

**Little Bear Goes Home:
A Love Story
2010 CPMA Short Story for Children – 2nd prize**

Synopsis:

Aling Lena is a worker in a dirty and noisy toy factory. One day, one of the teddy bears she is making begins to talk to her. The little bear and *Aling* Lena become good friends and come to love each other.

But *Aling* Lena knows the little bear must go to a store one day, and they must be separated. She explains to the bear that he must go away to live and play and be happy with a child who will love him always.

When the day comes, *Aling* Lena is very sad, but she whispers a prayer that the little bear will always be safe.

The little bear is taken to a toy store and finally meets the special little girl who will love him always. But he never forgets *Aling* Lena, and knows that he will love *Aling* Lena and his little girl forever.

Little Bear Goes Home: A Love Story

If you climb the highest hill in the city and look a little to the left of the big green lake, you might spot a building that looks really ordinary, but is actually very special. Outside, this building looks like a very big house, but the walls are dull and the roof is gray, and it doesn't look like it has ever been painted. Inside, it looks like a very long room with rows of white tables and huge windows along both sides of the building. If you look closely, you will see bags of cotton, spools of thread and many colored cloths.

This is the toy factory where stuffed animals are made. This is probably where your teddy bear comes from.

The factory is very hot and very dirty. The workers at the factory sit at the tables using noisy sewing machines. The sewing machines make a whirring sound all day long, and it is very loud and hurts people's ears. The sun streams in from the big windows and the workers get very sweaty. Their t-shirts stick to their skin from their perspiration.

Aling Lena works here. Sometimes, she finds it very hard to work because it is so uncomfortable and dusty, and it smells of people sweating. But she keeps stitching and sewing because she needs the money. If she doesn't earn money, her family won't eat and her children can't go to school. So, even when it is dirty and noisy in the factory, she keeps on working.

The good thing about the factory is that *Aling* Lena likes making teddy bears. She knows teddy bears make children happy. Sometimes, on her way to work, she sees children playing and hugging their teddy bears. This makes her feel like her work is worthwhile, and this is why she stays at the factory.

One particularly hot day, *Aling* Lena was stitching a little bear's eye when she heard a sound.

"Oww! Ouch! That hurts!"

Aling Lena stopped and looked carefully at the teddy bear she was working on. He had light brown fur the color of caramel syrup, and a dark brown nose. But he didn't have any arms or legs yet, and his chest was still open, with white cotton stuffing spilling out from inside.

Aling Lena started to work again, but she heard another "Ouch!" She peered at the little bear's face. "Did you say something, little bear?" she asked, feeling a little silly.

To her surprise, the little bear's head bobbed back and forth. "Yes, I did. I said ouch because the stitching around my eye hurts."

Aling Lena was amazed that the teddy bear was talking. But she smiled and rubbed the bear's eye gently. "I'm sorry I hurt you. I will be a little more careful and stitch your eye more slowly." She tried making just one stitch, very gently moving the needle and thread. "Is that better?" she asked.

The teddy bear smiled, as much as the stuffing around his face would let him. "Yes, it's much better. Thank you."

Aling Lena smiled back happily. "I am so glad you have said something. It's very hard working here in the factory. It's nice to have someone to talk to. It will help pass the time away."

"Why is it so hard to work here?" the little bear asked. He did not know what *Aling* Lena was talking about, but he liked her smile.

“Well, it’s hot and dusty and there is so much work to do,” *Aling Lena* said. “But I like making bears like you. So it’s not so bad after all.”

Aling Lena smiled one more time and the little bear felt happy inside. “Well, we can be together everyday now,” he said, with a stuffy little giggle. “We can talk and play. You see, it’s boring just staying still while you sew me together.”

Aling Lena laughed. “Yes, we will be together everyday. We can talk and play. But you must tell me when I do something that hurts you.”

“I will,” the little bear promised. “And you must tell me when something hurts you, too.”

“I will,” *Aling Lena* promised.

