

Jane Hissey



Old Bear

Five-Minute

Bedtime Stories



A treasury of short tales and poems



For Finn



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The Dolls'-House Christmas



IT WAS nearly Christmas. The toys all knew this because the children were very busy decorating the house. They were too busy to play and they wouldn't let any of the toys help with the decorations.

"You're a bit small to decorate the tree," they told Little Bear.

"And you can't reach to hang paper chains."

They wouldn't even let Old Bear help to put up the fairy lights. It wasn't much fun at all for the toys.

"We haven't been able to do anything," grumbled Little Bear.

"I would have loved to help make the house look Christmassy."

"They should have saved the low-down jobs for us," said Rabbit.

"What low-down jobs?" asked Duck. "There aren't any really, are there?"

"There's the pot the Christmas tree stands in," said Little Bear, "that's low down and it's always decorated."

They all rushed to the Christmas-tree pot only to find that it had just been wrapped in red paper and tied with a big green bow.

"There's nothing left for us to do," said Little Bear.

"And I have been practising bows all week."



Then he noticed the dolls' house. Standing in the corner of the playroom, it had been completely forgotten. There were no paper chains in the rooms, no Christmas tree with presents underneath, and no holly over the pictures. It looked just as it did all the rest of the year.

"Why haven't you decorated your house?" Little Bear asked the dolls in the dolls' house. "It doesn't look very festive."

"We haven't any decorations," said one of the dolls.

"Nobody really bothers with the dolls' house at Christmas. They're too busy doing other things."

"Oh, that's wonderful," said Little Bear. "We'll decorate it for you. It's just what we wanted. We can reach into every corner of the dolls' house and we'll make the decorations ourselves."

The other toys were very excited at Little Bear's idea and set off in search of suitable decorations.

Old Bear was the first to find something. He arrived at the dolls' house carrying a tiny but perfect Christmas tree.



"I found it in the dustbin," he explained. "It's a little branch that had broken off the big tree, but it's just the right size for the dolls' house."

They planted the tiny tree in a little egg cup with soil packed tightly round its stem to stop it wobbling.

"It needs fairy lights," said the biggest doll. "What can we use?"

Rabbit rummaged through the button and beads box until he found what he was looking for: some tiny, coloured, glass beads. He threaded them on a piece of green cotton and wound them in and out of the branches of the tree. When the light caught them, they did look just like fairy lights and the dolls' house dolls were delighted. They found other beads to hang on

the tree as decorations and Little Bear stuck a tiny, gold, sticky-paper star on top.

"Well that's the tree done," said Old Bear.

"Now for the rest of the house."

Little Bear and Duck collected holly with nice red berries to decorate the rooms and to make a wreath for the front door.





Rabbit sat and cut up thin strips of wrapping paper and all the toys used these to make dolls' house-sized paper chains. Then, Old Bear, who could reach into every corner of the house, hung the paper chains up so they criss-crossed all the tiny rooms. The dolls' house was looking ready for Christmas now and all the toys began to feel excited.

"We'll put our presents under the tree, shall we?" suggested Rabbit. They had all wrapped up gifts to give to each other – little things they'd made or found. They piled these in a heap under the tree.

And, as the finishing touch, one of the dolls rushed off and returned with all the doll-sized socks she could find.

"We'll all have to have bare feet until Christmas," she laughed, "but we don't mind. There are enough socks here for everyone." And she hung the socks in a row along the dolls'-house mantelpiece.

"Now the house looks really Christmassy," said Little Bear, as he stood back to admire all their work.



“And it’s been fun decorating it.”

And do you know, on Christmas morning, when the dolls’-house dolls walked into their sitting room they could hardly believe their eyes; every tiny sock was full of tiny presents. So they hadn’t been forgotten after all, had they?



The Winter Picnic



SPRING hadn't quite arrived; there were still no leaves on the trees or eggs in the nests and all the toys were well wrapped up and sitting around in the playroom.

"Let's go for a picnic," said Old Bear, suddenly.

"A picnic?" chorused the others. "But it's cold."

"Then we'll take warm food," said Old Bear, "and wear warm clothes. It's a perfect day for a picnic."

"Why is it perfect?" asked Bramwell Brown, looking at the trees blowing in the wind outside.

"Because nobody else will be having a picnic," said Old Bear, "and we'll be able to choose the best picnic place and have it all to ourselves."

"And nobody else will be using the picnic basket," said Little Bear, excitedly.

"Or the blanket," added Bramwell Brown.

"That's right," said Old Bear, getting to his feet. "Come on, everyone, let's get ready."

Old Bear filled a hot-water bottle and put it in the bottom of the picnic basket. Then he put everything else in on top. He made the sandwiches with hot toast, wrapped them up and put them right on top of the hot-water bottle to keep warm.

Then he filled a flask with soup and wrapped up hot buns, sausage rolls and baked potatoes. He packed a few other bits and pieces while the others fetched blankets, coats and scarves. Soon they were all ready.

There was just a little frost on the path as they marched out of the house, dragging the picnic basket along on a little four-wheeled cart.

"This is fun!" said Bramwell Brown. "We're going on the first picnic of the year. Where shall we have it?"



"I suggest over there," said Old Bear, pointing to the top of a little hill. "There will be a nice view from the top."

"It'll be a bit windy," said Harry Bear, doubtfully. "And we'll have to walk all the way back, don't forget."

But nobody was really listening; they were pulling and puffing their way up the hill. By the time they were halfway up, most of them had taken off their coats.

"I feel quite warm again now," said Bramwell, "and I'm very hungry."

At last, they reached the highest point.

"This will do," said Old Bear, spreading out one of the blankets and sitting down in the middle of it. The others joined him. They left the basket on the little path and unloaded the food. The soup in the flask was lovely and warm and they all wrapped their paws around steaming mugs of it. The butter had melted out of the sandwiches, but it all tasted good; in fact, everything tasted especially good and, in no time at all, the food had all gone.

But when they'd finished, the toys began to shiver again.

"Come on," said Old Bear, "it's too cold to sit still – let's play some games."

They played a very quick game of 'hide-and-seek' and an even quicker game of 'hunt the acorn' and then they rolled pebbles down the hill. Rolling pebbles down the hill wasn't really active enough and, soon, they began to feel chilly again.

"The hot-water bottle is still warm in the picnic basket," said Bramwell Brown. "Why don't we all get in with it for a little while, just for a warm up!"

Rubbing their paws together, they all climbed into the nearly empty basket.

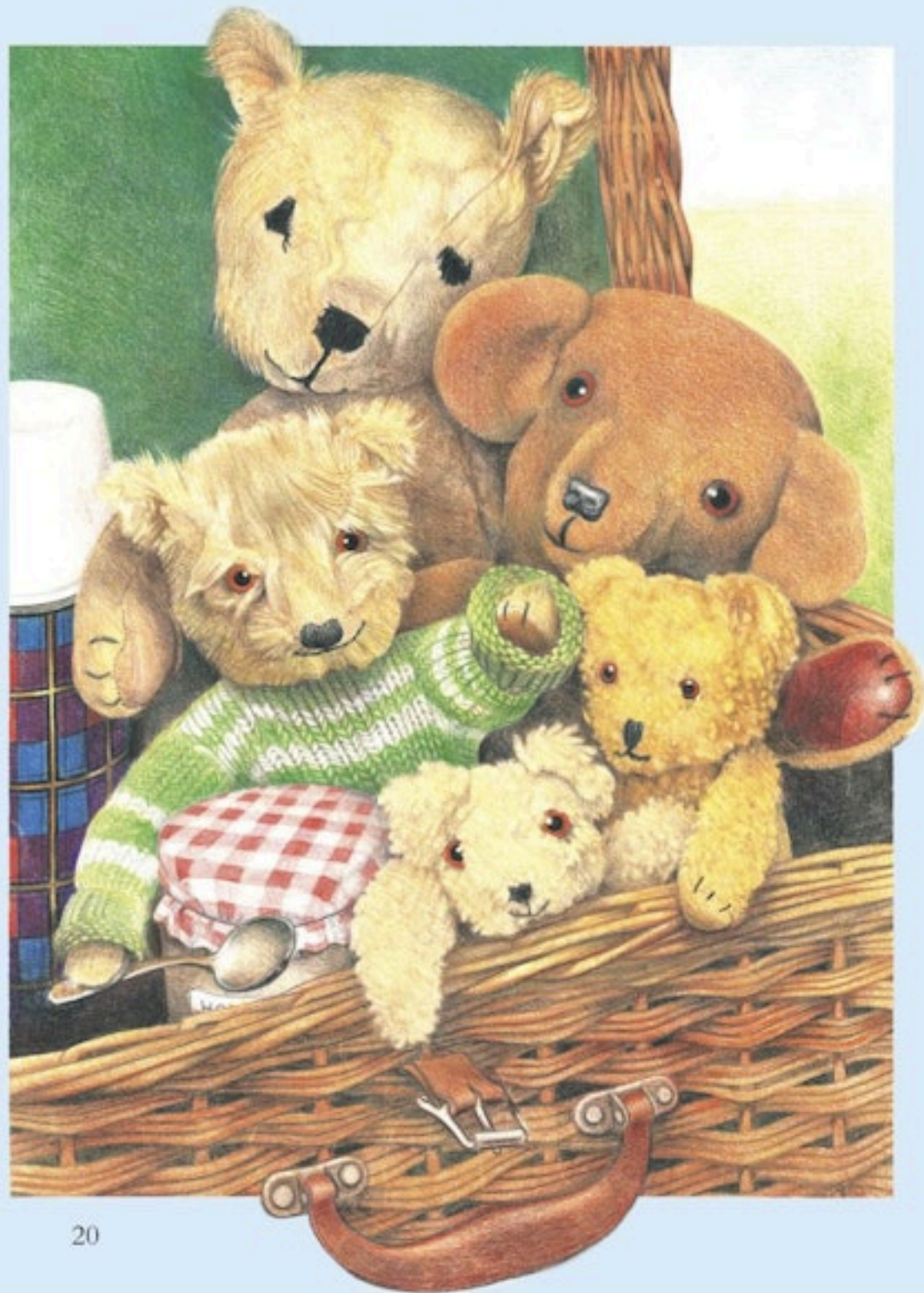
"Lovely," said Harry Bear, as his feet touched the hot-water bottle. "I'm as warm as summer now."

