


# Sydney's Visitor

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Sydney pulled on her pajamas and called, “Story time!”

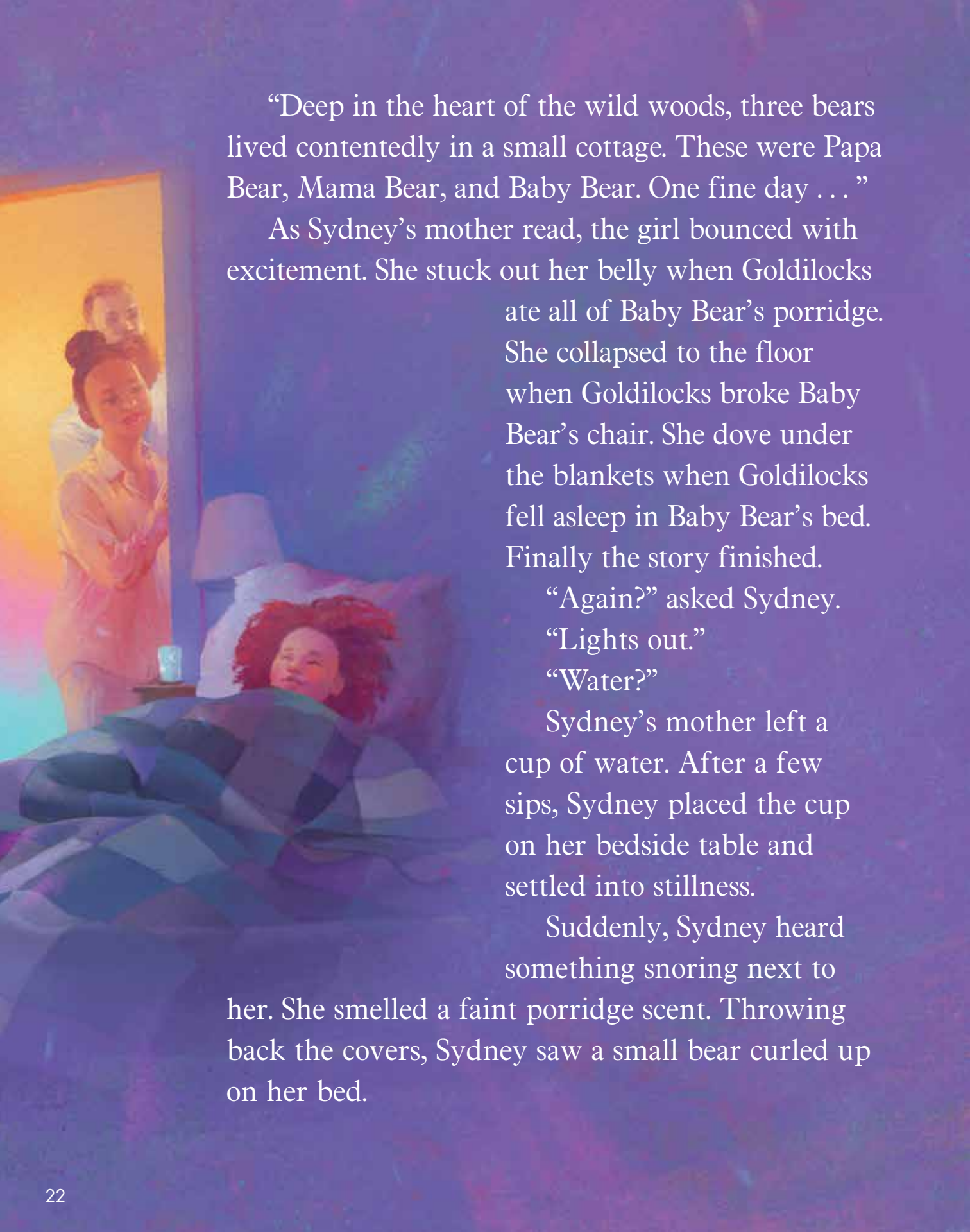
“How about this new one from the library?” asked her mother.

