



STRANGER IN THE FOREST

By Nigel Toeg



HONEYBEAR STORIES BOOK 1

Honeybear Stories written and published by Nigel Toeg

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Honeybear

Honeybear lived in the middle of a large forest. She had built herself a fine Tree House and loved to sit inside, looking out at the tops of the trees. She was rather a lazy bear and didn't like going for long walks or bathing in the lake. Most days Honeybear was quite content to stay at home, where she would spend her time snoozing and preparing tasty meals.

Because she stayed at home a lot, she sometimes felt rather lonely. Honeybear knew most of the animals in the forest, of course, but none of them were what she would call a really good friend.

One day, while looking out from the Tree House, she caught sight of a dark shape in the undergrowth below.

Honeybear wondered what it was. 'Perhaps another bear?' she thought. 'Or, maybe, a fox or a badger?'

But then, it called up to her. "Gerumph, gerumph," it said.

Badgers don't usually say things like that, Honeybear decided. Or foxes for that matter and certainly not bears! It doesn't sound like any of those animals.

"Gerumph, gerumph," the call came again and, in spite of being so lazy, Honeybear felt she just had to find out what it was.

So, she climbed down from her Tree House and looked around. But whichever way she looked, there was no one to be seen.

Suddenly she jumped in the air with surprise as the 'gerumphing' noise sounded right in her ear. She was almost afraid to turn around and see who or what it was. But Honeybear was quite brave in her own way and she did so, coming face to face with a large black animal with long fur, a mournful face, sad brown eyes and very long arms.

"Who-who are you?" Honeybear stammered, trying to keep up her courage. "You gave me a fright, appearing out of nowhere like that."

The stranger looked at Honeybear with his mournful eyes.

“Gerumph, gerumph,” he said. “I’m a gorilla, of course, and I’m lost in the forest and don’t know how to get back to my home in the zoo.”

Honeybear didn’t know what a zoo was but she suddenly felt a lovely warm glowing feeling. Could this be the friend she’d always wanted?

“Why don’t you stay here with me in my Tree House for a little while and see if you prefer it to your home in the zoo – whatever that is?” she said.

The young gorilla considered this carefully, his long arms hanging down by his sides. After some time, he said: “All right, that sounds rather fun,” which made Honeybear laugh as he looked so mournful when he said it.

“If you’re going to be my friend,” said Honeybear. “You must tell me your name.”

The gorilla looked even sadder and said that he’d never been given a proper name.

“All right,” said Honeybear. “Then I shall call you Gerumph.”

At this, the gorilla thumped his chest with delight several times, making his gerumphing sound. Honeybear was pleased to have made him so happy and they both climbed up into the Tree House together.



Gerumph

In no time at all, Honeybear and her new friend were cosily settled in. Gerumph, who had lived most of his life in a zoo, loved the freedom of the forest and would swing from tree to tree while Honeybear looked on, wondering where he got his energy from.

But, as the days went by, Honeybear began to realise that no one had come to visit her. No one at all! In fact, she'd been expecting to see

Potting the pine marten who had promised to bring over some delicious berries that grew in a secret place near where he lived. They tasted wonderful dipped in honey and were one of her favourites.

Just thinking about them made Honeybear's tummy rumble. She began to feel very hungry and then rather cross. After thinking a little longer, she decided to go and see Potting and find out what was going on. Leaving the Tree House, she made her way along the track in the direction of Potting's home.

Approaching where he lived, she could see the pine marten sitting outside in the sun.

"Hello, Potting," Honeybear called out. "Have you any berries for me?"

Potting looked up.

"Oh, hello, Honeybear," he said. "Can't stop and talk, I'm afraid. Lots to do."

"But my berries!" Honeybear said and then added. "It doesn't look like you have lots to do. You were just sitting in the sun." She rubbed her round tummy. "You know how much I like those berries."

"I know," said Potting. "But the trouble is that nasty creature you have living with you. He chases us and gerumphs at us. All the animals are frightened of him and I won't come with the berries while he's staying at your home."

“He doesn’t mean to frighten you,” Honeybear said. “You see he hasn’t lived in a forest before. Please come round tomorrow and bring as many of the animals as you can and I’ll make sure he behaves himself.”

Later that afternoon, when Gerumph returned to the Tree House, Honeybear explained sternly about the problem with the berries and told him he would have to stop chasing the animals.

“I only wanted to play with them,” Gerumph said, mournfully.



Pine Marten

The next day, when Potting arrived with some of the other animals, Honeybear introduced them all to Gerumph.

“I’m very sorry if I frightened you,” Gerumph said, and then, just to show how friendly he was, jumped up and down and thumped his chest.

“There, you see,” said Honeybear. “Gerumph just wants to be friends with you all. There’s nothing to be afraid of.”

Gerumph gave them all a mournful look and gerumphed in agreement—but not too loudly, so he wouldn't scare them.

So, Honeybear was able to have her berries again and, despite being very hungry, even shared some with her new friend.