

The Mouse and the Duckling



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In a big, sunny garden full of flowers, there lived a small mouse named Minnie. She had soft grey fur, round pink ears, and a tiny red scarf around her neck. Minnie knew every hidden pathway in the garden, from the tall sunflower row to the secret tunnel under the hedge. She carried a little brown satchel for treasures she found. Life was quiet and happy, and Minnie liked to explore.



One morning, Minnie heard a tiny, wobbly sound near the rose bushes. It went 'peep, peep, peep!' Minnie peeked through the leaves and saw a fluffy yellow duckling. The duckling had a light blue ribbon bow around her neck and big, dark, worried eyes. She was about the size of a teacup, and she looked very lost. 'Oh dear,' said Minnie. 'Are you all alone?'



'I'm Dottie,' the duckling said with a sniffle. 'I was following my family, but I stopped to look at a butterfly, and now I can't find them.' Her little orange beak quivered. Minnie's heart felt soft and warm. 'Don't worry,' she said. 'I know this garden better than anyone. I'll help you find your family.' Dottie's eyes grew bright with hope.



Minnie took Dottie's wing and led her down a narrow path between tall, nodding sunflowers. The sunflowers made a golden tunnel, and bees buzzed lazily around them. 'Stay close,' said Minnie. 'The garden is big, but I know every shortcut.' Dottie waddled as fast as her little webbed feet could go. She felt a little braver with Minnie beside her.



They came to a row of bushes with low branches. 'We can go under here,' said Minnie. 'It's a secret path that only small creatures use.' Dottie looked at the dark space and hesitated. 'Is it safe?' she whispered. 'Very safe,' said Minnie. 'I use it all the time.' So Dottie ducked her fluffy head and followed Minnie under the bushes, where the leaves made a soft, green roof.



On the other side, they found a patch of bright flowers. Dottie gasped. 'So many colors!' she said. Minnie smiled. 'My garden is full of surprises.' They rested for a moment, and Minnie shared a few seeds from her satchel. Dottie had never tasted seeds before, but she liked them. 'You're a good friend,' said Dottie. Minnie's pink nose twitched happily.



As they walked, Minnie told Dottie about the garden's secrets. 'Over there is the stone wall where lizards sun themselves,' she said. 'And under that log is a family of beetles.' Dottie listened with wide eyes. She had never met anyone who knew so much. 'You must be very clever,' said Dottie. Minnie felt proud, but she also felt happy to share.



Suddenly, Dottie stopped. 'I hear something!' she said. They listened. From far away came a faint 'quack, quack!' Dottie's heart jumped. 'That sounds like my family!' But the sound was coming from the other side of a thick hedge. Minnie looked at the hedge. 'I know a way through,' she said. 'Follow me!'



Minnie led Dottie to a tiny gap at the bottom of the hedge. It was just big enough for a small mouse and a little duckling. 'Squeeze through here,' said Minnie. Dottie pushed her fluffy body through the gap. It tickled, and she giggled. On the other side, the garden opened up to a beautiful pond. The quacking was louder now.



By the pond, a mother duck and five ducklings were swimming in circles, looking worried. 'My family!' cried Dottie. She ran as fast as her little legs could carry her. 'Dottie! Dottie!' quacked the mother duck. 'We were so worried!' The ducklings swam to the shore to greet their sister. Dottie hugged them all with her stubby wings.



Dottie turned to Minnie. 'You found them!' she said. 'You led me all the way through the garden.' Minnie felt shy. 'I only showed you the paths,' she said. 'But you were brave and followed me.' The mother duck thanked Minnie again and again. 'You are a very kind mouse,' she said. Minnie's red scarf fluttered in the breeze.



Dottie gave Minnie a big, fluffy hug. 'Will you come and visit us at the pond?' she asked. 'I would like that,' said Minnie. 'And I will show you more secret paths.' Dottie's family quacked happily. Minnie waved goodbye as Dottie swam off with her family, looking back and smiling. Minnie felt warm inside, even though she was very small.



As Minnie walked home through the garden, she thought about the day. She had always known every hidden pathway, but she had never used them to help a friend before. It felt good. She realized that even a small mouse can give very important help. Her satchel felt a little lighter, but her heart felt full and happy.



Back at her cozy nest under the rose bush, Minnie tied her red scarf neatly. She thought of Dottie's happy eyes and the way the duckling had grown braver with every step. Minnie had made a new friend, and she had helped a family find each other. It was the best adventure she had ever had, and it had all started with a tiny 'peep'.



The next morning, Minnie found a small, shiny feather by her door. It was from Dottie. Minnie smiled and tucked it into her satchel. She knew she would visit the pond soon. And she knew that no matter how small you are, you can always help a friend. That is a very big thing indeed.



And so, in the big, sunny garden, a little mouse and a little duckling became the best of friends. Minnie still knew every hidden pathway, and Dottie still wore her blue ribbon bow. But now they explored together, side by side. For even the smallest friends can give the most important help, and that is the best kind of friendship of all.