The Little Deer Friend
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Lily loved visiting Grandma Rose. Her grandmother's house sat at the edge of a wide green meadow. Lily's honey-brown hair bounced as she ran through the tall grass in her red rubber boots. The meadow hummed with bees and birdsong. "This is the best place in the world," Lily said, breathing in the sweet smell of wildflowers. Grandma smiled from the porch, her silver bun shining in the sun.

One morning, Lily saw something move in the meadow. A little deer stood among the daisies, its reddish-brown coat dotted with white spots. Its large dark eyes blinked at her. Lily froze, her heart thumping. "Hello, little friend," she whispered. The deer flicked its small ears and a green leaf clung to one ear. Lily didn't move. She just watched, quiet as a mouse.

Lily remembered the sketchbook hanging from a string around her neck. Slowly, she sat down in the grass. She opened the book and began to draw. The little deer stepped gracefully, its thin legs like twigs. Lily's pencil danced across the page, catching every line. When the deer looked up, Lily smiled. "You're beautiful," she breathed. The deer twitched its white-tipped tail and nibbled clover.

Every day, Lily returned to the meadow. She wore her mustard-yellow raincoat when it was cool and her striped shirt when it was warm. Each time, the little deer came closer. Lily never tried to touch it. She just sat and drew. Grandma Rose brought lemonade and said, "Animals stay wild when we give them space. That's how they trust us." Lily nodded, her hazel-green eyes wide.

Lily's sketchbook filled with deer drawings. One showed the deer leaping. Another showed it sipping from the stream. Grandma Rose looked at each page. "You've captured its spirit," she said. "The meadow gives the deer a safe path to the forest. Wild animals need room to roam." Lily traced the deer's outline with her finger. "I hope it always comes here," she said softly.

Then one day, a big yellow truck rumbled down the lane. Men with clipboards measured the meadow. Lily's heart sank. "They're going to build a parking lot," Grandma Rose said. "No more meadow. No more path for the deer." Lily watched the little deer hide behind the oak tree. Its dark eyes seemed to ask for help. Lily clenched her small fists. "We can't let this happen," she said.

Lily ran to the community board and saw a poster. "Volunteer Day: Save Our Wildlife Corridor." She showed Grandma Rose. "Can we go?" Lily asked. Grandma nodded. "Of course. Small hands can do big things." At the meeting, Lily met Sam, who wore a green vest and carried a clipboard. "We're building a safe path for animals," Sam said. "Want to help?" Lily nodded eagerly.

Sam showed Lily maps of the meadow. "See this line? It's a wildlife corridor. Animals use it to travel safely." Lily thought of the little deer. "The deer needs a way to reach the forest." Sam smiled. "Exactly. We'll plant trees and put up signs. We'll ask the builders to move their project." Lily drew a picture of the corridor and the deer. "Can I show this?" she asked. "Please do," Sam said.

The next day, Lily stood before the town council. Her heart beat fast, but she held up her drawing. "This meadow is home to a little deer," she said. "Please don't take its home away." The grown-ups looked at her picture. They saw the graceful deer and the green meadow. Grandma Rose squeezed her hand. Sam gave a thumbs-up. Lily took a deep breath and kept going.

The town council listened. They agreed to change the plans. The parking lot would go on the other side of the road. The meadow would stay. Lily cheered. That afternoon, she ran to the meadow. The little deer was there, nibbling grass. It lifted its head and looked at her. Lily didn't move closer. She just sat and drew. "You're safe now," she whispered.

Sam came to visit with a box of small trees. "We're planting a wildlife corridor here," Sam said. "Trees give animals cover and food." Lily grabbed a shovel. She dug holes and patted the soil. Grandma Rose brought water in her watering can. "This is a good day," Grandma said. "You've helped make a home for many deer." Lily looked at the little deer watching from the oak tree. It seemed to nod.

The volunteers planted a whole line of trees. Lily painted a sign: "Wildlife Corridor—Please Keep It Green." Sam hung it on a post. "You're a real conservationist," Sam said. Lily smiled. "I just want the deer to be free." She drew a picture of the deer walking through the new trees. She wrote at the bottom: "This is your home. I will help keep it safe."

That evening, Lily sat in the meadow with Grandma Rose. The sky turned pink and gold. The little deer stepped out of the trees. It stood still, its white spots glowing in the sunset. Lily didn't reach out. She just watched. "You know," Grandma said, "the best way to love a wild animal is to let it be wild." Lily nodded. "I know," she said. "That's why I draw it. So it stays free."

The next summer, Lily returned to Grandma Rose's house. The meadow was full of flowers. The trees had grown taller. Lily sat in her favorite spot and opened a new sketchbook. Then she saw it—the little deer, now a young doe, with a tiny fawn beside her. Lily gasped. "You came back," she whispered. The doe flicked her ears, and Lily began to draw again.

The fawn wobbled on thin legs. Lily's pencil flew across the page. She felt a warm glow inside. "The meadow is a home for your family," she said softly. "I'm glad you're free." The doe watched Lily, then turned and led her fawn into the trees. Lily finished her drawing. It showed the doe and fawn walking into the green forest. She wrote: "Wild friends stay free."

Grandma Rose looked at the drawing. "You've learned a big lesson," she said. "Caring for animals means respecting their freedom. You helped keep their home safe." Lily smiled. She hung the drawing on the wall. Every time she looked at it, she remembered the little deer. And she knew that small hands can make a big difference. The meadow would always be a place of friendship and freedom.