

The Boy and the Tree Kangaroo



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Ben stepped off the bus and into the rainforest. Everything was green and damp and alive. Leaves dripped, birds called, and the air smelled like wet earth. He wore his yellow t-shirt, green shorts, and red backpack. His magnifying glass hung around his neck, ready for adventure. Ben grinned, showing the little gap between his front teeth. Today, he would explore!



Ben walked slowly along the path, his brown hiking boots squishing in the mud. He saw mushrooms like tiny umbrellas and ants marching in a long line. He sketched everything in his notebook. Suddenly, a rustle came from above. Ben looked up. Something reddish-brown moved among the leaves. What could it be?



A creature peered down at Ben from a branch. It had reddish-brown fur, a cream belly, and big gentle amber eyes. Its long thick tail curled around the branch. 'Hello,' said the creature softly. 'I am Kira, a tree kangaroo. You must be Ben. I have been waiting for you.' Ben's eyes went wide. A tree kangaroo! And she could talk!



Kira climbed down with strong claws and landed softly beside Ben. Around her neck hung a small woven leaf pouch. 'What's in your pouch?' Ben asked. 'Forest seeds,' said Kira. 'I carry them to new places, so the forest grows.' Ben nodded. 'Will you show me around?' he asked. Kira smiled. 'Climb on my back. We are going up!'



Up they went, branch by branch, into the leafy roof of the rainforest. Ben held tight to Kira's soft fur. 'Welcome to the treetops,' she said. 'This is where many animals live. Look!' A bright green parrot squawked and flapped its wings. 'Parrots spread seeds with their droppings,' said Kira. 'They plant new trees without even trying.'



Kira pointed with her nose. A furry animal with big eyes hung upside down. 'That's a cuscus,' she said. 'It sleeps all day and eats fruit at night.' Ben used his magnifying glass to see its long claws. 'It has a pouch like you!' he said. Kira nodded. 'Many animals here carry their babies in pouches. We are marsupials.' Ben wrote that down.



Next, Kira showed Ben a tiny frog no bigger than his thumbnail. It was bright orange with black spots. 'It lives in the wet leaves,' said Kira. 'It needs the rainforest to stay damp and cool.' Ben sketched the frog carefully. 'The rainforest is like a big, busy house,' he said. 'Exactly,' said Kira. 'Every animal has a room.'



Kira grew quiet. 'But our house is getting smaller,' she said. 'People cut down trees for wood and farms. My cousins and I lose our homes. Tree kangaroos like me are rare now.' Ben felt a lump in his throat. 'That's sad,' he said. 'What can we do?' Kira looked at him with kind amber eyes. 'We can teach others,' she said.



Ben had an idea. 'I can make a guide!' he said. 'An illustrated guide about the rainforest and its animals. Then other children will learn why it's important to protect places like this.' Kira's ears twitched happily. 'That is a wonderful idea,' she said. 'I will help you find every animal to draw.'



They spent the whole day exploring. Kira showed Ben a tree frog with red eyes, a lizard that looked like a leaf, and a family of bats hanging like furry fruit. Ben drew them all in his sketchbook. His pencil flew across the pages. He wrote down what each animal ate and where it slept. 'My guide is going to be full!' he said.



As the sun began to set, Ben heard a familiar voice. 'Ben! There you are!' It was his friend Mira. She wore a blue rain jacket and carried a camera around her neck. 'I've been looking everywhere for you,' she said. 'What have you found?' Ben showed her his sketches. 'A tree kangaroo named Kira is my guide,' he said. Mira's hazel eyes sparkled. 'Can I take photos for your guide?' she asked.



Mira photographed Kira and all the animals they had seen. She took pictures of the frog, the cuscus, and the parrot. 'Now your guide will have drawings and real photos,' she said. Ben smiled. 'And we can add tips on how to help,' he said. 'Like planting trees and not wasting paper.' Kira nodded. 'Small actions make a big difference,' she said.



Ben and Mira worked together all evening. They glued photos next to drawings and wrote simple facts. 'The rainforest is a home for rare animals,' wrote Ben. 'Tree kangaroos need tall trees to climb and hide.' Mira drew a map showing where each animal lived. 'This guide will help children understand,' she said. 'Conservation starts with learning.'



The next day, Ben and Mira brought the guide to school. They showed it to their class. 'This is Kira,' said Ben, pointing to a drawing. 'She taught me that the rainforest is full of life. But it needs our help.' The children passed the guide around, looking at the colorful pictures. 'I want to protect the tree kangaroos!' said one girl. Ben felt proud.



Kira watched from a nearby tree. She had followed Ben to school to see his guide. Her amber eyes glowed with happiness. 'You have done well, Ben,' she said softly. 'You have given the forest a voice.' Ben waved to her. 'Thank you, Kira,' he whispered. 'You showed me how.' The children didn't see Kira, but they felt the magic of the rainforest in Ben's guide.



From that day on, Ben and Mira shared their guide with everyone they met. They taught other children how conservation protects rare animals and their homes. Ben kept his magnifying glass and sketchbook close, ready for new adventures. And sometimes, when he listened closely, he could hear Kira's gentle voice in the leaves. The rainforest was in good hands.