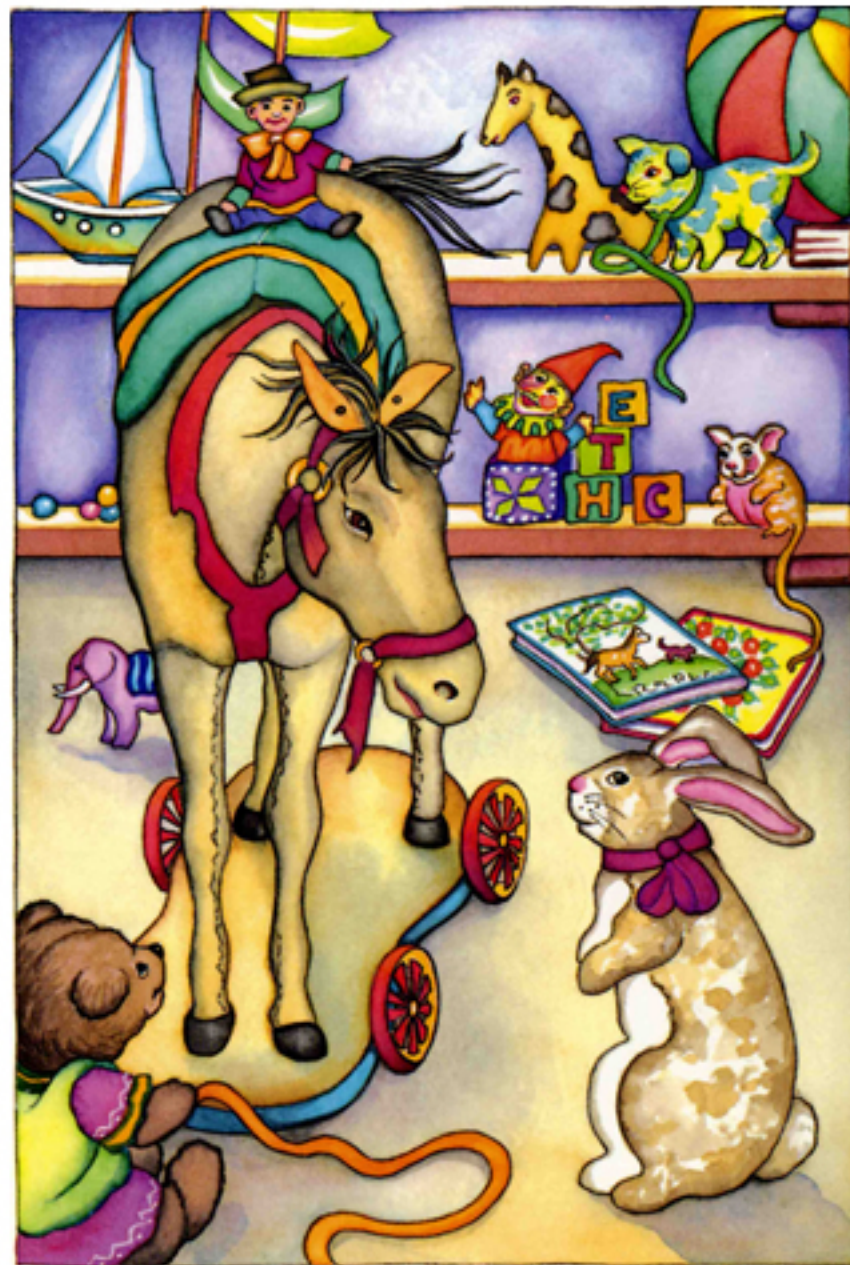


There was once a velveteen rabbit, and in the beginning he was really splendid. He was fat and cuddly, as a rabbit should be; his coat was spotted brown and white, he had real thread whiskers, and his ears were lined with pink satin. On Christmas morning, when he sat wedged in the Boy's stocking, with a sprig of holly between his paws, he looked lovable.

For at least two hours the Boy loved playing with him, and then Aunts and Uncles came to dinner, and in the excitement of looking at all the new presents the Velveteen Rabbit was forgotten. For a long time he lived in the toy cupboard, and no one thought very much about him. Some of the more expensive toys snubbed him, and even Timothy, the wooden lion, would not talk to him. The only person who was kind to him at all was the Skin Horse.

