

The Boy and the Proboscis Monkey



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Ben lived in a small house near the edge of a green, muddy forest. He loved to explore, and today he wore his bright yellow t-shirt, green shorts, and red baseball cap. He tucked a small notebook into his pocket and set off. 'I wonder what lives in the mangrove forest today?' he said with a wide, curious smile.



The mangrove forest was a tangle of roots and leaves. The trees stood in shallow water, and the air smelled like salt and mud. Ben stepped carefully along a wooden walkway. 'Hello, forest!' he called. A bird squawked, and a crab scuttled sideways. Ben pulled out his notebook to draw everything he saw.



Suddenly, a rustling sound made Ben stop. High in a tree, something moved. It had reddish-brown fur, a round pot belly, and a very big, drooping nose. 'What a funny-looking monkey!' Ben whispered. The monkey blinked its small dark eyes and stared back. Ben wrote in his notebook: 'Proboscis monkey—big nose, big belly.'



The monkey swung down on a long tail and landed on a branch close to Ben. It yawned, showing tiny teeth, then grabbed a handful of leaves and stuffed them into its mouth. 'You really like leaves, don't you?' Ben laughed. The monkey munched loudly and patted its belly. Ben sketched the funny face and the big nose in his notebook.



The monkey leaped to another tree, and Ben followed along the walkway. It swung from branch to branch, its long tail curling around twigs. 'Wait for me!' Ben called. The monkey paused and looked back, as if to say, 'Keep up!' Ben ran, his sneakers squelching on the damp wood. He had never seen an animal move so gracefully.



The monkey stopped at the edge of the forest, where the trees met the river. It sat and gazed at the water. Ben caught up, panting. 'Why do you stay here?' he asked. The monkey just chewed another leaf. Ben looked around. The mangrove roots were like a maze, and the water shimmered. He wrote: 'Monkey lives only in mangrove forest.'



Ben spent the whole afternoon watching the monkey. He saw it eat leaves, swing, and even take a nap on a wide branch. Ben drew pictures and wrote notes. 'You're special,' he told the monkey. 'I bet not many people know about you.' The monkey yawned and scratched its belly. Ben felt a warm, happy feeling inside.



On the way home, Ben thought about the monkey. He remembered what his teacher had said: mangrove forests were disappearing. People cut down the trees, and animals lost their homes. Ben's smile faded. 'If the forest goes away, where will the monkey live?' he wondered. He clutched his notebook tightly. He had to do something.



That evening, Ben told his mom and dad about the proboscis monkey. 'It has a big nose and a big belly, and it only lives in mangrove forests,' he said. 'But the forests are in trouble.' His parents listened. 'What can we do?' asked his mom. Ben thought hard. Then his round brown eyes lit up. 'We can start a conservation project!'



The next day, Ben went back to the mangrove forest with a small bag of young mangrove seedlings. He found a muddy spot near the walkway and dug a hole with his hands. 'This one is for you, monkey,' he said. He planted the seedling and patted the mud around it. Then he planted another, and another. His yellow shirt got splattered with mud, but he didn't mind.



Ben asked his friends to help. 'Come see the funny monkey and help me plant trees!' he said. Soon, a group of kids in colorful shirts were digging and planting. They laughed and worked together. The proboscis monkey watched from a branch, its big nose twitching. 'Look!' Ben pointed. 'He's saying thank you!' The monkey munched a leaf and swung away.



Ben told everyone at school about the mangrove forest and its wildlife. He showed his notebook drawings and explained how the proboscis monkey needed the trees. His teacher invited him to give a talk. Ben stood in front of the class, a little nervous but determined. 'We can all help,' he said. 'Even small actions make a big difference.'



The class decided to adopt the mangrove forest. They made posters and wrote letters to the mayor. They organized a weekend planting day, and many families came. Ben's red cap was easy to spot among the crowd. The proboscis monkey and its family watched from the trees. Everyone cheered when a baby monkey peeked out from behind its mother.



Months later, the new mangrove trees had grown taller. Ben visited the forest often. The proboscis monkey seemed to recognize him. It would swing down and sit nearby, chewing leaves. Ben wrote in his notebook: 'The monkey is my friend. His home is safe now.' He felt proud of what they had done together.



Ben's conservation project grew. Other schools heard about it and started their own mangrove projects. Ben's notebook filled with new drawings and notes about all the animals in the forest—crabs, birds, fish, and of course, the proboscis monkey. He learned that every animal has a place in nature, and every place is worth protecting.



One sunny afternoon, Ben sat on the walkway and watched the proboscis monkey swing through the trees. Its big nose and round belly made him smile. 'You're the reason I started all this,' he said. The monkey chattered and ate a leaf. Ben looked around at the thriving forest and knew that wildlife diversity was a treasure. And he would always protect it.