

“Let me go, please,” the little bear pleaded his hunter with water-filled, big pitiful eyes.

Marko held him firmly but gently, and stroked the silky hair on his back, trying to console him, “I wouldn't hurt you, little one,” he said softly.

“I have a family to take care of,” the bear sobbed, “they're waiting for me, please let me go,” he insisted.

Marko kept down his weapons and sat his little furry prey on his lap and looked into his eyes.

“Why are you so afraid my dear, I told you I wouldn't hurt you, didn't I?” Marko asked while softly playing with the little fur on his head.

“My— my family will be so worried about me, they're still waiting for me, you see. If you please let me go just for one hour, I'll go and give them this grocery, otherwise they'll go hungry tonight, and I'll tell them to not wait for me, to not cook food for me from tonight, that I'll never come back again, you see, otherwise my mom would cook for me every night and hope I would come back, but we aren't that rich that they can afford to cook extra food everyday, I even forgot to say goodbye to them today evening, please let me go just for one hour, I promise I'll come back.” The little bear said.

The hunter was silenced for some time. He finally asked, “and, if you don't?”

“I don't usually go back on my word, even if I did, you could catch me on these paths any time, I have to come through here everyday to shop, you see, otherwise my family would die of starvation.”

*What a brave little chubby,* the hunter thought to himself.

“Do you have any idea what would become of you if you were kidnapped by a hunter?” Marko asked him, stroking his little tummy.

The little bear smiled, “Yes, I know. I have grown up with this fearful knowledge all my life. You see, I'll be tortured and killed and then my organs will be sold off, before my hide is used for entertainment purposes. I know it all, you see.”

“And you'd still come back?”

The bear smiled again, “Yes, I’ll return, otherwise it’ll be a bad thing to do to you, you see, you caught me, so rightfully I belong to you. If you let me go now out of mercy, it would also be my responsibility to come back to you to return the favour.”