

The Small Brown Bear

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There once was a little girl who lived in a cottage all alone with no one to look after her. She did all the work around the house and in the garden by herself. When she wasn't hard at work, she amused herself by sewing and stuffing cloth animals. One day, she was adding the finishing stitches on a small brown bear she had named Fuzzy, when a golden bird fluttered into the cottage and brushed the bear with its wing. Immediately little golden threads began to grow all over his body. Because of this special quality, Fuzzy immediately became the girl's favorite. She took him with her everywhere that day, even into bed at night. Once she fell asleep, Fuzzy came to life. None of the girl's other creatures did, though, because golden bird's wing hadn't touched them. From sunset to sunrise Fuzzy could move around where he pleased, but when the sun shone through the windows, he turned back into cloth. He acted as the girl's guardian during the dark and silent hours of night by looking after the cottage, singing to her so that she would have pleasant dreams, and doing whatever else that would make her comfortable and safe. He thought she had never seen him awake, but once just before she closed her eyes, she had seen Fuzzy tucking her blankets around her.

As the girl grew older, she lost interest in Fuzzy and would never take him around with her any more. She rationalized this by reasoning to herself that he never could have come alive and there was nothing special about him anyway. Since she would leave him at the end of her bed day after day in the same position, he would wake up every night so extremely sore and stiff that he could barely move. Even when he was neglected so, he still performed his duties at night, taking no thanks for all his pains.

Eventually, he woke up one night packed away in a corner of the cellar. He was no longer even wanted at the foot of the bed. Instead of leaving the girl to the horrors of the dark as she deserved with no one to look after her, he still did what he had been doing for years, and would crawl out of the cellar, scuttle across the cottage's dirt floor, and hop up to where she was sleeping. Before the sunlight would flood the cottage, though, he would scurry back to his place in the corner of the cellar.

Things had been going on like this for a while, when Fuzzy began to sense a change coming over the cottage. It seems that the girl was preparing to vacate it and was getting rid of many of her things. She was not only throwing away useless junk that had accumulated over the years, but was giving away some of the cloth animals that she had made long ago, like himself, to strange children he had never seen. He feared that his turn might come soon.

Sure enough, the next night, he became conscious of the fact that he was tied up in a bag with other animals that were left. Although he could see through the holes of the weave, none were large enough for him to slip through. For the first time since Fuzzy was sewn together, he could not complete his evening routine. He settled down in his prison for a dreary night.

Meanwhile, the girl tossed and turned in bed. She couldn't fall asleep, and when she did, she had the most frightful nightmares. She would wake up every few minutes shivering because her blankets had slipped onto the floor. Something was dreadfully wrong, but she couldn't put her finger on it. It was the longest night of her life and she gave a sigh of relief when the sun finally shone through the curtains. Today she was to give away those old animals she had sown and finally start on her journey.

Suddenly, a little golden bird flew in through the open windows, alighting on a bag by the door, and brushed his body against a lump of cloth within. He chirped the simple words, "Save him, he has always looked out for you" before disappearing into the sky. The girl was quite confused until the furry brown lump started to move, concealed just inside the bag. The golden bird had given Fuzzy life during the daytime, and he was struggling to make a hole in the sack. When the girl saw that Fuzzy had come to life, she quickly lifted him out of the bag and placed him beside her. They then set out on their journey together as traveling companions. And from that point on, there was not one moment when Fuzzy was neglected, forgotten or not given the thanks he deserved.