

The Little Bear's Rabbit Friend



Jane MEADOW

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In a sunny forest, a small bear cub named Bruno woke up. His fur was warm light-brown and fluffy, and his big dark eyes sparkled. He loved to run and tumble and laugh out loud. Today the forest felt extra special. The leaves whispered and the sunbeams danced. Bruno stretched his big padded paws and yawned. 'What a perfect day for an adventure!' he said.



Bruno bounced through the ferns and sniffed the wildflowers. He splashed in a shallow stream and rolled on soft moss. Everything made him happy. He hugged a tree trunk and giggled. 'Hello, forest!' he called. 'I'm Bruno, and I'm ready to play!' His voice echoed between the tall green trees. Somewhere nearby, a little rabbit heard him and peeked out from behind a bush.



The rabbit's name was Rosie. She had soft grey fur, a white chest, and long ears with pink insides. Her brown eyes were gentle and watchful. Rosie liked quiet places and soft sounds. When Bruno's loud voice reached her, her pink nose twitched. She hid behind a leafy fern and held very still. 'Who is making all that noise?' she wondered.



Bruno spotted two long ears poking above a bush. 'A friend!' he shouted, and he leaped over. He landed with a thump that shook the ground. 'Hi! I'm Bruno! Let's play!' Rosie's eyes went wide. Her ears stood straight up. She took one quick hop back. Bruno's big paws thumped again as he tried to get closer. 'Wait!' he called, but Rosie was already turning away.



With a flick of her fluffy white tail, Rosie darted into the bushes. Bruno watched her go. His round ears drooped. 'Did I do something wrong?' he asked a passing bluebird. The bluebird tweeted softly. 'You were very loud,' she chirped. 'Rabbits like quiet.' Bruno sat down on a stump. His big heart felt heavy. He wanted a friend more than anything.



Bruno thought about Rosie's wide eyes and quick hop. 'I scared her,' he said quietly. 'I was too excited.' He remembered how his mother spoke softly when he was sleepy. 'Maybe I need to be gentle,' he said. He took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Then he stood up. 'I'll find Rosie again,' he decided, 'and I'll show her my quiet side.'



Bruno walked slowly through the forest. He didn't stomp or shout. He stepped softly on the moss and listened. He heard a tiny rustle under a ferns. He peeked behind the leaves. There was Rosie, nibbling a clover. Her long ears twitched. She looked up and froze. Bruno didn't move. He just smiled a small, soft smile. 'Hello,' he whispered. 'I'm sorry I was loud.'



Rosie's nose twitched. She didn't hop away. Bruno sat down right where he was. His big paws rested on the grass. He kept his voice low. 'I like your ears,' he said. 'They're very long and pretty.' Rosie blinked. No one had ever said that before. She took one tiny hop closer. Bruno's eyes were round and kind. He waited patiently. The forest felt very still.



Rosie hopped a little closer. 'You were very loud before,' she said in a small voice. Bruno nodded. 'I know. I get excited. But I can be quiet too.' He showed her how he could wiggle his nose without making a sound. Rosie giggled. It was a tiny, soft giggle. Bruno's heart lifted. 'Can I sit with you?' he asked. Rosie nodded slowly.



So Bruno sat beside Rosie in the clover. They didn't run or shout. They watched a butterfly float by. Bruno pointed with his nose. 'Look,' he breathed. Rosie leaned closer to see. The butterfly landed on a flower. They stayed very still. Rosie's ears relaxed. Bruno felt calm and happy. This was even better than loud play. They sat together for a long, quiet while.



Bruno wanted to play a game. He thought hard. 'How about we build a tiny tower of twigs?' he suggested softly. Rosie's eyes lit up. 'I like that,' she said. Bruno gathered small twigs, and Rosie stacked them carefully. When the tower wobbled, Bruno held his breath. It didn't fall. Rosie smiled. 'You're good at being gentle,' she said. Bruno's fluffy tail gave a happy little wag.



Rosie felt a warm, calm feeling inside. Her paws didn't want to run away. 'I feel safe with you,' she told Bruno. Bruno's dark eyes shone. 'I'm glad,' he said. 'I'll always try to be gentle.' They shared a juicy berry that Bruno found. Rosie took tiny bites. Bruno took one big bite. They both laughed quietly. The sun moved across the sky, and the forest hummed a soft song.



After that, Bruno and Rosie met every day. They played quiet games under the tall trees. They made leaf boats for the stream. They counted mushrooms and listened to bird songs. Sometimes Bruno forgot and started to shout. Then he caught himself and whispered, 'Oops!' Rosie would giggle. 'That's okay,' she'd say. 'You're learning.' And they'd go back to their gentle play.



One afternoon, a young deer wandered by. She looked nervous and shy. Rosie hopped forward. 'It's okay,' she said softly. 'Bruno is gentle.' Bruno sat very still and smiled. The deer took a step closer. Soon all three were playing a quiet game of hide-and-seek. Bruno hid behind a tree, but his round tummy stuck out. Everyone giggled. The forest felt full of friends.



When the sun began to set, Bruno walked Rosie home to her burrow. 'Thank you for being my friend,' he said. Rosie's nose twitched happily. 'Thank you for being gentle,' she replied. They promised to meet again tomorrow. Bruno watched her hop inside. His heart felt big and warm. He had learned that slow and quiet could be just as fun as loud and fast.



Bruno skipped home through the twilight. He didn't stomp. He stepped lightly on the soft path. His fur glowed in the fading light. He thought about Rosie's tiny giggle and her calm brown eyes. 'Gentle play builds trust,' he said to himself. 'And trust makes the best friends.' From that day on, the bear cub and the rabbit shared quiet adventures every day in their peaceful forest home.