

After Dinner Conversation Series



# As You Wish

Tyler W. Kurt

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After Dinner Conversation, Volume 5

Tyler W. Kurt

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# As You Wish



## *After Dinner Conversation Series*



SAD BEAR AND HIS FRIENDS had been living in the pitch black for years. *Absolute* blackness. They had been put in the trunk shortly after their child, George, had gotten a puppy. There's no sense of time in the blackness so they didn't know how long they'd been in there—months, maybe years.

And then, one day, they heard footsteps in the darkness. Clack, clack, clack, clack. The sound grew louder as it approached. Clack, clack, clack, clack. Would it mean a person would finally set them free? Would this be the person to let them out?

The room shifted violently. Fluffy, a stuffed white rabbit with just one eye, landed on top of Sad Bear, a teddy bear. Mr. Giraffe, a stuffed giraffe, fell onto Dolly, a hard-plastic doll with a yellowed dress and loose threads. Dolly also had, down the side of her face, a long red crayon mark in the shape of an A which made her self-conscious. As the trunk jostled the stuffed animals rolled around on each other until they finally landed with a thud.

The top of the trunk opened. After years of living in the dark the bright light temporarily blinded the animals as they looked up. Their eyes slowly adjusted and they saw, towering over them, an eccentrically-dressed elderly woman.

The woman had white hair that looked as if it hadn't been combed in years and a face thick with wrinkles from smiling. She was 75 years old if she was a day, but her clothes were that of a teenager in a time long past. In fact, her blouse and poodle skirt made it look like she was about to go to a 1950's dance. Her shoes, however, were Converse; one red and one white. And when she spoke, she used the words of an elderly woman but said the words in a light, fairy-like voice.

"Why, hello dears," said the woman. "What do we have here?"

The woman pulled Dolly out of the trunk and examined her. "Now aren't you in sad shape. Old dress, torn threads ..." the woman quickly licked her thumb and started rubbing the red crayon mark off Dolly's face "... it looks like somebody was learning their alphabet on you. Well, this will never do."

The woman looked down at the other stuffed animals in the trunk. "A sad lot indeed." She gently set Dolly down outside the trunk and picked up the stuffed Beagle that was jammed between two other animals. As she lifted the Beagle it exposed its missing leg with stuffing hanging out.

"Be careful with my stuffing!" shouted the Beagle.

"I'm being careful," the woman replied.

"You can hear me?!" the Beagle asked, shocked.

The woman held the Beagle up to look him straight in the eye, because she felt it was more respectful to look someone directly in the eye when you spoke to them. "Well of course I can. Is your leg in the trunk? Should I get it for you?"

"It's not in the trunk, the puppy ripped it off!"

"Well," the woman said, "if I ever meet that puppy I will have to explain to him the proper way to play with children's toys."

The woman gently set the stuffed Beagle on the ground outside the trunk next to Dolly. "At the very least, I can sew that hole of yours closed so you don't lose any more stuffing. You will be a three-legged dog, but that's better than being a dog that's losing its stuffing."

"Excuse me, ma'am," said Sad Bear from the trunk looking up. Sad Bear, you see, was named Sad Bear because he had a frown sewn on his face for a mouth when he was born. This caused him to be sad even when happy things were happening all around him. "Excuse me ma'am," said Sad Bear. "Can you really hear us?"

The woman picked up Sad Bear to look him in the eyes, just as she had done with the stuffed Beagle. "I suppose I can. Hold on, let me get all of you out of the trunk so we can be properly introduced."

The woman gently set Sad Bear down then reached into the trunk and pulled out all the stuffed animals: Mr. Giraffe, Edwina the elephant, as well as Fluffy the white rabbit, Mr. Panda, and a rainbow unicorn that all the other animals made fun of because she stood out and had no name at all. She grabbed them all, and, one by one, lined them all up in a circle, so they could have a proper conversation.

When they were all sitting in their places, Fluffy the stuffed white rabbit, looked up at the woman and spoke first, "Excuse me Miss, but how is it you can hear us?" he said in a rabbit's squeaky voice.

"Well," the woman said, sitting down cross-legged in front of them, a rather impressive feat, considering her age, "You all can hear each other, can't you?"

"Yes," said Fluffy, "but we're stuffed animals and you're a real person. And real people can't hear stuffed animals, except sometimes when they are very young."

“I guess I never grew up,” the woman replied. Then she glanced around at the other stuffed animals in the circle to examine them. “Well, you all are a motley group in dire need of repairs, if you don’t mind me saying.”