They all snuggled down while Old Bear told them stories of picnics he used to go on when he was a new bear, many years ago. They didn't mind that the basket was full of crumbs, or that there was butter all over their fur.

"It's warm in here, isn't it?" said Little Bear. "I won't want to get out to go home."

None of them wanted to get out but, as it turned out, they didn't actually have to. They had forgotten that the picnic basket was still on the little four-wheeled cart.

Suddenly, a big gust of wind caught the open lid and began to blow the basket down the hill.



“Oh no!” cried Old Bear. “Help!”

But of course there was no-one to help. Nobody else was out having picnics in weather like that; they were the only ones. All they could do was hold on to each other as tightly as they could and hope that the basket wouldn't stop too suddenly.

“It's when things like this happen,” said Bramwell Brown, shakily, “that you wish you were having a picnic on a normal sort of day; when there were lots of people around to help.”

The basket bumped its way on down the little hill. It jumped a very small stream and headed towards the gate.

“Duck!” shouted Old Bear.

And they all ducked, except Little Bear who was busy *looking* for Duck as they whizzed underneath the gate.

If anyone had seen the picnic basket now, they would have thought it was just a basket on wheels rolling down the hill. They would never have guessed that there were five brave picnickers inside.

“Oh, when is it going to stop?” cried Little Bear.

“When it gets to the bottom, I should think,” said Bramwell Brown. And he was more or less right. The little cart suddenly hit a log; the basket fell off the cart and the five friends fell out of the basket.

When they realised that they weren't moving any more, and dared to look, they found that they were right outside their own front door.

"Well, isn't that wonderful?" said Little Bear. "A picnic on top of a hill and we didn't even have to walk back."

"I think perhaps I would rather have walked back," said Old Bear, standing up rather shakily, "but for the first picnic of the year, it's going to be hard to beat."

"Yes," said Bramwell Brown, "travelling home from the picnic isn't usually the most exciting bit, is it?"

And gathering up the basket, its contents and the little cart, they all trooped indoors for tea!

Wet Bear



BARNABY BEAR stood on the doorstep feeling cold and damp. What a day to be left out in the rain. Teddy George opened the door to let him in.

"What happened to you?" he asked, staring at the very soggy bear.

"I was in the garden and I fell asleep," said Barnaby.

"Nobody took me in when it started raining and I'm so cold and wet. How can I get warm and dry?"

"The best thing to do is run around," said George. "That always warms you up."

Barnaby began to run up and down the kitchen.

"Like this?" he puffed.

"Yes, that's the way," said George.



But just as he said it, Dog came through the door and bumped straight into Barnaby. They both landed in a heap.

"Why were you running?" asked Dog.

"To get warm," said Barnaby.

"Oh, I always wrap up in something," said Dog. He fetched a sheet and wrapped it around Barnaby. "Do you feel warmer now?" he asked.

The sheet was a rather large one and they couldn't actually see Barnaby any more.

"I feel warmer," came the muffled reply, "but I can't see where I'm going."

Hearing all the muffled voices, Little Bear came trotting in through the door. He saw a lumpy, flapping sheet staggering across the room towards him.

"A ghost, a ghost!" he cried, and rushed to hide behind Teddy George.

"No, it's all right," called the ghost. "It's only me, Barnaby. I'm trying to wrap up to keep warm."

"Why don't you just jump up and down?" said Little Bear.

"All right," said Barnaby, throwing off the sheet and starting to jump. "You're right. I am getting warmer, but I can't keep doing this 'til my fur's dry."

"No," said Teddy George, "you can't. You're making the plates rattle. I know, I saw a hot-water bottle at the back of the cupboard one day; I could fill it with water from the tap. That will warm you up."

Teddy George rummaged about and found the old hot-water bottle. He took it to the tap and filled it with warm water.

"There," he said to Barnaby, "feel that."

A happy smile spread across Barnaby's face as he hugged the warm hot-water bottle close to his fur.

"Oh, it's lovely," he said. "Thank you, Teddy George."

Then he stopped smiling.

"George," he said, slowly, "I think I know why nobody uses this hot-water bottle any more. It leaks." He very carefully laid the hot-water bottle on the ground and looked down at his fur. It was wetter than ever. Warm and wet this time.

"Oh no," cried the others.

"Newspaper," said George, "that's what we need."

Dog rushed off and returned with one.

"Now," said George, opening it up, "lie on that, Barnaby, and we'll roll you up in it. Newspaper keeps you warm and dry."



With the help of the others, Teddy George rolled Barnaby up in the newspaper until he looked like a sausage roll.

"Now what?" asked Barnaby, with only his head sticking out.

"Now we wait," said Teddy George, sitting down.

"You can't leave me like this," wailed Barnaby.

"We'll unroll you when you're dry," said Dog.

"But I want to get out now," said Barnaby, rolling all over the floor.

He tripped up Little Bear and then Dog, and then they all bumped into George.

Soon, there was a great heap of toys in the middle of the floor. Barnaby wriggled out of the newspaper and out from under the heap. He looked at Dog with his feet in the air and George with Little Bear sitting on his middle and he began to laugh. He laughed and laughed.

"Do you know," he said, "all that rolling around has completely dried my fur and laughing is a wonderful way to warm up. I think I know what to do now, if I'm ever left out in the rain again."

There Were Four in the Bed



OLD BEAR woke with a bump when something hit him on the head. "Don't do that," he said, crossly, and then opened his eyes and found he was talking to the floor.

"Well, I wonder how I got down here," he muttered, rubbing his head with his paw.

"You fell out of bed," said a voice from above him.

Looking up, he saw a row of faces staring down at him: Duck, Lucy the rabbit and Bramwell Brown.



"I think," said Duck, "there are too many toys in this bed."
"Well, it isn't too bad now," said Lucy, "because Old Bear has gone."
"But I haven't gone!" said Old Bear.
"You look as though you have," said Lucy, hanging dangerously over the side of the bed.
"I didn't mean to go," said Old Bear. "It just happened."
"If a few more people happen to go," said Duck, thoughtfully, "the others would be able to spread out."
"Are you hurt?" asked Bramwell Brown.
"Well, I did bump my head," said Old Bear.
Bramwell Brown climbed down and bandaged his old friend's head with a handkerchief.
"Is that better?" he asked, kindly.
"Yes, thank you," said Old Bear. "You know, perhaps it is true that the bed is too crowded; I think I'll try and find somewhere else to sleep."
"We could all look for somewhere else," said Bramwell.
"It would be nice to have a change."
The others climbed down too, and all four of them set off to look for new places to sleep. The first place they found was an open drawer.

"This looks really good," said Lucy Rabbit, climbing in.
"It's full of socks."
"They're nice and soft," said Bramwell Brown. "I could sleep in there very comfortably."
"And what would happen if someone shut the drawer?" asked Duck.
"Oh dear, I hadn't thought of that," said Lucy, wriggling out of the drawer as fast as she could. "I wouldn't want to be stuck in there forever."
Bramwell Brown found a big fruit bowl next. "I think this would be good," he said, "except that it's full of fruit."
"Oh, we could easily eat that," said Lucy, and she began to munch a large apple.



Some time later, the fruit bowl was empty. Well, it had no fruit in it. Instead, four rather full toys sat where the fruit had been.

"It's big enough," said Old Bear.

"But it's not very comfortable," added Duck.

"We could come and sit in it for a change," said Bramwell Brown, "perhaps when we're hungry. But I don't think we could sleep here."

"I'm so full, I could sleep anywhere," said Lucy.

The others helped her out of the fruit bowl and continued to search. Lucy was soon busy pulling the cushions off all the chairs and piling them in a big heap on the floor.

"Come on, everyone," she called from the top. "Try it out."

The cushions were so bouncy it made them hard to climb but, eventually, all the toys were balanced on the top.

But the mountain of cushions would not stay still, and soon Old Bear found himself on the floor once again.

"My poor head," he said. "And my bandage has come off."

"Can we use that handkerchief?" asked Lucy. "It would make a nice hammock."



Lucy and Bramwell tied the hanky hammock between two chair legs. Old Bear decided he'd never get into a hammock, especially with someone else, and he set off for the kitchen. He'd remembered he'd seen a very comfortable-looking basket there, which was lined with straw and used to keep eggs in. It could be just the thing. When he arrived in the kitchen, he climbed up and settled himself in the straw like a rather strange chicken.

If there hadn't been eggs in the basket, there might even have been room for him to lie down. But there were five eggs, and he wasn't a chicken, so he couldn't sit on the eggs. His paws seemed to get in the way. And just as he was climbing out of the egg basket, he heard a crash.





“Oh no! What’s happened now?” he cried, rushing back to the other room. And there he found his friends – *under* the handkerchief hammock.

“It wasn’t big enough for all of us,” said Lucy. “We fell out.”

“Do you know,” said Old Bear, “I think our bed was the safest place, after all. But I’ve had an idea how we can have more room.”

And that night, if you’d peeped into their room, you would have seen Duck, Lucy and Bramwell tucked up in their usual place in bed. But down at the other end of the bed, tucked in the other way round, so his paws met theirs in the middle, was Old Bear. He had the whole end of the bed to himself and he looked very comfortable and very safe.

