



A Thank You and a Goodbye

The song "I Will Always Love You" is a beautiful—and sad—love song. Dolly Parton wrote it when she was a young singer and songwriter. Most people think the song is about the end of a romance. But it is not about the end of a romance. It is about the end of a business partnership.

Dolly Parton grew up in the mountains of Tennessee. There were 12 children in her family, six boys and six girls. Her family lived in a two-room cabin with no electricity or running water. It was a home with a lot of love but not a lot of money.

Dolly loved to sing, and she loved to play her guitar. Most of all, she loved to write songs in a style called “country music.” The day after she graduated from high school, she left home and moved to Nashville, Tennessee, the center of country music. Dolly wanted to be a big star.

In Nashville, Dolly wrote and recorded a few songs that were hits. That got the attention of a country music singer who had a weekly TV show. He was looking for a female singer to sing duets with him. Dolly auditioned for him, and he offered her the job.

The TV show was a good start for Dolly, but she knew she didn't want to sing duets forever. “I’ll stay for five years,” she promised her partner, and she did. When the five years were up, she told him it was time for her to go—she wanted a solo career. He didn't want her to go. With Dolly on his show, it had become very popular—3 million people watched it every week. “Please stay one more year,” he said, and Dolly did.

At the end of year six, Dolly told her partner it was time for her to go. “Please stay one more year,” he said, and Dolly did.

At the end of year seven, Dolly knew she had to leave. She was 25 years old, and it was time for her to have a solo career. Would she be successful? She didn't know, but she had to try. She told her partner it was really time for her to go. “Please stay one more year,” he said.

“What can I do?” Dolly thought. Her partner had helped her so much. He had given her a really good start in the music business, and she was grateful. But she had to leave. How could she explain that to him? “Well,” she thought, “what do I do best? I write songs. I’ll explain my feelings in a song.”

In less than an hour, Dolly wrote the song "I Will Always Love You." The next morning, she walked into her partner's office with her guitar, sat down, and sang the song. "I'll go," she sang, "but I know I'll think of you each step of the way." When she finished the song, tears were rolling down her partner's cheeks. "It's the best song you've ever written," he said. He agreed that it was time for Dolly to leave.

The song became Dolly Parton's first big hit. It became an even bigger hit 19 years later, when Whitney Houston recorded it for a movie. Dolly Parton earned more than \$10 million from that song. But she didn't write it to make money. She wrote it to say thank you and goodbye.

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