

A Talk With the Middle-Sized Bear

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You've had a rough journey; a hellish long day;
 There's a fire in your throat and an ache in your head
 And you long to be back in your own cozy bed.
 But the world you grew up in has vanished away.
 You're weary and sick and you're frightened by change
 When something wraps 'round you like a swirl of warm air
 For there's no place as comforting, gentle, or strange
 As the mind of the Middle-Sized Bear.

For the Middle-Sized Bear is a creature most rare
 He'll feed you on honey and tea in his lair
 And you don't think you trust him, but maybe you'll dare
 Have a talk with the Middle-Sized Bear.

He's clumsy, forgetful, ill-tempered, and shy;
 There's dust on his spectacles, gray in his fur;
 Sometimes he growls when you think that he'd purr,
 But he holds you so gently and just lets you cry.
 He says he's not clever, but sometimes he's wise,
 Sometimes he's so silent you can't tell he's there
 And he quietly kisses the tears from your eyes
 As you sit with the Middle-Sized Bear.

For the Middle-Sized Bear is a creature most rare
 He'll sing you a song as he brushes your hair
 And they say it's a comfort just knowing he's there
 As you talk with the Middle-Sized Bear.

There's a line in his journal that pierces your mask
 Though he says at the time that he's probably wrong;
 But he sums up your fears in a few lines of song,
 And answers a question you never would ask.
 A letter, a message, a voice on the phone,
 A scrap of a song coming out of thin air.
 Perhaps it's enough to know you're not alone
 As you talk with the Middle-Sized Bear.

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For the Middle-Sized Bear is a creature most rare
He knows you don't love him, but he doesn't care
And you think you could trust him, if only you'd dare
Have a talk with the Middle-sized Bear.

The Middle-Sized Bear is a character out of science fiction: the section “Conversation With the Middle-Sized Bear” in Cordwainer Smith’s² novella, *Mark Elf*. For several years I’ve used it to refer to the aspect of my personality that is, so people have told me, comforting to talk to and be around.

This song is very much a composite; the first verse is almost entirely out of Cordwainer Smith; the last two are more about the women in my life who have encountered the Middle-Sized Bear over the last year. It’s a little unusual in being largely autobiographical but in the second and third person, so that it’s singable by anyone.

²<<http://www.cordwainersmith.com/>>
20081214-22