The Bunny Dancer

Lizzie Long-ears loves to dance
With music or without it.
And if she ever gets a chance,
She'll tell you all about it.
She'll mention that she leaps and lands
On just one toe and stays there.
(She balances so perfectly
She might spend several days there!)

She pirouettes and hops and jumps,
And if you've ever seen her,
You'll know without a doubt that
She's a bunny ballerina.





Flossie and Ginger at the Seaside



IT WAS a hot summer's day. Ginger and Flossie, the two teddy bears, were on holiday at the seaside with the children. They'd all been playing hide and seek in the towels and rolling down sand hills, but now the children were going into the sea for a swim.

"You guard our buckets and spades," they said to the bears, "we'll be back later to build sandcastles." And with that, they skipped over the wet sand and into the waves.

"I wish we could swim," said Ginger. "I'm so hot."

"We could cool down if we had some shade," said Flossie.

"Let's build a sandcastle and sit in its shadow."

The two bears set to work at once. They dug and dug. They filled the buckets with sand to build towers on top of towers. Then, while Ginger worked on the castle, Flossie dug a deep moat round it and joined it to the sea with a long canal. It filled up with water every time a wave came in and the whole thing looked just like a real castle. Flossie and Ginger put towers on the four corners and then made the towers look like teddy bears, with pebbles for eyes and shells for ears.

"We'll call our castle 'Teddy Towers'," they said, and wrote it in the sand.

"The castle is nearly big enough to sit behind," said Ginger, "just one more spadeful." But as Ginger pushed his spade in for the last time, it hit something hard. With his paws, he dug down to see what it was and came up with a ten pence piece.

"Oh whoopee!" cried Flossie. "We can go and buy ice creams now – I'm so hot."

"That's a very good idea," said Ginger. "I'll finish this off while you go to the ice-cream man."





Flossie marched happily up the beach, carrying the shiny coin. She found the ice-cream man standing by the heap of deck chairs. He had a sign saying:

NICE, COLD ICE CREAMS – 10p EACH.

Flossie looked at the money in her paw – it was only enough to buy one ice cream. Oh dear! One ice cream would never be enough to cool down two hot bears. Still, it had to be better than no ice cream so she bought just one.

She arrived back at Teddy Towers, carefully carrying the precious ice cream cone, and explained that she only had enough for one ice cream. They were just about to decide who would have the first lick when a man and a woman came over to them.

“Excuse me,” they said, “we have just come to tell you that you have won the ‘best sandcastle’ competition.”

Flossie and Ginger stared in amazement. They hadn’t even known there was a competition.

“Thank you,” they said, “how exciting!”

“And your prize,” said the woman, “will be an ice cream each for every day of your holiday. Here is today’s prize.”

She handed Flossie two more ice-cream cones.

"Goodness!" laughed the bears when the people had gone.
"A little while ago we had no ice creams, and now we have three. What shall we do?"

"Well, I know what I'm going to do," said Flossie, and she sat down in front of Teddy Towers to enjoy her prize.

And I think they were so hot they managed all three ice creams, don't you?



Henry Isaiah



HENRY ISAIAH was a bear. He was called Henry Isaiah because one of his eyes was higher than the other one. He had been called Henry Isaiah for as long as he could remember, and for as long as he could remember he had wished he was called something else.

"Do you think I ever had another name?" he asked his friend Rags, one day.

"Well, I suppose if your eyes were straight when you were new, Isaiah would have been a silly name," said Rags.

"Perhaps you were called something else then."

"I wish I had a nice short name like yours," said Henry Isaiah.

"You wouldn't want to be called Rags would you?" said Rags. "I think it means I look like a rag bag with bits of material mending my paws. I was a smart new bear once, but I've been hugged until I'm threadbare. I can't always have been called Rags, but nobody remembers the name I had when I was new. If you want to find someone who will remember your old name, you'd better ask Furless Fred. He's even older than me and he remembers us all when we were new."

Henry Isaiah and Rags found Furless Fred sitting in the garden amongst the flowers.





"Furless," said Henry Isaiah, "was I always called Henry Isaiah?"

"I think so," said Furless. "Your eyes were like that when you were new – one up and one down."

"But it's such a silly name," said Henry Isaiah.

"Not as silly as 'Furless Fred'," said the old teddy. "I was just called Fred once, but I've been left in the garden so many times now all my fur is worn off and everyone calls me Furless."

"Well, if I never had a better name," said Henry Isaiah, "then I'll invent one. It needs to be something short and distinguished. I'll call myself James."

"That's all right," said Furless Fred, "you can call yourself anything you like as long as everyone knows your new name."

"How can I tell everyone my new name?" asked Henry Isaiah, who was now called James.

"Well, we could have a new-name party for you and tell all the other toys at the party."

"That's a very good idea," said Rags. "I shall send out the invitations at once. Dog can be postman and take them to all the toys."

James Bear, who used to be Henry Isaiah, went back happily to wait for his party invitation.

He snuggled down under a blanket and dreamed of party hats and jellies and everyone calling him James. It would be the best party ever. Rags and Furless Fred carefully wrote out the invitations to everyone. They remembered to put James and not Henry Isaiah on Henry Isaiah's invitation and they gave them all to Dog to deliver. The next day everyone started arriving for the party. Nobody knew why they were having the party and some had brought presents in case it was anyone's birthday.

"It's a surprise party," said Rags. "Somebody wants to tell you something and he's going to tell you at the party."

"Ooh," said the toys, "that sounds exciting."

Rabbit started to organise some games and soon everyone was having a lovely time. Rags and Furless Fred waited for James, who had been Henry Isaiah, to arrive, but he didn't. Soon everyone was hungry.

"Well, you'd better start on the food," said Rags, peering out of the door to try and catch sight of the missing guest. Where could he be? They'd sent him an invitation with the time and the place of the party.

When everyone had finished their party food and begun to go home, Rags called Dog over.

"Dog," he said, "you did deliver all the invitations didn't you?"

"Of course I did," said Dog, "all except one."

"Which one?" said Furless Fred and Rags at the same time.

"This one," said Dog, producing a crumpled piece of paper.

"It's addressed to someone called James. I asked everyone but nobody knew who that was."

"Oh, no," cried Rags, "we forgot to tell Dog about Henry Isaiah. Now James, who was Henry Isaiah, has missed his own naming party."

Rushing out of the room, they bumped straight into James. He was standing miserably, watching everyone going home from the party carrying balloons and pieces of cake.



"Was that my party?" he asked, sadly.

"Oh, James," said Rags, "I'm so sorry." And he explained how Dog did not know where to take the invitation.

"Did I miss the games?" asked James.

"I'm afraid so," said Rags.

"And the food?" asked James.

"And the food," said Furless Fred.

"All because I changed my name?" asked the very miserable James Bear.

"I'm afraid so," said the others.

"Perhaps changing my name is not such a good idea," said James. "Do you think perhaps I ought to change my name back to Henry Isaiah? I wouldn't want to miss any more parties."

"Perhaps that would be best," said Rags, "it's a very nice name you know, a very memorable name."

"Yes, perhaps it isn't so bad," said Henry Isaiah, who had briefly been James. "Did you save me a balloon?"

"Of course we did," said Furless Fred and Rags. "Shall we write your name on it?"



And they did. Henry Isaiah proudly walked home with a big red balloon with 'Henry Isaiah' written on it.

Henry Isaiah is the right sort of name to have on a balloon, he thought to himself. It's nice and long and goes all the way round to the other side. It's twice as long as James.



Freddie and the Blackberries



IT WAS a muddy, misty autumn day and Freddie the teddy decided it was just the day for a walk. He went to the cupboard to fetch his boots and there he found something which didn't belong to anyone in his house. It was an umbrella, but it wasn't just any umbrella, it was a bright red one with a teddy-bear handle carved out of wood.

"Oh dear," said Freddie, "I know who that belongs to and I shall have to return it straight away."

The umbrella belonged to a friend of Freddie's, Alexander Bear, who lived just across the field with another family of children. He'd been to visit Freddie the day before and had forgotten to take the umbrella home.

"Well, it makes a good excuse for a walk," said Freddie, picking up the umbrella and putting on his boots. "I shall go and see Alexander straight away."

Singing happily to himself, Freddie set off down the garden and through the hedge into the field. The field was very muddy and Freddie found that the only way to go was round the edge where the ground had not been ploughed up by the tractor.

Then he noticed something he'd forgotten all about since last year: blackberries! Big, bright, juicy blackberries, hanging there, just waiting to be picked.

"Oh, I'm sure Alexander Bear would love some of those," said Freddie. "We could have them for tea!" And he started to pick pawfuls of the juicy fruit. Soon, he couldn't hold any more.

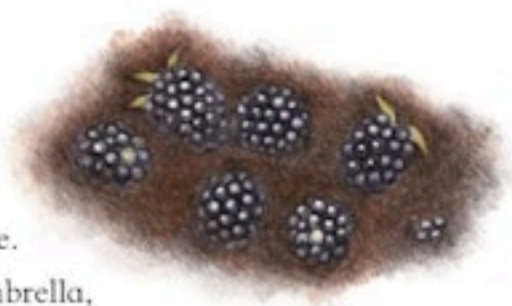
"I really need something to put them in," he said, "but what can I use? I didn't think to bring a basket with me." And then he remembered the umbrella – Alexander's umbrella. "Of course," he said, "if I open up the umbrella and hold it upside down, I can fill it with blackberries."

And so he did. He picked and picked until the umbrella was full of the best and most delicious blackberries. Then, as it looked as though it might rain soon, he hurried off along the path towards Alexander's house.

The path was muddy, but Freddie had his boots on so his feet stayed dry. When he was nearly there, the grey clouds couldn't hold on to the rain any longer, and big drops started to patter on to Freddie's head. That's all right, thought Freddie, I've got Alexander's umbrella to keep me dry. And without thinking, he lifted the umbrella up above his head.



