

The Tiny Teddy

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

If you go into the woods – deep, deep into the woods, where the flowers turn purple in the shade and the green moss climbs up the knotty trunks of the ancient trees – you will find them. Surrounded by protective pink butterflies and watchful fairies with iridescent wings is the teddy bear village. This is where they live, grow, and learn how to become a child’s best friend.

There was a celebration every year when the young bears were finally ready to go to their new homes: to be squeezed, and hugged, and told childhood secrets by whispering children under the blankets. They held a big picnic, and all the teddy bears came out to eat and dance and wave goodbye to the departing bears. This year, it was Toby’s turn to leave.

But there was one problem.

Toby was too tiny.

He always ate his dinner. He liked fruits, vegetables and marshmallows. But he didn’t grow.

He was old enough. He knew the teddy bear songs and the clapping games. He could name all the colors and recite the alphabet. But Toby never seemed to get any bigger.

His parents were puzzled. The wise ones were stumped. They had tried all the magic spells they knew, but none of them made Toby any larger. He was just too small to leave the village.

Toby watched as all his friends packed up their backpacks and began to go. They hugged him as they marched past, excited for the adventures ahead of them. If teddy bears could cry, Toby would have. Instead, he walked back home and didn’t talk to anyone.

For weeks, Toby was quiet. His parents couldn’t get him to play “I Spy” or “Simon Says.” He didn’t want to count to ten, and he didn’t want to sing any lullabies. What was the point?

One Saturday morning, a bluebird came flying into the teddy bear village, wings flapping at full speed. It carried a note in its beak from one of Toby’s old friends. The little bear opened the note and read it. A smile spread over his fuzzy face. “Mom! Dad!” he shouted. “Good news!”

His parents tumbled into the room, eager to listen. Toby hadn’t been happy since the picnic. What could it be?

“It’s a letter from Bailey Bear! He says there is a family with a child next door. But not an ordinary child; this one is special. She is very small. She is two years old, but she is not growing fast like the other children. She might stay little forever. Bailey says that a grown teddy bear would be too big for her to carry. She needs a tiny teddy bear.” Toby looked at his mother and father. His black button

eyes were shining with joy. "She needs me."

His parents hugged him tightly. "Of course she needs you. You must go first thing tomorrow." They helped Toby pack his things in his small suitcase. Together they enjoyed a family dinner. At bedtime, they tucked him under the covers and sang him a lullaby until he fell asleep.

In the morning, they kissed him on the forehead. They told him how much they loved him. Blowing their noses into lacy handkerchiefs, they smiled and waved and sent him on his way. He was off to meet his new best friend.

Questions

1. Where is the teddy bears' village? Describe or draw a picture based on the description.
2. What was the problem that stopped Toby from leaving like his friends?
3. How did being left behind make Toby feel? How do you know?
4. Why was Toby a perfect match for the little girl?