

## Mrs Bixby and the Colonel's Coat – shorter version

Mrs Bixby is having a secret affair with the Colonel. She is married to Mr Bixby but once a month she goes to see the Colonel and they spend the night together. She tells her husband that she is seeing her Aunt Maude. The Colonel is very rich.

Just after a visit to the Colonel Mrs Bixby is standing at the train station. She is waiting for her train to go home to Mr Bixby. Suddenly there is a voice beside her 'The Colonel asked me to give you this,' says the voice. Mrs Bixby turns. It is Wilkins, one of the Colonel's servants. Wilkins pushes a large flat box into Mrs Bixby's arms.

'What is it Wilkins?' she cries 'Was there a message?'

'No message,' the servant says and walks away.

Mrs Bixby is on the train. She carries the box to the toilet and locks the door. She opens the lid and inside is a beautiful fur coat.

'My God!' she cries 'It can't be true!'

She has never seen such a beautiful coat. It must have cost \$5000. Possibly more. She tries it on and she feels wonderful.

Mrs Bixby smiles, stroking the coat and looking at herself in the mirror. Then suddenly her smile disappears. What would she tell her husband? He would never believe she could afford the coat. He would guess something was going on. And he might find out about her and the Colonel.

But Mrs Bixby wants desperately to keep the mink coat.

'I've got to have this coat,' she says out loud 'I've got to have this coat.' And she starts to think about how she can trick her husband so she can keep it. It shouldn't be too difficult, she thinks.

Two and a half hours later the train stops and Mrs Bixby steps onto the platform. She is wearing her old red coat and carrying the box in her arms. She has thought of a plan to trick her husband into letting her keep the coat. She calls for a taxi

'Driver,' she says 'Do you know of a pawnbrokers around here?' (*A pawnbrokers is a shop where poor people can borrow money if they take their belongings and leave them there.*)

The taxi driver looks amused. He does not think Mrs Bixby looks like the type of lady to go to a pawnbroker. 'Yes,' he says 'There are plenty of pawnbrokers round here.'

Mrs Bixby enters the pawnbrokers shop and opens the box. 'Isn't it silly of me?' she says to the man behind the counter 'I've lost my handbag and as this is Saturday all the banks are closed and I need money for the weekend. I want to hand in this coat.'

The man picks up the fur coat that the Colonel gave Mrs Bixby and holds it in front of him. 'It looks new,' he says.

'Oh yes it is,' says Mrs Bixby 'But I only want to borrow fifty dollars to help me until Monday.'

'I'll lend you fifty dollars,' says the man and he goes to the drawer and takes out a ticket.

'Name?' he asks.

'You can leave the name out,' says Mrs Bixby 'And the address as well.'

The man looks at her 'You better not lose this ticket then,' he says 'If anyone gets hold of it they could claim the coat.'

'I won't,' says Mrs Bixby.

'And what do you want me to put as the description of the coat?'

'No description thank you.'

Mrs Bixby takes the fifty dollars and goes back home. So far her plan is working, but she still has more to do. When she gets home her husband is waiting.

‘You’re a bit late aren’t you?’ he says

‘The trains were late,’ says Mrs Bixby.

Mrs Bixby opens her bag as if she is looking for something. ‘Oh look,’ she cries as she takes out the ticket from the pawnbrokers ‘Look what I found on the seat of my taxi. It’s got a number of it.’ She is pretending to her husband that she doesn’t know what the ticket is.

‘It’s a pawn ticket,’ says her husband.

‘What’s that?’ says Mrs Bixby and Mr Bixby explains how a pawn ticket works. He tells her that whoever has the ticket can go and collect whatever it was that had been put in for money.

‘The ticket says its worth \$50 but it could be worth more than that,’ says Mr Bixby ‘It could be worth \$500. A pawnbroker always gives about a tenth of the real value.’

‘And whatever it is can we keep it?’ asks Mrs Bixby.

‘Of course we can. This is our ticket.’

Mrs Bixby says she will go and collect the item tomorrow but Mr Bixby says he won’t let her. He says it would be better if he did it in case the pawnbroker tries to cheat her.

‘I won’t get cheated,’ pleads Mrs Bixby but Mr Bixby insists on doing it himself.

Monday morning comes and Mr Bixby goes to work with the pawn ticket. As he goes Mrs Bixby says ‘Darling. If it is something nice please telephone me as soon as you get to the office.’

About an hour later the telephone rings. Mr Bixby has collected the item from the pawnbrokers.

‘What is it?’ says Mrs Bixby ‘Is it something good?’

‘Good!’ cries Mr Bixby ‘It’s wonderful. You’ll go crazy when you see it.’

Mrs Bixby puts on her old coat and hurries to her husband’s office. When she arrives her husband tells his secretary, Miss Pulteney to go and have her lunch. Then he walks over to the cupboard.

‘It’s in here,’ he says ‘Now shut your eyes.’

Mrs Bixby closes her eyes and takes a deep breath.

‘All right,’ says Mr Bixby ‘You can look.’

Mrs Bixby opens her eyes. She stands in amazement. She is shocked. There is no furcoat in front of her. There is no coat at all. There is only a small piece of fur to go around the neck. It is dirty looking and still has the heads on it.

‘Just look at that,’ says Mr Bixby ‘Real mink.’

Mrs Bixby thinks she is going to scream. She puts her hand over her mouth.

‘Here,’ says her husband ‘Try it on.’ And he puts it round her neck. ‘It’s perfect,’ he says ‘It really suits you. Now why don’t you go and buy yourself a nice lunch to celebrate.’

Mrs Bixby moves towards the door. She is thinking how she wants to kill the pawnbroker. She is so cross that she hasn’t got the beautiful mink coat the Colonel gave her.

As she walks down the corridor Mrs Bixby passes Miss Pulteney, her husband’s secretary, on her way to lunch.

‘Isn’t it a beautiful day?’ says Miss Pulteney and smiles. Mrs Bixby looks up. Miss Pulteney is walking proudly. She looks like a queen. Miss Pulteney is wearing a beautiful black mink coat. She is wearing the coat the Colonel gave to Mrs Bixby. Mrs Bixby’s fur coat.