

The Boy and the Puffin



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On a windy morning by the sea, a boy in a bright yellow raincoat stood at the edge of a green cliff. His name was Leo, and his red backpack held a sketchbook and a pencil. He had come to see the puffins, the funny little seabirds with orange beaks. "I can't wait!" he said, his gap-toothed smile wide with excitement.



A friendly guide with a wide-brimmed hat and a green ranger jacket walked up to him. "Welcome to the puffin colony!" she said cheerfully. "I'm Ranger May. Puffins come here every spring to raise their chicks." Leo looked around, but he didn't see any puffins. "Where are they?" he asked, puzzled. Ranger May laughed. "They're hiding in the grass!"



Ranger May led Leo along a narrow path. "Puffins dig burrows in the soft soil," she explained. "Each pair makes a cozy tunnel and lays one egg inside." Leo's eyes grew wide. "So the nests are underground?" he asked. "Yes, and they're hidden under the grass," said Ranger May. "You have to be careful where you step."



Just then, a puffin waddled out from a burrow entrance. It had black and white feathers, a bright orange beak, and orange webbed feet. It looked like a tiny clown in a tuxedo. "There's one!" Leo whispered. The puffin tilted its round white face and peered at them with dark eyes. Then it flapped its wings and bustled back into its burrow.



Ranger May knelt down and pointed to a small dip in the grass. "See this?" she said. "This is a burrow entrance. The puffin family is inside, safe and warm." Leo leaned in close. He could hear a soft rustling sound. "It's so well hidden," he said. "I would never have known it was there."



"That's the problem," said Ranger May. "Visitors sometimes step off the path to get a better look. One careless step can crush a burrow and harm the chicks inside." Leo looked at his blue rubber boots. He thought about how easily he could have stepped on the nest. "That's terrible!" he said. "How can we protect them?"



Ranger May smiled. "We can start by staying on the paths and keeping a safe distance," she said. "And we can teach others to do the same." Leo thought for a moment. Then he pulled out his sketchbook and pencil from his red backpack. "I have an idea!" he said. "I can make a picture guide to show visitors how to protect the burrows."



Leo sat on a bench and began to draw. First, he drew a puffin peeking out of its burrow. Then he drew a big red X over a footprint on the grass. He drew a smiling child staying on the path. "This will show people where the nests are," he said. "And it will remind them to be careful."



Ranger May looked at his drawings. "These are wonderful, Leo!" she said. "You have a real talent for explaining things clearly." Leo beamed. He added a picture of a puffin family safe inside their burrow. Under it, he wrote: "Please stay on the path. Puffin homes are under the grass!"



Next, Leo drew a picture of a pair of binoculars. "Keep a safe distance," he said. "That way, you can watch without getting too close." He drew a puffin with a happy orange beak. Then he drew a child with a sketchbook, just like him, watching from the path. "Perfect!" said Ranger May.



They posted Leo's picture guide at the start of the path. Soon, visitors began to arrive. A family with a dog stopped to look. "Look at this, kids!" said the mother. "We must stay on the path." The children nodded and followed the rules. Leo watched with pride as people read his guide and smiled.



A little girl pointed at the drawing of the puffin family. "They're so cute!" she said. "I want to help protect them too." Leo felt a warm glow in his chest. "It's working!" he whispered to Ranger May. "People are listening!" Ranger May gave him a thumbs-up. "You made a real difference today, Leo," she said.



As the sun began to set, Leo and Ranger May walked back along the path. "You know," said Ranger May, "nature is best enjoyed responsibly. When we take care of it, everyone can enjoy it, including the puffins." Leo nodded. He looked out at the sea, where puffins were bobbing on the waves. "I'll never forget this day," he said.



On the way home, Leo opened his sketchbook again. He drew one more picture: a puffin waving goodbye with its orange beak. Under it, he wrote: "Protect the burrows. Stay on the path. Keep a safe distance." He knew he would show this to his friends at school. Maybe they could help too.



The next spring, Leo returned to the puffin colony. He saw his picture guide still hanging at the start of the path, a little faded but still clear. Visitors were following the rules. Puffins were waddling in the grass, safe and sound. Leo smiled his gap-toothed smile. He pulled out his sketchbook to draw the new puffin chicks.



As he watched the puffins, Leo felt proud. He had learned that even kids can help protect seabirds. Ranger May came up beside him. "You started something good, Leo," she said. "Remember, nature is best enjoyed responsibly." Leo nodded. He knew he would always keep a safe distance and stay on the path, and he would keep drawing to help others do the same.