



The Wizard and the Whispering Woods

**A Tale of Talking Animals, Small
Kindnesses and Very Big Adventures**

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Dedication

For every child who has ever stopped to listen to a bird,
rescued a tiny creature,
or wondered what the animals might say
if only we could understand them.

May we always remember that kindness belongs
not only to people,
but to every living thing.

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Welcome to the Whispering Woods

Not far from the busy streets of NDG, beyond the last row of houses and behind a crooked wooden fence, there was a forest.

Most people believed it was an ordinary forest.

It had tall trees, mossy stones, winding paths and a stream that seemed to forget where it was going. Birds sang in the branches. Squirrels chased one another through the leaves. Frogs sat in puddles looking as though they were waiting for someone to ask their opinion.

But the forest was not ordinary.

It was listening.

And sometimes, when the wind was quiet and the person walking beneath the trees had a kind heart, the forest whispered back.

One morning, the Wizard of NDG entered the woods wearing his short-sleeved NDG shirt, olive-green pants and well-worn red sneakers. His satchel hung across his shoulder, and inside it were the things he carried everywhere: a notebook, a pencil, a little string and a sandwich he had promised himself he would not eat before lunchtime.

He had no wand.

He had no magic spells.

He simply noticed things other people sometimes missed.

That day, the Wizard expected to take a peaceful walk.

Instead, he met a furious robin, a forgetful chipmunk, a worried frog, a very polite skunk and a raccoon with far too many ideas.

Before long, he discovered something astonishing.

Every animal in the forest could talk.

The surprising part was not that the animals had voices.

The surprising part was how much they had to say.

The Forest Begins to Whisper

The Wizard of NDG had been walking for less than five minutes when he heard someone shout:

“Stop!”

He stopped.

“Not there!”

He lifted one foot.

“No! The other there!”

The Wizard looked around. No one was on the path.

“Who said that?”

“I did.”

A robin landed on a low branch directly in front of him. She had a bright orange chest, a tiny pointed beak and the impatient expression of someone who had already explained everything twice.

The Wizard stared.

“Did you just speak?”

“Of course I spoke,” said the robin. “How else would I tell you that you are standing on my breakfast?”

The Wizard looked beneath his shoe. A very frightened worm wriggled between two leaves.

“Oh!” he said, quickly stepping aside. “I’m terribly sorry.”

“You should be,” said the robin. “Do you have any idea how difficult it is to find a good worm before noon?”

“I’m afraid I don’t.”

“Very difficult.”

The worm disappeared into the soil.

The robin gasped.

“My breakfast!”

“I think he was rather hoping not to become breakfast,” said the Wizard.

The robin tilted her head.

“That is a surprisingly good point.”

The Wizard opened his notebook.

“What are you doing?” she asked.

“Writing down something I nearly forgot.”

He wrote:

Before taking the next step, look carefully. Someone smaller may be in your way.

The robin flew down and peered at the page.

“Your handwriting is terrible.”

“It becomes worse when birds are watching.”

“I can help with that.”

“How?”

“I will look the other way.”

She turned around—but continued peeking over her shoulder.

The Wizard laughed.

Then the trees rustled.

A squirrel sneezed.

A frog muttered from somewhere near the stream.

High above them, an owl said, "At last."

The Wizard looked up.

"At last what?"

"At last," said the owl, "someone has begun to listen."

All around the Wizard, the forest came alive with voices.

Birds called from the branches.

Mice whispered beneath the leaves.

A chipmunk shouted, "Has anyone seen one hundred and forty-three acorns?"

A skunk quietly said, "Please do not be alarmed."

And from inside a hollow log, a raccoon announced:

"I have had a brilliant idea!"

Every creature in the forest groaned.

The Wizard smiled and tightened the strap of his satchel.

His peaceful walk, he realized, was over.

His adventure had begun.

The Wizard's Note

Kindness begins when we slow down, look carefully and notice the lives around us.



Robin's Missing Breakfast

The Wizard had not walked much farther before he heard frantic flapping above his head.

"Oh dear!"

"Oh no!"

"This is terrible!"

The robin swooped down from a maple branch, flew in a tight circle around the Wizard, and landed on his satchel.

"I've lost it!"

"What have you lost?" asked the Wizard.

"My breakfast!"

"I thought we already discussed your breakfast."

"We did."

"And it escaped."

"It did."

"So perhaps it isn't lost."

The robin blinked.

"I hadn't thought of that."

The Wizard smiled.

"What exactly are you looking for now?"

"A much nicer worm."

The robin fluttered from branch to branch, peering into the grass.

"Have you looked over there?" asked the Wizard.

"Yes."

"And there?"

"Twice."

"And there?"

"Three times."

"Perhaps," said the Wizard, "you're looking so hard that you're frightening all the worms."

The robin stopped hopping.

"Do worms frighten easily?"

"I think they probably do."

The robin puffed out her feathers.

"I suppose I'd be frightened if someone kept shouting, 'Where's my breakfast?'"

Just then, a tiny earthworm poked his head out of the soil.

He looked left.

He looked right.

He saw the robin.

"Good morning," said the worm politely.

The robin smiled.

"Oh... hello."

The worm smiled back.

"What a lovely day."

"It certainly is."

The worm disappeared underground again.

The robin sighed.

"There goes another one."

The Wizard laughed.

"You let him go."

"I know."

"Weren't you hungry?"

"I was."

"Then why?"

The robin watched the little hole where the worm had vanished.

"He was just being so polite."

The Wizard sat on a nearby log.

"You know," he said, "kindness has a funny way of returning."

Before the robin could answer, another robin landed beside her.

"I found a patch of wild berries," she said.

"Far too many for one bird."

"Would you like to share them?"

The robin looked at the Wizard.

Then she smiled.

"I would love to."

The two robins flew away together, laughing as they disappeared into the trees.

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote carefully:

Sometimes the kindness we give away returns in a completely different form.

As he slipped the notebook back into his satchel, he heard a voice from somewhere high in an oak tree.

"Has anyone seen..."

There was a long pause.

"...whatever I was looking for?"

The Wizard smiled.

"I'm guessing that's the chipmunk."

From above came an excited reply.

"It certainly is!"

The Wizard's Note

Kindness is never wasted. It often returns when we least expect it.



The Chipmunk Who Hid Everything

As the Wizard followed the winding path deeper into the Whispering Woods, he heard leaves rustling high above his head.

Then...

An acorn bounced off his shoulder.

Another landed beside his shoe.

A third dropped squarely into his satchel.

"Sorry!" called a tiny voice.

The Wizard looked up.

A little chipmunk clung upside down to an oak branch, holding three acorns, two pinecones, a feather, a shiny marble and what looked suspiciously like someone's missing sock.

"You seem rather busy," said the Wizard.

"I am!" squeaked the chipmunk.

"Doing what?"

"Losing everything."

The Wizard blinked.

"I thought you were collecting things."

"I am."

"So why are you losing them?"

"Because I hide them."

"That sounds sensible."

"It would be," sighed the chipmunk, "if I could remember where."

He scrambled down the tree and emptied his tiny paws onto the ground.

"I've hidden one hundred and forty-three acorns."

"That's impressive."

"I've found eleven."

"What about the others?"

"I have absolutely no idea."

The Wizard couldn't help smiling.

"Perhaps you've made little maps?"

"I hid those too."

"You hid... your maps?"

"I didn't want anyone finding them."

"Did anyone?"

"No."

"Not even you?"

"Especially not me."

The Wizard laughed so hard that a blue butterfly landed on his shoulder.

The chipmunk scratched behind one ear.

"I've also misplaced twelve pinecones..."

"Oh?"

"...a mushroom..."

"Anything else?"

"...my favourite pebble."

"You have a favourite pebble?"

"It has a face."

"It does?"

"Only if you look at it sideways."

Just then the robin swooped down onto a nearby branch.

"I've found another berry patch!" she chirped.

The chipmunk gasped.

"I hid berries there!"

"They've become berry bushes," she replied cheerfully.

The chipmunk looked astonished.

"So... I planted them?"

"It appears so."

The Wizard knelt beside him.

"Perhaps not everything you've forgotten is really lost."

"What do you mean?"

"Sometimes the good things we leave behind continue growing."

The chipmunk looked around.

Everywhere he turned were tiny oak saplings, little berry bushes and young wildflowers.

"Did I do all that?"

"I think," said the Wizard gently, "you've been planting the future without even knowing it."

The chipmunk's eyes grew wide.

"I thought I was forgetful."

"You are."

"I thought I was making mistakes."

"You were."

"So..."

The Wizard smiled.

"Sometimes mistakes become forests."

The chipmunk looked proudly at the tiny trees surrounding them.

"I think," he declared, "I'm going to lose a few more acorns."

The robin burst into laughter.

"Maybe just remember where half of them are."