Aling Lena and the little bear became good friends. Everyday, *Aling Lena* worked on the little bear. One day, she sewed on his legs. “There little bear, now you can wiggle.” And the little bear did a little dance for her.

The next day, she sewed on his arms. “There little bear, now you can hug.” And the little bear gave her a hug

The next day, she sewed on his little mouth. “There little bear, now you can kiss.” And the little bear gave her a kiss.

The next day was very special. It was the day she sewed the patch on his chest. *Aling Lena* took a long time stitching on the patch and when it was finally done, the little bear felt funny and warm

inside. *Aling* Lena was very quiet for a moment. And then she said in a soft voice. “There little bear, now you are finally born.”

The little bear thought for a moment. He didn’t understand. “How do you know that I’m born?”

Aling Lena laughed, shaking her head from side to side. “You silly little bear. I know you’re born because now you have a heart. Some teddy bears take longer to get it. They say some teddy bears need to be loved by a child before they are born. But you, you’re born now. And you’re just the cutest little bear in the world.”

The little bear smiled, as much as his stitched on smile could make him. “Thank you. I think I know what cute means. Teddy bears like me are born to be cute. But what do you mean by love?”

Aling Lena smiled, a sad little smile. “Love is when your heart thumps for someone.”

The bear looked at her intently from his stitched on eye. “Do you love me?”

“Yes, of course I love you,” *Aling* Lena replied. “I made you. You are from my own hands. We have spent so much time together, and that has made me love you very much.”

When he heard those words, the little bear felt a little jump in his fur. “Oh!” he exclaimed. “I feel my heart thumping too!” He looked earnestly at *Aling* Lena. “Now I know I love you too.”

Suddenly, *Aling* Lena’s eyes were full of water. But she was smiling, and the little bear felt something warm inside his fur all over again.

The next day, the factory supervisor came to inspect the little bear. He peered at the little bear for a long time. He turned the little bear over and pressed on his fur and pulled on his arms and legs. *Aling* Lena watched him quietly, a little afraid that he would find something wrong. But finally, the supervisor smiled.

“What a cute little bear! He will make a little child very happy indeed.” With that, he told *Aling* Lena to wrap up the bear in a big plastic sheet.

When the supervisor was gone, the little bear wrinkled his little brown nose and asked curiously “Why do I need to be wrapped?”

Aling Lena did not say anything for a moment. She didn’t look at the little bear as she sewed a beautiful bow tie made of special red checkered cloth around his neck. When the bowtie was fixed, she finally answered softly. “You need to be wrapped so that you can go to a store.”

“What’s a store?” the bear asked in a frightened voice.

“A store is somewhere teddy bears go for a little while, before you go home to a little boy or little girl,” *Aling* Lena answered softly.

“No!” the little bear cried. “I don’t want to go to a store. I want to stay with you!” But *Aling* Lena shook her head sadly.

“Don’t you want me to stay?” the poor, confused little bear asked.

“I want you to stay with all my heart!” *Aling* Lena exclaimed. “But there is no room in my house for a little bear.”

The little bear thought for a while. “But I don’t have to stay in your house. I can stay here, and you can visit me everyday, just as you have done when you were making me.”

But *Aling* Lena replied “I won’t be allowed to keep you, now that you are made. And if you stay in the factory everyday, you will get dirtier and dirtier. Your beautiful caramel fur will fade in the sun, and your stitching will come off with the dust. And if you stay here, you won’t be able to play.”

“Why not?” the little bear asked desperately.

“Because the factory is only for bears that aren’t born yet. When you’re born, you have to go away. First, to the store. Then to a nicer place. To a place where you can play.”

The little bear was quiet for a moment. “I want to play,” he said slowly.

Aling Lena nodded. “I want you to play too. And hug. And kiss. And wiggle. That’s what little bears do. When you go away from here, you can do all of those things.”

The little bear stared at *Aling* Lena as she carefully wrapped him up in plastic. “If I go away, can’t you come with me?”

Aling Lena shook her head sadly, and her eyes were full of water again. “No, I can’t come with you, little bear. But I know it’s nicer out there. And I know you can play to your heart’s content. As for me, I can’t play everyday. I need to work. I have to stay here.”