For a moment, Freddie thought that it was raining blackberries, and then he realised his dreadful mistake.



When he'd lifted up the umbrella, all the lovely berries had fallen out, bounced off his head, and landed on the path. Miserably, Freddie watched as they sank into the thick, brown mud and disappeared forever.

"Oh no!" he said. "Now we won't be having blackberries for tea after all."

Sadly, he walked on to Alexander's house and knocked on the door. The little bear was delighted to see him and was really pleased to have his umbrella back.

"Thank you, Freddie," he said, "that was so kind of you. Now come and see what I've been doing."

A wonderful smell met Freddie's nose as he walked into the kitchen. There, amidst the pots and pans, was a row of gleaming jars of jam.

"It's blackberry and apple," said Alexander proudly. "There's a jar for you and some for our tea and there are enough blackberries and apples for us to make a pie."

Freddie laughed, and told Alexander all about his blackberry picking, and how they'd all fallen out of the umbrella.

"Perhaps it's just as well I didn't bring you any," he said, smiling. "I don't think you could have managed more.

You would have run out of jam jars!"

And the two friends sat down to enjoy their blackberry tea.



Billy Bear's Party





THE TOYS all knew it was Billy Bear's birthday. He'd been telling them for weeks, to give them plenty of warning. Then, on the day, they found a huge notice written on the blackboard in the middle of the room. It said:

YOU ARE ALL INVITED TO A PARTY OF SURPRISES –
COME AS YOU ARE OR COME IN DISGUISES.

The notice also told them that the party was to be that afternoon at the far end of the playroom. Everyone thought a party of surprises sounded very exciting.

Billy thought that it was a pity he knew what all the surprises were. He had to, because he'd planned them. But it wouldn't really matter, because everyone was bound to bring him a birthday present.

"Presents are the best surprises," he said to himself.

All morning, he worked very hard preparing his surprise party. He made jellies with whole fruits hidden in the middle. He made some egg, some cheese and some banana sandwiches, and he made little paper flag-shaped labels to tell people which was which. Then he swapped the flags round. Now the cheese ones were labelled 'banana', and the egg sandwiches said 'cheese'.

"That will surprise everyone," he said. He also made a pretend cake by painting a box to look like a cake; but he made a real one too, so that the toys wouldn't be disappointed. He made a special banana milkshake for his friends to drink, but he coloured it pink so that people would expect it to taste of strawberries! When he'd put holes in some of the squeaky blowers, so that they didn't quite squeak, and glued some of the paper hats up so you couldn't get your head into them, he decided that, at last, he was ready.

But, as a final touch, he hid all the food and drink around the room. "It will surprise everyone to see no food at a party," he said. "I'll let them discover it."

The time of the party came at last and everyone marched down to the far end of the playroom. As each toy arrived, Billy was handed a birthday card in an envelope with his name on.



"Thank you very much," said Billy, putting them on the table. "I'll open the cards after. . ." He was going to say, 'after I've opened my presents', but he stopped himself, because he suddenly realised that not one of the toys had brought him a present. Oh dear, how disappointing; a birthday without presents.

Billy tried to hide his feelings, but just couldn't enjoy things in quite the same way any more. He didn't say anything; after all you don't *have* to give people presents on their birthday. Perhaps it was silly of him to expect to be given things. He decided to make a special effort.

"Come on, everyone," he said, "I'll open my cards at the end of the party. Let's all enjoy ourselves."



The toys were ready for that. They had looked forward to the party all day. Soon they were playing games and dancing. After a little while, someone found a hidden plate of food, and then everyone began a food hunt. It was great fun. Every time they found some food, they put it on the table, and soon the table was full of the delicious party food and Billy said that it was time to eat. And then the real fun began!

The food all looked lovely, but it wasn't long before the toys were discovering Billy's little tricks and surprises. When they asked for a sausage roll, Billy rolled a sausage across their plate and laughed. They discovered the surprise sandwiches when they ate them, and they thought the milkshake very strange, 'til they realised that too was a trick.

But there were nice surprises too. Billy had invited a magician to come along and do some magic for the toys. His surprises were very clever. He made bunches of flowers pop out of magic boxes, and handkerchiefs appear from nowhere. At one point, he even made one of Rabbit's friends pop up out of a hat. The toys were delighted; Billy enjoyed it, too. But it didn't quite take his mind off the thought that he hadn't had a single birthday present that day.



At last, the end of the party was drawing near; the food had all gone, and they'd played as many games with surprise endings as they could think of. Billy wasn't looking quite as happy as he should have been and all the toys knew why.

"Why don't you open your cards, now," said Old Bear, at last.

"Yes, I should do, shouldn't I," said Billy. He returned to the heap of cards on the table and carefully tore open the envelope of the first one.

Out fell a birthday card that said, 'To Billy, with love from Rabbit,' on it.

"Thank you, Rabbit," said Billy Bear.

"There's something else," said Rabbit, "look in the envelope."

Billy peeped inside and saw a piece of paper.



He pulled it out and read what it said, "'This piece of paper entitles you to one carrot cake to be baked by me, Rabbit, on the day of your choice.'

"Oh Rabbit," said Billy, "what a lovely idea! I shall look forward to that. Will you make it when my friends come to stay next week?"

"Of course," said Rabbit. "It's your present. You can have it whenever you like."

"Thank you very much," said Billy, "it's a wonderful present."

Billy opened the next card. It was from Old Bear and there was a piece of paper in that one, too. It said that Old Bear would pack Billy a picnic on the first sunny day of the summer. Billy was very excited. He opened one card after another and, in each, there was a paper promise. Bramwell Brown promised to pick Billy a big bunch of flowers, Sailor said he'd teach him to dance the 'Sailor's Hornpipe', Little Bear said he'd make him a pair of trousers just like his own, and Duck said that he would make him a nest when he wanted somewhere cosy to sleep. There were lots more promises from all the toys. Billy was soon promised anything he could have wished for.

"Oh, thank you everyone," said Billy, "this has been the best surprise of the day. They're lovely birthday presents and they will last me all year; right up until my next birthday. But now I'm so tired that, Duck, do you think I could have your birthday present tonight? I would just love to curl up in a nice cosy nest and dream about all today's surprises."

Teddy No-Nose and the Black Button



TEDDY NO-NOSE hadn't actually had a nose for years. He'd lost it when he was a fairly new bear and he'd managed perfectly well without one. There weren't many things he had to smell, and the other toys were so used to seeing him without a nose that they hardly noticed at all. In fact, some of the newer toys thought that Teddy No-Nose had never had a nose.

One day, however, Teddy No-Nose was watching some of the other toys being packed into a basket. They were going out for the day with the children, and he suddenly realised something: people always played with him at home, as much as with the other toys, but he couldn't remember ever being taken out for the day or away on holiday.

"It must be because of my nose," he said to himself. "They're too ashamed of me to take me out in case their friends laugh at me. Perhaps it's time I got a new nose."

Teddy No-Nose went off in search of Old Bear and asked him where he could get a new nose.



"That's easy," said Old Bear. "Take some money from your money box and go to the Teddy Bear Repair Shop. They sell noses there and you'll be able to choose any nose you like."

Teddy No-Nose was quite excited at the idea of choosing a new nose, until he realised that he had no money in his money box. The last time he'd looked, there had just been a button in there.

"Well," he said, "I shall just have to earn some money to buy a nose."

He went off straight away to ask all the toys whether they needed any jobs doing. Within a few minutes, he was busy tidying up the dolls' house.

"We'll pay you when you've done it," said the dolls'-house dolls. Teddy No-Nose worked very hard and soon the little house was spotless. The floors and walls were gleaming and the furniture was all in place.

"That's lovely," said the dolls'-house dolls. "You've done a lovely job and here's your money."

With the precious money in his paw, Teddy No-Nose began his next job. Duck had said he would pay him too, if he would help him to find a missing piece of jigsaw puzzle that he'd been looking for for days.



Teddy No-Nose searched everywhere, lifting things that were too heavy for Duck to lift, and suddenly, there, under a very big book, was the missing piece of jigsaw.

"Wonderful," said Duck, giving Teddy No-Nose a coin. "Now you've got two five-pence pieces; that's ten pence altogether. I should think you

could buy a new nose with that."

Teddy No-Nose thanked him very much and set off with his money. But he only got as far as the stairs. With one coin in each paw, he had nothing to hold on with and was trying to go down the stairs just a bit too fast. He slipped, grabbed at the stair carpet, and dropped both the coins.



Helplessly, he watched as they bounced down the stairs and disappeared between the cracks in the floor boards.

"Oh no!" he cried, and sat down on the stairs with his head on his paws. "Now I'll never get a new nose."

"Why not?" said a voice very nearby.

Looking up, he saw Monkey standing beside him.

"Well, I was going to buy a nose," explained Teddy No-Nose, "and I earned ten pence by working very hard, but now I've dropped it, and that means all I've got in my money box is a button."

"Well, what's wrong with a button?" asked Monkey.

"There's nothing wrong with a button," said Teddy No-Nose, "but it won't buy me a new nose, will it?"

"No," said Monkey, "but what colour is it?"

"I can't remember," said Teddy No-Nose. "I'll have a look."

Fetching his money box, he undid the little cork at the bottom. Out dropped a shiny, round, black button.

"What does that button remind you of?" asked Monkey.

Teddy No-Nose stared at the button and then he stared at Monkey. And then he realised that Monkey's nose and eyes were all made from buttons.

"Of course," he said. "It looks like a nose."

"That's right," said Monkey. "You don't need to buy a nose because you've already got one; a button nose."

Teddy No-Nose was very excited and could hardly stand still long enough for Monkey to sew on his new button nose. It looked very smart – better than any shop-bought one.



The children still didn't take him out, though.

"It wasn't because of your nose," they explained, "you're just too big to fit in the basket."