"That's a splendid compromise," said the Wizard.

The chipmunk nodded seriously.

"I'll probably forget."

Everyone laughed.

Even the trees seemed to chuckle as their leaves danced in the breeze.

The Wizard took out his notebook.

He carefully wrote:

Sometimes the good we leave behind keeps growing long after we've forgotten about it.

Just then there was a tremendous splash from somewhere ahead.

A voice croaked dramatically,

"My puddle has disappeared!"

The robin whispered,

"That'll be Frog."

The chipmunk grinned.

"He thinks every puddle is the most important puddle in the forest."

The Wizard's Note

The seeds of kindness often grow into beautiful things we may never see.



Frog's Very Important Puddle

The Wizard followed the sound of splashing until he reached a little clearing beside a stream.

There, standing ankle-deep in what could barely be called a puddle, was a bright green frog.

He was wearing a large lily pad like a hat.

He looked absolutely miserable.

"Oh dear," sighed the frog.

"Oh dear, oh dear."

The Wizard walked over.

"Good morning."

"It most certainly is not."

"It looks rather sunny."

"Exactly."

The Wizard blinked.

"The sunshine is the problem."

"The sunshine?"

"It keeps drying my puddle."

The Wizard looked down.

The puddle was indeed very small.

"So," asked the Wizard gently, "why not swim in the stream?"

The frog gasped.

"The stream?"

"Yes."

"It moves."

"I've noticed."

"I don't approve of moving water."

The Wizard tried not to laugh.

"Why not?"

"You never know where it might take you."

"I imagine... downstream."

"Exactly!"

The frog shivered dramatically.

"Far too adventurous."

The Wizard sat beside him.

"What is your name?"

"Frederick."

"It's nice to meet you, Frederick."

"I wish I could say the same."

The Wizard smiled.

"You don't?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because every time I meet someone, something unexpected happens."

Just then Robin landed beside them.

"Oh!"

She looked at the puddle.

"It's even smaller than yesterday."

Frederick sighed.

"I know."

Chipmunk scampered into the clearing carrying an enormous pinecone.

"I've forgotten where I put breakfast!"

"You usually do," said Robin.

"I know."

Frederick looked at the Wizard.

"You see?"

"What?"

"Unexpected."

The Wizard laughed.

"You know, Frederick..."

"What?"

"I think you've been looking at the wrong puddle."

"There is only one puddle."

The Wizard pointed toward the trees.

"Would you hop over there with me?"

Frederick frowned.

"It seems unnecessarily hop-like."

"You are a frog."

"That is difficult to argue with."

With one very reluctant hop...

...and another...

...and one extremely dramatic sigh...

Frederick followed.

The trees opened into a beautiful little pond.

It sparkled beneath the morning sun.

Water lilies floated across its surface.

Dragonflies danced above the water.

Tiny fish swam beneath the lily pads.

Frederick stood perfectly still.

"This..."

he whispered,

"...is magnificent."

The Wizard smiled.

"It seems your puddle was hiding a pond."

Frederick slowly waded into the cool water.

He paddled.

He floated.

He leapt onto a lily pad.

Then he leapt to another.

Then another.

Soon he was laughing louder than anyone.

"I LOVE MOVING WATER!"

Robin folded her wings.

"That was quick."

Chipmunk nodded.

"He changes his mind faster than I lose acorns."

Frederick looked at the Wizard.

"I almost stayed in my tiny puddle forever."

"I'm glad you didn't."

"So am I."

The frog looked across the pond.

"I think..."

he said thoughtfully,

"...sometimes the world is much bigger than our worries."

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

Sometimes we discover wonderful places only after we become brave enough to leave the comfortable ones behind.

Just then...

A sweet little voice floated through the forest.

"Excuse me..."

The Wizard turned.

Standing beside a blackberry bush was a tiny black-and-white skunk.

She looked terribly shy.

"I hope I'm not bothering anyone..."

Robin whispered,

"That's Penelope."

Chipmunk smiled.

"She apologizes before she says hello."

The Wizard's Note

Sometimes courage is simply taking one small hop toward something new.



Penelope Says Sorry

The Wizard had barely left the pond when he heard the tiniest voice.

"Excuse me..."

He turned around.

Nothing.

"Over here..."

He looked down.

Peeking timidly from behind a blackberry bush was the smallest skunk he had ever seen.

She wore a little white daisy tucked behind one ear.

"I hope I'm not interrupting."

"You aren't," said the Wizard warmly.

"I'm terribly sorry if I startled you."

"You didn't."

"I'm sorry."

The Wizard smiled.

"What are you sorry for?"

"Oh..."

She thought for a moment.

"I'm not entirely sure."

Robin landed on a nearby branch.

"Good morning, Penelope."

"I'm sorry."

Chipmunk hurried over carrying three pinecones and half an apple.

"Hello, Penelope!"

"I'm sorry."

Frederick the Frog paddled to the edge of the pond.

"Lovely weather!"

"I'm terribly sorry."

The Wizard blinked.

"You apologize quite a lot."

Penelope looked embarrassed.

"I know."

"Why?"

She lowered her eyes.

"I'm a skunk."

"So?"

"Sometimes people run away before they've even met me."

Robin folded her wings.

"They've never met you."

"I know."

"They're only guessing."

"I know."

"They're wrong."

"I know..."

She sighed.

"...but it still hurts."

The Wizard sat beside her.

"May I ask you something?"

"Of course."

"Have you ever sprayed anyone?"

Penelope's eyes grew wide.

"Oh my goodness!"

"No!"

"Not even once?"

"I wouldn't dream of it."

Chipmunk scratched his head.

"Then why does everyone worry?"

Penelope looked down.

"They think I will."

The Wizard picked a tiny white daisy growing beside the path.

"Do you know what I see?"

"What?"

"A skunk who loves flowers."

Robin added,

"And blackberry pie."

Chipmunk grinned.

"And saying sorry."

Frederick laughed.

"Far too much."

Everyone giggled.

Penelope giggled too.

It was such a soft little laugh that even the butterflies seemed to pause and listen.

Just then...

A frightened baby rabbit darted out from the bushes.

Behind him, a loud crack echoed through the woods.

The little rabbit jumped straight into Penelope's arms.

Without thinking, Penelope wrapped her paws around him.

"It's alright," she whispered.

"I'm here."

The rabbit stopped trembling.

He looked up at her.

"Thank you."

Penelope smiled.

For several wonderful seconds...

She forgot to apologize.

The Wizard quietly opened his notebook.

He wrote:

The kindest hearts are often hidden behind the things others misunderstand.

Penelope looked at the page.

"That's beautiful."

"It reminds me of someone."

She smiled.

"Who?"

"You."

She blushed so deeply that even the robin laughed.

Just then there was an enormous crash somewhere farther into the woods.

Branches shook.

Leaves fluttered.

Chipmunk sighed.

"Oh dear."

Robin rolled her eyes.

"I know that sound."

Frederick groaned.

"What now?"

Robin smiled.

"Raccoon has had another brilliant idea."

The Wizard's Note

**Never judge someone by what you think they might do.
Judge them by the kindness they choose to show.**



Rascal's Brilliant Bad Idea

The loud crash echoed through the Whispering Woods.

Birds flew from the trees.

Leaves rained onto the forest floor.

Somewhere ahead, someone shouted,

"I meant to do that!"

Robin sighed.

"That's Rascal."

Chipmunk nodded.

"It usually is."

Penelope smiled politely.

"I hope he's alright."

Frederick shook his head.

"I hope we're alright."

The Wizard hurried toward the sound.

He found a raccoon sitting upside down inside an empty wooden barrel.

Only his striped tail was sticking out.

"Good morning," said the Wizard.

"I'm not entirely certain it is," replied the barrel.

The Wizard lifted it gently.

Out popped the raccoon.

Leaves clung to his ears.

Twigs stuck out of his fur.

He grinned from ear to ear.

"Excellent!"

"Excellent?" asked the Wizard.

"My experiment worked."

"What experiment?"

"I wanted to know whether a barrel could roll downhill by itself."

"And?"

"It can."

The Wizard smiled.

"Were you inside it?"

"I thought someone should supervise."

Robin landed on a stump.

"You always supervise your own disasters."

"They're called adventures."

"They're called disasters."

"Tomato..."

"That's not how that saying goes."

Rascal ignored her.

"I've had another brilliant idea."

Every animal froze.

Even the wind seemed to stop.

Penelope whispered,

"Oh dear..."

Chipmunk quietly hid behind the Wizard.

Frederick slipped beneath a lily pad.

The Wizard smiled.

"What is your idea?"

Rascal pointed excitedly toward the tallest oak tree in the forest.

"I'm going to build..."

He paused dramatically.

"...a tree elevator!"

Robin blinked.

"A what?"

"A tree elevator!"

"So nobody has to climb anymore."