Aling Lena looked very sad after she spoke. But then, she smiled a little smile. “My little bear, go and be happy. No matter what, you must remember that my heart will always thump for you.”

The little bear smiled a little smile. “And my heart will always thump for you too.”

Aling Lena stayed a little later that night after work, and she cuddled and hugged the little bear, even though he was already wrapped in plastic. The little bear was happy that she stayed with him and he tried to stay awake for as long as he could. But he eventually yawned and fell asleep.

For a long time, *Aling* Lena stared at the sleeping little bear fondly. Then suddenly, tears fell from her eyes. She looked up at the dark sky and whispered a prayer, “Dear God, giving up my little bear is the hardest thing I’ve ever had to do. But I can’t give him a good home and I love him too much to see him suffer. His life will be better and happier if he goes to live somewhere else. I offer him up to you. Please find him a special place to live. Amen.”

Then *Aling* Lena dried her eyes and kissed the little bear softly on his sleeping head. She got up and walked away without looking back.

The next morning, the little bear was woken up by a loud rumbling sound. He was surprised to find himself surrounded by other little stuffed animals all wrapped up like him. They were all being taken to the store in a big truck. The little bear felt scared, but he remembered that *Aling* Lena had said that the store was where he would meet the child that would take him home. The little bear tried to be brave.

The journey seemed to take a long time and the ride was quite bumpy. But eventually, the little bear was carried out and finally put on a shelf in a toy store. He ended up sitting beside other little bears just like him. Together, they smiled and looked cute for every little child that walked past them.

Sometimes, many children would come to look. Sometimes, only a few would come.

Everyday, the lights would go down in the shop and the air conditioning would be turned off and that meant that it was closed and no more children were coming. In the dark, the little bear would get very worried that no child would ever choose to love him. He got scared that a heart would never thump for him again.

But the heat of the store reminded him of the factory where he was made and he remembered *Aling* Lena. Thinking of *Aling* Lena made him smile a little smile. He knew that her heart, at least, would always thump for him.

Then one day, a little girl with big brown eyes and bright pink cheeks walked up to the little bear. The little bear smiled at her. The little girl smiled back, and then jumped up and down. “Daddy! Mommy!” She cried. “Come quick! I have found my special little bear!”

The little girl’s mommy and daddy came to her and looked at the little bear. “Can I take him home please?” the little girl asked, her big brown eyes wide and hopeful.

“Well, I think he’s just the cutest little bear in the world!” the daddy exclaimed.

“Yes he is,” said the little girl.

“Yes he is,” said her mommy.

“Yes I am,” whispered the little bear.

With that, the daddy took the little bear from the shelf and the little girl brought him home.

In her daddy's car on the way home, the little girl held him tightly and chattered away. "You know little bear, I've looked all over the city for you. Mommy said last week that I could have any bear I wanted. But I didn't want just any bear, I wanted one that was special. I wanted you. It's funny really. I didn't know where to find you, or what you looked like or where you came from. But I knew I would find you. And I did! As soon as I saw you on that shelf, my heart thumped! Isn't that amazing?"

The little bear smiled and thought "Yes, it is!"

When they arrived home, the little girl kept hugging and kissing him. She taught him how to dance and how to wiggle in her arms. She took him to meet all her other toys. The little bear kicked a ball, banged on drums, and even had a ride in a bright red car. The little bear was very happy. He knew he had finally arrived home. And what a wonderful home it was!

That night, the little girl said her prayers with the little bear in her arms. "God bless my little bear. Thank you for bringing him home to live with me. I will love him forever and ever. Amen."

Then, the little girl yawned and fell asleep.

The little bear snuggled up to the little girl and looked up at the bright stars in the sky. He thought of *Aling* Lena, and the little girl, and his wonderful new life. As his stitched on eyes finally closed to sleep, he prayed to God.

"Thank you God for bringing me home. God bless *Aling* Lena. God bless my little girl. I will love them forever and ever. Amen."