

The Bear and the Little Duck



Jane MEADOW

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Once upon a time, in a sunny forest, a big bear named Bruno lived happily. His fur was warm brown, and his muzzle and belly were lighter tan. He had small round dark brown eyes and a big black nose. Every morning, he walked along a path, humming a soft tune. The forest was full of tall trees and bright flowers, and Bruno loved to explore.



Bruno carried a leaf-green satchel across one shoulder. Inside, he kept berries and nuts for snacks. He was very large and tall, towering over the path, but his gentle smile made everyone feel safe. Birds sang in the branches, and squirrels chattered as he passed. Bruno would wave to them all. He was calm, patient, and kind-hearted, and the forest was his happy home.



One day, as Bruno walked near a muddy path, he heard a tiny, sad sound. 'Peep, peep, help!' It came from a little duckling named Dottie. She was very young and tiny, small enough to sit in a bear's paw. Her fluffy bright yellow down was soft, and a small red ribbon bow was tied around her neck. Her big round shiny black eyes looked up at Bruno.



Dottie had lost her family. She had wandered away and now stood at the edge of a wide muddy path. The mud was deep and sticky, and her small orange webbed feet could not cross it. 'I'm too little,' she cried. 'I can't get across!' Her tiny rounded wings fluttered with worry. Bruno knelt down slowly and gently, his big black nose close to her.



'Don't worry, little one,' Bruno said in his calm, deep voice. 'I can help you.' He looked at the muddy path and then at Dottie. 'Your family must be on the other side. I will carry you across.' Dottie's big shiny eyes grew wide. 'You would do that for me?' she asked. Bruno nodded and smiled his warm, gentle smile.



Bruno carefully scooped up Dottie in his huge paw. She felt as light as a feather. Her fluffy yellow down tickled his nose, and her red ribbon bow stood out against his brown fur. 'Hold on tight,' he said softly. Dottie nestled into his warm paw, feeling safe. 'I'm ready,' she peeped, and Bruno stepped into the mud.



The mud squished and squelched under Bruno's big feet. He walked slowly and steadily, holding Dottie high so she would not get dirty. 'Are you okay?' he asked. 'Yes,' Dottie chirped, 'but it's very muddy!' Bruno laughed a low, rumble laugh. 'Just a little further,' he said. His soft, rounded body moved carefully through the sticky path.



On the other side of the mud, Dottie's family was waiting. They quacked and flapped their wings when they saw her. 'Dottie! Dottie!' they called. Dottie wiggled with joy in Bruno's paw. 'There they are!' she said. Bruno stepped out of the mud and gently set her down on the soft grass. Dottie's family rushed over, quacking happily.



Dottie's mother hugged her with soft wings. 'Where have you been?' she asked. Dottie pointed her tiny orange beak at Bruno. 'This kind bear helped me cross the muddy path!' she said. Her family looked up at Bruno with grateful eyes. 'Thank you, big bear,' they said. 'You are very kind.' Bruno's cheeks turned a little pink under his fur.



Dottie turned to Bruno and gave him a big smile. 'Thank you, Bruno,' she said. 'You are my hero.' She fluffed her yellow down and adjusted her red ribbon bow. 'Will you come and play with us sometimes?' she asked. Bruno's small round eyes twinkled. 'I would like that very much,' he said. 'I'd love to be your friend.'



From that day on, Bruno and Dottie were best friends. Every afternoon, Dottie would waddle to the edge of the mud, and Bruno would lift her gently and carry her across. They would sit by the pond and talk. Dottie told Bruno about her family, and Bruno told Dottie about the forest. They laughed and shared berries from Bruno's leaf-green satchel.



One day, Dottie brought Bruno a gift. It was a tiny flower she had picked with her orange beak. 'For you,' she said, 'because you are kind.' Bruno carefully took the flower and tucked it behind his ear. 'Thank you, Dottie,' he said. 'I will keep it forever.' Dottie beamed, her big shiny eyes sparkling with happiness.



The other animals in the forest noticed their friendship. 'A bear and a duckling?' they said. 'How strange!' But then they saw how kind Bruno was to Dottie, and how happy Dottie made Bruno. They realized that friendship can come in many shapes and sizes. Bruno and Dottie didn't mind what others thought. They were happy together.



Bruno learned that even a big bear could be gentle and helpful. Dottie learned that even a tiny duckling could find a friend in unexpected places. They showed everyone that kindness can create wonderful friendships. The forest was a happier place with the two of them in it, and their friendship grew stronger every day.



And so, in the sunny forest, Bruno and Dottie remained the best of friends. They helped each other and shared many adventures. Whenever someone needed help, Bruno and Dottie were there, ready to lend a paw or a wing. Their story spread through the woods, reminding everyone that kindness can create unexpected friendships.



So if you ever find yourself lost and sad, remember Bruno and Dottie. Remember that a kind heart can light up the darkest path. And remember that a big bear and a little duckling can be the best of friends. For kindness is a gift that brings us all together, no matter how different we may seem.