

Heart of Gold

Shona was a 10-year-old girl who lived in sunny Florida. She was named after her mother's favorite fairy tale, Goldilocks, because the word "Shona" means "gold" in the Bengali language.

Now that warmer weather was here, Shona had noticed many more geckos crawling on walls inside houses. Though completely harmless, the geckos weren't very welcome inside homes and were constantly shooed out by people. But Shona, compassionate towards all animals, was the only one who stopped to consider how the *geckos* might be feeling. She felt sad that all day long the only thing the geckos heard was "get out of here!" Finally, she decided to make a difference.

Shona figured the geckos would be happier outside in the garden; they could roam in the fresh grass and find bugs to eat. "Maybe I could lure the geckos outside with food?" she thought to herself. "Hmm, what would geckos enjoy? Perhaps lettuce?" Starting from the door, Shona left a trail of lettuce leaves, all the way to the garden. Soon, the geckos noticed the lettuce. Curious, they all came crawling from the walls towards the trail. But suddenly the geckos stopped in their tracks and stared disappointedly at the lettuce. They looked up at Shona and seemed to speak with their bright yellow lemon-like eyes. "Do you really think we'll eat this green stuff?" they seemed to say.

"Hmm, perhaps lettuce is too crunchy!" thought Shona. Next, she tried beans. A gecko crawled up and licked a bean hesitantly. Then he glanced at Shona with an unsatisfied look. "Must be too squishy!" Shona thought. As all the food options she tried failed one by one, Shona started to lose hope.

Lunchtime came, and Shona smelled a delicious aroma filling the house. It was *biryani*, a fragrant rice dish that made the whole house smell heavenly. Right before her first bite, an idea sparked in her head. "I've been trying to feed the geckos things I think *animals* would like, but why don't I try one of *my* favorites?" Feeling enthusiastic, Shona set out a trail of biriyani rice grains and waited in eager anticipation for the geckos to find the gourmet surprise!

Smelling something intriguing, the geckos scurried toward the biriyani trail. They looked at each other with their lemon-eyes and finally took a bite. Their eyes seemed to widen as they savored the taste and started munching gleefully! They gobbled their way through the trail, and ended up in the garden, just like Shona had planned. Shona clapped her hands in delight and exclaimed "the biriyani was just right!"

Her namesake, Goldilocks from the fairy tale, had shown no care for the three bears. But Shona had used her compassion and creative thinking to try to show the geckos that they were *not* unwanted, that they too mattered! And her small gesture of kindness was proof that not only did her name mean “gold”, Shona had a heart of gold as well!

Word Count: 496 words