Chipmunk scratched his head.

"But..."

"We're squirrels."

"And chipmunks."

"And birds."

"We climb."

"Exactly!"

said Rascal.

"Think how much easier it would be."

Frederick called from the pond.

"I don't climb trees."

"You could visit the top!"

"I don't want to."

"You might."

"I won't."

Rascal had already gathered vines, branches and old wooden wheels.

The Wizard watched quietly.

For nearly an hour, Rascal tied knots.

Pulled ropes.

Hammered sticks together with a smooth rock.

Finally he stood proudly beside his invention.

"It is magnificent."

It certainly looked...

interesting.

Robin tilted her head.

"Is it safe?"

"Almost certainly."

"Almost?"

"It depends."

"On what?"

"Whether anyone uses it."

Chipmunk whispered,

"I vote no."

Rascal climbed onto the little wooden platform.

"Observe!"

He pulled a rope.

The platform rose.

Higher...

Higher...

Higher...

Until suddenly—

SNAP!

The vine broke.

The platform tipped.

Rascal tumbled into a huge pile of soft autumn leaves with a tremendous...

WHOOMPH!

Silence.

Then two bright eyes appeared above the leaves.

Rascal smiled.

"Good news."

"What?" asked the Wizard.

"I've discovered one design that definitely doesn't work."

Everyone burst into laughter.

Even Rascal laughed louder than anyone.

The Wizard helped him out of the leaf pile.

"Do you know what I like most about you?"

"What?"

"You aren't afraid to try."

Rascal dusted off his fur.

"I also don't mind starting over."

The Wizard nodded.

"That's how wonderful ideas are born."

Robin smiled.

"So today's idea wasn't wonderful?"

"Oh no," laughed the Wizard.

"It was wonderfully educational."

Rascal beamed.

"I like educational."

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

Every mistake teaches us something — especially when we laugh, learn, and try again.

Just then...

A loud chopping sound echoed through the woods.

CHOMP.

CHOMP.

CHOMP.

Chipmunk smiled.

"I know who that is."

Robin nodded.

"Only one animal builds faster than Rascal."

Frederick laughed.

"And much better."

The Wizard looked toward the river.

"Shall we go and meet the beaver?"

Everyone answered together.

"Yes!"

The Wizard's Note

Mistakes are not the end of an adventure. They are often the beginning of a better idea.



Benjamin Builds Too Much

The chopping grew louder.

CHOMP.

CHOMP.

CHOMP.

The Wizard and his friends followed the sound until they reached the river.

There, wearing a little twig tucked proudly behind one ear, stood the largest beaver the Wizard had ever seen.

He was dragging a branch nearly twice as long as he was.

"Good morning!" called the Wizard.

The beaver stopped.

"Please don't distract me."

"Oh?"

"I'm building."

"What are you building?"

"A dam."

"It already looks wonderful."

Benjamin nodded.

"It does."

"So why are you adding more?"

"Because it could be even more wonderful."

Robin landed beside him.

"You've been building for three days."

"I know."

Chipmunk tilted his head.

"It already stretches across the whole stream."

"I know."

Frederick floated happily nearby.

"My pond has never been bigger."

"I know."

Penelope smiled.

"The fish seem happy."

"I know."

Rascal grinned.

"I think it needs a tower!"

Benjamin looked horrified.

"It absolutely does not need a tower."

Rascal shrugged.

"It was only a suggestion."

Benjamin wiped his brow.

"There is always one more log."

One more branch.

One more stone.

One more improvement."

The Wizard watched quietly.

Benjamin worked all morning.

By lunchtime he looked exhausted.

His shoulders drooped.

His tail hung low.

Yet every time he finished one section...

He found another to fix.

The Wizard sat beside him.

"May I ask you something?"

Benjamin nodded.

"When will your dam be finished?"

The beaver looked puzzled.

"I hadn't thought about that."

"If you keep adding to it..."

"...I'll never stop."

The Wizard smiled gently.

"Sometimes something doesn't need to be perfect."

Benjamin looked across the water.

The dam was strong.

The pond was beautiful.

The fish were swimming happily.

The ducks had built nests among the reeds.

Dragonflies danced over the water.

Even Frederick had invited three cousins to visit.

Benjamin sighed.

"I think..."

"...I forgot why I was building it."

"Why were you?"

"So everyone would have a safe home."

The Wizard nodded.

"Do they?"

Benjamin smiled.

"They do."

"Then perhaps..."

"...it's finished."

At that moment, Robin fluttered down carrying a tiny flower.

She tucked it into a crack between two logs.

"There."

Chipmunk added a smooth pebble.

Penelope placed a daisy near the water.

Frederick rested a lily pad against the bank.

Even Rascal carefully balanced a funny-looking stick on top.

Benjamin laughed.

"You've all helped."

The Wizard smiled.

"No."

"We've all celebrated."

Benjamin stepped back.

For the very first time...

He stopped working.

The whole forest admired the beautiful dam together.

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

The best work is not the work we never finish. It is the work that brings others together.

Just then...

There was a tiny squeaky voice from the bushes.

"Excuse me..."

Everyone looked around.

No one could see who had spoken.

"Down here..."

They looked lower.

Still nothing.

"Even lower..."

At the foot of an old pine tree stood the smallest porcupine anyone had ever seen.

She looked up with hopeful eyes.

"I have a rather unusual problem..."

Rascal whispered,

"I bet it's brilliant."

The Wizard's Note

We build wonderful things not to make them perfect—but to make life better for others.



Penny Needs a Hug

The little porcupine stood nervously beneath the tallest pine tree in the Whispering Woods.

She was so small that the Wizard almost hadn't seen her.

She looked up with hopeful eyes.

"Hello," she whispered.

The Wizard smiled.

"Hello."

"I'm Penny."

"It's very nice to meet you, Penny."

She shuffled one tiny paw.

"I've heard wonderful things about you."

"I hope they're true."

"They are."

She smiled.

"I asked Robin."

Robin puffed out her chest proudly.

"I only tell the truth."

Chipmunk nodded.

"Mostly."

Robin pretended not to hear him.

The Wizard knelt so he was eye level with Penny.

"You said you had a problem."

Penny nodded.

"I do."

"What is it?"

She looked down at her little feet.

"I've never hugged anyone."

The forest became very quiet.

Frederick blinked.

"Never?"

Penny shook her head.

"I'm afraid I'll poke them."

Penelope's eyes filled with sympathy.

"Oh..."

Rascal scratched behind one ear.

"I've never thought about that."

Benjamin Beaver rubbed his chin thoughtfully.

"That is quite a puzzle."

The Wizard smiled gently.

"Do you want to hug someone?"

"Oh yes."

"Who?"

"My grandmother."

Everyone looked surprised.

"She tells the softest bedtime stories."

Penny smiled.

"She says every porcupine should hug someone they love."

Robin asked,

"So why don't you?"

Penny sighed.

"I don't want to hurt her."

The Wizard thought quietly for a moment.

Then he smiled.

"I have an idea."

Rascal's ears stood up.

"Is it brilliant?"

"I hope so."

Benjamin chuckled.

"Those are usually the best kind."

The Wizard picked up two large pillows of soft moss that had fallen from an old tree.

He tucked one beneath each arm.

Then he smiled.

"Would you like to practice?"

Penny looked worried.

"What if I poke you?"

"I'll let you know."

Very carefully...

Very slowly...

Penny wrapped her tiny arms around the Wizard.

Nothing happened.

The moss cushions gently rested against her quills.

The Wizard smiled.

"That was a wonderful hug."

"It was?"

"It certainly was."

Penny's eyes sparkled.

She hugged Robin.

Robin giggled.

She hugged Chipmunk.

He squeaked with delight.

She hugged Benjamin.

He laughed so hard his tail slapped the ground.

She hugged Penelope.

Penelope smiled so broadly that her daisy almost fell off.

Even Frederick wanted one.

"I've never hugged a porcupine before."

"You haven't?"

"No."

"Neither have I."

The hug made them both laugh.

Just then, an elderly porcupine slowly appeared along the forest path.

Her fur was silver.

Her smile was warm.

"Penny?"

"Grandmother!"

Penny stopped.

She looked at the Wizard.

"What if..."

The Wizard gently nodded.

"You already know how."

Penny took one careful step.

Then another.

Her grandmother opened her arms.

The two porcupines hugged.

Very gently.

Very carefully.

Very happily.

Neither one was poked.

Robin wiped away a little tear.

Chipmunk sniffled.

"I think..."

he said,

"...I've got something in my eye."

"You've got two pine needles in your whiskers," said Rascal.

"Oh."

"That explains it."

Everyone laughed.

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

Sometimes love simply asks us to be gentle.

As he closed the notebook, a deep voice drifted down from high in an ancient oak tree.

"An interesting lesson..."

Everyone looked up.

