

# The Bear's Owl Friend



Jane MEADOW

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In a quiet forest, tall trees whispered to each other. A big brown bear named Bruno lived there. He had thick warm fur, a tan muzzle, and round dark eyes that always looked a little sleepy. Every morning, Bruno woke up and yawned. Every night, he slept. He had never seen the dark. He knew nothing about the nighttime forest.



One evening, as the sun went down, Bruno sat by his den and rubbed his eyes. He heard a soft whooshing sound. A small grey owl landed on a branch above him. The owl had huge golden eyes and a speckled chest. "Hello," said the owl. "I am Oliver. Why are you awake?" Bruno blinked. "I don't know," he said. "I usually sleep."



Oliver tilted his head. "You sleep all night? Then you have never heard the crickets sing or the frogs croak. You have never felt the wind in the trees after dark." Bruno shook his big head. "No," he said. "I have never seen the night at all." Oliver's golden eyes twinkled. "Would you like to?" he asked. Bruno nodded slowly. "Yes," he said. "I would."



When the sky turned deep blue, Oliver said, "Follow me." Bruno stood up. He was as big as a small car, and his paws were huge and soft. He followed the little owl into the trees. The forest looked different at night. Shadows danced, and the moon shone silver. Bruno felt a little clumsy, but he trusted Oliver. "Where are we going?" he whispered.



Oliver led Bruno to a quiet clearing. "Listen," he said. Bruno listened. At first, he heard nothing. Then, a tiny sound started. Chirp, chirp, chirp. "Those are crickets," Oliver said. "They rub their wings together to sing." Bruno smiled. "It sounds like tiny bells," he said. He tried to chirp back, but bears are not good at chirping.



Next, Oliver took Bruno to a pond. "Now listen," he said. From the water came a deep croak, croak, croak. "Those are frogs," Oliver said. "They sing to each other in the dark." Bruno listened carefully. He had never heard frogs before. "They sound like little drums," he said. He tried to croak, but it came out as a big rumble. Oliver chuckled. "Almost!" he said.



Then Oliver said, "Listen to the wind." A gentle breeze moved through the trees. Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. "The wind talks to the leaves," Oliver said. Bruno closed his eyes and listened. The sound was soft and steady. "It's like a song," he said. "A big, quiet song." Oliver nodded. "The night is full of songs," he said. "You just have to listen."



Bruno's sleepy eyes were wide open now. He loved the night sounds. "This is wonderful," he said. "I never knew the dark could be so friendly." Oliver puffed out his speckled chest. "I am glad you like it," he said. "The night is my home." Bruno looked around. "But I am getting hungry," he said. "Do you know where to find food at night?"



Oliver shook his head. "I know insects and mice," he said. "But I don't know much about berries." Bruno's eyes lit up. "I know all about berries!" he said. "I can show you the best berry patches in the forest. They are my favorite places." Oliver's golden eyes grew wide. "I would like that," he said. "I have never tasted a berry."



Bruno led Oliver through the trees. He knew every path. Soon, they reached a sunny patch full of bushes. "Here," Bruno said. "These are blueberry bushes. The berries are small and sweet." He gently picked a berry with his big paw and gave it to Oliver. Oliver tasted it. "Mmm!" he said. "It's delicious!" Bruno beamed. "Try these raspberries too," he said.



Oliver tasted raspberries and blackberries. He loved them all. "You are a berry expert," he said. Bruno felt proud. "And you are a night expert," he said. "We make a good team." They sat together in the berry patch. The moon shone down, and the crickets sang. Bruno did not feel sleepy at all. He was having too much fun with his new friend.



As the sky began to lighten, Bruno yawned. "The night is ending," Oliver said. "The sun will come up soon." Bruno nodded. "I should go to sleep," he said. "But I don't want to forget everything you taught me." Oliver smiled. "You won't forget," he said. "The night will always be here. And so will I." They promised to meet again the next evening.



The next night, Bruno woke up excited. He hurried to the clearing. Oliver was waiting. "Hello, friend!" Bruno said. "I remembered the cricket song!" Oliver laughed. "And I remembered the berry patch!" he said. "Let's visit it again." They went to the berries and ate together. Bruno listened to the frogs and the wind. He was learning more every night.



One evening, Oliver said, "I have a surprise." He led Bruno to a new part of the forest. "Listen," he said. There was a new sound: hoo, hoo, hoo. "That's another owl," Oliver said. "My cousin!" Bruno listened. "It's beautiful," he said. "Now I know four night sounds." Oliver nodded. "And I know three kinds of berries," he said. "We are both learning."



As the nights went by, Bruno and Oliver became the best of friends. They shared their knowledge. Bruno showed Oliver where the juiciest berries grew. Oliver showed Bruno the secrets of the night. They laughed and played under the moon. "Friends can teach each other," Bruno said. "And have fun together," Oliver added. They knew they would always be friends.



And so, in the quiet forest, a big bear and a small owl stayed friends. Bruno still slept during the day, but he never forgot the night. Oliver still loved the dark, but he never forgot the berries. They learned that sharing what you know makes friendship stronger. And every night, when the crickets sang, they smiled. The forest was full of songs, and they knew them all.

Happy Hierpaly endcey!