The Angel on the Small Tree



Honey-Beats and Candy-Nut are decorating Ted-E-Bear’s little tree. In the old photograph, the fabric angel stands up straight on the very top. Here, she won’t. Every time they put her up, she turns a different way. And what is that funny-shaped present underneath?



On the first Saturday in December, Ted-E-Bear carried a small tree into his sitting room. It stood in a red pot by the window, no taller than Ted’s shoulder.

“It’s perfect,” said Honey-Beats.

“It’s tiny,” said Candy-Nut.

“It’s both,” said Ted.



Ted brought down the old decorations box and blew the dust off the lid.

On top was a photograph in a wooden frame. It showed a small tree, a very small Ted, and his gran. And on the very top of the tree, standing up straight, was a fabric angel.



Under the photograph, wrapped in tissue paper, was the angel herself.

She had a cream dress, a gold string halo and two felt wings. One wing was big and puffy. The other wing was small and flat.

“Her wings don’t match,” said Candy-Nut.

“Gran made them,” said Ted. “She made them in a hurry.”



“Angel first!” said Honey-Beats. “Like in the photo!”

“Decorations first!” said Candy-Nut. She had made twelve acorns out of salt dough and painted every one. “The angel goes on last. Everybody knows that.”

They both looked at Ted.

“The tree doesn’t mind,” said Ted. “Shall we start with the angel and see?”



Ted lifted Honey-Beats up high, so she could reach the top branch.

“Up you go, Angel!” said Honey-Beats, and she slipped the angel’s loop over the tip of the tree.

Ted put Honey-Beats down. They all stood back to look.



The angel had turned round to face the wall.

“She’s shy,” said Candy-Nut.



Ted lifted Candy-Nut up this time. Candy-Nut turned the angel round to face the room.

“Up you go, Angel!”

They stood back.

The angel slowly tipped forward until she was looking at the floor.

“She’s lost something,” said Honey-Beats.



While Ted fetched the lights, Candy-Nut hung her first salt-dough acorn. Honey-Beats hung the second one. Then the third.

They hung all twelve, one each, taking turns.



Under the tree there was one present already. It was wrapped in green paper with a red bow.

It had a very funny shape. A round, flat part. And two long, thin bumps sticking out of the top.

“What do you think it is?” whispered Candy-Nut.



“A frying pan,” said Honey-Beats, “and two spoons.”

“A snowman’s hat,” said Candy-Nut, “and his arms.”

“A lollipop with legs!”

“A pancake with chopsticks!”

They laughed so much that Candy-Nut fell over.

“Christmas morning,” said Ted, from the doorway, with the lights.



They tried the angel one more time. Honey-Beats held her very straight, and Ted lifted her very slowly.

“Up you go, Angel!”

The angel leaned... and leaned... and leaned all the way over to one side, until she was looking straight down at the present.

“She’s peeking!” said Candy-Nut.



Honey-Beats crossed her arms. “She’s supposed to stand up straight. Like in the photo.”

Ted sat down on the rug. “Let’s work out why she leans. Then we can decide what to do about it.”



Candy-Nut held the angel up by her loop, in the air, all by herself.

The angel swung, and tipped over toward her big puffy wing.

“It’s the wing!” said Candy-Nut. “The big one’s heavier. It pulls her over.”



“We could make the big wing smaller,” said Honey-Beats.

Ted looked at the wing his gran had sewn. “I’d like to keep it, if we can.”

Honey-Beats thought. She tapped her drumsticks together, the way she did when she was thinking. Tap, tap, tap.



“Then let’s make the small wing heavier!” said Honey-Beats.

They looked in the decorations box for something small and a little bit heavy.

A button? Too light. A conker? Too lumpy. A pine cone? Too big.



At the very bottom of the box, Candy-Nut found a little brass bell on a red thread.

She tied it to the small wing. Very carefully. Double knot.

Candy-Nut held the angel up by her loop again.

The angel hung perfectly straight. And when she moved, she went *jingle*.



Ted lifted them both up together this time, one under each arm.

“Up you go, Angel!” they said.

The angel stood on top of the tree, straight and tall, with her halo on and her bell ringing softly.



“Now she looks like the photo,” said Honey-Beats.

She picked up the photograph to check. Then she looked closer. Then she held it right up to her nose.

“Ted,” she said. “In the photo... she’s leaning.”



Ted put on his reading glasses. He looked.

In the photograph, on the top of Gran’s little tree, the angel was leaning over to one side. Not very much. Just a little.

Ted laughed. “I’d forgotten. Gran always said, ’She leans toward the best bit.’”



“What’s the best bit?” asked Candy-Nut.

“Gran never said,” said Ted. “We used to try to guess.”

Honey-Beats looked up at the angel, standing straight with her little bell.

“Can we take the bell off?” she said. “Just to see?”



So Candy-Nut untied the double knot, and Ted lifted Honey-Beats up one last time.

“Up you go, Angel!”

They stood back. They watched.

The angel leaned slowly over, and stopped.



She was pointing straight at the funny-shaped present.

“She thinks the present is the best bit!” said Candy-Nut.

“She might be right,” said Honey-Beats.



Ted switched on the lights. The little tree glowed, with twelve salt-dough acorns and one leaning angel.

Candy-Nut tied the brass bell to a low branch, where everybody could reach it.



Honey-Beats gave the bell a tap with her drumstick. *Jingle.*

“Ted,” she said. “Is it a drum?”

Ted smiled, and said nothing at all, which is what grown-ups say when the answer is “Christmas morning”.