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Warning

by Richard Rewell

“In planetary astronomy, a planet orbiting its sun at just the right distance for liquid water to exist on its surface, neither too hot nor too cold was referred to by NASA in 1979 as being in the ‘Goldilocks’ Zone.”

The learned old man looked over his glasses and across his polished marble desk towards the beautiful young golden-haired woman who sat opposite. Next to her sat three brown bears each chewing on a chunk of honeycomb, although the smallest was on his mobile phone. The bears were well-known to him, he had taken his grandchildren to see them at a pantomime last year.

The learned old man swopped his attention to the young woman and said “I have read your case and the communications committee’s report. Indulge me.”

The young woman shot a glance to the bears, two of whom mouthed a “Go on.” The smallest was on his mobile phone.

“Well Sir you know the story? My great grandmother? Florence Goldilocks?”

“I do” replied the learned old man.

“It’s because of granny that I’m in the interplanetary PR and communications department. To carry on spreading the word that species, races and religions can all live together in peace. Obviously with granny’s speech implants. Not the originals. But the mark seven.”

“Yes, Miss Goldilocks I’m aware of all that.”

“Please, it’s Shakira.”

“As you wish Shakira. Continue.”

“We sent the story out, as per transport regulation 556.7.D. But, some prat. Sorry, idiot once it had got there, missed the point of the story and corrupted it. Apparently, I’ve been replaced by an old woman and the guys here as, well terrorists. No mention of the other three characters in the story.ie the snake. No mention of harmony and that with granny’s invention creatures can talk to each other.”

“Oh dear” said the learned old man as he shifted his attention to the bears. The two big ones nodded, the female saying

“Years of good honest endeavour wasted on that lot.”

“Agreed” added the big male.

The smallest bear was still on his mobile phone.

“So, Sir” said Shakira “ We want more pods sent. But to hundreds of publishers this time”

“Yeah” said the little bear who was still on his mobile phone and who did not deviate his eyes away from it, “That lot buggered up the story. I wasn’t their kid. I was playing the part of the window cleaner. I’m outraged.”

Shakira stretched out a hand to the female bear, who the learned old man then remembered was known as Justine Mirren and who, with Shakira mouthed soundlessly to the learned old man “He’s a bit sensitive.” nodding to the little bear.

“Understood ladies. I’ll sign this off. The pods can go from launch bay 333.”

One hour later in eighteenth century London, having travelled through space and time the pods arrived at various publishers. Not one cared about the strange silver box that appeared in their post rooms, nor the story. They corrupted it. Again. The story of Goldilocks, her two friends from different races, the vicar, the Iman, the talking bears and the talking python (Trevor) who could not attend the meeting with the learned old man because he was filling in his income tax form.

One year later that lovely planet gave up on us. Look what’s happened to us since.