“Let’s read *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* again,” said Sydney.

“This will be our fifth night in a row.”

“Please, Mommy! I just love it!”

Sydney’s mother sighed and opened up the book. Its spine pulled away from the pages like a loose tooth.



“Deep in the heart of the wild woods, three bears lived contentedly in a small cottage. These were Papa Bear, Mama Bear, and Baby Bear. One fine day . . .”

As Sydney’s mother read, the girl bounced with excitement. She stuck out her belly when Goldilocks ate all of Baby Bear’s porridge. She collapsed to the floor when Goldilocks broke Baby Bear’s chair. She dove under the blankets when Goldilocks fell asleep in Baby Bear’s bed. Finally the story finished.

“Again?” asked Sydney.

“Lights out.”

“Water?”

Sydney’s mother left a cup of water. After a few sips, Sydney placed the cup on her bedside table and settled into stillness.

Suddenly, Sydney heard something snoring next to her. She smelled a faint porridge scent. Throwing back the covers, Sydney saw a small bear curled up on her bed.



“You’re a baby! You’re so cute! But you’re a BEAR!”

The small bear opened his eyes and blinked.

“Where am I?” he asked in a high voice. “Who are YOU? Where are my mommy and daddy?” Tears began rolling down the bear’s furry cheeks.

“Don’t cry, little bear! I’m Sydney. You’re in my bedroom. What’s your name?”



“Baby Bear,” he said. “I need to get back to my small cottage in the heart of the wild woods.”

“Baby Bear,” repeated Sydney. “Small cottage in the heart of the wild woods. Wait! Are you THE Baby Bear? From *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*?”

Baby Bear brightened. “That’s me!”



“How did you get here?” asked Sydney.

Tears formed again in Baby Bear’s eyes. “I don’t know. I was so tired, I guess I fell asleep. We’ve been acting out our story for five nights in a row.”

Sydney clicked on the light and hurriedly opened the battered book. “Oh no!” she said in a worried whisper. “You’ve disappeared from your pages! You must have fallen asleep so deeply that you fell out of your story!”

Baby Bear began to bawl.

“Shhh,” whispered Sydney. “I’m supposed to be asleep. But don’t worry, we’ll get you home. I know! We’ll walk to the wild woods!”



“OK!” said Baby Bear.

Together, they opened the window and looked outside. The night was painted black. Trees groaned in the wind.

“There might be scary animals out there,” said Baby Bear.

“You’re right!” said Sydney. They pulled the window closed.

Baby Bear sank onto the bed.

“I know! Maybe you’re still asleep!” said Sydney.

“If I wake you up, you might go back to your story.”



“OK!” said Baby Bear. He curled up and closed his eyes.