Perched silently on a thick branch sat an old owl with bright golden eyes.

"I've been watching."

Robin whispered,

"That's Oliver."

Frederick smiled.

"He always asks impossible questions."

The owl blinked once.

Then he said,

"I have one for the Wizard."

The Wizard's Note

The gentlest hugs are given not with strength, but with love and care.



Oliver's Impossible Question

The Whispering Woods grew unusually quiet.

Even Rascal stopped talking.

High above the forest, perched on the oldest oak tree anyone could remember, sat Oliver the Owl.

His feathers were silver-brown.

His eyes shone like golden moons.

He blinked once.

Very slowly.

Then again.

Robin whispered,

"He only blinks when he's thinking."

Chipmunk looked up.

"How long has he been thinking?"

Robin shrugged.

"I've forgotten."

Oliver finally spoke.

"Wizard."

"Yes?" replied the Wizard.

"I have a question."

Rascal grinned.

"I like questions."

Oliver looked at him.

"No."

"You like answers."

Rascal thought about it.

"That's true."

Oliver turned back to the Wizard.

"What is the strongest thing in the forest?"

The Wizard looked around.

Benjamin pointed proudly to his dam.

"It has to be that."

Frederick puffed out his little chest.

"I've got very strong legs."

Robin flapped her wings.

"Flying takes strength."

Chipmunk held up an enormous acorn.

"I carried this all morning."

Penelope smiled shyly.

"I once pushed a fallen branch off a rabbit's path."

Rascal raised both paws.

"I lifted a barrel!"

"You were inside it," Robin reminded him.

"It still counts."

Everyone laughed.

Oliver waited patiently.

The Wizard looked around the forest.

He touched the trunk of the great oak.

"It's certainly strong."

Oliver nodded.

"It is."

The Wizard picked up a smooth stone.

"This?"

Oliver shook his head.

The Wizard watched the stream.

"No."

He watched the wind bend the branches.

"No."

He watched butterflies dancing among the flowers.

"No."

At last he sat quietly beneath the tree.

Nobody spoke.

Even Rascal.

The forest seemed to hold its breath.

Then...

A tiny green shoot pushed its way through a crack in an old rock.

The Wizard smiled.

"I think I know."

Oliver tilted his head.

"What is stronger than the rock?"

"The little seed."

Robin blinked.

"The seed?"

"It doesn't look strong."

"No," said the Wizard.

"But year after year..."

"...it keeps growing."

"It doesn't fight the rock."

"It simply keeps growing."

Benjamin looked at the tiny plant.

"Eventually..."

"...the rock will crack."

Oliver smiled for the first time.

A very small smile.

Almost too small to notice.

"But not too small to matter."

"You have answered well."

The Wizard smiled.

"I don't think I answered."

"I simply watched."

Oliver nodded.

"The forest teaches those who are willing to look."

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He carefully wrote:

**The strongest things are not always the biggest.
Sometimes they are simply the ones that never give up.**

Oliver spread his great wings.

As he glided silently into the evening sky, one white feather drifted gently to the ground.

The Wizard picked it up.

"I think," whispered Robin,

"that means he likes you."

Chipmunk nodded.

"I think so too."

Rascal grinned.

"I think he should smile more often."

From somewhere above came Oliver's calm voice.

"I heard that."

Everyone burst into laughter.

Just then, Blue Jay swooped through the trees at tremendous speed.

"I've got news!"

he shouted.

"Wonderful news!"

"What is it?" asked the Wizard.

Blue Jay opened his beak.

Then stopped.

"Oh dear..."

"What?"

"I forgot."

Robin sighed.

"This could take a while."

The Wizard's Note

True strength is not always loud or powerful. Sometimes it is simply the courage to keep growing, one day at a time.



Blue Forgets the News

Blue Jay swooped into the clearing like a streak of bright blue lightning.

"I've remembered!"

he shouted.

Everyone jumped.

Robin nearly fell off her branch.

Frederick splashed into the pond.

Chipmunk dropped three acorns.

"What have you remembered?" asked the Wizard.

Blue smiled proudly.

"The wonderful news!"

"Excellent."

"What is it?"

Blue opened his beak.

He blinked.

"Oh dear."

Everyone waited.

Blue scratched his head with one wing.

"I've forgotten again."

Rascal laughed so hard he rolled onto his back.

Benjamin smiled.

"Perhaps the news wasn't quite ready."

Blue looked embarrassed.

"It was incredibly important."

"I'm sure it was," said the Wizard kindly.

"I even practiced saying it while I was flying."

Robin sighed.

"You were singing."

"I was."

"You got distracted."

"I did."

Chipmunk nodded wisely.

"That happens to me."

Robin looked at him.

"You lose acorns."

"I also lose thoughts."

The Wizard smiled.

"What do you usually do when you forget something?"

Blue thought very hard.

"I flap faster."

"Does it help?"

"No."

"I simply forget more quickly."

Everyone laughed.

The Wizard reached into his satchel and pulled out his little notebook.

"I have an idea."

Blue's eyes lit up.

"A brilliant one?"

"I hope so."

He tore out a tiny piece of paper.

Then he handed Blue a little pencil.

"When something important comes to mind..."

"...write it down."

Blue stared at the tiny notebook page.

"I've never thought of that."

Robin smiled.

"I thought you might not."

Blue carefully tucked the paper beneath one wing.

Just then...

His eyes grew wide.

"I REMEMBER!"

Everyone leaned forward.

"The ducklings!"

"What about them?"

"They've wandered away from the river!"

Benjamin looked surprised.

"The little ones?"

"Yes!"

"They're looking for their mother!"

The Wizard stood immediately.

"Then we'd better help."

The whole forest sprang into action.

Robin searched from above.

Chipmunk checked beneath bushes.

Frederick called from every pond.

Penelope searched quietly through the flowers.

Rascal climbed fallen logs.

Benjamin searched along the riverbank.

At last...

Tiny peeping voices answered from a blackberry thicket.

Three fluffy ducklings looked up at the Wizard.

"We were chasing butterflies."

The Wizard smiled.

"I think your mother has been chasing you."

A loud,

QUACK!

echoed across the river.

Mother Duck hurried toward them.

The ducklings raced into her wings.

She smiled gratefully at everyone.

Blue puffed out his chest.

"I remembered!"

Robin laughed.

"You certainly did."

Blue looked at the tiny note tucked beneath his wing.

"I think..."

"...I'm going to keep writing things down."

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

Good ideas sometimes need a little help remembering where they belong.

Blue looked over his shoulder.

"I'll remember that."

Robin smiled.

"You've already written it down."

"Oh."

"That's even better."

Everyone laughed.

Just then...

A little white rabbit came racing through the clearing so quickly that he nearly tumbled over his own feet.

"I'm late!"

he cried.

"I'm terribly, terribly late!"

Frederick blinked.

"Late for what?"

The rabbit stopped.

He looked puzzled.

"|..."

"...don't actually remember."

The Wizard's Note

Even the brightest ideas can fly away unless we take a moment to catch them.



Riley Is Brave for One Minute

The little white rabbit came racing through the Whispering Woods as fast as his long legs could carry him.

"I'm late!"

he cried.

"I'm terribly late!"

The Wizard smiled.

"Late for what?"

Riley stopped so suddenly that he nearly tumbled over his own paws.

He blinked.

He looked left.

He looked right.

"I..."

"...don't remember."

Robin chuckled.

"That seems to happen around here."

Blue Jay puffed out his chest.

"It happened to me yesterday."

"And today," Robin reminded him.

"Oh yes."

Chipmunk hurried over carrying a handful of acorns.

"I forget things all the time."

Riley shook his head.

"My problem isn't forgetting."

"What is it?" asked the Wizard.

"I'm afraid."

"Of what?"

Riley looked around carefully.

"Everything."

Frederick Frog blinked.

"Everything?"

"The shadows."

"The wind."

"The creek."

"The owls."

Oliver cleared his throat high above.

"I have never frightened anyone."

Riley looked up.

"I know."

"I'm frightened anyway."

Oliver nodded thoughtfully.

"That is fair."

Everyone smiled.

The Wizard sat beside Riley.

"Tell me something."

"What?"

"Have you ever been brave?"

Riley laughed nervously.

"Oh goodness, no."

Robin fluttered onto a nearby branch.

"I've seen you rescue a butterfly from a spider web."

Riley looked surprised.

"I did?"

"You certainly did."

Benjamin Beaver nodded.

"You warned me when a tree was about to fall."

"I remember that," said Penelope.

"You stayed beside me during a thunderstorm."

Riley looked confused.

"I was terrified."

"I know," said Penelope.

"So was I."

"You still stayed."

Riley thought quietly.

"I suppose I did."

The Wizard smiled.

"Perhaps courage doesn't mean you aren't afraid."

"What does it mean?"