The Skin Horse had lived in the nursery longer than any of the other toys, and he was very old and wise. His coat was worn thin and most of the hairs in his tail had been pulled out.



“**W**hat is REAL?” asked the Velveteen Rabbit one day.
“It’s a thing that happens to you,” said the Skin Horse.

“When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real. By the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out. But these things don’t matter, because once you are Real, you can’t be ugly.”

The Velveteen Rabbit sighed. He longed to become Real like the Skin Horse, and yet the idea of growing shabby was rather sad.

One evening, when the Boy was going to bed, he couldn’t find the China Dog that always slept with him. Nana, who ruled the nursery, looked into the toy cupboard. “Here,” she said, “take your old Bunny! He’ll do to sleep with you!”

That night, and for many nights after, the Velveteen Rabbit slept in the Boy’s bed. At first, he found it rather uncomfortable, but soon he grew to like snuggling down under the Boy’s chin, with the Boy hugging him close.



And so time went on, and the Velveteen Rabbit was very happy—so happy he never noticed how his beautiful fur was getting shabbier and shabbier, and his tail coming unsewn, and all the pink rubbed off his nose where the Boy had kissed him.

Spring, then summer came, and wherever the Boy went, the Velveteen Rabbit went too. They had picnics and games, and whispered together when no one else was there.

One day the Boy left the Velveteen Rabbit out on the lawn. Long after dusk, Nana had to come and look for him with the candle, because the Boy couldn't go to sleep unless he was there.

"What a lot of fuss for a toy!" said Nana.

The Boy stretched out his hands.

"Give me my Bunny!" he said. "He isn't a toy. He's REAL!"

Not long after, the Velveteen Rabbit was alone in the garden when two strange creatures approached him. They were rabbits like him, but their seams didn't show and they hopped about by themselves.



"Why don't you play with us?" one of them asked.

The Velveteen Rabbit was embarrassed that he couldn't move as they did, so he simply said, "I don't feel like it."

One of the strange rabbits came very close, and then cried: "He isn't a rabbit at all! He isn't real!"

"I *am* real!" said the Velveteen Rabbit. "I am Real! The Boy said so!" And he nearly began to cry when the rabbits hopped away.

Time passed, and the Velveteen Rabbit grew very old and shabby, but the Boy loved him, so the Velveteen Rabbit didn't mind at all.

Then one day, the Boy became very ill. For many weeks the Velveteen Rabbit stayed close by, waiting for him to get better. At last the Boy was allowed out of bed, and the Velveteen Rabbit learned that the next day, the Boy was going to the seashore.

"Hurrah!" thought the Velveteen Rabbit. "Tomorrow we shall go to the seashore!"



But the Velveteen Rabbit was not to go with the boy, for all the books and toys the Boy had played with in bed were to be burned, because they were full of the germs that had made him so sick.

So the Velveteen Rabbit was put into a sack with the other books and toys and set outside. In the morning the gardener was to burn everything.

As the Velveteen Rabbit lay cold and lonely in the sack, he thought of the long days in the garden, playing with the Boy. A great sadness came over him, and a tear, a *real* tear, trickled down his little shabby velvet nose and fell to the ground.

And then a strange thing happened. Where the tear had fallen a flower grew. Soon the blossom opened and out stepped the most beautiful fairy in the whole world.

"I am the nursery magic Fairy," she said. "I take care of all the toys that the children have loved. When they are old and worn, and the children don't need them anymore, I come and take them away and turn them into Real."



She took him to the wood, and placed him with the other rabbits. "Run and play, little Rabbit," she said.

With a kiss from the Fairy, the Velveteen Rabbit was transformed: instead of dingy velveteen, he had brown fur, soft and shiny, his ears twitched by themselves, and his whiskers were so long that they brushed the grass.

He was a Real Rabbit at last, at home with the other rabbits.

Another spring came and the Boy went out to play in the woods. A rabbit crept out from the bushes. The rabbit had strange markings under his fur, as though long ago he had been spotted. And there was something familiar about his soft little nose and his round black eyes.

"Why, he looks like my old Bunny that was lost when I was sick," said the Boy. But he never knew it *was* his own Bunny, come back to look at the Boy who had first helped him to be Real.

