

The Boy and the Goose Family



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Every morning, Leo walked down the lane to the village pond. He was a small, wiry boy of seven, with curly dark-brown hair poking out from under his green canvas cap. He wore his mustard-yellow t-shirt and red sneakers, and his round brown eyes were always looking for something wonderful. At the pond, there was always something wonderful to see.



At the edge of the pond lived a goose family. Papa Goose was big and tall, with white and grey feathers and a bright orange beak. A little red band on one leg showed he belonged to the pond. Mama Goose had soft grey-brown feathers and a pale cream chest, and she stayed close to her babies all day long.



One spring morning, three tiny goslings hatched in the nest. They were fluffy and yellow-grey, with small orange beaks and round dark eyes. Leo crouched behind a willow tree and watched them wobble and peep. "Hello, little geese," he whispered. His freckled nose crinkled with a big, tooth-gappy smile. He wanted to see them every single day.



The goslings were curious and clumsy. They waddled after Mama Goose in a wobbly line, tumbling over their own tiny orange feet. Papa Goose marched behind them, watchful and proud, his broad wings half open. Leo laughed softly. He came back after lunch, and then again before supper. The goose family was the best thing at the pond, and Leo never got tired of them.



But Leo was not the only visitor. Soon other people heard about the fluffy babies. Children ran up close to the nest, waving and shouting. Someone leaned over the reeds with a rattling bucket. Papa Goose spread his strong wings and hissed a loud, warning hiss. Mama Goose tucked her goslings behind her and hurried them toward the water.



The goslings peeped with worry and huddled in a tight, fluffy bunch. Mama Goose guided them into the reeds, away from all the noise. Papa Goose stood tall between his family and the crowd, his black eyes bright and bold. "Honk!" he said, and it did not sound friendly at all. The visitors stepped back, but they looked unhappy.



Leo watched from behind his willow tree and felt a tug in his chest. The goose family did not want a crowd. They wanted quiet. They wanted privacy to raise their babies, the way his own family liked quiet time at home. He sat on a flat stone and thought hard, tapping his red sneakers on the grass.



The next day, the crowd came back, bigger than before. The goslings could not even reach the water without someone leaning close. Mama Goose called them back to the nest again and again. Leo saw her gentle dark eyes flick from side to side, worried and tired. Papa Goose hissed until his voice grew hoarse. This could not go on.



Leo ran home and found a roll of soft rope and a bundle of short wooden sticks in the shed. He borrowed a small hammer and a bag of nails. His mother asked what he was building. "A safe spot for watching," Leo said. "Somewhere far enough away that the geese feel safe." She smiled and gave him a box of wooden pegs.



Back at the pond, Leo measured a wide, careful circle. He pushed the sticks into the soft earth, far back from the nest. He tied the rope between them, low and neat. Then he made a little sign from a piece of old board. On it he painted: PLEASE WATCH FROM HERE. THE GOOSE FAMILY NEEDS SPACE.



When the first visitors arrived, Leo stood by his fence and spoke in his clearest voice. "You can see the babies from here," he said. "But if we go closer, the parents get scared and hide the goslings away. Let's give them privacy, like we give our own families." The visitors looked at Leo's careful fence and nodded. They stood behind the rope and watched quietly.



Papa Goose lifted his head and stared at the little fence. He waited, wings half raised. No one came closer. Slowly, he lowered his wings and settled down beside the nest. Mama Goose was the first to relax. She gave a soft, gentle honk and led her fluffy goslings out of the reeds toward the water.



The goslings waddled in a happy line, peeping and dipping their tiny orange beaks in the shallows. Behind the rope, people smiled and pointed softly. Leo sat on the grass with his chin in his hands, and his heart felt warm and full. The goose family had room to swim, to splash, and to rest. They were safe and calm at last.



All through the summer, Leo visited his pond every day. The goslings grew taller and their fluff turned into smooth feathers. Papa Goose stopped hissing at the fence and simply watched the world go by. Mama Goose raised her young in peace, and the little family floated together in the golden evening light.



One day, a girl asked Leo why the fence was there. "Animal families need space to feel safe," Leo said. "Just like people do. When we stay back a little, we get to see more." The girl nodded and sat down behind the rope. More children came and sat too, quiet as mice, watching the geese glide by.



So the village pond got a new habit: visitors stay behind the little fence, and the goose family gets its privacy. Leo still comes every morning, his green cap pulled low, his freckled nose crinkled in a smile. He knows that watching from a respectful distance is its own kind of kindness. And the geese, safe and calm, honk softly to say thank you.