

## Jacob

*I can get story ideas from the unlikeliest places! The person who unknowingly gave me the idea for this short story may or may not recognize her contribution, but I was listening.*

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I'm not sure why I did it. I guess it was just time.

You'd think an eleven year old girl would want to keep a room full of stuffed animals forever. All my friends did. But one day I just told my mother "You can get rid of all of these now. I don't want them any more!"

I'm not sure what my reasoning was, then. I could put it down to laziness, I suppose ... dusting and cleaning around all those bunnies, teddy bears, kittens and other assorted furry stuffed creatures was a lot of work, even for a reasonably tidy person like me. But maybe I'd just decided that, at eleven, I was too mature for such silly childish things.

I even allowed my mother to take Jacob, a large ragged teddy bear with green ears, who had been my constant companion since I was two. She bundled him up with all the other stuffed toys, and took them off to Goodwill, where I supposed other kids less fortunate than me could love them as I had.

For the first week or two, I didn't miss them at all. The window ledge that had held my three plush kittens, one of which had lost its ear and had always looked a little forlorn, was now bare, neat and tidy in its emptiness. The bedspread that for years had been a home for all of my teddy bears, including Jacob, was pristine. The top shelf of my closet was bare.

I reveled in the empty space. It was easy to clean. For the first time, my room looked tidy. I was happy.

But as is true for most eleven year old girls, whose happiness is often subject to the whims of friends who sometimes don't want to be friends any more, I found myself sad and just a little bit lonely. Liz and Cathy, my best friends forever, had decided that 'forever' was a little unreasonable, and had declared that Megan was now their new 'best friend'. That left me with nobody to talk to on the phone in the evenings, a pastime I'd enjoyed for years, under the pretense of 'getting help with my homework'.

I missed Jacob. I wanted to hold him. He'd always made me feel better.

In fact, I missed all my stuffed animals. I missed seeing their friendly button-eyed faces when I walked into my room. I missed their stares as I lay in bed reading. I missed their smiles when I woke up each morning.

Most of all, I missed Jacob. We'd had a lot of good talks together.

I asked my mother about the possibility of maybe getting them back from the place she'd taken them. But she reminded me that, once given away, donations could not, in all good conscience, be reclaimed. I knew she was right, but it didn't make me feel any better.

Weeks went by. I was disconsolate. How could I have ever been so stupid as to give away all of my stuffed animals, most of which I'd had since I was a little girl? I missed them terribly, and I didn't know what to do about it.

My mother suggested I might buy a new teddy bear or two. But it wouldn't have been the same. She didn't understand.

A month after giving up all of my stuffed friends, and still feeling the loss, my mother and I stopped in at the hospital. I needed to have a prescription refilled; nothing serious, just mild asthma that had been bothering me for the past year. Being just eleven, my mother was there with me, of course.

As I sat in the rather uncomfortable chair, pretending to be interested in the magazine I'd picked up off the table, my mother poked me in the ribs.

"Honey, look over there!" She pointed to a small girl sitting on her father's lap on the other side of the waiting room. The little girl couldn't have been more than four years old, and had a cast on her leg. She was crying.

For a moment, I didn't understand why my mother wanted me to look. She poked me in the ribs again. I wish she wouldn't do that ... it's embarrassing.

And then I saw it. The little girl was holding Jacob.

There was no doubt it was Jacob. I'd recognize that moth-eaten furry face anywhere, and the incongruous green ears were a dead give-a-way. That was my Jacob!

The little girl was still crying, but she was holding on to Jacob with a tight little grip, and her head was nestled against Jacob's.

Part of me wanted to march over there and tell her that Jacob was mine, and that I wanted her back.

But I didn't.

It was obvious that the little girl loved Jacob as I once had. She needed him, maybe more than I did. And it looked like Jacob was enjoying the love too. I could tell. He had that look.

I turned to my mother and smiled. "*I guess Jacob has found a new home. I hope all my other stuffed animals have homes too. That would make me happy*".

I never saw Jacob again, or any of my other stuffed animals. But I didn't mind any more. I knew they were being loved.

And anyways, Liz and Cathy had given up on Megan and we were all best friends again.

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*You can read all of my short stories at*  
<http://www.worsleyschool.net/stories/stories.html>