“We have been in the trunk a very long time,” said Sad Bear. “And before we got put away by George, that was our child, the puppy would play with us very rough.” The three-legged Beagle held up his stump where his leg used to be to prove his point. The woman looked over at the Beagle.

“Indeed,” replied the woman looking where his leg used to be. “But, like I said, I will fix you. I will fix *all* of you, and you’ll be in ship-shape and ready to go to a new home in no time. So, let’s make a list of all the things that need to be fixed. First, of course, my Beagle friend, I will sew your leg hole shut so you can stop losing stuffing. Or, if you would prefer, I can make you a new leg that matches.”

“You can do that?” asked the Beagle in wonder.

“Why, of course I can,” said the woman, who took out a small notepad and a pencil to write notes as she spoke. “One new Beagle leg.”

“Excuse me ma’am,” Dolly said, seeing her chance. “My dress is very dirty, you see, and it has yellowed with age when it should be white...and the threads are all coming out—”

“—Yes, yes, of course,” the woman interrupted. “I shall sew you a new white one.” The woman spoke out loud as she wrote in her notepad, “One new white dress. You appear to be a size negative 32, is that correct?”

Dolly blushed and lowered her head. “Why, yes ma’am, that’s correct.”

“How many dresses would you like?”

“I like?” Dolly asked.



“Yes. How many dresses would you like me to make for you?”

“Well,” said Dolly, “I’ve only ever had the one.”

“I’ll make you three to get you started, and more later if you want.” Dolly heard this and blushed.

Fluffy, the white rabbit, spoke up next in his squeaky rabbit voice. “I lost one of my eyes to the dog; could you sew me on a new eye?”

“Oh my, yes, I see that. That will never do. I will find you a new eye to sew on.” The woman wrote in her notepad as she spoke. “One new rabbit eye.”

“Actually,” Fluffy said, “If it’s not too much to ask, my eyesight wasn’t all that good even before with two eyes. You see, when I was born my eyes were made with the cheapest plastic. Do you think you could sew on *better* eyes so that I can see better than before?”

“I don’t see why not.”

“And I...” said Mr. Panda, speaking up for the first time in a Panda’s deep proper voice. “I am quite fat, even for a Panda. Would it be too much trouble for you to take some of my stuffing out? Not all of it, mind you, just a little bit, so that I still look like a Panda, but I look like a *thin* Panda?”

“Of course,” said the woman, “What else? I can change anything you want. I can make you taller, or shorter, or fatter, or thinner. I can change your eyes, or even your fur. As a matter of fact, while I’m at it, would anyone else like me to take some of their stuffing out?” The elephant’s trunk went up.

Mr. Giraffe, a stuffed orange and brown giraffe that spoke very quickly when he spoke, spoke up next. “I know I’m a giraffe. And I know giraffe’s have long necks, but I think I look very silly standing next to everyone else with such a long neck. I would like 4 1/4 inches taken off of my neck please.”

“Of course,” the woman replied with a smile and note in her notebook. “Exactly 4 and 1/4 inches....”

“You can do that?” asked the very shy rainbow unicorn.

“Yes I can.”

“Well, then could you...” said the unicorn very softly. “You see, I’m a unicorn—”

“—Yes, I see that,” said the woman. “Unicorns are very rare and very special indeed.”

“Yes, but you see,” said the unicorn almost in a whisper, “I don’t want to be rare and special. Could you... please...take off my unicorn horn and make my fur brown, so that people would think I was a horse?”

The woman gave a slow nod-like bow. “If that is what you wish.” The only animal that hadn’t asked for anything was Sad Bear and so, the woman turned to him last. “And what about you Mr. Bear, that frown stitched on your face looks terribly sad. You must be sad all the time.”

“I am,” said Sad Bear. “From the first day I was made I’ve always had this frown on my face, and so I’ve always been sad.”

“Well then, I shall *fix* that too. It won’t take but a minute. I shall take that stitching out and stitch a smile on your face, so you will always be happy even when sad things are happening.”

“Thank you,” responded Sad Bear politely. “But if it’s all the same to you, I think I’d like to keep my frown.”

“Well, why would you want to do that? I am going to fix his leg, and her dress, and give him two brand new eyes that are better than the cheap plastic eyes he was born with. I’m going to turn a unicorn into a horse, take the stuffing out of Mr. Panda and his elephant friend, and make the giraffe’s neck shorter. As long as I am doing all of those things, I could just as well sew a smile on your face.”

