HILLS LIKE WHITE HEFFALUMPS

The hills across the valley of Pooh Corner were long and white. On one side there was no shade and no trees and a stuffed animal could fry in the heat in minutes. A small building stood between the valley and the green Hundred Acre Wood. A bear and the girl with him sat at a table in the shae, outside the building.

"What should we eat?" the girl asked.

"Honey," said the bear. It was hot and small beads of sweat dropped off the tip of his nose. He watched teh water make a reasonable pool on the table. He looked up at the girl.

"It will be all right," she said. "Lots of people have done it."

"I don't know," said the bear. He thought about the war. He tried no to think, but it was always there in the darkness. He remembered the explosion and afterward the doctors putting the stuffing back inside hime. He remebered months in the Pet Hospital on Sata Monica Boulevard in Century City, and afterward the walks to Harry's Bar & Grill in the afternoon. He remembered the old waiter and the young waiter and how no one ever quite learned how to say the Lord's Prayer without all the nadasI  in it.

"Oh, pooh," swore the girl. "I can't bear it when you're like this."

The bear looked across at the hills in the distance. They looked like white heffalumps. He smiled to himself, remebereing how clever things had been before the accident. Now his old friends were all gone. Eeyore had become a therapist specializing in manic depression. Tigger had opened an aerobics studio in Beverly Hills. Kanga had finally gotten the divorce settlement and moved back to Australia. The bear realized he was thinking too much. He crossed his legs carefully and stared at the girl.

The waitress brought a jar of honey. The bear stuck his nose in it and began to eat.

"Don't get your head stuck in the jar," the girl said. "Like last time."

The bear looked down across the valley. Eeyore's gloomy place had been subdivided and overbuilt with condos. He remembered hunting for woozle on crisp winter mornings when his breath would frost in the air and he would follow tracks in the snow and the world seemed so clear and true that it was like being in love all the time. He tried to remeber what being in love was like but his accident had fixed that and the girl was talking again and he couldn't think.

"It's an awfully simple operation," she said. "And then everything would be like before."

The bear stood and looked down at the sleek unbroken line of fur that ran to his toes. "Yes," he said. "Isn't it pretty to think so?"

–Chris McCarthy