

The Boy and the Reindeer



Çınar BİBER

The Boy and the Reindeer

Çınar BİBER



In a cozy village at the edge of the northern hills lived a boy named Luka. He had warm light-brown skin, short curly black hair, and large dark-brown eyes that missed nothing. A small gap between his front teeth showed whenever he smiled, and freckles danced across his nose. Luka loved to watch the reindeer more than anything in the world.



Every autumn, the reindeer herd appeared on the ridge behind Luka's house. Their thick brown-grey coats shimmered in the cold air, and their cream necks and rumps looked like patches of snow. The adults carried large branching antlers, and the calves stayed close to their mothers. Luka pulled his red wool scarf tighter and opened his little notebook.



Luka's mother joined him on the hill, her blue dress warm under her cream apron. Her long black hair was tied in a low bun, and her hazel eyes sparkled as she watched the herd. "They're on the move again," she said gently. "Reindeer travel with the seasons. They follow the food and find safe places to rest. That's called migration."



Luka wrote the word in his notebook: migration. He drew a small reindeer beside it. "But why do they have to go so far?" he asked. His mother pointed to the wide, open land beyond the hills. "Because the seasons change the land. In winter, they need the lichen under the snow. In spring, they need fresh green plants and quiet places for their calves."



All winter long, Luka watched the reindeer dig through the snow with their broad hooves. They moved slowly, always searching for food. One calf had a white patch on its forehead, and Luka named it Snowpatch. He followed the herd's tracks and marked them on a big sheet of paper. Each day, the tracks led somewhere new.



When spring came, the herd began to move again. They headed toward the green valleys and the quiet calving grounds near the river. Luka hiked up the hill every morning to see which way they went. He noticed they always used the same paths, like invisible roads across the land. He drew those paths carefully in his notebook.



One day, Luka saw something that worried him. A new fence crossed one of the reindeer paths. The herd stopped and turned, confused. Snowpatch and the other calves huddled close to their mothers. "They can't get through," Luka whispered. "Their road is blocked." He hurried home to tell his mother.



"Animals need connected landscapes," his mother said, stirring a pot of soup. "That means paths they can follow without fences or roads stopping them. If their routes are broken, they can't reach food or safe places." Luka thought hard. He wanted to help the reindeer. But how could one small boy fix a fence?



That night, Luka had an idea. He would build a model of the whole landscape! He would show the hills, the valleys, the river, and all the reindeer paths. His mother helped him gather cardboard, clay, and little twigs. "A model can show people what we see," she said. "Sometimes that's the best way to help."



Luka worked for days. He shaped hills from clay and painted a blue ribbon for the river. He glued twigs as tiny trees and sprinkled flour for snow. Then he drew the seasonal travel routes with bright red yarn. The winter route looped through the snowy hills. The spring route led to the green calving grounds by the river.



He added a tiny fence where the real one stood, and he showed how it blocked the path. Then he made a little gate in the fence so the reindeer could pass. "Look, Mama," he said. "If we open a gate here, the reindeer can keep moving. Their landscape stays connected." His mother smiled and nodded.



Luka brought his model to the village meeting. Everyone leaned in to see the hills and valleys and the red yarn paths. He showed how the reindeer traveled with the seasons and how the fence had stopped them. "We can put a gate here," he said, pointing. "Then the reindeer can reach their food and their calving grounds."



The villagers talked together. The farmer who owned the fence listened carefully. "I didn't know the reindeer used that path," he said. "I can add a gate. I want them to be safe too." Everyone agreed it was a good plan. Luka felt his heart swell with pride. His model had helped!



A few weeks later, the gate was built. Luka watched from the hill as the reindeer herd approached. Snowpatch and the others paused at the gate, then moved through it one by one. They walked along their old path toward the green valley. Luka waved his red scarf, and his mother waved beside him.



That summer, Luka updated his model with new yarn paths and little reindeer made of clay. He showed it to the children at school. "Animals depend on connected landscapes," he told them. "When we keep their paths open, they can stay healthy and happy." The children asked questions and helped him add more details.



Now Luka still watches the reindeer as they travel with the seasons. He knows their routes by heart and keeps his notebook full of drawings. His model stands in the village hall for everyone to see. And every time the herd passes through the gate, Luka smiles his gap-toothed smile, proud to help them on their amazing journey.