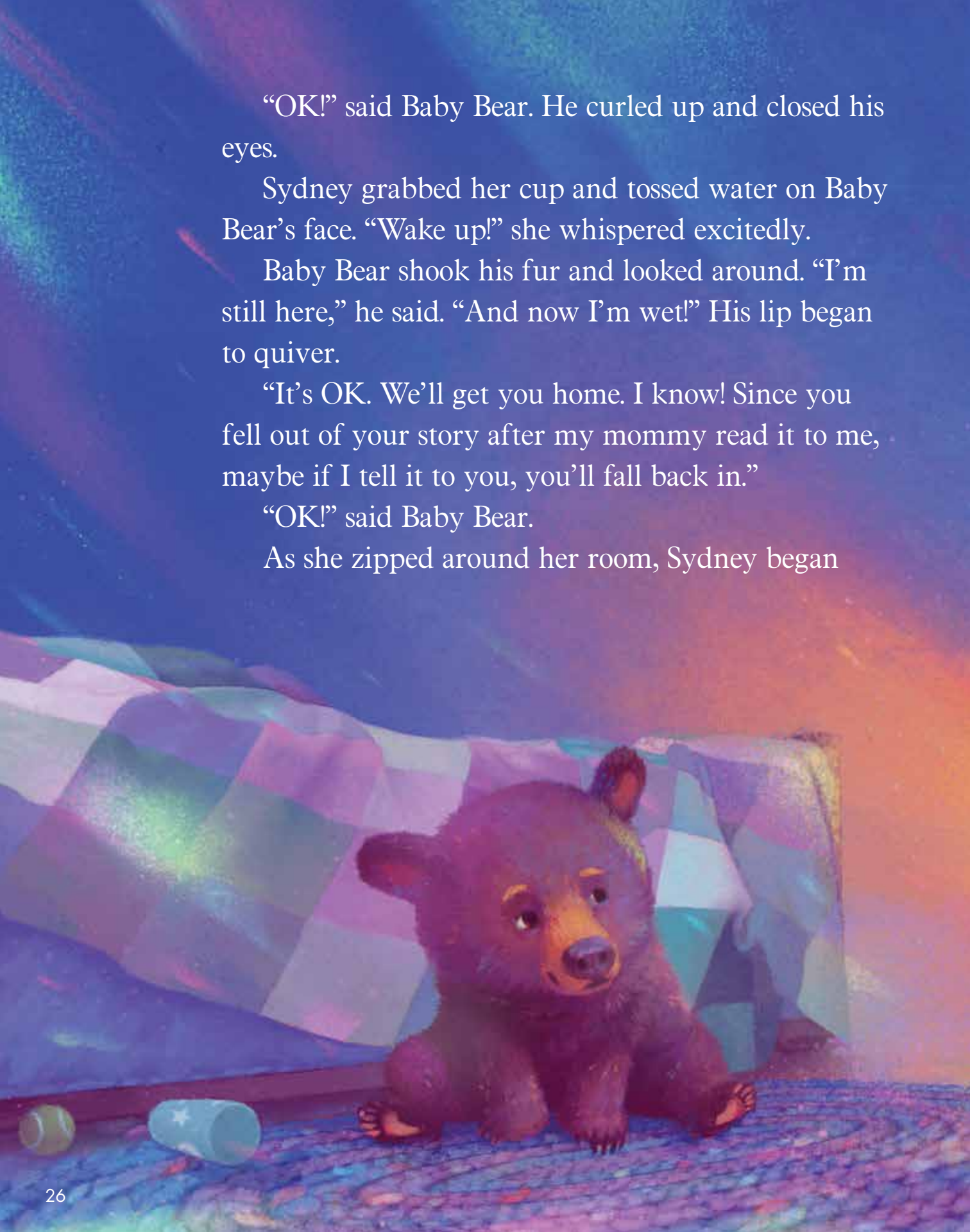
Sydney grabbed her cup and tossed water on Baby Bear’s face. “Wake up!” she whispered excitedly.

Baby Bear shook his fur and looked around. “I’m still here,” he said. “And now I’m wet!” His lip began to quiver.

“It’s OK. We’ll get you home. I know! Since you fell out of your story after my mommy read it to me, maybe if I tell it to you, you’ll fall back in.”

“OK!” said Baby Bear.

As she zipped around her room, Sydney began



the story. “Deep in the heart of the wild woods, three bears lived contentedly in a small cottage.”

“Right!” said Baby Bear.

Sydney puffed out her chest. “These were Papa Bear . . .”

Sydney curtsied. “Mama Bear . . .”

Sydney jumped. “And Baby Bear!”

With all her heart, Sydney told the story. When she was finished, she looked around the room. No Baby Bear. Sydney checked the *Goldilocks* book. There was Baby Bear on the cover, smiling cheerfully and clutching his parents’ paws.





“Bye, Baby Bear!” whispered Sydney. She gently closed the book, placed it on the shelf, and climbed back under the covers.

Just as Sydney began to fall asleep, she heard a soft tapping at the window. Looking up, she saw a little girl with long, golden locks waving at her through the glass.

Tomorrow, Sydney thought, I’m going to ask for a different story. 🐼

