LEOLA
AND THE
HONEYBEARS
An African-American Retelling of
GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS
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LOOK, GRANDMA! LOOK!" Lucie very near to the fence struggled to pull the biggest, newest bedsheet from the ladder today.

Monday was always wash day, and much to her grandsister's surprise, Lucie had decided to help her set the sheets.

"Listen, child. Just put these sheets away before you get it all falls off dirt," Aunt Lucie protested.

Lucie asked, "But I just wanted to help."

"I know, ngắn me, but I don't need any help right now," Grandmother replied. "You go out and play now. Don't go missing all afternoon. And don't go talking to any strangers. They may want both our clothes."

When she looked up again, there was someone holding onto the empty bottle.

"YOU BEAR ME, CLUCK!
" Grandmother shouted after the "bird soul" and "Bubba greeneggs", Ihr?

"Even the best duck and owl eat the same two things."

"Well, it's good for the soul, too."

"Cluck!"
Lucy and her grandparents lived in a small, even comon
set in the Blue Ridge Mountains. When Lucy got her
new, she could be as sweet as brown sugar. But when she
didn't, she could be as rebellious as Grandma's old mare.
"Today Lucy could find nothing for her to do, "Oh land,"
she complained. "And I don't like what my Grandma says I'm
going to do what I want to."

Suddenly, Lucy caught sight of some yellow flowers
blossoming in the forest across the meadow. "Okay!" she
exclaimed as she watched the wild things that had not yet
found their homes. Oh, yes, things were like that.
After waiting for a while, Lucy finally heard Jack.
Nothing looked familiar, but Lucy didn't care. She was
having too much fun following the flowers like butterflies...
...the sun was shining on the hillside.

Then she saw a face that was surrounded by prickly thorns and thistles. She sat down and let tears roll down her cheeks.

"Oh, oh!" cried the girl as the needle pierced her flesh. It was too late.
Now was down deep in the Pine Hollow Woods stood a
shimmering lake, it was owned by a family known as
the Honeybees. Papa Honeybee was a GREAT, BIG
tree. Mama Honeybee was a sweet sister from Li'l Honey
and they brought home great.

Woodland folk from far and near came to see the
Honeybees' tree. They danced to delicious ditty delites
like delicious pine, double dipped doughnut, and sweet
doughy cake. Cheesecake, butter and honey
laughter always filled the air.

Come evening time, Papa Honeybee sat in his
GREAT, BIG oak chair and polished his GREAT, BIG
toothed whistle. Mama Honeybee sat in her settle with
tree chair and marbled his wities with marbled cheese,
And Li'l Honey sat in his wood chair and added his
chocolate-covered peanuts.
On this particular morning, after Miss Honeysuckle had served the last of her blackberry pie to Miss Hart and her grandchildren, she decided to make some special treats for her own family. She baked a great big pie for Papa Honeysuckle and a smaller one for Mr. Honeysuckle for herself, and a small one just for Lil' Honey.

When Papa Honeysuckle and Lil' Honey had finished their morning chores, they were as hungry as well. James,
Meanwhile, poor Lulu was still wandering around the deepest, darkest part of the Pine Hollow Woods. "I promise always to listen to my Grandmother, no matter how much I want to do what I want to," Lulu said, "just please let me find my way back home."

Weary and confused, Lulu plodded down a damp patch of ground. Suddenly she and Loo were filled with a warm, sweet smell.

"That must be my Grandmother's cracklin' beans or else," said Lulu, "now I know I can find my way."

But before Lulu could finish, Of Mouse and Wizard came slowly stalking by.

"'Hiude, meet Li' Mose," he said in his silly voice. Of Mouse and Wizard gave a deaf snout to the bumpkin-hooded boy. Lulu quickly hopped to her feet at the sound of the night.

Of Mouse and Wizard laughed and said, "Now, now child, I don't want no more run away. I be returned in this here world that I am. 'Tis no' room to our pardner."
With that, Leola took off running as fast as her feet could carry her, following the sweet smell that still filled the woods. Soon she came to a large clearing. As Leola trudged the trail from her home, she saw a little house in the distance.

“That must be a stranger’s house,” Leola thought to herself as she looked back over her shoulder. But I can’t go back home. Mrs. Wenzel will cut me for sure!” So Leola headed straight for the Honeybear’s inn.

She knocked on the heavy wooden door, but no one answered. The door was open just a little, so she peeked her head in.


“I know my Grandmama said, ‘Never go inside folks’ houses, even if being politely asked,’ but I don’t think she meant me.” And she quietly crept inside.
The first thing to catch Lulu's eye were the tasty-looking treats sitting out on the kitchen counter.

"Oh, my! Lulu splashed. "I'm so hungry. I know my grandmother said, 'Never help yourself to food in the kitchen until you've been politely invited,' but I don't think she'd mind this one."

So Lulu stuck her small finger into Papa Honey's CRAW-FRIED-DEVILED-EGGS and turned to "Ouch!" her Lulu said as she tucked her lips. It was much too soon.

