

The Girl and the Golden Deer



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Lily pulled on her yellow rain boots and tucked a red ribbon into her wavy black hair. She slung her green canvas satchel over her shoulder and stepped outside. The forest at the edge of her garden was full of spring sounds. Birds sang, leaves whispered, and something small rustled in the ferns. Lily smiled her gap-toothed smile and went to see.



Spring had painted the forest in bright green and soft yellow. Lily's boots squished happily in the mud as she followed a winding path. She knew every tree and every turn. But today the forest felt a little different. The air was too dry, and the moss was pale. Lily stopped and listened, but the water she usually heard was silent.



Then, between two tall trees, something golden glowed. Lily stepped closer and gasped. A young deer stood there, the size of a pony, with soft golden fur that shimmered in the light. Its antlers glowed like warm amber. Large hazel eyes looked at her, and a woven collar of leaves and white flowers rested around its neck.



The deer did not run away. It lowered its head and let out a soft, sad sigh. Lily noticed its gentle eyes were wet, just a little. 'What is wrong?' she asked quietly. The golden deer stepped closer and nudged her hand. Then it turned and looked toward the heart of the forest, where the spring should have been.



'The spring is gone,' the deer seemed to say with its eyes. Lily knew that spring well. It was where all the animals drank and where the water sang over smooth stones. 'We must find it,' Lily said, brave and sure. The deer's antlers glowed brighter, as if it had been waiting for a friend. Together they set off.



High above them, a small brown owl peeked from a hollow. It had huge round yellow eyes and a tiny blue scarf around its neck. 'Hoo! Looking for water?' it hooted. 'I can see far from up here!' The owl spread its mottled wings and flew ahead, acting as lookout. Lily and the golden deer followed quickly.



Soon they met a plump brown rabbit hiding under a fern. It was shy and trembled, but around its neck hung a small acorn pendant on a grass string. 'I remember the spring,' the rabbit whispered. 'It used to babble right past my burrow. I can show you the way.' Lily nodded kindly, and the rabbit bravely hopped ahead.



The rabbit led them through thick undergrowth and past twisty roots. The golden deer walked close to Lily, its glowing antlers lighting the shady path. The owl swooped overhead and called directions. 'Left! A little more left!' it hooted. Lily tied her satchel tight and kept going, determined to help her new friends.



At last they reached the place where the spring should have been. But instead of singing water, they found only dry stones and dusty ground. Lily looked around, puzzled. The owl squinted from a branch. 'Something is blocking the water,' it said. 'I can see a tangle of branches up the hill!' The deer flicked its ears, hopeful.



They hurried up the slope, and there it was. A huge pile of fallen branches lay across the stream, damming it completely. The water could not get through. 'This is why the spring went missing,' Lily said. 'We can fix this together.' The rabbit nodded shyly, and the owl hooted, 'Hoo-ray! Let's be quick!'



Lily pulled the first branch. It was heavy, but she tugged and wiggled it free. The golden deer pushed with its strong golden head. The rabbit dug away the smaller twigs with its paws. The owl flew up and called, 'That one! Now that one!' They worked as a team, branch after branch after branch.



Then, with a happy splash, the water broke free! It rushed down the hill, singing over the stones. The spring was back. Lily clapped her muddy hands, and the golden deer lifted its head high. The rabbit hopped in a joyful circle, and the owl flapped its wings. 'Hoo! We did it!' they all cheered together.



Down below, the forest began to wake up. The moss turned green and soft. Flowers opened along the banks. Birds splashed in the fresh water, and the whole wood filled with happy sounds. The golden deer's antlers glowed warm and bright. It walked over to Lily and rested its gentle head on her shoulder. She hugged its soft golden neck.



'You found our spring,' the deer seemed to say, its hazel eyes shining. The owl adjusted its little blue scarf and hooted proudly. The rabbit sat beside them, its white cotton tail twitching. Lily smiled her gap-toothed smile. 'We found it together,' she said. 'That is what friends do.' The forest rustled softly, as if it agreed.



From that day on, Lily visited the forest often. She brought her green satchel full of seeds and planted them near the spring. The golden deer with glowing antlers was always waiting for her. They became the best of friends, sharing quiet walks and sunny afternoons beside the singing water.



Lily learned something important in that springtime forest. Nature is precious and needs our care, just like a friend. When we help the earth, everyone gets to share its beauty. The golden deer still roams the woods, and if you listen carefully, you might hear the spring babble and a girl laugh beside it.