**THE THREE BEARS**

**LITTLE** Goldilocks was a pretty girl who lived once upon a time in a far-off country.

One day she was sitting on the hearthrug playing with her two kittens, and you would have thought she was as happy as a queen, and quite contented to stay where she was instead of wanting to run about the world meddling with other people's property. But it happened that she was rather a mischievous little maid, and could not resist teasing her pets, so one of them scratched her, and then she would play with them no longer.

She got up and trotted away into the wood behind her mother's house, and it was such a warm, pleasant day that she wandered on and on until she came into a part of the wood where she had never been before.

Now, in this wood there lived a family of three Bears. The first was a **GREAT BIG BEAR**, the second was a **MIDDLING-SIZED BEAR**, and the third was a **little teeny tiny bear**, and they all lived together in a funny little house, and very happy they were.

Goldilocks stopped when she came to the Bears' house, and began to wonder who lived there.

"I'll just look in and see," she said, and so she did; but there was no one there, for the Bears had all gone out for a morning walk, whilst the soup they were going to have for dinner cooled upon the table.

Goldilocks was rather hungry after her walk, and the soup smelt so good that she began to wish the people of the house would come home and invite her to have some. But although she looked everywhere, under the table and into the cupboards, she could find no one, and at last she could resist no longer, but made up her mind to take just a little sip to see how the soup tasted. The soup had been put into three bowls—a Great Big Bowl for the Great Big Bear, a Middling-sized Bowl for the Middling-sized Bear, and a Teeny Tiny Bowl for the Teeny Tiny Bear; beside each bowl lay a spoon, and Goldilocks took one and helped herself to a spoonful of soup from the Great Big Bowl.

Ugh! how it burnt her mouth; it was so hot with pepper that she did not like it at all; still, she was very hungry, so she thought she would try again.

This time she took a sip of the Middling-sized Bear's soup, but she liked that no better, for it was too salt. But when she tasted the Teeny Tiny Bear's soup it was just as she liked it; so she ate it up every drop, without thinking twice about it.

When she had finished her dinner she noticed three chairs standing by the wall. One was a Great Big Chair, and she climbed upon that and sat down. Oh, dear! how hard it was! She was sure she could not sit there for long, so she climbed up on the next, which was only a Middling-sized Chair, but that was too soft for her taste; so she went on to the last, which was a Teeny Tiny Chair and suited her exactly.

It was so comfortable that she sat on and on until, if you'll believe it, she actually sat the bottom out. Then, of course, she was comfortable no longer, so she got up and began to wonder what she should do next.

There was a staircase in the Bears' house, and Goldilocks thought she would go up it and see where it led to. So up she went, and when she reached the top she laughed outright, for the Bears' bedroom was the funniest she had ever seen. In the middle of the room stood a Great Big Bed, on one side of it there was a Middling-sized Bed, and on the other side there was a Teeny Tiny Bed.

Goldilocks was sleepy, so she thought she would lie down and have a little nap. First she got upon the Great Big Bed, but it was just as hard as the Great Big Chair had been; so she jumped off and tried the Middling-sized Bed, but it was so soft that she sank right down into the feather cushions and was nearly smothered.

"I will try the Teeny Tiny Bed," she said, and so she did, and it was so comfortable that she soon fell fast asleep.

Whilst she lay there, dreaming of all sorts of pleasant things, the three Bears came home from their walk very hungry and quite ready for their dinners.

But, oh! dear me! how cross the Great Big Bear looked when he saw his spoon had been used and thrown under the table.

"**WHO HAS BEEN TASTING MY SOUP?**" he cried, in a Great Big Voice.

**"AND WHO HAS BEEN TASTING MINE?"** cried the Middling-sized Bear, in a Middling-sized Voice.

**"but who has been tasting mine and tasted it all up?"** cried the poor little Teeny Tiny Bear in a Teeny Tiny Voice, with the tears running down his Teeny Tiny Face.

When the Great Big Bear went to sit down in his Great Big Chair, he cried out in his Great Big Voice:

**"WHO HAS BEEN SITTING ON MY CHAIR?"**

And the Middling-sized Bear cried, in a Middling-sized Voice:

**"WHO HAS BEEN SITTING ON MY CHAIR?"**

But the Teeny Tiny Bear cried out in a Teeny Tiny Voice of anger:

**"who has been sitting on my chair, and sat the bottom out?"**

By this time the Bears were sure that someone had been in their house quite lately; so they looked about to see if someone were not there still.

There was certainly no one downstairs, so they went up the staircase to their bedroom.

As soon as the Great Big Bear looked at his bed, he cried out, in his Great Big Voice:

**"WHO HAS BEEN LYING ON MY BED?"**

And the Middling-sized Bear, seeing that the coverlet was all rumpled, cried out, in a Middling-sized Voice:

**"WHO HAS BEEN LYING ON MY BED?"**

But the Teeny Tiny Bear cried out, in a Teeny Tiny Voice of astonishment:

**"who has been lying on my bed and lies there still?"**

Now, when the Great Big Bear began to speak, Goldilocks dreamt that there was a bee buzzing in the room, and when the Middling-sized Bear began to speak, she dreamt that it was flying out of the window; but when the Teeny Tiny Bear began to speak, she dreamt that the bee had come back and stung her on the ear, and up she jumped. Oh! how frightened she was when she saw the three Bears standing beside her.

She hopped out of bed and in a second was out through the open window. Never stopping to wonder if the fall had hurt her, she got up and ran and ran and ran until she could go no farther, always thinking that the Bears were close behind her. And when at length she fell down in a heap on the ground, because she was too tired to run any more, it was her own mother who picked her up, because in her fright she had run straight home without knowing it.