

## Warm Fuzzy Story (revised 2004)

Once upon a time not so long ago there was a beautiful valley called Mystic which was surrounded by hills and just far enough from I-10 to make it almost impossible to reach. Vacationers thought about bumpy and winding roads and dust coming in through the tailgates of their Surburbans, and they drove right on by the exit that would have taken them to the valley called Mystic.

From the view at I-10, the hills in the distance seemed like a steep wall, and there was no sign of the rich, green valley except for a sign that said "Mystic." Thousands of cars just whizzed by. Nobody ever went to the Mystic Valley; there was nothing but a peaceful river, beautiful trees, and rolling hills.

The people in the valley were very easygoing people. They were just like you'd find anywhere else except for two things: they were happy, and they had Fuzzies.

Now a lot of people are happy sometimes – but the valley people were happy all of the time. They were happy on Monday mornings; they were happy when it rained or when there was a flood; they were even happy when they lost a tribe game. They didn't know that it takes things to make you happy or that other people could make you unhappy. For instance, people in the valley never locked their doors or thought about counting their change.

They enjoyed talking to one another and would go out of their way to do each other favors. They would even do each other's jobs for inspection. Most of all, they enjoyed meeting and greeting each other and making new friends.

The people were happy because of their Fuzzies. The first campers in the Mystic valley were the one to discover these small, roly-poly creatures who sat up on their plump little haunches. They were like little puffs of soft fur – perfectly round, warm and soft. Those first campers found the Fuzzies in the deepest part of the Mystic Valley at a place called Natural Fountains.

They made absolutely no effort to run away, and in fact what they liked most was being picked up and held. Just picking up a Fuzzy somehow made you feel better.

The campers began to catch the Fuzzies and keep them in little pens behind their cabins – because once you picked up a Fuzzy, the thought of letting him out of your sight was hard to bare. Gradually, so many Fuzzies were picked up and kept that none remained to be found in the woods or garden. The people began to miss the joy of finding a new Fuzzy to add to their collection.

So, the custom of exchanging Fuzzies grew over many years. At first campers gave them to new campers to make them feel at home. Then they started to give them to sick campers in Heaven Can Wait to cheer them up. So every camper was given a Fuzzy of her very own. So, campers enjoyed each day as it came and hardly knew how to be bored or tired of seeing the same old faces and going to the same old places.

That's just what the grumpy old lady of the valley thought when she accidentally happened to see the happiness which existed in the valley of the Fuzzies as she drove her 1965 Buick. "This is ridiculous," said the grumpy old lady. "I've got to do something for those poor people. They're so easy-going that they may spend their whole lives thinking they are happy when they can't possibly know what it means."

You don't get to be that grumpy just by riding around in a 1965 Buick. You've got to work at it all year round. It didn't take her long to come up with a foolproof plan to help the people in the valley get rid of the foolish notion that they were happy.

The first chance she had, the grumpy old lady crossed the river into the green valley. When she got there, she stopped in front of the first little cabin she saw, Twins I.

In a matter of seconds, the counselor who lived in the cabin came running to the window. Frightened though she was, she timidly opened her door with a Fuzzy in her hand to greet this unusual guest. The grumpy old lady took the Fuzzy in her hand and squeezed it so tightly that it squealed and squirmed out of her fingers. "Oh dear," said the counselor. "I'm so sorry. That's the first time I've ever seen a fuzzy run away. Perhaps it is afraid. But don't worry, I'll give you another one."

Finally, the counselor asked the grumpy old lady, "Would you like to see our Fuzzies? We don't like to brag, but we think we have some of the finest in the valley."

She took her out into the garden and showed her the tiny pen where the Fuzzies were rolling and tumbling and playing. "How many do you have?" asked the grumpy old lady. "Well," replied the counselor, "subtracting the one that just ran away, and the three that my camper gave away yesterday, we should have 24."

"Yesterday, when your camper gave the Fuzzies away, didn't she get any in return?" The grumpy old lady asked innocently.

"Goodness, no!" the counselor replied. "You only give Fuzzies. You don't expect one in return."

"It's none of my business," said the grumpy old lady slyly, "but it sounds like you're in trouble to me. If you keep on at that rate, you'll be out of Fuzzies in another week! Did it ever occur to you that people may be trying to get your Fuzzies from you?"

"But why would anyone want to do that?" Cried the counselor who for the first time in her life felt a strange sinking feeling in her stomach.

"Oh," said the grumpy old lady, "haven't you heard about the terrible Fuzzy shortage?"

"Good Heavens!" said the counselor. So she found herself down on her hands and knees trying to find the Fuzzy that had run away.

Now it was the grumpy old lady's turn to be happy. Her plan was going to work. Pretty soon, everyone stopped giving and exchanging Fuzzies, and people began to notice that everyone was taking not giving. So, they stopped giving too, worried about running out of Fuzzies themselves. It didn't take long before everyone realized that there was a serious shortage of Fuzzies.

They stopped visiting each other. With nowhere to, and not many people to talk to, people mostly just sat around and worried that something was going to happen to their Fuzzies.

And, sure enough, one day, an entire cabin awoke to find that their Fuzzies had been stolen during the night. People brought their Fuzzies in from the outdoor pens, and locked them away in their trunks where the little creatures missed the fresh air and the sunlight. Their coats grew matted and dull, and they no longer sat on their haunches or begged to be picked up. The cloudless Fuzzy days turned into Fuzziless cloudy days. The Fuzziless months turned into Fuzziless years, and soon there were a few young campers in the valley who had never actually seen a Fuzzy, much less exchanged or owned one.

But one day, some campers were hiking to Natural Fountains and many of them had never seen a Fuzzy. But suddenly, they saw one of the last ones. They picked it up and felt so happy that they wanted to share the Fuzzy with everyone. Holding the Fuzzy gave them the warmest glow and the most special feeling.

They brought the Fuzzy back to camp, and soon the Fuzzy shortage was over. Everyone began to share them, and the campers were happy again and not afraid to share, give, or love. Fuzzies had come back into their lives, and everyone was happy.

The End.