

## Wanted: Teddy Bear Repair

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If you are coming downstairs now with a bump, bump, bump on the back of your head, then that may be the only way you know of coming downstairs, but that frankly is still not going to help you when your eye pops out, your seams come undone and your face turns black from the stairs in your apartment building.

Edward the Bear had it lucky in his day when that nice A.A. Milne described his descent down some stairs at the start of “Winnie the Pooh.” There were a few more houses with indoor stairs than in Russia, even back then.

Just try and find some stairs in Moscow that any self-respecting bear would want to have his head bump, bump, bumped down. There is a dog in my stairwell who would have a furry soft toy leg in his mouth in a second once he saw him heading down.

All these bear thoughts are because someone is looking for a soft toy repairer near the Avtozavodskaya metro station. Nobody answered Wednesday, but it is not hard to get an idea of the precariousness of life as a bear by looking at the sites for soft toys to be restored, repaired, cleaned or given a nip and a tuck so that once more they can head out for the stairs.

A site for collectors gives advice that may be too graphic for some owners:

“If your Mishka [teddy bear] is without an eye, you need to find out its age and the name of the firm,” they write. “And work out whether his eye is made out of plastic, glass or a shoe button.”

They warn of hard-hearted bear traders who age bears specially — luckily they do not say how — so they look as if they were the original Edward the Bear with old eyes stuck in their young sockets to give them an air of ancient grace.

Once your bear is complete with its own eyes, the next step is a clean. In the tub or to the dry cleaner? One site warns that after home-washing you will never get the bear back in the shape it was when it went into the washing machine.

It will never dry, and that wash will help “the spread of pathogenic microbes. ... The toy will deform and start to rot from the inside.”

Unlike the fish in the Russian saying, an Edward the Bear rots from the inside apparently. After reading that, it is hard to feel any sympathy for the bad, evil parents who wash their children’s toys in the sink instead of sending them to be tossed on the waves of an industrial cleaner.

Another dry cleaner’s place has a simple page for their soft toy-cleaning service, which just says they charge by the kilogram — 350 rubles (\$12) a kilo to have Winnie spun.

I say buy him a trolley to wheel him around and avoid any bumping.

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