But he didn't mind staying at home now, because he had a new friend; a friend with a button nose just like his.

And Monkey and Teddy No-Nose spend many hours sitting together, trying to think of a name for a teddy who used to have no nose, but who now has a button. They haven't thought of one, yet; I wonder whether they ever will.



Duncan Barker and the Tartan Rug



THE TOYS were all a bit worried when Duncan Barker came to live with them. The first thing he did was to chase Rabbit round and round the room.

"I always chased rabbits at my old home," he explained.

"I can't live here with that new dog," puffed Rabbit, out of breath from running. "I'll never have any peace."

"Don't worry, Rabbit," said Snowy, the old white bear.

"He tried to get me to wear a kilt, this morning, but I expect he'll settle down soon."



But Duncan Barker didn't settle down. The next day he upset the dolls'-house dolls by cooking porridge on their cooker and not washing up the saucepan.

"I always cook porridge for breakfast," he explained.

"We can't live with that new dog," said the dolls'-house dolls, "we'll never have any clean saucepans."

"It's all right, he's just getting used to things," said Snowy.

But things got worse. The following morning the toys were woken to a dreadful, squeaking, whining noise. It was Duncan Barker, of course. He'd tried to make bagpipes out of a hot-water bottle and it hadn't worked very well.

"I always play the bagpipes first thing in the morning," he explained.

"Oh no," groaned the other toys.



A few days after that, there was a big commotion at bedtime.

"Ow!" yelled Rabbit. "There's something prickly down my bed!"

"Ooh!" quacked Duck. "It's got me too."

"Duncan Barker," shouted Snowy, "what have you done this time?"

"Oh," said Duncan, "I think you've found my thistle collection. I love collecting thistles."



"Thistles!" chorused the other toys. "Why thistles?"

"Because thistles remind me of my real home," said Duncan Barker.

"And where is your real home?" asked Snowy.

"In Scotland, of course," replied Duncan Barker.

"Well, I wish you could go back there," said Rabbit, picking prickles out of his paws.

"So do I," said Duncan. And, miserably, he left the room to practise his bagpipes in the bathroom.

"Rabbit, that wasn't a very kind thing to say," said Old Bear. "If Duncan is missing his home, then we must make him feel at home here. If he were happier, then he probably wouldn't be so much trouble. Let's look for things that will make him feel more at home."

While Duncan Barker was out of the room, the toys rushed about getting things ready for his return. They found a lovely tartan rug in the blanket box and put it in a cosy corner of the playroom. Then they put Duncan's thistle collection with it and a special bowl for him to have his porridge in. Bramwell Brown, who was good at painting, painted a lovely picture of mountains and valleys and pinned it up near the tartan rug.

"There," he said, "I'm sure Duncan will like that."



And of course, he did.

"Oh, it's just like home," he barked, running round the tartan rug. "Everyone has tartan rugs in Scotland – and what a lovely porridge bowl. Can I make you all a nice bowl of porridge?"

"Thank you very much," said Snowy, "we'd like that."

And while Duncan made them all some porridge, Snowy talked to him about Scotland.

Duncan Barker felt quite at home after that. He went to Scotland sometimes for his holidays, but the rest of the time, he lived in the little Scottish corner of the playroom and was almost no trouble at all. He never quite mastered the hot-water bottle bagpipes, though, however hard he tried.





The Bedtime Pony

He doesn't do much in the daytime
And I can't take him outside,
Though he's a sort of pony
He's too small for me to ride.
His stuffing's rather lumpy
In his hooves and in his head,
But he's always waiting for me
When I snuggle up in bed.

He's not the sort of pony
Who can walk or pull a cart,
And no one dares to wash him
Just in case he falls apart.

His coat is rather faded
(All the pink bits should be red),
But he's always there beside me
When I'm sleeping in my bed.

Best Friends

My best friend doesn't look like me,
She's yellow and I'm not.
We counted paws and I have four,
Two feet is all she's got.
She does have wings; I don't need those,
I never have to fly.
She has a beak and mine's a nose
I'm not sure I know why.
So 'though we're very different,
All that matters in the end
Is she likes me and I like her;
My little Ducky friend!





The Jumble Sale





LITTLE BEAR burst into the playroom in a terrible hurry. He upset a jar of marbles and tripped over a jigsaw that had taken Rabbit all morning to do.

"Quick, everyone!" he called, rolling across the room on the marbles. "It's an emergency!"

"What is it, Little Bear?" asked Rabbit, crossly. "What has happened?"

Little Bear led Rabbit out into the garden and there, pinned to a tree, was the terrible sign. It said:

JUMBLE SALE ON SATURDAY AT
2 O'CLOCK – JUMBLE WANTED URGENTLY.

"Oh, no," groaned Rabbit, "not again. We'll all be sorted and sold. Quick, let's get back and warn the others. Old Bear's ear has nearly fallen off and Bramwell has a loose arm."

They rushed back to warn the other toys and, within five minutes, there was a queue forming at Sarah Elizabeth's cupboard.

Now Sarah Elizabeth was a very kind little bear; she was always mending the other toys and making new clothes for them. But today, she looked at the queue of toys waiting for repairs or new clothes, and she knew there were too many.

"It's no good," she said, "I can't possibly do all this sewing. There's only one answer."

"What's that?" asked Little Bear.

"I shall have to teach you all to sew," said Sarah Elizabeth. "Then you can do your own repairs and make new clothes."

So Sarah Elizabeth made her own little sign. It said:

SEWING LESSONS FOR EVERYONE – SMARTEN UP OR
YOU MAY BE SENT TO THE JUMBLE SALE.

By the time Sarah Elizabeth had had her lunch, all the toys were gathered, eagerly awaiting their sewing lesson.

“Oh do show us how to sew. We don’t want to be given to the jumble sale,” said Sylvester Bear. “My trousers are full of holes. I must have a new pair.”

Sarah Elizabeth emptied out a heap of materials from her rag bag and gave each toy a needle and some thread. All afternoon, she showed them how to make jackets and trousers, bow ties and ribbons. She showed them how to darn noses and mend ears, how to sew on eyes and patch threadbare paws. The toys all listened carefully and worked very hard. None of them wanted to go to the jumble sale.

“Well done,” said Sarah Elizabeth, when Bramwell mended Old Bear’s ear and Old Bear repaired Bramwell’s arm. The bears looked very pleased.

Sylvester needed trousers and had found some material that he decided would suit him. Sarah Elizabeth helped him to cut out the shapes he needed and then he sewed them together himself.





His trousers looked wonderful.
Then everyone wanted trousers.
Rabbit and his cousin Reggie made
themselves whole sets of clothes.

"Nobody will give us to a jumble
sale," said Rabbit, "we look like
new toys." It was true, they
all looked brand new. Their
ears were fixed on firmly,
their paws didn't have
any holes and their eyes
weren't hanging on by
a thread.

Sarah Elizabeth was very
pleased with everyone, especially

Rabbit, who looked extremely smart.

"You're all really clever," she said. "I don't think I shall need
to sew for you any more."

The next day, the day of the jumble sale, the whole
family came into the playroom to look for toys that could be
given away.



"I'm sure there are some that have noses or ears missing," said the childrens' mother. "Let's have a look."

They walked round the room and found a row of toys sitting there; smart, clean, well dressed and without a single wobbly nose or ear between them.

"It does seem strange," said the childrens' mother, "I never realised what good condition the toys were all in. I thought I'd find lots to give away to the jumble sale, but all I could find were these," and she held up a bag of marbles and a jigsaw puzzle. "Perhaps we'll find some broken toys for the next jumble sale," she said.

But now that all the toys could sew they never allowed themselves to get threadbare again. And as a very special thank you to Sarah Elizabeth, they all made her a beautiful new dress.

"We want you to have this," they said, "because you saved us from being given away."

And, just for fun, they played jumble sales themselves, using all the old threadbare clothes as jumble.

"We won't have toys at our jumble sale," they said.

"You can never be sure they are going to good homes. We wouldn't want to worry them, would we?"

The Circus



THERE had been a birthday party at the house where Old Bear and his friends lived. The big round table in the dining room had a big round cloth on it, and there, on top of the table was all the food that had not been eaten at the party.

"Just look at it all," said Little Bear, "we could have a feast if we could reach it."



Unfortunately, all the chairs had been taken to another room for a game of musical chairs. There wasn't one left to climb on to reach the food. Little Bear popped his head under the tablecloth to see whether there was a way up from the inside and squeaked with excitement.

"Look everyone!" he shouted, "it's like a circus tent in here – a 'big top'!"

The others popped their heads in too and soon all the toys had joined them. It really was like a huge, round tent.

"We could have a circus instead of a party," said Bruno the big brown bear.

"How do you have a circus?" asked Little Bear.

"Well, everyone goes into the big top, or under the table in our case, and some people watch and some people do tricks."

"And the people who watch have to clap and cheer," added Sailor.

"It's a lovely idea," said Rabbit. "I could do jumping."

"Jumping isn't a trick," said Little Bear.

"It is if you jump very high or over something," said Rabbit.

"Rabbit can jump over me if he likes," said Zebra, "that will be a trick."

Rabbit and Zebra practised their trick while the other toys discussed what they could do in the circus.

"I think I could juggle," said Little Bear, "almost."

"And I could walk a tightrope," said Sailor.

"That would be good," said Bruno, "but we need lots more acts. What can you do, Camel?"

"I don't know," said Camel. "If I ran round and round the big top, could someone balance on one of my humps?"

Everyone had a go at standing up on Camel's humps. But nobody could do it except Rabbit, and he could stand on one leg, waggle his ears, hop up and down and even jump up in the air while Camel trotted round the ring.

There was no doubt about it, Rabbit was going to be the star of the show. By the time he'd shown them how he could hang from things just by his feet, jump through a hoop, and juggle with three bean bags, the others all wanted to be the audience.

