

## Royce the Rabbit

### Description

Once upon a time, there lived a rabbit in the woods. He was large for his size, with giant, grey ears, long whiskers, a bushy tail, and eyes that shone like the reflection of an emerald. He also had unusually large front teeth which gave him an evil appearance, although that couldn't have been farther from the truth. And his name was Royce.

Royce was a lonely rabbit, as he had spent most of his life roaming the woods, trying to find other animals like him; but he never succeeded. All the other animals were afraid of him, due to his appearance, and thus he was never given the opportunity to show what an amazing rabbit he truly was.

One day, while sitting on a creek bank, he began to ponder his life and wonder what he could do to change the way others thought about him. He had tried smiling, but that just seemed to frighten the other animals even more. He tried playing tag with the other animals, but they always mistook his playfulness for aggression. He was misunderstood and he wanted to know why. As he spoke to his reflection in the water, he heard gasps behind him. These loud gasps startled him, and he whipped around and could not believe what was standing in front of him. He had never seen animals like this before, and he was so frightened, he did not know what to do. He was afraid to move.

These animals were the strangest things he had ever seen. They were tall - some taller than others; they had long arms and long legs, and a few of them even had long fur on their heads. And he couldn't, for the life of him, figure out what on earth they had covering their bodies. He had never seen anything like it. He stood perfectly still, waiting for them to run away, screaming like all the other animals had, but then something strange happened. One of the animals spoke to him.

"Hi there. My name is Stella. And you're cute! I've never seen a rabbit like you before."

Royce didn't know what to say. No animal like this had ever spoken to him, so he wasn't sure what to do next.

"Hi, Stella. I'm Royce. I'm a rabbit. Why do you have such a round head? And what are you, exactly? And why aren't you running away from me, scared?"

She giggled and replied, "I DO have a round head, don't I, Royce? Thank you for telling me. Usually people just say that about me behind my back."

"Oh, did I hurt your feelings?" asked Royce. After all, he had never had a conversation with an animal like this - let alone any animal, and he certainly didn't want to hurt any feelings.

"Oh no, not at all!" replied Stella. "I'm used to it. Here, I'd like you to meet a few of my friends! This is Caprice - she's my sister. And these are my cousins, Tanner, Tatum, Noah, & Beckham. Guys - say hi to Royce."

"Hi," they all murmured.

“Sorry if this seems like a strange question, but what exactly ARE you? You don’t look like any animal I’ve ever seen.”

“We’re people,” said Caprice.

“People?” asked Royce, quizzically. “What are people?”

Noah & Beckham looked at each other. They weren’t sure how to answer, so they simply said, “We are people.”

“Are there more like you?” asked Royce.

“Well yes and no,” said Tatum. “There are zillions of people who are like us, but each of us are unique in our own way, so from that standpoint, NO, there is no one else like us.”

Royce was confused. What did Tatum mean? There were zillions like her, but no one like her? How does that even make sense?

Noah could tell Royce was utterly confused, so he interjected.

“Royce let me break it down for you so you can understand. Have you ever seen a group of animals running through the woods? Well, while they may all have similar physical features, none of them look exactly the same, and that’s what makes each animal unique and special.”

“So does that mean that I am unique and special?” asked Royce.

“Of course!” replied Beckham. “There are zillions of rabbits in the woods, and in all the woods around the world, but there is only one Royce. There is only one **you**. And THAT makes you special.”

Royce pondered what the strange animals called “people” had just told him. It didn’t make any sense. If he was indeed special, then why did the other animals run away from him?

Stella could tell by Royce’s expression that something was amiss, so she asked him what was wrong.

“Well,” said Royce. “My whole life I’ve been trying to find others like me, but nobody ever wants to talk to me or even be around me. I never understood why, until I saw my reflection in the water. I am ugly. My teeth are too big, my ears are too long, my tail is too bushy, and my eyes are green. All the other animals are scared of me.” Royce hung his head low.

The kids all looked at each other, and then Tanner, the quietest of the group, sat down next to Royce and began to rub his soft fur.

“Royce, I’m kind of like you.”

“What??? How is that possible?” asked Royce. “They were nothing alike!”

“Well,” said Tanner, “My ears are kind of big for my head, I have a lot of freckles, and other kids, basically little people who still have to grow, sometimes make fun of me and run away, too. I know how hard it is to be judged how you look on the outside, instead of how you look on the inside.”

“How I look on the inside?” asked Royce. “Ew! I don’t think I would ever want to see what someone’s insides look like!” He shuddered at the mere thought.

“No, Royce, I don’t mean what your body looks like on the inside; I mean the things that make up who you are as a person. For example, I can see just by talking to you, that you are a kind rabbit. You are smart, and curious about the world, but you aren’t given the opportunity to let that part of you shine through, because the other animals don’t give you a chance. It’s the same with people. And I know how you feel, and I want you to know that I will not run away.”

“You won’t?” asked Royce, his emerald eyes lighting up and bushy tail wagging ever so slightly.

“No we won’t!” said the rest of the group, in unison. “You are our friend, and if you want, you can come home with us,” said Tatum.

Royce pondered the idea. What would life be like with people? Would he be happy? Would he miss his home? And then the answer came to him.

“Stella, Tatum, Caprice, Noah, Beckham, & Tanner you guys have given me the best gift any animal could hope for. You gave me hope. and with that hope, I shall make it my mission to stay in these woods and make the other animals see that it is what is in your heart that matters not your ears, not your whiskers, not your tail, not your eyes, not your teeth, and certainly not your size. Now, if you will excuse me, I have a lot of educating to do. Thank you, my new friends. I really hope to see you again.”

“Oh you most certainly will!,” exclaimed Stella, “But call me Round Head.”

And with a wink and a nod, Royce hopped away, excited about the future. These people had given him hope, and nothing would get in his way.

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