

(SYNOPSIS)

Beary the teddy bear grows bored waiting for his boy to come home from school, and against the wishes of his fellow toys, he escapes into the garden. When he returns to the bedroom to discover that he has lost his nose, there is no time to go back to the garden and look for it. Jacob was due to arrive any minute. What will he do when he sees the noseless bear?

The Bear

Meet the finest teddy bear in the world. Black eyes that sparkle, a good-natured smile, a bright black nose in the middle of his face; small rounded ears at the top of his head, long limbs that wrap you in a warm embrace. Wherever it matters, he's pillowy and soft. No need for a story, no need to count sheep. Just give him a minute and he'll hug you to sleep.

He's an excellent playfellow. Game for any game at all. He'll say yes to a quick round of chess, make a spaceship out of a box, be your superhero sidekick and build castles out of blocks. He'll agree to play the hostage; be laid over the tracks, be tied up in the closet with his hands behind his back. Throw him in a dungeon, hang him upside-down from trees, put him in a forest full of ants and killer bees. He knows it's all just make-believe, a game where you pretend; a game that always ends with being rescued by a friend.

Jacob calls him Beary. Just the thing to name a bear. He takes him along wherever he goes, he takes him everywhere. Almost everywhere, that is, save for one place he can't go. When Jacob has to go to school, he has to go alone, and that means Super Sidekick Beary has to stay at home.

Beary didn't mind at first. He stayed right where he was. He never made a single sound; he never made a fuss. But one day all that staying put and always sitting still—made Beary very restless – as waiting often will. He'd waited long enough and couldn't bear it anymore, so he tumbled off the bed and started walking out the door.

“Come back here, Beary!” hissed all the other toys. It was utterly against the rules to even make a single noise. Beary's bad behavior made them very much afraid, for toys were meant to sit quite still and wait till they were played.

“What if someone sees you?”

“What if you lose your way?”

“What if you get stuck somewhere and we're too far away?”

“That's not going to happen,” Beary answered. “I know every inch of this house. I'll be very, very careful. I'll be quiet as a mouse.” They tried to argue with him, they begged him to stay, but Beary was bent on sneaking away. Then out of the blue spoke the eldest of the toys, a wise old Owl with a gravelly voice. He held out his wing and stifled a cough, and said, “What if THAT falls off?”

Beary clamped a paw to the end of his nose. It wobbled a bit, it wiggled up and down, moved from side to side and around and around. His bright black nose was coming loose. Hardly a surprise for a bear in overuse. Beary and Jacob had spent the last week climbing up trees and jumping to the ground, creeping like ninjas making barely any sound; jumping a bicycle off a homemade ramp; turning the garage into a military camp; skating up and down the street, scooting past on winged feet; dashing quickly here and there, scrapes and scratches everywhere.

But Beary was a stubborn bear, as you may now be quite aware. He stuck his nose up in the air, and said quite loudly, “I don’t care!” And then he sauntered gallantly off, at which the Owl gave another cough. But Beary wasn’t listening. Straight down the hall he stomped along, turned the corner, and then was gone.

He tiptoed softly down the stairs, wound a path around the tables and chairs, silently, stealthily, making no sound, bent on never being found. And when at last he reached the den, he felt his courage rise again, and Beary shot across the floor, past the sofa, out the door, squeezing through a narrow gap, edging round the welcome mat, right under the noses of the dog and the cat.

Beary was in the garden. Out in the sunlight and under the trees. Free to frolic with the birds and the bees. Up one tree and down the other! Swinging like a monkey from branch to branch! Leaping over flower bushes, rolling in the grass, paying barely any mind to the time speeding past. And so he was suddenly caught unawares, trapped in a dreadful state of affairs, when he found himself about to meet the bright yellow schoolbus coming down the street.

“Oh, no! He’s home!” cried the naughty bear, losing his grip and falling to the grass. He brushed off the leaves and straightened out his ears, and ran back to the house as quick as a flash. Right under the noses of the dog and the cat, he quietly edged around the welcome mat, and squeezing through the gap in the door, shot past the sofa and across the floor. Making it safely through the den, he felt his confidence rise again. Stealthily, silently, making no sound – perfectly sure that he’d never be found -- he zigzagged around the tables and chairs and tiptoed hurriedly up the stairs.

“I’m back!” cried Beary, coming through the door, “You all needn’t worry about me anymore.” The toys all breathed a sigh of relief, a breath very long and incredibly deep, but, examining Beary from his head to his toes, they all gasped together,

“WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR NOSE?”

And poor Beary froze. Quickly clapping a paw to his face to check that his nose was firmly in place, his courage began at once to fall because it wasn’t there at all! Uh-oh. Oh, no. What to do? What to do? Were Beary’s days as Top Bear through? Instantly, every able toy arose in search of a substitute for Beary’s nose.

A shiny black marble? A rubber ball? A lump of clay? A Lego brick! Find a nose and find it quick! A pencil topper? A pick-up stick? A bottle cap, a laundry clip? A board game token, a domino, a Scrabble tile, a plastic chip?

And suddenly, they heard a noise, scaring the wits out of all the toys. Catching them almost unawares...footsteps running up the stairs. So they all scrambled back to their places in the room, leaving poor Beary to his doom. Beary sprang back to his place on the bed, frightened and rueful, filled with dread.

Jacob came banging through the door, and tossing his bag down on the floor, he said, “Let’s go, Beary! Wanna play a game?” Then Jacob stepped closer and suddenly froze, seeing that Beary was missing his nose. He stood and stared, and stared some more, never having seen a noseless bear before, and then he slowly shook his head, snatched the bear right off the bed, and promptly ran right out the door.

“Where’s he taking him?” whispered the toys, doing their best not to make any noise. “Are they going down to play?” “Is he letting Beary stay?” “Does he mind that Beary’s lost his nose?” “Is he throwing him away?” The toys swapped questions back

and forth, trading queries and retorts, thrashing out theories blue and black, when they heard Jacob coming back.

And then the door flew open wide, swinging on its hinges from side to side. Jacob appeared, and Beary too, with one small change! His nose was new! A bright black shirt button, with four holes in place, sewn securely to the center of his face. He didn't look quite the same bear anymore, but ever more charming than before! And one good thing was proved that day; lucky old Beary was here to stay.

And when at last it was time for bed, one happy thought filled Beary's head: The best-loved toys are toys for keeps. And he hugged dear Jacob straight to sleep. ***