"We'll never be as good as Rabbit," they all said.

"It doesn't matter," said Bruno. "Circuses are just meant to be fun. We don't all have to be good at everything."

"Let's begin," said Old Bear. He lifted a corner of the tablecloth to make an entrance, and all the toys marched in under the table. It was very exciting.



"I've never been to a circus, before," said Duck.

"I don't think any of us have," said Bruno, taking his place as ringmaster in the middle of the ring.

The toys all sat around the edge and Rabbit and Zebra stepped forward to do the first trick. Everyone clapped and cheered as Rabbit ran across the ring and leaped over Zebra's back. He landed on Old Bear's lap, but the other toys thought that was part of the trick. He did it a few more times until Bruno stopped him, and then Sailor came into the ring.

Sailor tied a skipping rope between two table legs and the toys watched excitedly as he carefully walked along the rope.



He did fall off once, but he landed on one of the other toys, so he didn't hurt himself. Swinging himself back up again, he tried juggling this time while balancing.

"Well done!" called Old Bear. "That's wonderful."

It was Dog's turn next. He strolled into the ring balancing one of his rubber bones on his nose.

"I was going to balance two," he said, "but I couldn't remember where I buried the other one."

Everyone clapped hard as Dog bowed and left the ring.

And as he left, Camel came in with Rabbit perched on a hump. She began to run really fast. Rabbit bounced about, standing first on one leg and then the other.

"What shall I do next?" he called.

"Hop," shouted one of the toys.

Camel thought they shouted 'stop' and stopped so suddenly that Rabbit sailed through the air and hit the tablecloth. Grabbing wildly at it, he clung on and then, quite slowly, pulled the whole thing down.



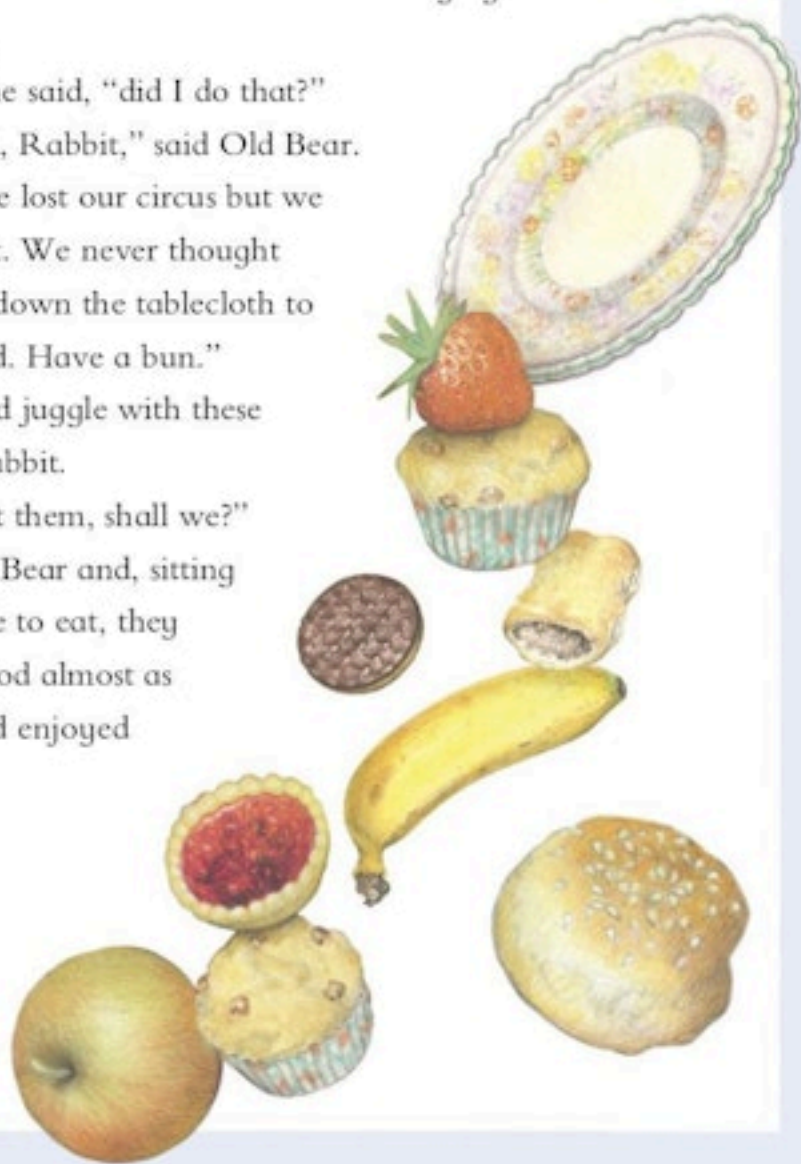
Plates of food landed all around the table, and, in a second, the circus tent had vanished. Rabbit, unhurt, wriggled out from under the cloth and looked at the food lying all around them.

"Oh dear," he said, "did I do that?"

"Never mind, Rabbit," said Old Bear. "We may have lost our circus but we found the feast. We never thought about pulling down the tablecloth to get all the food. Have a bun."

"Ooh, I could juggle with these buns," said Rabbit.

"Let's just eat them, shall we?" suggested Old Bear and, sitting under the table to eat, they enjoyed the food almost as much as they'd enjoyed the circus.



Mr Brown and the Baby Bear



MR AND MRS BROWN lived in a little cupboard in the playroom. They had furnished the cupboard home themselves with things that Mr Brown had found while out walking. He'd brought back acorns for them to use as cups, and soft feathers that he'd found near the duck pond to stuff cushions with. He'd made mirrors from silver paper and a broom from twigs that he'd collected. All their tables were made from little boxes.

In fact their cupboard was cluttered with the bits and pieces that he'd collected. Mrs Brown decided that it was full enough.

"If you go out today," she said to Mr Brown, "please don't bring anything back. Our house is just too full!"

Mr Brown hugged her as usual and set off out of the cupboard, across the room, down the stairs and out into the garden.

It was a lovely autumn day and a carpet of leaves covered the lawn. Mr Brown thought it was great fun crunching through the leaves.

He found some especially interesting ones which he thought of taking home but, remembering Mrs Brown's warning, he left them where they were.



"It's a pity," he said. "I'm sure I could have made something with them."

A little further down the garden he found a bright, shiny brown conker. "Oh, what a beauty!" he said to himself as he bent down to polish the gleaming nut with his paw. "The case it came out of must have been huge." And then he saw it; the biggest, most perfect conker case he'd ever seen. The inside was smooth and white and shaped like a round-bottomed bowl. The outside was hard and covered in prickles.

"I'm sure I could put something in it," said Mr Brown, but he remembered what Mrs Brown had said and left it where it was.

Mr Brown continued down the garden until he came to the fence at the end. He was just about to turn and go back up to the house when he saw a heap of leaves. They'd been raked up the day before and piled against the fence. Mr Brown gazed at the heap and sighed. He'd always wanted to jump right into the middle of a heap of dry, crunchy autumn leaves.

"Shall I?" he asked himself. "Just to see what it's like – to see whether it's soft or crunchy or bouncy. I must find out."

Then he counted, "One, two, three," and jumped. It was wonderful! The leaves were all crispy and they crackled softly as he sank gently down, into the springy heap.

And then, when he'd stopped sinking into the leaves, Mr Brown heard a sound. Someone very near him said, "Ow!"

Mr Brown looked all around. "Who's there?" he called. "I am," said a muffled little voice. "You're sitting on me."

Mr Brown jumped to his feet and, pushing his paw deep into the leaves, he pulled out the smallest teddy bear you've ever seen.

"Goodness!" said Mr Brown. "It's Toby Small. How did you get in there?"

"Somebody took me for a walk and dropped me," said Toby Small. "I've been here all night and I'm very cold and hungry."

"Well, Toby," said Mr Brown, "I will take you back to your house this afternoon, but first I think I'd better take you home so we can brush the leaves out of your fur and give you some lunch."

So Mr Brown picked up the little bear and carried him back to the house. On the way, he stopped to collect the big conker case that he'd found. He had an idea now how he could use it without making Mrs Brown cross.

Mrs Brown was waiting at the door of the cupboard when he arrived back.

"Now," she said to Mr Brown when she saw the conker case in his paws, "take that straight back to the garden. We don't need it."

"But we do," said Mr Brown, and he put down the conker case so that Mrs Brown could see inside it. There, lying fast asleep in the soft, smooth, white bed was Toby Small. He was tucked up with sheets made from the brightest autumn leaves and he was smiling happily.

"Oh," said Mrs Brown softly, "I see. You couldn't really leave him outside, could you?" And she carried the sleeping bear in his conker cot into the little cupboard house.

When Toby Small had had a sleep and a meal and his fur was brushed free of leaves, Mr and Mrs Brown took him back to his own home. And after that he came to stay with them for his holidays and they kept the conker case for him to sleep in.

Gradually the cupboard house became more and more cluttered with things that Mr Brown brought home from his walks, but Mrs Brown never complained.

"We must have something for Toby Small to play with when he comes to stay," she would say.

And Mr Brown just smiled.





Peter and the Pumpkin Bear



PETER BEAR sat in his usual place on the windowsill, looking out at the people walking by. Everyone knew Peter was there and every now and then someone would come close to the window and talk to him through the glass. Peter loved all the attention. He would stay there for most of the day and was never lonely for a minute.

Today was a special day. It was the last day in October; Halloween. Lots of people stopped to tell Peter about their exciting plans for parties that night. Before long, Peter saw the two children who lived with him, coming home from school.



They were each carrying a fat, bright, orange pumpkin. Peter thought these might be to eat, but the children had other ideas.

“Look, Peter!” they cried, rushing into the house. “We’re going to make faces with these and put candles inside.”