Then she took a cold from Mama's cold chicken and a tiny piece of pork rib. "Ouch! " It was much too soon. Finally, she tasted Lil' Honey's HAMBACKSAUSAGE and it was absolutely delicious! Lulu gobbled it down, right then and there.
“Oh, I'm so tired,” Lula said as she let out a big yawn.

“I know my Grandma said, 'Never sit down in folks' houses until first being politely asked,' but I don't think she'd mind this time.”

Lula was beginning to feel right at home. First, she sat in Papa Honeybear's GREAT, BIG chair. But it was much too hard. And so were his wooden shoes.

Then she sat in Mama Honeybear’s soft, soft chair. But it was much too soft. And so were her roasted chestnuts.

Finally, Lula sat in Lil' Honey's wooden chair. It felt like it was made just for her, and she loved his chocolate-covered pinecones. She ate every one. “Yummy, mmm, mmm!”
Before long, Leola had stuffed herself so full of huckleberry pie and chocolate-covered pine nuts that the buttons on her dress began to pull and her tummy began to ache.

And then, KABOOM!

Lil' Henrie's wooden chair broke all to pieces.

"Oh, my," Leola moaned. "I know ma Grandmama said, 'Never make yourself too comfortable in folks' houses until first being politely asked,' but I don't think she'd mind this time."

Leola dragged herself up from the floor to look for a place to lie down.
At the top of the mast Lady found the Homebird's bed room with three small hides beds all in a row.
First, she lay down on Papa Homebird's GREAT, BIG bed. But it was much too hard.
Then, she lay down on Mama Homebird's TWEENY small bed, but it was much too soft.
Finally, she lay down on Lil' Homey's — bed. And it was just right! Without another word, lady fell fast asleep.
By this time, the Honeybear men were on their way home, laughing and singing their favorite fishing song.

Mary fell out at the front, Papa caught one with a hook.
Mama had one in a pan, Baby not 'em like a toad.

When Papa Honeybear opened the door, the Honeybear could not believe their eyes. Their own little one looked like a strong gust of wind had just whipped through it. Everything was upside down and inside out.

"LOOK!" yelled Papa Honeybear in his GREAT, BEEFY voice. "Somebody's been among my peach pie."
"And look!" said Mama Honeybear in her WONDERFULLY voice. "Somebody's been eating my pear poppy cobbler!"
"And look!" squawked Lil' Henry at his daddy. "Somebody ate every bit of my blackberry pie!"
"LOOK!" Pops Honeybear growled in his GREAT, BIG bear voice. "Somebody's been sitting in my chair, eating my walnuts."

"And somebody's been sitting in my chair," cried Mama Honeybear in her MOTHERLY voice. "And they left chocolate all over it."

"And somebody helped themselves to all my chocolate-covered poppers and broke my chair all to pieces!" squawked Lil' Honey in his squeaky voice as his brown eyes rolled up with panic.

"Relax," Mama Honeybear whispered. "What's that strange sound?"

With Pops Honeybear leading the way, they all tiptoed up the stairs. They crept past Pops Honeybear's GREAT, BIG bed and around Mama Honeybear's MOTHERLY bed, until they reached Lil' Honey's bed, and they gasped at what they saw.

"Look!" squawked Lil' Honey. "A stranger!"
Scared, Uncle woke up and saw three angry-looking bears leaning over her.

"Oh, please, don't eat me," Uncle cried.

"We're not going to eat you," Mama Bear Bear said gently. "But didn't your folks teach you any manners?"

"Yes, ma'am," Uncle stammered. "My Grandmama always told me, 'Never to go into folks' houses... and never help yourself to folks' kitchens... and never, ever sit down and make yourself at home unless you were politely asked.' But I couldn't find my way back home and Ol' Man Wozard told me and I was so scared and hungry I didn't think anyone would mind, not the one.
As the tears flowed down Lulu's face, Mama Honeybou saw that she was only a younger, no different than her own Lil' Honey. Soon, all was forgiven.

Mama Honeybou took her back home, stuffed a half of sunflower seeds, and covered it with one of her prettiest lace doilies.

As she handed the basket to Lulu, Mama Honeybou called to Mrs. Blackbird, who was soaring overhead. "Mrs. Blackbird, would you mind guiding this child back home? We don't want her getting lost again."

"Why sure, Mama Honey," Mrs. Blackbird replied. "I'll be glad to help."

Mama Honeybou gave Lulu a proper good-bye basket. "You were lucky this time, Lulu," she said. "You might not be the next. Your Grandma told you right. She must love you very much."

Lulu had taken only a few steps down the path when she turned to wave at her new friend. Mama Honeybou pulled Lil' Honey under a tree and Papa Honeybou put his arms around her in that all-mixed-good-bye.
As Lulu turned the open window, she smelled fresh-washed laundry flapping in the breeze. With home in sight, she heard her Grandmama calling—and this time, Lulu did answer back.

From that day on—even when she wanted to do what she wanted to—Lulu always listened to her Grandmama. (Well, most of the time.) And she never stayed too far from home again.