“Yes, I’m sure you could” said Sad Bear. “And thank you for helping all my friends, but you see, ma’am, my name is ‘Sad Bear’ because I have a frown on my face. Because I *am* a Sad Bear.”

“I see, but you don’t have to be sad,” said the woman. “Don’t you know that being *happy* is good and being *sad* is bad. Just like missing a leg is bad and having all your legs is good. And having one eye is bad, and having two eyes is good, and having two very good eyes is even better still. And why would you want to be a unicorn or a giraffe and stand out, when you can be so very average and blend in? Don’t you want to be fixed?”

Sad Bear thought about this for a while and thought a long time about how best to explain himself without offending the eccentrically dressed woman or his friends.

“I think...” said Sad Bear slowly, “...even though I have a frown sewn on my face, and I am sad, even when good things are happening... I think...” said Sad Bear, “...I would prefer to just be me. Even if, you see, that is just a sad bear.”

“I see,” said the woman with a warm smile and a nod. “As you wish.”



## Discussion Questions

1. Which of the toys asked for things that you think were okay for them to ask for? As a reminder, the beagle wanted his torn off leg sewn back on, the doll wanted a new dress, the panda and elephant wanted to have some stuffing removed. The unicorn wanted to look like a horse, and the rabbit wanted his eyes replaced with better eyes. What is the distinction between each request being a “good request,” and a “bad request?”
2. What are the things about us that we should improve, or correct, and what are the things we should leave alone? What is the distinction between the two?
3. Was Sad Bear right in refusing the woman’s offer to remove his frown and sew a smile on his face so he would always be happy? Why/why not?
4. If someone could magically fix something about you, or improve something to make you better, would you let them? What would you change?

LISTEN TO THESE AND other questions discussed on the “After Dinner Conversation” [podcast](#).

# Additional Information

## Ongoing Discussions

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# From the Publisher

**After Dinner Conversation** is a growing series of short stories across genres to draw out deeper discussions with friends and family. Each story is an accessible example of an abstract ethical or philosophical idea and is accompanied by suggested discussion questions.

## Additional “After Dinner” Titles

1. [Patchouli Lost](#) (*Free*): Patchouli calls a friend for help getting out of an abusive relationship. ([Podcast](#))
2. [My Fellow \(Immortal\) Americans](#) (*Free*): The President gives a speech about a proposed raise in the minimum “time wage” and its effect on those who plan to live forever. ([Podcast](#))
3. [The Shadow Of The Thing](#) (*Free*): Maeve calls on her friend to help her take a new street drug that (she thinks) will forever open her see the true meanings that hide behind the curtain. ([Podcast](#))
4. [This I Do For You](#) (*Free*): A spoiled child is raised in the lap of luxury until he is finally called on to serve others. ([Podcast](#))
5. [As You Wish](#) (*Free*): An elderly woman finds a trunk of tattered stuffed animals and makes a promise to fix them all. (*All-Ages*) ([Podcast](#))
6. [Pretty Pragmatism](#) (*Free*): A US Senator introduces a bill that borrows public policy ideas from the Nazi party. ([Podcast](#))
7. [Alpha-Dye Shirt Factory](#): A fire breaks out at the garment factory and one worker has to make a life or death choice. ([Podcast](#))
8. [Are You Him?](#): A family man on his way to work stops to talk to a young woman in need of a friend. ([Podcast](#))
9. [Lay On](#): Three outcast witches visit the hippy era to tempt a street musician. ([Podcast](#))
10. [Bunny Racing](#): Two bunnies race, but one of them has been eating a special carrot from the forbidden forest to help him run faster. (*All-Ages*)
11. [The Truth About Thurman](#): Two Americans are captured by a terrorist group who give the government a choice, pick one for us to let go free, or we kill them both. ([Podcast](#))
12. [Rainbow People of the Glittering Glade](#): Three kingdom wards are sent to investigate the reclusive “Rainbow People” of the shifting desert. ([Podcast](#))
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## About the Author



**TYLER W. KURT** self-identifies as a teacher, writer, traveler, and trail runner. He left the practice of law to spend five years teaching Socratic discussion classes in an Arizona High School. He has visited 40+ countries and has lived in Mozambique, China, and Argentina. Accordingly, he has learned and forgotten Portuguese, Chinese, and Spanish.

He has written and/or optioned a dozen screenplays for Hollywood production, sold more than a dozen short screenplays, had his short plays performed in at least a dozen states, and has had his short stories published in more places than he can remember.

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