While Peter watched with excitement, they carefully cut off the top of one of the pumpkins, then they began to dig out the middle with a spoon. That looks fun, thought Peter. But when the children cut a face for their pumpkin he changed his mind. He could hardly bear to look – the horrible, cross monster face had staring eyes and gappy teeth in a wicked sort of grin.

The children were delighted, but Peter put his paws over his eyes. With the help of their parents, the children put a candle inside the pumpkin head and lit it. Straight away the pumpkin face shone with a fiery, yellow glow. It looked even more scary now and seemed to stare at Peter.

When the children put it on the windowsill it glared out at the people walking by and nobody dared to come near the window.

When everyone had left the room, Peter peeped out from behind his paws. “What can I do?” he said. “With that monster thing frightening everyone, nobody will come over to talk to me.”



He crept over to blow out the candle, but thought the children would be cross with him if he did that.

And then he saw the other unused pumpkin and an idea came to him. Using the spoon the children had used, he cut the top off the spare pumpkin and hollowed out the middle. Then he began to cut a face in his pumpkin, but this pumpkin had a happy, friendly face. In fact, it looked like a smiling teddy bear.

Peter carried the finished pumpkin to the windowsill and put it down carefully beside the monster face.



As he knew he shouldn't use a candle in case he burnt his paws, he fetched a torch to put inside his pumpkin bear.

Straight away it smiled out with a warm, orange glow and the people walking by were so surprised to see a friendly bear face that they came over to take a closer look. All Peter's friends arrived to talk to him about his pumpkin and they took no notice of the monster face at all.

In fact, so many people liked Peter's idea that they all made pumpkin bears too. And it turned out to be the most unfrightening Halloween anyone had ever known.

The Christmas Fancy-Dress Party



THE Christmas holiday seemed to be a time for the new toys. All the old ones found themselves sitting upstairs with nobody to play with.

"It's not very exciting, is it?" said Mo, the mohair bear, as he paced up and down the playroom.

"Well, we could do something exciting," said Old Bear.

"Let's have a fancy-dress competition, a Christmas one."

"That's a good idea," said Rosie and Fluff, two very small bears.

"We know what we could dress up as." Whispering and laughing, they rushed off into a corner to plan their costumes. Soon all the toys were busy finding, making, or trying on their fancy-dress costumes. They were all very excited.



"I'm going to dress up as a king," said Mo. "I can just imagine myself in a beautiful crown."

"Where will you get a crown?" asked Little Bear.

"I shall pull a cracker," said Mo. "They always have paper crowns inside."

Old Bear and Little Bear settled themselves down in a chair to judge the competition. Rosie and Fluff had left the room to fetch something.

"They said they wouldn't be long," said Old Bear.

"When they come back we'll start the judging." Looking round the room, he didn't recognise any of his friends any more, they were all in disguise. "They do look good costumes," he said. "It's going to be very hard to judge the best."

Everyone was eager to get started and still Rosie and Fluff weren't back.

"I think we'd better begin without them," said Little Bear.

"They might be ages."

Bramwell Brown was the first to be judged. He had rolled himself up in a piece of pretty paper tied round with ribbons.

"What are you meant to be?" asked Old Bear.

"Bang!" said Bramwell Brown.

"I think it's an exploding sausage," said Little Bear.
"BANG!" said Bramwell Brown even louder.
"I know," said Mo, "it's a Christmas cracker."
"Oh, well done!" said Old Bear. "I can see it is now.
What a clever idea!"

King Mo was next. He marched in front of the judges with his cracker crown on and a king's robe made from a piece of red crepe paper. He looked very smart indeed and everyone cheered.

The next thing to shuffle in front of the judges seemed to be a walking paper chain. It moved along like a brightly coloured, rustling snake.

"It seems to be a paper chain that can walk," said Little Bear, "but I can't see who's under it."

"It's us, it's us!" cried the little yellow bears, Marigold and Buttercup. "We knew you'd never see us." The paper chain suddenly tripped over its paws and ended up a heap of bears and paper. Marigold and Buttercup grinned at the judges from under the heap. "We're a paper chain that's fallen down now," said Marigold, "they do you know, sometimes."





"Of course they do," said Old Bear, kindly.
While everyone was busy clapping the fallen paper chain,
in jumped Rabbit. He was
covered in white cotton wool
and had a carrot over his nose.
"Oh look," cried Little Bear,
"a white rabbit."



"I'm not a white rabbit,"
said Rabbit, crossly,
"that wouldn't
be Christmassy.
I'm a snowman."
"Well, a snow *rabbit*
then," said Little Bear.
"You've left your ears
sticking out. Snowmen
don't have long ears."
"It looks like this one
does," said Old Bear
kindly.

While the toys were admiring the snow rabbit, the door opened and something prickly came in.

"What is it?" said King Mo. "It looks like a holly bush." But when they looked closer, the toys could see that inside the bush were two pairs of eyes.

"It's Rosie and Fluff!" said Old Bear. "But what are you supposed to be?"

"We're holly bears," said Rosie, proudly.

"What are holly bears?" asked Rabbit, not sure whether he should know.

"Well," said Fluff. "There's a Christmas song called *The Holly and the Ivy* and it's got a bit in it all about holly bears. I don't know what they look like, but they must be something like this." And with that, the whole holly-covered pair of bears did a little twirl to show off its disguise.

"Well, if holly bears look like a bush, then you've done very well," said Old Bear.

When everyone had clapped the holly bears, Old Bear and Little Bear discussed the winners.

"We really think," said Old Bear, "that you've all done so well, you should all win something, but what can the prize be?"



"A crown!" shouted Rosie. "In the Holly Bears' song it says, 'the holly bears the crown'."

"Oh, I remember," said King Mo, "and I know how we can all have a prize *and* a crown."

"How?" asked the others.

"Crackers," said Mo.

On the table in the room had been a whole box of crackers. Mo had only used one to get the crown for his king costume. It had been a box of ten crackers and there were nine left. And so they all won prizes for their costumes and they all felt very jolly in their paper party hats. There were even enough crackers for the judges to have one too.



The Warm Snowman



THERE had not been a single flake of snow all winter. Almost every morning the toys had crowded on to the windowsill hoping to look out at a snow-covered garden. Some of the newer toys had never seen snow and they were just beginning to wonder whether, perhaps, it didn't really exist.

And then one morning there it was; a thick blanket of snow over everything. They woke up and wondered why it was so quiet. There were no footsteps on the path or wheels on the road; even the birds were too busy keeping warm to sing.

The toys were so excited they almost fell off the windowsill.

"We'll build a snowman," they shouted, and all rushed to the door and tumbled into the garden in a heap.

It was then that they realised just how deep the snow was. Only the tallest teddy bears with the longest legs could actually walk about. Most of the others had disappeared completely.

"Oh dear," said the muffled voice of Polly, a very small bear, "I can't move at all. The snow is so deep it comes all the way up to my ears."

The others helped to pull her out and then Freddie the teddy fetched a tea tray from the kitchen.

All the smaller toys clambered on to the tray and were towed across the snow-covered lawn by the toys with the longest legs. They looked round the garden until they found a place that was just right for a snowman and then they set to work.

Freddie and the other big bears made a snowball and began to roll it across the garden. As it rolled it picked up more and more snow, leaving a trail behind it of bare grass, just like a wiggly, green path. The small bears were very pleased to see this and, leaving their tea-tray sledge, they ran along the green path and helped the big bears push the heavy snowball.

After a while the snowball was big enough to be the body of a snowman.

"We need a head now," said Polly, and began to pat a snowball into shape with her paws. They rolled this one right round the lawn making a big O-shaped path and arrived back at the snowman's body with a snowball big enough to be his head.

"How are we going to get it up on top of the body?" asked Freddie. "Even I can't reach."

But Polly had a plan.

"We've got the tea tray," she said. "We'll roll the snowball head on to the tray and pull it up with a rope. It shouldn't be too difficult."

They all rolled the snowman's head on to the tray and threaded a skipping rope through the handles. Then the strongest bears climbed up to the top of the snowman's body with the ends of the rope and pulled. Slowly the tea tray, with the snowball head on it, rose into the air until it was level with the bears.

"It's up! We've done it," shouted Freddie, and he rolled the head neatly into place. The toys down below cheered and jumped up and down with excitement.

"He needs a face," called one little bear. The tea tray was lowered down and some of the toys went off to fetch coal for the snowman's eyes, a carrot for his nose and twigs for his mouth and eyebrows.



Very soon the snowman was smiling down at them with his twiggy mouth and his shining, coal-black eyes. Before Freddie climbed down he took off his own stripy scarf and tied it round the neck of the snowman.

"He looks lovely," said Polly. "We'll keep him forever and ever and come and play with him every day."

They spent the whole afternoon in the garden, throwing snowballs, making slopes out of snow and sliding down them on the tray. When it began to get dark they said goodnight to the snowman and went indoors to bed.

The next morning the sun was shining brightly and the toys couldn't wait to get outside. But when they opened the door they all stopped and stared.

"Somebody's stolen our snowman," cried Freddie. It seemed to be true: the lovely snowman had vanished.

Then Polly noticed something lying on the ground.

"But they left behind the carrot nose," she said.

"And the coal eyes," added Freddie. "And my scarf."

Then they realised what had happened to their snowman. He hadn't been stolen; he'd melted. What's more, the snow had almost gone too. There definitely wasn't enough to build another snowman.

Feeling very sad, the toys began to play with the last of the snow. But in the warmth of the sun even that was melting fast.

Polly had an idea and went indoors again. The others could see her sitting by the window, knitting. She looked up and waved every now and again, but she seemed very busy.

By the end of the day the grass was as green as it was in summer. The only snow left was in the shady bit under the tree. The toys gave up trying to make things with the snow and trooped indoors.