"It means doing the right thing..."

"...even while you're afraid."

Riley stared at the forest floor.

"I've never thought of it that way."

Just then...

A tiny baby squirrel peeked from behind an old stump.

She looked lost.

"I can't find my mother."

Riley immediately hopped toward her.

"It's alright."

"We'll help."

The little squirrel smiled.

She reached out and held Riley's paw.

The Wizard watched quietly.

Riley never noticed.

He was too busy comforting someone who needed him.

Together, the forest searched.

Robin circled overhead.

Blue called directions from the sky.

Benjamin checked the riverbank.

Chipmunk searched every oak tree.

Rascal climbed fallen logs.

Frederick questioned every frog.

Oliver watched from above.

Finally...

A worried mother squirrel came racing down a pine tree.

"There you are!"

The little squirrel leaped into her arms.

"Thank you!"

she called to Riley.

The little rabbit smiled.

"I wasn't very brave."

Robin laughed.

"You crossed the whole forest."

Blue nodded.

"You spoke first."

Penelope smiled.

"You forgot to be afraid."

Riley blinked.

"I did?"

The Wizard nodded.

"You were busy helping someone else."

Riley looked thoughtfully toward the little squirrel.

"I think..."

"...being kind made me forget to be scared."

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote carefully:

Sometimes courage quietly arrives while we're busy helping someone else.

Just then...

A sweet smell drifted through the Whispering Woods.

Everyone sniffed.

Benjamin smiled.

"Honey."

Frederick's eyes widened.

"Oh dear."

Robin laughed.

"I know exactly who's coming."

A deep cheerful voice echoed through the trees.

"Has anyone seen my picnic basket?"

The Wizard's Note

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is choosing kindness even while you are afraid.



Barnaby's Honey Emergency

The sweet smell drifted through the Whispering Woods.

Robin smiled.

"Here he comes."

The bushes began to shake.

Branches swayed.

Leaves fluttered down like little green raindrops.

Then...

Out stepped the largest bear the Wizard had ever seen.

He carried a picnic basket in one paw.

In the other...

...he held an empty honey pot.

He looked heartbroken.

"Oh dear."

The Wizard smiled.

"Good morning."

Barnaby sighed.

"I'm afraid it isn't."

"What seems to be the trouble?"

Barnaby held up the empty pot.

"My honey."

"What about it?"

"It's gone."

Robin looked inside.

"It certainly is."

Chipmunk peered into the pot.

"I don't think there's even one drop left."

Barnaby nodded sadly.

"I checked twice."

Frederick Frog paddled closer.

"When did you last see it?"

"I was eating it."

"And then?"

"It disappeared."

Rascal scratched behind one ear.

"I believe that's what honey usually does."

Barnaby looked puzzled.

"It does?"

"When you eat it."

"Oh."

Barnaby thought for a moment.

"That explains quite a lot."

Everyone laughed.

The Wizard sat beside the big bear.

"Is honey your favourite food?"

Barnaby smiled.

"Oh yes."

"How much do you like it?"

Barnaby looked thoughtfully toward the sky.

"If happiness had a flavour..."

"...it would taste like honey."

Robin whispered to the Wizard,

"He says that every week."

"I do," Barnaby admitted proudly.

Just then...

A tiny buzzing sound floated through the trees.

Bzzzz...

A little honeybee landed gently on the empty pot.

She looked inside.

Then she looked up at Barnaby.

"Finished already?"

Barnaby looked embarrassed.

"I may have been."

The bee smiled kindly.

"Our hive is having a busy week."

"We've been collecting nectar from every flower in the forest."

Barnaby's eyes sparkled.

"That sounds wonderful."

"It is."

"But we're very tired."

The Wizard looked around the clearing.

Flowers grew everywhere.

Some were beginning to wilt in the warm afternoon sun.

"I wonder..."

he said,

"...if we could help."

Benjamin Beaver carried water from the stream.

Robin and Blue spread wildflower seeds.

Chipmunk carefully planted them.

Penelope gently watered the blossoms.

Frederick splashed cool water with his big webbed feet.

Even Rascal remembered not to step on the flower beds.

"Mostly," Robin whispered.

For the rest of the afternoon...

The forest became a garden.

Butterflies arrived.

Bees danced from flower to flower.

The whole clearing seemed to hum with happiness.

Several days later...

The little bee returned.

She carried the tiniest wooden jar.

"This is for everyone."

Barnaby looked surprised.

"For me?"

"For all of you."

"You helped our flowers."

"We wanted to say thank you."

Barnaby carefully opened the little jar.

Inside was the most beautiful golden honey anyone had ever seen.

He looked at it for a very long time.

Then...

He closed the lid again.

"Aren't you going to eat it?" asked Rascal.

Barnaby smiled.

"Oh yes."

"But first..."

He handed the jar to the Wizard.

"I think happiness tastes even better..."

"...when it's shared."

The Wizard smiled.

"I couldn't agree more."

One tiny spoonful was enough for everyone.

Even Frederick.

"It tastes like sunshine," he said.

The little bee giggled.

"It tastes like teamwork."

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

The sweetest things in life become even sweeter when we share them with others.

Just then...

Something orange flashed between the trees.

It disappeared.

Then reappeared.

Then disappeared again.

Robin smiled knowingly.

"That's Felix."

"The fox?"

"The very one."

Rascal whispered,

"He's clever."

Benjamin nodded.

"Sometimes..."

"...a little too clever."

The Wizard's Note

The sweetest gifts are not the ones we keep—they are the ones we gladly share.



Felix Tells the Truth

An orange tail disappeared behind an old maple tree.

Then two bright amber eyes peeked around the trunk.

Then they disappeared again.

Robin smiled.

"Hello, Felix."

A fox slowly stepped into the clearing.

His coat glowed like autumn leaves, and his white-tipped tail swayed proudly behind him.

He gave everyone a friendly bow.

"Good afternoon."

The Wizard smiled.

"Good afternoon."

Felix smiled back.

"I've been looking for you."

"You have?"

"I need some advice."

Robin whispered,

"That almost never happens."

Felix heard her.

"I heard that."

"I know," Robin replied with a grin.

Felix sighed.

"I've made a mistake."

The forest grew quiet.

"What happened?" asked the Wizard.

Felix looked at the ground.

"I borrowed something."

"From whom?"

"Barnaby."

The great bear looked surprised.

"You did?"

Felix nodded.

"A honey jar."

Barnaby smiled warmly.

"I don't mind lending things."

Felix sighed again.

"I accidentally broke it."

Barnaby blinked.

"Oh."

Felix looked even more uncomfortable.

"So..."

"I hid the pieces."

Rascal scratched his head.

"Why?"

"I didn't want Barnaby to be disappointed."

Barnaby smiled gently.

"I'm not disappointed."

Felix looked confused.

"You're not?"

"I'm disappointed you thought you couldn't tell me."

Felix stared at him.

"I've been worrying about it for three whole days."

Robin tilted her head.

"That's a long time."

Frederick nodded.

"I don't like worrying for three minutes."

The Wizard sat beside Felix.

"May I tell you a secret?"

Felix nodded.

"When we hide mistakes..."

"...they usually become heavier."

Felix thought about that.

"They certainly have."

The Wizard smiled.

"What if we go and find the broken pieces together?"

Felix led everyone to an old hollow log.

Inside lay the cracked honey jar.

Benjamin Beaver examined it carefully.

"I think I can fix this."

Chipmunk gathered little sticks.

Penelope found soft tree sap.

Rascal collected smooth pebbles.

Robin brought tiny feathers to brush away the dust.

Together they worked patiently.

By sunset...

The honey jar looked beautiful.

One tiny golden line showed where it had once been broken.

Barnaby admired it.

"I like it even better now."

Felix blinked.

"You do?"

"It reminds me."

"Of what?"

"That friends help one another."

Felix smiled.

"I should have told you the truth right away."

Barnaby nodded.

"You should have."

"I'm sorry."

"I know."

Barnaby wrapped one enormous paw gently around Felix's shoulder.

"I forgive you."

Felix smiled wider than anyone had ever seen him smile.

"It feels..."

"...much lighter."

Robin laughed.

"That's because you aren't carrying the secret anymore."

Everyone chuckled.

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

The truth may feel difficult to carry for a moment, but a secret often becomes heavier every day we keep it.

Just then...

Something graceful stepped from between the birch trees.

A beautiful deer.

She moved so quietly that the leaves hardly noticed.

Robin whispered,

"That's Daisy."

Benjamin smiled.

"She notices things the rest of us never see."

The Wizard's Note

Honesty may feel difficult at first, but it opens the door to forgiveness, trust, and peace.



Daisy Notices Everything

The Whispering Woods grew quiet as the graceful deer stepped from between the silver birch trees.

She moved so gently that the leaves hardly stirred beneath her feet.

