

The Story of the Three Bears

(adapted from Joseph Jacobs's *English Fairy Tales*)

Once upon a time there were Three Bears, who lived together in a house of their own, in a wood. One of them was a Little Small Wee Bear, and one was a Middle-sized Bear, and the other was a Great Huge Bear. They had each a pot for their porridge,--a little pot for the Little Small Wee Bear, and a middle-sized pot for the Middle-sized Bear, and a great pot for the Great Huge Bear. And they had each a chair to sit in,--a little chair for the Little Small Wee Bear, and a middle-sized chair for the Middle-sized Bear, and a great chair for the Great Huge Bear. And they had each a bed to sleep in,--a little bed for the Little Small Wee Bear, and a middle-sized bed for the Middle-sized Bear, and a great bed for the Great Huge Bear.

One day, after they had made the porridge for their breakfast, and poured it into their porridge-pots, they walked out into the wood while the porridge was cooling, that they might not burn their mouths, by beginning too soon to eat it. And while they were walking, a little girl named Goldilocks came to the house. She had never seen the little house before, and it was such a strange little house that she forgot all the things her mother had told her about being polite: first she looked in at the window, and then she peeped in at the keyhole; and seeing nobody in the house, she lifted the latch. The door was not fastened, because the Bears were good Bears, who did nobody any harm, and never suspected that anybody would harm them. So Goldilocks opened the door, and went in; and well pleased she was when she saw the porridge on the table. If Goldilocks had remembered what her mother had told her, she would have waited till the Bears came home, and then, perhaps, they would have asked her to breakfast; for they were good Bears--a little rough, as the manner of Bears is, but for all that very good-natured and hospitable. But Goldilocks forgot, and set about helping herself.

So first she tasted the porridge of the Great Huge Bear, and that was too hot. And then she tasted the porridge of the Middle-sized Bear, and that was too cold. And then she went to the porridge of the Little Small Wee Bear, and tasted that: and that was neither too hot nor too cold, but just right; and she liked it so well, that she ate it all up.

Then Goldilocks sat down in the chair of the Great Huge Bear, and that was too hard for her. And then she sat down in the chair of the Middle-sized Bear, and that was too soft for her. And then she sat down in the chair of the Little Small Wee Bear, and that was neither too hard nor too soft, but just right. So she seated herself in it, and there she sat till the bottom of the chair came out, and down she came, plump upon the ground.

Then Goldilocks went upstairs into the bed- chamber in which the Three Bears slept. And first she lay down upon the bed of the Great Huge Bear; but that was too high at the head for her. And next she lay down upon the bed of the Middle-sized Bear, and that was too high at the foot for her. And then she lay down upon the bed of the Little Small Wee Bear; and that was neither too high at the head nor at the foot, but just right. So she covered herself up comfortably, and lay there till she fell fast asleep.

By this time the Three Bears thought their porridge would be cool enough; so they came home to breakfast. Now Goldilocks had left the spoon of the Great Huge Bear standing in his porridge.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN AT MY PORRIDGE!" said the Great Huge Bear, in his great, rough, gruff voice. And when the Middle-sized Bear looked at his, he saw that the spoon was standing in it too.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN AT MY PORRIDGE!" said the Middle-sized Bear, in his middle-sized voice.

Then the Little Small Wee Bear looked at his, and there was the spoon in the porridge- pot, but the porridge was all gone.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN AT MY PORRIDGE, AND HAS EATEN IT ALL UP!" said the Little Small Wee Bear, in his little, small, wee voice.

Upon this, the Three Bears, seeing that someone had entered their house, and eaten up the Little Small Wee Bear's breakfast, began to look about them. Now Goldilocks had not put the hard cushion straight when she rose from the chair of the Great Huge Bear.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR!" said the Great Huge Bear, in his great, rough, gruff voice.

And Goldilocks had crushed down the soft cushion of the Middle-sized Bear.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR!" said the Middle-sized Bear, in his middle-sized voice.

And you know what Goldilocks had done to the third chair.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN SITTING IN MY CHAIR AND HAS SAT THE BOTTOM OUT OF IT!" said the Little Small Wee Bear, in his little, small, wee voice.

Then the Three Bears thought it necessary that they should make further search; so they went upstairs into their bed-chamber. Now Goldilocks had pulled the pillow of the Great Huge Bear out of its place.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN LYING IN MY BED!" said the Great Huge Bear, in his great, rough, gruff voice.

And Goldilocks had pulled the bolster of the Middle-sized Bear out of its place.

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN LYING IN MY BED!" said the Middle-sized Bear, in his middle-sized voice.

And when the Little Small Wee Bear came to look at his bed, there was the bolster in its place; and the pillow in its place upon the bolster; and upon the pillow was the shining, yellow hair of little Goldilocks!

"SOMEBODY HAS BEEN LYING IN MY BED,--AND HERE SHE IS!" said the Little Small Wee Bear, in his little, small, wee voice.

Goldilocks had heard in her sleep the great, rough, gruff voice of the Great Huge Bear; but she was so fast asleep that it was no more to her than the roaring of wind or the rumbling of thunder. And she had heard the middle-sized voice of the Middle-sized Bear, but it was only as if she had heard someone speaking in a dream. But when she heard the little, small, wee voice of the Little Small Wee Bear, it was so sharp, and so shrill, that it awakened her at once. Up she started, and when she saw the Three Bears on one side of the bed, she tumbled herself out at the other, and ran to the window. Now the window was open, because the Bears, like good, tidy Bears as they were, always opened their bed-chamber window when they got up in the morning.

Out little Goldilocks jumped, and ran away home to her mother, as fast as ever she could.