"It's nearly spring now," said Freddie to Polly, when he found her sitting by the fire. "I don't think it will snow again this winter, so we won't be able to make another snowman for a whole year."



"No," said Polly, "but I have a surprise for you, Freddie," and she pointed to a corner of the room. In soft white wool, with black eyes and a carrot-shaped nose, stood a little knitted snowman. He was smiling at Freddie and was wearing a knitted hat and scarf just like Freddie's own.

"He's a warm snowman, Freddie. I knitted him myself. This one will never melt!"

"We can play with him all year," said Freddie. "Oh Polly, you are clever!" And holding one white arm each they led the little, warm snowman out of the room to show all the other toys.

Of course, he never melted. In fact, he's still there to this day.



Spotty Ben

Ben saw his own reflection
In the mirror on the wall.
"I seem to be all spotty;
I can't be well at all."
"It's all right," laughed the other toys,
"None of your spots are new.
You've always had a spotty coat,
That's how we know it's you."





The Three Bears





IT WAS a warm summer's day and the toys were sitting under a tree in the garden. They were watching Bramwell Brown and Jolly Tall trying to make an old curtain into a hammock and were waiting for Old Bear to tell them a story.

"Now this is a story about Goldilocks and the three bears," began Old Bear.

"Who's Goldilocks?" asked Little Bear.

"She's a little girl," said Old Bear, sighing. Little Bear already knew who Goldilocks was because he'd heard the story so many times before.

"The three bears lived in a cottage in the middle of a wood," Old Bear continued.

"I like this story," interrupted Little Bear. "Especially the bit about the porridge."

"We'll never get to that bit, if you don't listen," laughed Old Bear. "Now, one day, Goldilocks was walking in the wood when she came to a little house. . ."

"Can I have some porridge?" asked Little Bear.

"You don't need porridge on a hot, sunny day," said Duck. "Porridge is to warm you up."

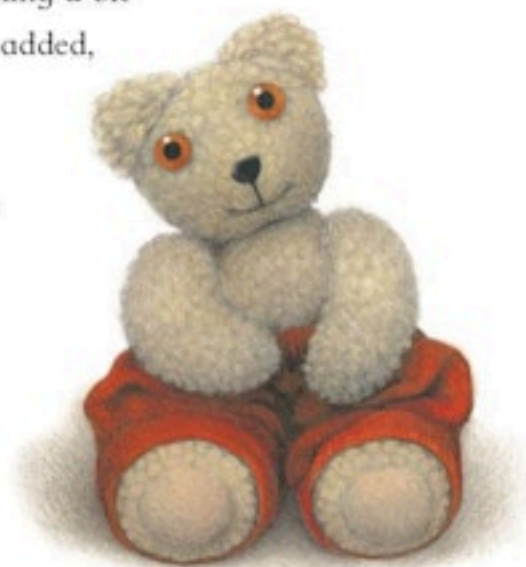
Little Bear shivered. "I am feeling a bit chilly," he said. "Just here," he added, rubbing his tummy.

Bramwell Brown smiled.

"Perhaps we could have some porridge for lunch."

"Can I help?" asked Little Bear.

"No, you stay here and listen to the rest of the story," said Bramwell. "I won't be long."



The toys settled down again as Old Bear told them about Goldilocks arriving at the house of the three bears. They had just reached the end of the story when Bramwell returned. He was carrying a tray laden with a steaming dish of porridge and a pile of bowls and spoons.

"Come and have some porridge!" he called to Jolly who was struggling with the hammock.

"I want to get this up first," replied Jolly. "I've only fixed one side to the tree."

"It looks just like a theatre curtain hanging like that," said Bramwell.

"So it does," said Old Bear, looking thoughtful. "Perhaps we could put on a play."

"What's a play?" asked Little Bear.

"A sort of moving story," said Old Bear. "Some people pretend to do things that are in a story and the others watch them."

"Ooh!" said Little Bear. "That sounds fun. Can I be in the play?"

"Only if it's about someone very small," muttered Duck.

"Why don't we do the story Old Bear has just been telling us?" said Rabbit. "That has a baby bear in it."



"And the bears all eat porridge," said Little Bear.

"Actually they don't," said Duck. "They go out to leave it to cool down. They only eat a little bit. . . and the baby bear doesn't get any at all."

"I'm not being a bear who has no food!" said Little Bear.

"Well, you could have some before we start the play," said Bramwell, spooning some porridge into a bowl and passing it to Little Bear.

While Little Bear ate his porridge, the others went off to the shed to look for the things they would need for the play. Bramwell found two very big boxes to use for the three bears' house, and there were some middle-sized ones for making the beds and a table, and small ones for making chairs.

"We'll cut a hole in this box for the front door," said Old Bear.

"And a hole here, for the bedroom door," added Rabbit.

Zebra and Duck collected odds and ends that might be useful in the play and piled them into the boxes while Ruff bounced back from the house with scissors and string. When they were ready they dragged the pile of boxes back across the garden to where the curtain hung between the trees.



"We'll make the furniture now," said Old Bear. "If we cut the sides off these shoe boxes, they'll make lovely little beds."

"Who are going to be the mummy and daddy bears?" asked Little Bear.

"I'll be Daddy Bear," said Old Bear, trying out one of the shoe-box beds. "And perhaps Bramwell would like to be Mummy Bear! He could wear a long apron."

Bramwell found a piece of flowery material. He cut a hole for his head and two strips to tie the apron round his middle.

"Lovely," said Old Bear. "Now, how can we make Little Bear look like a baby?"

"Well, as he's got porridge down his front already," said Bramwell, "perhaps a bib would be a good idea."

"I don't need a bib," protested Little Bear.

"It's just for the play," said Old Bear.

"You can take it off at the end."

Bramwell made Little Bear a tiny white bib and tied it round his neck.

"There!" he said.

"Now that you have a costume you look like a real actor."

"We're nearly ready to start," said Jolly.

"But we haven't got a Goldilocks yet!" said Duck. "She has to eat the porridge and break a chair."

"I'll be Goldilocks," said Little Bear.



"You can't be Goldilocks *and* Baby Bear," said Rabbit.

"I'll be Goldilocks. I haven't had any porridge yet."

"Goldilocks has long, golden hair," said Duck. "Yours is a bit too short."

"Well, I'll make some then," said Rabbit, rummaging about in the odds-and-ends box. He pulled out a yellow curtain fringe and draped it over his head. "How's that?" he said.

"Perfect," said Old Bear.

"Now all we need is an audience. Ruff, would you go and tell everyone we're ready to begin?"

Ruff bounced off and soon returned with all the toys. Once they had settled themselves on the blanket, Jolly grabbed the edge of the curtain and galloped across to pull it back. And there, behind the curtain, were the three bears sitting at the table ready to eat their porridge.



"This porridge is getting cold," said Little Bear, tasting his first spoonful.

"Sshh!" said Bramwell. "Pretend it's too hot. We're supposed to leave it to cool down."

Little Bear blew hard on his bowl. "This porridge is burning hot," he said. "Let's go for a walk while it gets colder."

The three bears went out for a walk and almost immediately there was a rat-a-tat-tat on the front door. In fact, it was such a hard rat-a-tat-tat that the door swung open and left Rabbit standing in the doorway wearing his curtain-fringe hair.

"Is there anybody there?" he called in his Goldilocks voice. But as the door was open, he could see there was nobody in so he bounded into the room, tripped over Daddy Bear's chair, and landed head-first in the biggest bowl of porridge.

"Help!" he cried, scraping the contents of the bowl off his fur. "This porridge is too sticky."

He jumped on to the medium-sized chair, to try Mummy Bear's bowl. "And this porridge is too lumpy," he said, as he dangled his curtain fringe in it by mistake.

Finally, he took a flying leap onto Little Bear's tiny chair and squashed it completely flat.

"Whoops!" he said. "Now I'll have to stand up to eat the rest of the porridge."

After Rabbit had eaten up every bit of Little Bear's porridge, he yawned. "I think I'm ready for bed now," he said, pushing open the door between the kitchen box and bedroom box.

As soon as he'd gone through the door, the three bears came back.

"Who's been tripping over my chair and spilling my porridge?" said Old Bear.

"And who's been sitting on my chair and dropping things in my porridge?" said Bramwell, pulling a long piece of curtain fringe out of his bowl.



"And who has completely squashed my chair and eaten my porridge all up?" cried Little Bear.

"Never mind about the porridge," said Old Bear. "It's time we went for a sleep."

"But we haven't even had our breakfast yet!" said Little Bear.

It was Old Bear who reached his bed first.

"Who's been getting porridge all over my bed?" he said.

"And who's been muddling up my bed?" said Bramwell.

"And who's bouncing up and down on my bed?" cried Little Bear.

"Why don't you lie down, Rabbit? You're meant to be Goldilocks asleep."

"But all that porridge has made me really bouncy," protested Rabbit. "I don't feel tired now."



"Well, now you're supposed to be frightened of the three bears and run away," said Old Bear.

"Oh, I can do that," said Rabbit. He waved his arms about and tried to look frightened. Then with an extra big bounce, he jumped straight through the open window.

The audience clapped and cheered.

"Wonderful," called Ruff, as the three bears came to the front of the box to bow. Rabbit came back through the door to join them, and when they'd finished bowing, Jolly marched across with the curtain.

"That was very good," said Jolly, popping his head round the curtain. "Do you think I could have my porridge now?"

Bramwell looked in the saucepan. "I'd better go and make some more," he said. "Little Bear has eaten most of this."

"Well, I don't feel hungry any more," said Little Bear, yawning. "All that acting has made me quite tired."

He climbed into Baby Bear's shoe-box bed and snuggled down. "Can we have another story?" he asked Old Bear sleepily.

“Well, just a quick one,” said Old Bear as he sat down on the grass. “Once upon a time. . .” he began, but when he looked down, the baby bear was already fast asleep.







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