Her coat shimmered like warm honey in the afternoon sunlight.

She smiled at the Wizard.

"Hello."

The Wizard smiled back.

"Hello."

Robin whispered,

"That's Daisy."

Blue nodded.

"She always sees things before the rest of us."

Rascal scratched his head.

"I don't even know what that means."

Daisy laughed softly.

"It means you walk very quickly."

"I do?"

"Very."

Chipmunk nodded.

"So do I."

"You run," said Robin.

"I suppose I do."

Daisy looked around the clearing.

"Has anyone noticed the little oak tree?"

Everyone looked.

"What oak tree?" asked Frederick.

"The one beside the stream."

Benjamin squinted.

"I've walked past it all week."

"I never saw it."

Daisy smiled.

"It has grown three new leaves."

The Wizard walked over.

She was right.

Three tiny green leaves reached toward the sunshine.

"They're beautiful," he said.

Daisy nodded.

"They are."

Robin looked around.

"I've been flying over this clearing every day."

"I missed them."

Blue looked embarrassed.

"I missed them too."

"I was looking for exciting news."

Daisy smiled.

"Sometimes..."

"...the exciting things are very quiet."

The Wizard thought about that.

Just then...

A tiny snail slowly crossed the forest path.

Rascal almost stepped on him.

"Oh!"

He jumped backward.

"I didn't even see him."

The little snail looked up.

"Thank you."

Rascal knelt beside him.

"I'm sorry."

The snail smiled.

"You noticed me."

Daisy looked at the Wizard.

"The smallest things often need the biggest attention."

The Wizard nodded.

"I think you're right."

As they continued walking, Daisy stopped again.

"Listen."

Everyone became still.

"I don't hear anything," whispered Frederick.

"Exactly."

The Wizard closed his eyes.

For a moment...

There was only the gentle breeze.

The rustling leaves.

The soft murmur of the stream.

A butterfly drifted past.

A dragonfly hovered above the water.

Far away, a woodpecker tapped on an old pine.

The forest wasn't silent at all.

It was simply...

peaceful.

The Wizard opened his eyes.

"I think I've been listening..."

"...but not hearing."

Daisy smiled warmly.

"The forest has been speaking all day."

"We were simply too busy."

Robin folded her wings.

"I think we should slow down more often."

"I agree," said Benjamin.

"So do I," whispered Penelope.

Even Rascal nodded.

"I suppose not every adventure has to be noisy."

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote carefully:

The world is filled with quiet wonders. We only need to slow down long enough to notice them.

Just then...

Tap. Tap. Tap-tap-tap.

A rapid knocking echoed through the forest.

Robin smiled.

"I know that sound."

Blue laughed.

"There isn't another bird in the woods who makes quite that much noise."

Rascal grinned.

"I like noisy."

Daisy smiled.

"I know."

From somewhere high above came a cheerful voice.

"I've found the perfect tree!"

The Wizard's Note

Some of life's greatest treasures are so gentle that we only discover them when we slow down and truly notice.



Woody Makes Too Much Noise

Tap!

Tap-tap!

TAP-TAP-TAP-TAP!

The sound echoed through the Whispering Woods.

Robin sighed.

"He's started early today."

Blue covered his ears.

"He started yesterday."

Frederick sank beneath his lily pad.

"I was hoping he'd finished."

The Wizard smiled.

"I've never met a woodpecker."

"Oh, you will," laughed Rascal.

"You'll hear him first."

The tapping grew louder.

TAP! TAP! TAP-TAP-TAP!

Then...

A cheerful red-headed woodpecker flew down from the tallest pine tree.

He landed upside down on a nearby branch.

"Good morning!"

he chirped.

Tap!

"My name's Woody!"

Tap!

"I love trees!"

Tap-tap!

"I love mornings!"

Tap!

"I love..."

He stopped.

"...tapping."

Everyone laughed.

The Wizard smiled.

"I'd noticed."

Woody looked surprised.

"Really?"

Robin folded her wings.

"The entire forest noticed."

Woody scratched his head.

"I hope I haven't been bothering anyone."

The whole forest became very quiet.

Frederick slowly raised one webbed foot.

"Only a tiny bit."

Benjamin smiled kindly.

"Perhaps... a little more than a tiny bit."

Penelope added gently,

"The baby rabbits couldn't nap yesterday."

Woody looked horrified.

"They couldn't?"

Robin nodded.

"The squirrels missed their afternoon rest."

Chipmunk yawned.

"I'm still sleepy."

Woody lowered his head.

"I only wanted everyone to feel happy."

The Wizard placed a hand on Woody's shoulder.

"I think they know that."

"They do?"

"They do."

Woody sighed.

"I don't know how not to tap."

The Wizard thought for a moment.

Then he smiled.

"I have an idea."

Rascal's eyes lit up.

"Brilliant?"

"I hope so."

The Wizard gathered everyone into a circle.

"What if..."

"...Woody only tapped when the forest actually needed him?"

Woody tilted his head.

"What do you mean?"

Benjamin pointed to a hollow tree.

"Sometimes insects hide beneath the bark."

Robin added,

"Sometimes we need a warning signal."

Blue smiled.

"Sometimes music makes everyone dance."

Frederick laughed.

"But not while we're sleeping."

Everyone chuckled.

Woody's eyes sparkled.

"So..."

"I don't have to stop tapping."

"No."

"I simply have to know..."

"...when to tap."

The Wizard nodded.

"Exactly."

Just then...

A tiny squirrel called from high above.

"Help!"

A branch had fallen across the entrance to her little tree hollow.

Woody flew straight to the trunk.

TAP! TAP! TAP!

He carefully pecked away the loose wood.

Benjamin helped lift the branch.

The opening was free again.

The little squirrel smiled.

"Thank you!"

Woody beamed.

"I helped!"

Robin smiled.

"You certainly did."

Woody looked at the Wizard.

"I think..."

"...noise can become music..."

"...if it's played at the right time."

The Wizard grinned.

"I couldn't have said it better."

He opened his notebook.

He wrote:

Every gift becomes even more beautiful when we learn the right time to use it.

Just then...

The ground near the Wizard's feet began to wiggle.

A little mound of earth rose gently.

Then another.

Then another.

Finally...

A tiny brown nose poked out of the soil.

Two little paws appeared.

Then a pair of bright eyes.

"Excuse me,"

said a quiet voice.

"I believe..."

"...I've arrived."

Robin smiled.

"Morris."

Benjamin nodded.

"The Mole."

Rascal grinned.

"I wonder what he sees down there."

The little mole smiled.

"You'd be surprised."

The Wizard's Note

Every talent is a gift. Wisdom is learning when and how to use it to help others.



Morris Sees in the Dark

The little mound of earth wiggled again.

A tiny brown nose appeared.

Then two little paws.

Finally, a round little mole climbed into the sunshine and blinked.

"Oh my," he said.

"It's brighter than I remembered."

The Wizard smiled.

"Hello."

"Hello."

"I'm Morris."

"I'm the Wizard."

"I know."

"You do?"

"Oh yes."

"The worms tell me everything."

Rascal laughed.

"The worms?"

"They're excellent listeners."

Chipmunk scratched his head.

"I've never spoken to a worm."

"They're rather quiet," Morris admitted.

Robin fluttered down beside him.

"What brings you above ground today?"

Morris smiled.

"I've lost my glasses."

Everyone looked at him.

"You wear glasses?" asked Frederick.

"Only for reading."

"But..."

Robin tilted her head.

"...you're wearing them."

Morris touched his nose.

"Oh!"

He laughed so hard that he rolled gently onto his back.

"Well..."

"That saves us a great deal of searching."

Everyone burst into laughter.

Even Oliver the Owl smiled from his branch.

The Wizard sat beside Morris.

"What is it like living underground?"

Morris looked thoughtfully toward the forest floor.

"It's wonderful."

"I know every root."

"Every tunnel."

"Every pebble."

"I know where the flowers drink."

"The flowers drink?"

"Of course."

"They drink through their roots."

Benjamin Beaver smiled.

"I never thought of that."

Morris nodded.

"Most people don't."

The Wizard looked down at the earth beneath his feet.

"It seems so ordinary."

Morris smiled kindly.

"That's because you only see the top."

He gently brushed away a little soil with one paw.

Beneath it stretched a tiny network of roots, weaving together beneath the forest floor.

"The trees help each other."

"They do?"

"Oh yes."

"The old trees share water."

"The young trees share sunshine."

"The flowers welcome the bees."

"The bees help the flowers."

"The mushrooms help everyone."

Robin blinked.

"I had no idea."

Morris smiled.

"Most of the forest's greatest work happens where no one is looking."

The Wizard grew quiet.

He thought about Barnaby sharing honey.

Benjamin building his dam.

Penny giving gentle hugs.

Riley forgetting his fear while helping someone else.

