

The Little Walrus's Hat



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On a bright, cold morning, the little walrus waddled out onto the ice. His name was Wally, and he loved his bright red knitted hat. It had a white pom-pom on top and a soft folded brim. Mama had made it for him, and it kept his ears warm. 'Come play,' he called to the seagulls. The snow sparkled all around, and the wind was gentle and kind.



Wally slid on his round belly and tossed a small piece of ice into the air. He caught it on his nose and balanced it there. 'Look, Mama!' he shouted. Mama Walrus smiled from the water's edge, her blue scarf flapping. 'Careful, little one,' she said. Wally giggled and spun around. His red hat stayed snug on his head, and he felt warm and happy.



Just then, a big gust of wind swept across the ice. It whistled and whirled and tugged at Wally's hat. 'Whoosh!' went the wind, and the hat flew off his head. It tumbled and rolled across the ice. Wally reached for it, but the wind was too fast. 'My hat!' he cried. 'My warm red hat!' The wind carried it far away, and Wally sat down with a sad, sad sigh.



Wally's small dark eyes filled with tears. His whiskered muzzle drooped, and he let out a little whimper. 'It's gone,' he said. 'My hat is gone.' Mama Walrus came up beside him and wrapped a flipper around his round body. 'Don't worry, little one,' she said softly. 'We will find it. But first, let's look around.' Wally sniffled and nodded.



High above, a small snow bunting was flying over the ice. Her white feathers gleamed, and her black wing tips fluttered. She saw the red hat tumbling and bouncing. 'What a pretty hat!' she chirped. 'Someone must have lost it.' She flew low, following the trail. The hat rolled past a snow pile and came to rest near a big drift. The bunting landed nearby and kept watch.



Mama Walrus called to the other animals. 'Friends! Wally lost his hat. Will you help us search?' A puffin waddled over quickly. His orange beak shone bright, and his round body bobbed. 'I'll help!' he squawked. 'I can peek behind snow piles.' A seal poked her head out of a hole. 'I'll help too,' she barked. Soon a little group stood ready on the ice.



Wally pointed with his flipper. 'The wind blew it that way,' he said. 'But I don't know where it went.' The puffin waddled ahead, peeking around every lump of ice. The seal slid on her belly, checking the cracks. Mama Walrus scanned the wide white scene. 'Spread out,' she said. 'We'll search together.' The friends nodded and began to look.



The snow bunting flew down and landed on the ice in front of them. She flapped her wings and chirped loudly. 'Follow me!' she seemed to say. 'I saw the hat!' She flew a little way and waited. Then she flew a little more. The friends followed her, waddling and sliding and peeking. 'She's showing us the way,' said Mama Walrus. 'Good little bird!'



The puffin found a trail of marks in the snow. 'Look here!' he called. 'The hat bounced this way!' The marks led past a tall ice pillar and around a snow mound. Wally's heart beat fast. 'Do you really think we'll find it?' he asked. 'We'll try our best,' said Mama Walrus. 'That's what friends do.' They kept following the bunting across the ice.



The snow bunting landed on a small snow pile and chirped again. She hopped up and down, looking at something behind the pile. The puffin waddled over quickly. He peeked around the snow pile and gasped. 'I see something red!' he squawked. 'Is it the hat?' Wally hurried as fast as his flippers could carry him. 'Let me see! Let me see!'



There, resting near the snow pile, was the bright red hat. The white pom-pom was a little dusty, but the hat was safe. 'My hat!' Wally shouted. He picked it up with his flippers and hugged it to his chest. 'Thank you, snow bunting! Thank you, puffin! Thank you, seal! Thank you, Mama!' He put the hat back on his head, and it fit just right.



Mama Walrus smiled and wrapped her flipper around him. 'We are glad we could help,' she said. The puffin danced a little jig on his orange feet. The seal clapped her flippers. The snow bunting chirped a happy song. 'You helped me just to be kind,' said Wally. 'You didn't want anything in return.' The friends all nodded and smiled at each other.



Wally looked at his friends. 'You searched and searched, and you didn't ask for a reward,' he said. 'That makes you the best friends in the world.' The puffin shrugged. 'That's what friends are for,' he said. The seal nodded. 'Helping is its own reward.' The snow bunting chirped in agreement. Wally felt warm inside, warmer than any hat could make him.



That evening, Wally sat with Mama and watched the sunset paint the ice pink and gold. 'I learned something today,' he said. 'What did you learn?' asked Mama. 'Friends help without expecting anything,' said Wally. 'They just help because they care.' Mama hugged him close. 'That's right, little one,' she said. 'And you are very lucky to have such friends.'



The next morning, Wally put on his red hat and went out to play. He saw the puffin and the seal and the snow bunting. 'Hello, friends!' he called. 'Want to play?' They all came over, and they played on the ice until the sun was high. Wally's hat stayed on his head, but even if it blew away again, he knew his friends would help him find it.



And from that day on, Wally always remembered: friends help without expecting rewards. He tried to be that kind of friend too. When the puffin lost his favorite feather, Wally helped him search. When the seal needed a buddy, Wally was there. And whenever the snow bunting flew by, Wally waved his flipper and smiled. Because kindness, like a warm hat, is best when shared.