

The Squirrel and the Little Owl



Jane MEADOW

The Squirrel and the Little Owl

Jane MEADOW



In the heart of the green woods, where tall trees touched the sky, lived a squirrel named Rusty. He had warm russet-orange fur, a cream belly, and a fluffy curved tail that curled like a question mark. Each morning, he grabbed his little green acorn satchel and raced out to play. He loved daytime games and climbing high branches. The sun was his friend, and he never wanted the day to end.



When the sun began to sink and the sky turned pink and purple, Rusty usually headed home to his cozy nest. But one evening, he lingered on a branch, watching the colors change. The woods grew quiet, and the air felt soft and cool. Rusty's big dark brown eyes opened wide. He had never stayed out this late before. Something special was about to happen, he could feel it in his whiskers.



Just then, a small shape fluttered down and landed on a nearby branch. It was a little owl with soft grey-brown feathers, pale speckles, and large golden eyes. Around the owl's neck was a little blue scarf. "Hello," said the owl softly. "I'm Olive. I've never seen a squirrel out so late." Rusty twitched his tail. "I'm Rusty. I usually go home at sunset. But tonight I stayed."



Olive tilted her tufted round head. "I'm just waking up," she said. "The night is my favorite time. I love to watch the stars come out." Rusty looked up. He had never noticed how many stars there were. "Wow," he whispered. "I'm usually asleep when the stars are out." Olive smiled. "Would you like to see them with me?" Rusty nodded, his tail flicking with excitement.



Olive led Rusty to a tall oak tree with a clear view of the sky. They climbed to the top, where the branches made a perfect seat. The first star twinkled like a tiny lantern. "I come here every evening," Olive said. "It's my routine." Rusty watched the sky turn dark blue. "I have a routine too," he said. "I play all day and sleep all night. But this is nice."



The two new friends sat together as the woods filled with the sounds of crickets and gentle wind. Olive pointed out shapes in the stars—a bear, a fish, and a great big owl. Rusty giggled. "I see a squirrel in that one!" he said, pointing to a cluster of stars. Olive laughed, a soft, happy sound. "You're good at finding things," she said. Rusty felt proud. He liked making Olive laugh.



As the evening went on, Rusty yawned. His eyes felt heavy. "I'm sorry," he said. "I'm not used to staying up so late. My body wants to sleep." Olive nodded kindly. "That's okay," she said. "I understand. Everyone has different routines. Maybe we can meet again tomorrow at twilight, before you get too sleepy?" Rusty's ears perked up. "Yes! Twilight time!"



The next evening, Rusty was waiting on the same branch when Olive arrived. They shared a small snack from Rusty's acorn satchel—a few seeds and a bit of dried apple. "This is my favorite time of day," Rusty said. "When the sun goes down, I get to see you." Olive's golden eyes glowed. "And I get to see you," she said. "Even though I'm usually just waking up."



Each evening, they met at twilight. Sometimes they raced along branches, Rusty leaping and Olive fluttering. Sometimes they played hide-and-seek among the leaves. Olive taught Rusty how to find the brightest star, and Rusty showed Olive the best acorn trees. Their twilight time became the best part of their day. "I never knew evenings could be so much fun," Rusty said.



One evening, a gust of wind blew Olive's blue scarf right off her neck. It tumbled through the air and landed high in a prickly pine tree. "Oh no!" Olive cried. "My scarf!" She fluttered up, but the branches were too prickly for her tiny wings. Rusty scurried over. "Don't worry," he said. "I'm a squirrel. I can climb anything!" He dashed up the pine tree.



Rusty carefully reached for the blue scarf. The pine needles scratched his paws, but he didn't give up. He grabbed the scarf with his tiny paws and climbed back down. "Here you are," he said, handing it to Olive. Olive wrapped it around her neck and gave Rusty a gentle nuzzle. "Thank you," she whispered. "You're a true friend." Rusty's fluffy tail swished with happiness.



From that night on, they knew they could count on each other. But they still had different routines. Rusty needed his sleep, and Olive needed her night time. So they made a special plan. Every evening, when the sun went down, they would meet for a while. Then Rusty would go home to bed, and Olive would stay up to watch the stars. It was a perfect solution.



Their twilight time became a treasured routine. They shared adventures in the woods, exploring new paths and discovering hidden treasures. Olive would say, "The night is full of wonders." Rusty would reply, "And the evening is my favorite time to be with you." They learned that friends can have different habits and still have lots of fun.



One evening, Rusty brought a tiny lantern from his nest. "I thought this might help us see," he said. Olive smiled. "That's sweet, but I can see in the dark. You're the one who needs it!" They both laughed. They hung the lantern on a branch and it glowed like a little star. They sat together, watching the woods grow dark and quiet.



As the seasons changed, their friendship grew stronger. Rusty told Olive about his daytime games, and Olive told Rusty about the moon and the stars. They learned to appreciate each other's routines. "I'm glad we're different," Rusty said one evening. "If we were the same, I might never have met you." Olive nodded. "Different is good," she said.



And so, every evening at twilight, a squirrel and a little owl meet in the woods. They share adventures, laughter, and friendship. They know that routines can be different, but friendship makes every moment special. Their twilight time is the best part of their day—and they wouldn't change it for anything.