None of those things had been done for applause.

They had simply been acts of kindness.

Morris looked up.

"You know..."

"What?"

"The roots don't compete."

"They grow together."

The Wizard smiled.

"I think people could learn something from that."

"I think so too."

Just then...

A tiny wildflower beside the path began to droop.

The afternoon had grown warm.

Without saying a word...

Every animal helped.

Benjamin carried water.

Frederick splashed the roots.

Robin shaded the flower with her wings.

Blue fetched fresh water in a curled leaf.

Chipmunk gently loosened the soil.

Penelope pulled away little weeds.

Rascal gathered smooth stones to keep the soil cool.

Morris smiled.

"See?"

"What?"

"The forest is healthiest..."

"...when everyone quietly helps."

The little flower slowly lifted its head again.

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

Some of the most important work in the world happens where no one is watching.

Morris nodded approvingly.

"I rather like that."

Just then...

Something soft brushed against the Wizard's ankle.

He looked down.

A tiny gray mouse stood there holding a single blueberry almost as large as his head.

He smiled shyly.

"I think..."

"...I may have brought too much lunch."

Robin laughed.

"That's Milo."

Rascal grinned.

"He always tries to carry everything himself."

The Wizard's Note

The strongest communities, like the strongest forests, grow when everyone quietly helps one another—even when no one is watching.



Milo's Very Big Blueberry

The tiny gray mouse stood in the middle of the forest path.

He was holding a blueberry almost as big as his own head.

He puffed.

He strained.

He wobbled.

Then...

PLOP!

The blueberry rolled away.

"Oh dear," sighed the little mouse.

The Wizard smiled.

"Hello."

The mouse tipped his tiny cap.

"Hello."

"I'm Milo."

"I'm the Wizard."

"I know."

"You do?"

"Everyone talks about you."

Robin smiled.

"Mostly good things."

"Mostly?" laughed the Wizard.

Robin pretended to whistle.

Milo hurried after the runaway blueberry.

It rolled down a little hill.

He chased it.

It bounced.

He bounced.

The blueberry bounced higher.

Finally...

PLOP!

It landed in Frederick's pond.

Frederick blinked.

"Well..."

"...that's new."

Milo looked heartbroken.

"I spent all morning finding the biggest blueberry in the forest."

Rascal grinned.

"You certainly succeeded."

Benjamin asked,

"What do you need such a big blueberry for?"

Milo smiled proudly.

"My grandmother."

"Does she like blueberries?"

"She loves them."

"So why not carry two smaller ones?"

Milo looked puzzled.

"I never thought of that."

Robin laughed.

"You always choose the biggest one."

"I know."

"Why?"

Milo smiled.

"I want to give her the very best."

The Wizard knelt beside him.

"That's a wonderful thought."

"It is?"

"It certainly is."

"But..."

"...do you think your grandmother would rather have one giant blueberry..."

"...or spend the afternoon laughing with you while carrying two smaller ones together?"

Milo thought very hard.

"I don't know."

At that moment...

An elderly mouse appeared beneath an old log.

She smiled the moment she saw Milo.

"There you are."

"I brought you a blueberry!"

Milo pointed proudly toward the pond.

"Sort of."

Grandmother Mouse looked at the floating berry.

Then she laughed.

It was the happiest little laugh anyone had heard all day.

"Oh Milo..."

"You always choose the biggest one."

"I know."

She gently hugged him.

"My favourite gift..."

"...isn't the blueberry."

"It isn't?"

"It's spending time with you."

Milo blinked.

"It is?"

"It always has been."

The Wizard smiled.

"I think we can still rescue the berry."

Benjamin Beaver rolled a smooth log into the pond.

Frederick nudged the blueberry with his nose.

Robin and Blue guided it toward shore.

Rascal leaned too far.

SPLASH!

He tumbled into the water.

Everyone laughed.

Especially Rascal.

"I meant to cool it off!"

"No, you didn't," said Robin.

"I know."

"But it sounded clever."

The blueberry finally reached the bank.

It was slightly soggy.

Slightly muddy.

And absolutely perfect.

Grandmother Mouse smiled.

"Would anyone like to share it?"

Within moments...

Benjamin carefully sliced it with a smooth shell.

One enormous blueberry became enough for everyone.

Milo looked around the smiling circle.

"I think..."

"...it tastes better..."

"...because everyone helped."

The Wizard nodded.

"So do I."

He opened his notebook.

He wrote:

The biggest gifts are not measured by their size, but by the love—and the friends—that come with them.

Just then...

A shadow fluttered overhead.

A tiny hummingbird zipped through the clearing so quickly that everyone felt only the breeze.

"Was that a bee?" asked Rascal.

"No," laughed Robin.

"That..."

"...was Hazel."

The Wizard's Note

Accepting help allows kindness to grow. The best journeys are the ones we share with others.



Hazel Never Stops

Something green flashed past the Wizard's nose.

ZIP!

Then it flew behind Benjamin.

ZIP!

Then around Robin.

ZIP! ZIP!

Then straight through the middle of everyone.

The leaves twirled.

Flowers nodded.

Rascal's fur puffed out in the breeze.

"What was that?" he gasped.

Robin smiled.

"Hazel."

A tiny hummingbird hovered in front of the Wizard.

Her emerald feathers sparkled in the sunlight.

Her ruby throat shimmered like a tiny jewel.

Her wings buzzed so quickly they were almost invisible.

"Hello!"

she squeaked.

"I'm Hazel!"

"I'm very pleased to meet you!"

"I've always wanted to meet you!"

"I've got seventeen places to visit!"

"I've already visited twelve!"

"I still have five left!"

"Oh dear!"

"I'm talking too much!"

She zipped away.

Then immediately zipped back.

"I forgot to say goodbye!"

The Wizard laughed.

"I don't think you've stood still long enough to say hello."

Hazel giggled.

"I know!"

"I don't like standing still."

"Why not?"

She shrugged.

"I might miss something."

Blue tilted his head.

"But if you're always rushing..."

"...don't you miss the thing you're doing now?"

Hazel froze.

"I..."

"...never thought of that."

Benjamin smiled.

"I used to keep building."

Barnaby nodded.

"I used to keep eating honey."

Rascal grinned.

"I still have brilliant ideas."

Robin smiled.

"We know."

Everyone laughed.

Just then...

Hazel darted toward a bright red flower.

She drank a sip of nectar.

Then another.

Then hurried toward the next flower.

Before she reached it...

She spotted a butterfly.

She chased it.

Then she noticed a dragonfly.

Then another flower.

Then a ladybug.

Then a shiny pebble.

Then...

She stopped.

"Oh dear."

"What happened?" asked the Wizard.

"I forgot whether I'd had breakfast."

Everyone laughed.

The Wizard smiled kindly.

"May I show you something?"

Hazel nodded.

He pointed to a single purple flower growing beside the stream.

"Would you stay with just one flower for one whole minute?"

"One minute?"

"That's forever!"

"It only feels that way."

Hazel took a deep breath.

She hovered quietly.

She sipped the nectar.

She watched a butterfly land beside her.

She noticed the flower's sweet scent.

She heard the gentle stream.

She felt the warm sunshine.

When one minute had passed...

She smiled.

"I never knew..."

"...one flower could be so interesting."

The Wizard smiled.

"Sometimes..."

"...the world becomes bigger..."

"...when we slow down."

Hazel looked thoughtfully across the Whispering Woods.

"I think I've been flying so fast..."

"...that I forgot to enjoy where I was."

Robin nodded.

"I've done that too."

"So have I," said Blue.

"So have I," whispered Penelope.

Even Rascal smiled.

"I suppose I don't need every idea immediately."

"You certainly don't," Robin laughed.

Hazel landed gently on the Wizard's shoulder.

For the first time all day...

She sat perfectly still.

"I like this."

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

Life becomes more beautiful when we pause long enough to enjoy the moment we're already in.

Just then...

The bushes began to rustle.

Very slowly.

Very carefully.

Out stepped the largest tortoise anyone had ever seen.

He smiled.

"Good afternoon."

Hazel whispered,

"I've never seen anyone move..."

"...quite so slowly."

The old tortoise chuckled.

"And yet..."

"...I'm exactly where I meant to be."

Robin smiled.

"That's Theodore."

Benjamin nodded.

"He has been arriving..."

"...for quite some time."

The Wizard's Note

There is no prize for rushing through life. Some of its greatest joys are waiting quietly for us to notice them.



Theodore Is Never Late

The giant tortoise slowly made his way along the winding forest path.

One careful step.

Then another.

Then another.

Hazel hovered beside him.

"I don't mean to be rude..."

"...but do you always walk this slowly?"

Theodore smiled.

"I've been told I do."

Hazel zipped around him twice.

"I could make ten trips across the forest before you reached that tree."

"I believe you."

