

# Our Old Friend, Bear

Story by Annette Smith  
Illustrations by Richard Hoit



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Bear limped down the path at the back of the garden and lay in the shade of the big tree. He was an old dog now, but he still waited every day for Matthew to come home from school.

It wasn't long before the bell rang, and Matthew came running across the school playing field towards the back gate of his home.

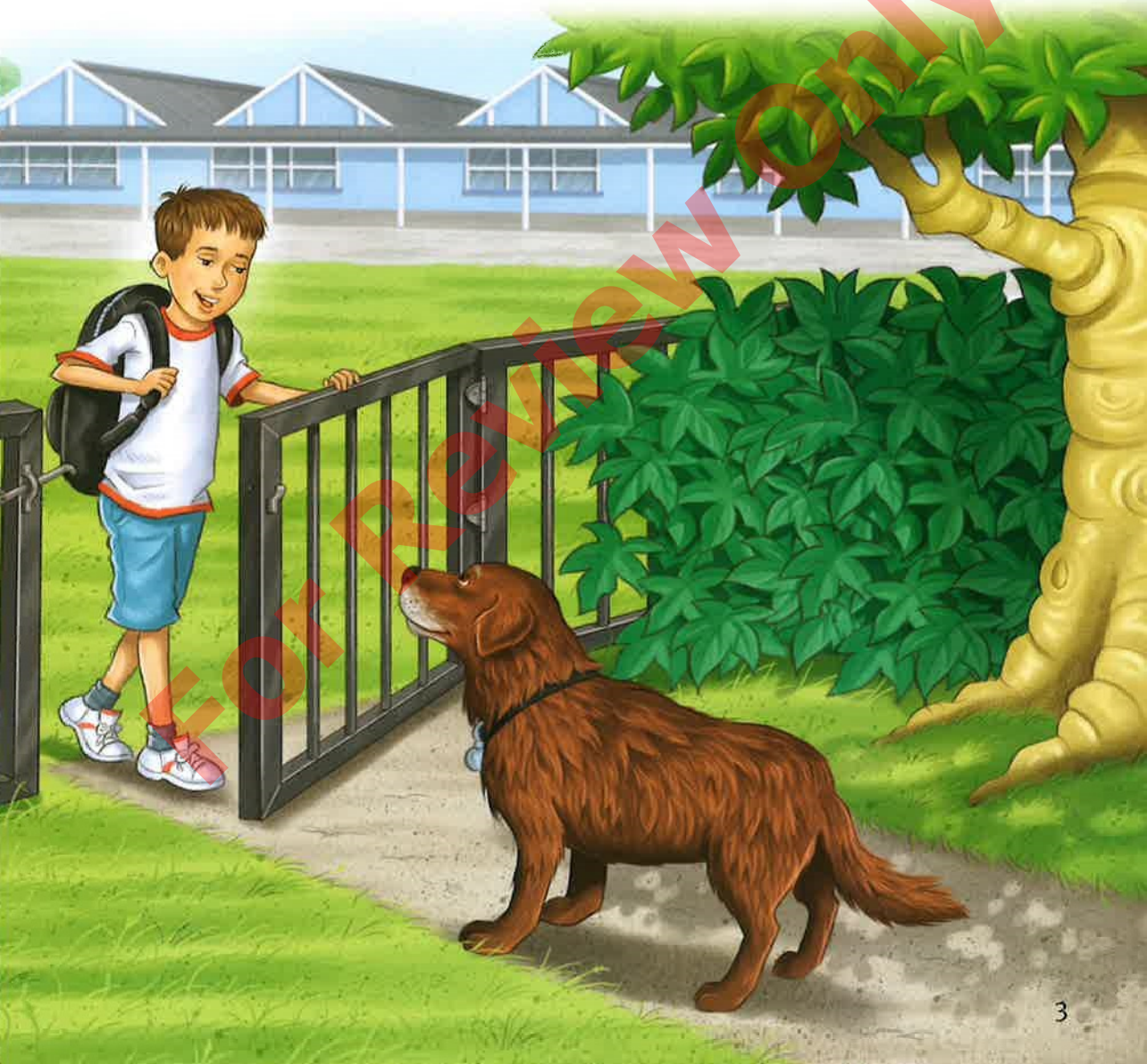
“Hello, Bear,” he called. “Let’s see if Mum will take us to the park. You could pretend to chase rabbits down there, just like you used to.”





Bear struggled to his feet and wagged his tail as he looked up at Matthew with his big brown eyes.

Matthew waved to Mum, who was watching them from the kitchen window.



“Mum, can we go down to the park?” asked Matthew, as he went inside. “It’s such a nice day, and ... Mum, what’s the matter? What’s wrong?”

As Mum turned to look at Matthew, her eyes filled with tears.

“Matthew, come and sit down here. I want to talk to you about Bear,” she said, leading him over to the couch.

“You know that he’s almost fourteen years old, and that’s very old for a big dog. He’s had arthritis and a weak heart for a while now.”

Matthew put his arms around Mum as she talked.

“I went down to the vet clinic today to get some more medication for him,” said Mum. “Dr Kelly said that Bear is in a lot of pain because his joints ache all the time, and his pain will get even worse when the cold weather comes.”

“How can we help him?” asked Matthew.





“Dr Kelly says that we are going to have to make a decision very soon,” Mum explained.

“A decision?” said Matthew. “A decision about what?”

“Dr Kelly feels that it may be a lot kinder if she helps Bear to die without pain,” said Mum.

“No,” said Matthew. “I don’t want Bear to die! Bear has always been here with us. Mum, you had him for ages, too, before I was born. It’s not fair. He can’t die yet!”





“But we have to think about Bear,” said Mum. “Is it really fair that he has to suffer a lot of pain just because we don’t want him to die? Dr Kelly said that we don’t have to make a decision right away. We can talk about it some more over the next few days. Now, let’s go down to the park. It’s a nice day, and Bear will enjoy it down there. Why don’t you phone Henry? He might like to come with us.”

