'LL LIE DOWN, ONLY FOR A MINUTE JUST TO TRY THE BED." AND IN NEXT TO NO TIME, GOLDBLOCKS LAY FAST ASLEEP IN BABY BEAR'S BED. IN THE MEANTIME, THE BEARS WERE ON THEIR WAY HOME.

"WASN'T THE NEW BEAVER BABY EVER SO SMALL?" SAID BABY BEAR TO HIS MOTHER. WAS I AS TINY AS THAT WHEN I WAS BORN?"

"NOT QUITE, BUT ALMOST," CAME THE REPLY, WITH A FOND CARESS. FROM A DISTANCE, FATHER BEAR NOTICED THE DOOR WAS AJAR.

"HURRY!" HE CRIED. "SOMEONE IS IN OUR HOUSE . . ." WAS FATHER BEAR HUNGRY OR DID A THOUGHT STRIKE HIM? ANYWAY, HE DASHED INTO THE KITCHEN. "I KNEW IT! SOMEBODY HAS GOBBLED UP THE PUDDING."

"SOMEONE HAS BEEN JUMPING UP AND DOWN ON MY ARMCHAIR!" COMPLAINED MOTHER BEAR.

"AND SOMEBODY'S BROKEN MY CHAIR!" WAILED BABY BEAR.

WHERE COULD THE CULPRIT BE? THEY ALL RAN UPSTAIRS AND TIPTOED IN AMAZEMENT OVER TO BABY BEAR'S BED. IN IT LAY GOLDBLOCKS, SOUND ASLEEP. BABY BEAR PRODDED HER TOE.

"WHO'S THAT? WHERE AM I?" SHRIEKED THE LITTLE GIRL, WAKING WITH A START. TAKING FRIGHT AT THE SCOWLING FACES BENDING OVER HER, SHE CLUTCHED THE BEDCLOTHES UP TO HER CHIN. THEN SHE JUMPED OUT OF BED AND FLED DOWN THE STAIRS.

"GET AWAY! AWAY FROM THAT HOUSE!" SHE TOLD HERSELF AS SHE RAN, FORGETFUL OF ALL THE TROUBLE SHE HAD SO UNKINDLY CAUSED. BUT BABY BEAR CALLED FROM THE DOOR, WAVING HIS ARM:

"DON'T RUN AWAY! COME BACK! I FORGIVE YOU, COME AND PLAY WITH ME!"

AND THIS IS HOW IT ALL ENDED. FROM THAT DAY ONWARDS, HAUGHTY RUDE GOLDBLOCKS BECAME A PLEASANT LITTLE GIRL. SHE MADE FRIENDS WITH BABY BEAR AND OFTEN WENT TO HIS HOUSE. SHE INVITED HIM TO HER HOUSE TOO, AND THEY REMAINED GOOD FRIENDS, ALWAYS.

The End