Hazel blinked.

"You aren't bothered?"

Theodore chuckled.

"Why would I be?"

"Because..."

"...you're so slow."

The old tortoise looked around the Whispering Woods.

"I've never been trying to be fast."

The Wizard smiled.

"What are you trying to be?"

Theodore thought for a moment.

"Present."

Robin smiled.

"I like that."

Hazel tilted her tiny head.

"What does that mean?"

"It means..."

"...when I'm walking..."

"...I'm walking."

"When I'm talking..."

"...I'm talking."

"When I'm watching a sunset..."

"...I'm watching a sunset."

Rascal scratched his head.

"I usually think about lunch."

Benjamin laughed.

"I've noticed."

Everyone smiled.

Just then...

A little caterpillar began crawling across the path.

Hazel hovered impatiently.

"At that speed..."

"...he'll be here next Tuesday."

The caterpillar smiled.

"I'm Oliver."

Oliver the Owl looked down from above.

"That is becoming confusing."

Everyone laughed.

Theodore knelt as well as a tortoise could.

"Hello, Oliver."

"Hello."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm looking for the tallest tree."

Hazel looked surprised.

"Why?"

"So I can become a butterfly."

She blinked.

"It takes that long?"

"Oh yes."

Hazel sat quietly on a nearby flower.

For perhaps the first time in her life...

...she didn't rush.

The Wizard smiled.

"What are you thinking?"

Hazel watched the tiny caterpillar crawl.

"I think..."

"...I've spent so much time trying to get somewhere..."

"...that I forgot every wonderful thing that happens on the way."

Theodore nodded.

"The journey is often the best part."

Just then...

Rain began to fall.

Tiny drops sparkled on the leaves.

Everyone hurried beneath the branches.

Everyone...

...except Theodore.

He stood quietly in the rain.

His eyes closed.

His face lifted toward the sky.

"Aren't you getting wet?" asked Rascal.

"I certainly am."

"Shouldn't you hide?"

Theodore smiled.

"I've waited three weeks for this rain."

The forest became very still.

The Wizard stepped out beside him.

Soon Robin joined them.

Then Benjamin.

Then Daisy.

Then Penelope.

Then Barnaby.

One by one...

Everyone stood quietly in the warm summer rain.

Nobody hurried.

Nobody spoke.

They simply smiled.

When the shower passed...

A magnificent rainbow stretched across the Whispering Woods.

Hazel gasped.

"I would have missed it."

Theodore nodded gently.

"Sometimes..."

"...beautiful things arrive..."

"...only after we've learned to wait."

The Wizard opened his notebook.

He wrote:

Patience is not waiting for life to begin. It is discovering that life has been happening all along.

Just then...

A tiny golden butterfly landed gently on Theodore's shell.

Hazel smiled.

"I think..."

"...I know who that is."

Robin nodded.

"So do I."

The Wizard's Note

Some of life's greatest gifts cannot be hurried. They appear quietly, in their own perfect time.



The Forest Was the Magic

The Whispering Woods was unusually quiet.

Not because anyone was sad.

Because everyone was listening.

The Wizard sat on his favourite mossy rock with his notebook resting on his knees.

The afternoon sunlight danced through the leaves.

Robin landed beside him.

"What are you writing?"

The Wizard smiled.

"I'm not sure."

Blue fluttered down.

"That's unusual."

"You usually know."

"I thought I did."

One by one...

The friends he had made over the summer began to arrive.

Barnaby carried a tiny jar of honey.

Penny the porcupine came with her grandmother.

Benjamin Beaver waddled proudly from the stream.

Frederick leaped happily from his lily pad.

Rascal appeared carrying three shiny buttons he insisted were "treasure."

Penelope arrived wearing a fresh daisy behind her ear.

Felix quietly brought the repaired honey jar.

Daisy stepped softly from between the birch trees.

Woody landed with one final cheerful...

Tap!

...then smiled.

"I only tapped once."

"Excellent timing," laughed Robin.

Morris climbed from his tunnel and carefully polished his tiny glasses.

Milo shared a basket of blueberries.

Hazel hovered quietly above the flowers.

For nearly five whole seconds.

"I'm improving," she whispered proudly.

Theodore slowly reached the clearing.

"Good afternoon."

Everyone smiled.

Oliver glided silently from the great oak.

He landed beside the Wizard.

"I have one final question."

The Wizard smiled.

"I was wondering when it would come."

Oliver looked around the clearing.

"What is the greatest magic in the Whispering Woods?"

Everyone became thoughtful.

Robin chirped,

"Friendship."

Benjamin smiled.

"Helping."

Barnaby answered,

"Sharing."

Penny whispered,

"Gentleness."

Felix said,

"Honesty."

Daisy smiled.

"Noticing."

Woody laughed.

"Using our gifts wisely."

Morris nodded.

"The work no one sees."

Milo said,

"Doing things together."

Hazel smiled.

"Enjoying today."

Theodore answered,

"Patience."

Frederick croaked happily,

"Hope."

Penelope smiled softly.

"Kindness."

Rascal scratched his head.

"Well..."

"...I was going to say snacks."

Everyone burst into laughter.

Even Oliver.

The Wizard looked around at every smiling face.

Then he quietly closed his notebook.

"I don't think the magic is any one thing."

Oliver waited.

"The magic..."

"...is all of us."

The forest grew wonderfully still.

Robin looked toward the trees.

"The birds."

Benjamin looked toward the river.

"The water."

Morris touched the earth.

"The roots."

Hazel watched the flowers.

"The nectar."

Barnaby looked at his friends.

"The hugs."

Penny smiled.

"The forgiveness."

Felix nodded.

"The laughter."

Rascal added,

"Definitely the snacks."

Everyone laughed even harder.

The Wizard stood.

He looked around the Whispering Woods one last time.

"I came here hoping to help."

He smiled at his friends.

"But every one of you..."

"...helped me."

Oliver gently spread his great wings.

"You have learned the oldest secret of the forest."

"What secret?"

Oliver smiled.

"The forest was never magical because animals could talk."

Everyone listened.

"It became magical..."

"...because everyone cared about someone besides themselves."

The Wizard felt a gentle breeze brush his face.

The leaves whispered overhead.

The stream sang its quiet song.

A butterfly landed on his notebook.

He opened it one last time.

On the final page he carefully wrote:

Kindness is the greatest magic in the world.

Then he closed the notebook.

He smiled.

And somehow...

The Whispering Woods smiled too.

The Wizard's Final Note

Every creature has a gift. Every person does too.

The world becomes a better place when we discover our gifts... and use them to help one another.



A Letter from the Wizard

My dear friend,

Thank you for walking through the Whispering Woods with me.

You met many wonderful animals.

Robin taught us to encourage others.

Benjamin showed us that helping builds stronger homes.

Barnaby reminded us that the sweetest things are meant to be shared.

Penny showed us that gentleness is one of the greatest strengths.

Felix taught us that honesty sets our hearts free.

Daisy helped us notice the quiet wonders around us.

Hazel reminded us to slow down.

Theodore taught us to be patient.

Oliver showed us that wisdom begins with listening.

But there is one thing they all hoped you would discover.

The next chapter isn't in this book.

It's yours.

Perhaps tomorrow you will help someone who feels lonely.

Perhaps you will notice someone who needs a smile.

Perhaps you will share, forgive, encourage, or simply be kind.

When you do...

the Whispering Woods will grow a little larger.

Because it isn't really a place on a map.

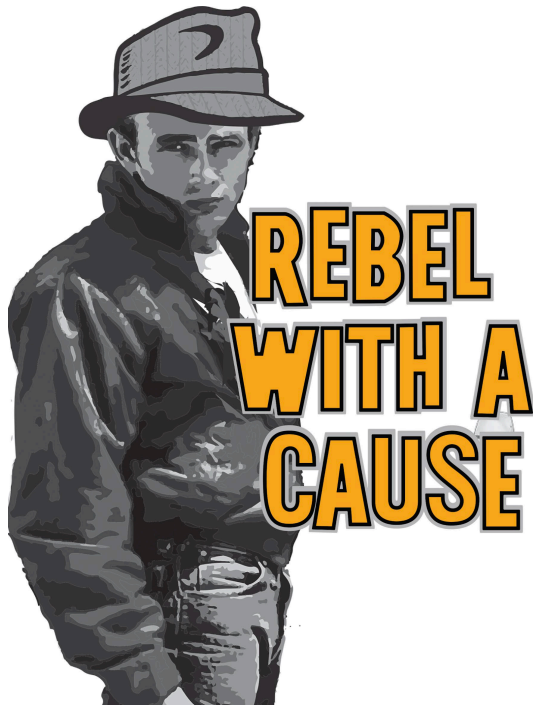
It lives wherever kindness lives.

And now...

it lives in you.

Your friend,

The Wizard of NDG



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