

Summary

In the story, the narrator highlights the emotional bond shared by his wife and their pet bear Bruno. He got the baby bear in an accident and presented it to his wife. She named the bear 'Bruno' and treated it like a baby. The bear was fed milk with a bottle and later it started eating different food items. He enjoyed eating and drinking everything and anything. Bruno was attached to everyone including their tenant's children and their pet Alsatian dogs. It would play, run around the house and even sleep in their bed.

One day, accidentally, it ate a poison - Barium carbonate which had been kept in the library to kill mice and rats. Bruno was under a fit of paralysis and was taken to a veterinary doctor. He was injected twice and finally, revived. After a while, Bruno resumed eating normally. In another incident, he drank a gallon of old engine oil which the narrator had kept to fight a termite attack. This did not have any ill - effect on Bruno.

As days passed, Bruno grew bigger but remained as sweet and playful. The narrator's wife changed his name to 'Baba' which was a Hindustani word for 'a small boy'. He had learned a few tricks too. When commanded 'Baba, wrestle' or 'Baba, box', he would tackle and overpower the person. When ordered 'Baba, hold gun' he would point a stick at the person. When asked 'Baba, where's baby?' he would take out the piece of wood and would cradle it affectionately like a baby. As he was big now, he had to be chained because he could harm the tenant's children. The narrator, his son and their friends advised the narrator's wife to send Baba to a zoo as he was too big to be kept as a pet. She gave in and finally, after taking consent from the zoo incharge, they packed Baba in a cage and sent him to the zoo at Mysore. Everyone missed him but felt relieved as it was not comfortable to keep him at home. The narrator's wife missed Baba immensely. She cried and worried about him. She wrote letters to the zoo incharge to ask about Baba's well - being. They replied that Baba was fine but did not eat and remained sad much like her. She would ask her friends visiting Mysore to visit Baba. Everyone said that he was sad and appeared thin. After three months had passed, the narrator's wife convinced him to take her to meet Baba. Everyone had predicted that the bear would not recognize her but she had not even reached the cage when Baba recognised her. He stood on his two paws and was delighted to see her. She petted Baba and fed him his favourite food. She spent three hours there until the visiting hours ended and left teary - eyed. She requested the zoo incharge to allow them to take Baba back for which they had to take permission from the Superintendent in Bangalore. As they got the required permission, Baba was put in a cage, the cage kept on top of their car and Baba was brought back home.

They got a special island made for Baba to live on. It was surrounded by a deep dry pit. Baba was provided with his belongings, a box to sleep in, straw to keep him warm, his stick and piece of wood to play with.

The narrator's wife would visit Baba on the island by swinging on a rope tied to a mango tree. She would make the big bear sit in her lap for hours and would pat him affectionately.