

“Gee, that would be great Benny. I don’t have any friends and my parents left me alone and didn’t take me with them. So yes, that would be very nice of you, and we can become friends!”

“Look it’s getting late, and I want to sleep after coming all this way to be in my home burrow” Benny explained.” It’s been a long three days and I’m excited to be able to sleep here for a change.

That night they slept and had to sleep close to each other because the burrow was not very big for both of them. The young pup had always with one of his family, especially when it was cold. So, at one point during the night, he slid over and fell asleep next to Benny to keep warm and cozy. When they awoke, they were surprised to be cuddled together and even though they were different animals in every way. It felt good to have the companionship.

Furball said, very sheepishly,” Sorry Benny, I was cold, and it was nice to sleep next to you and keep warm. Do you know that you snore and kick in your sleep!”

“No, I didn’t know, Furball!” Benny said, “But that’s what you get for sleeping next to me! I can fix that with a little more digging and increase the size of the burrow.

So, the two animals looked around and decided it needed to be bigger. They knew that both would grow in the months ahead and they would need more room. Benny is a great digger and he proceeded to scratch through the sandy, loam soil and worked efficiently to enlarge the burrow. Soon he had a tunnel that ran under the old tree that had fallen down years ago. Then he made a big space at the end of the tunnel that would be his bedroom so Furball could have his own place to sleep. Furball was not good at digging but he was good at moving the soil out of the hole and making a nice front entrance to their new home.

Both animals were happy about their work and rested during the day and talked about how they were going to survive on their own. It was sad to be left alone at this young age, but they had found companionship with each other even though they were quite different animals. They did have one thing in common, both liked to hunt at night and with signals and techniques they could be a great team. But for now, they needed something to eat!

“Benny,” Furball asked, “How are we going to eat and get water? I’m hungry after all that work so we need to do something before I faint!”

“Water is not a problem because there is a spring about 5 minutes away through the forest. I might have an idea about getting something to eat, though you may not like it Furball!”

“Really, what’s that Benny? I could eat anything at this point, although I prefer something meaty you know!”

“Okay Furball, I am going to introduce you to a garden and great tasting vegetables in the garden by that farmhouse. It’s just at the other side of the pasture. It’s not meat but at this point we can’t be choosy right?”

“I don’t know Benny! I’ve never had vegetables before and never even heard of them. Already it doesn’t sound very good!” Furball said with a quizzical look on his face.

Benny took Furball on top of the log and they looked across the pasture where they could see a small white farmhouse with a large red barn where they kept a horse and two young calves. He knew about this because he would go there during night sometimes and catch mice that crawled around in the hay looking for some grain. It had been scattered by a young girl when she fed the animals in the morning on her way to school. Sometimes if he was tired, he would sleep in the barn and creep out after she left, then he would sneak away and go to his burrow to sleep during the rest of the day.

She seemed like a nice girl, and he liked her because she was very gentle with the animals and brushed them every morning and sometimes in the afternoon. Usually, she would lead them around a fenced-in area to give them a little exercise and would talk to them all the time. The animals really liked her and one of the calves would rest its head against the girl’s arm so she would scratch him on the back. The calf would wiggle its body and swish its tail while the girl scratched its him. It was fun to watch and made Benny sad that he didn’t have someone like that in his life. This was the same girl that Benny had seen as she picked berries by the side of the road.

“I see it, Benny,” Furball finally shouted! “I see a lot of green plants but what are vegetables and what do they taste like?”

“Well, Furball,” Benny responded, “They are very different from meat and all of them have a different taste. But you get used to it if you are hungry! Right now, I could use something in my tummy!”

” I don’t know Benny. It doesn’t sound very good to me.” He said reluctantly to his new friend, “But you just never know about good things to eat! I might like them so at least I’ll try them!”

“Great Furball, you may become a vegetable eater after all!”

Benny explained what they needed to do, so the two animals worked their way across the open pasture and arrived at the fence by the garden. It had been put there to keep the cows and horses out of the garden. They were not designed to keep a badger and a coyote out however. They both looked for any danger and then slipped under the bottom rail of the fence and entered the leafy jungle of plants.

It was a new and exciting experience for the coyote because he had never heard of a garden much less in one. He didn't know what there was to eat, so he followed his friend as he waddled through the rows of plants and stopped at one section. It had long leaf-like tops and an orange plant that grew under the ground. Benny turned to Furball and motioned for him to be quiet as he pulled on one of the tops of the plant and it popped out of the ground!

“Furball, this long orange thing is a carrot, and it tastes good. Here try a bite!”

The coyote picked it up with his paws and rolled it around, and sniffed it as he did so. He looked at his friend and said, “Now what”!

“Take a bite Furball!” Benny exclaimed. “You'll like it and besides there's nothing else to eat except these vegetables. It will fill your stomach at least for a while!”

The coyote took a small bite from the end of the carrot and made a disgusting face and spit it out! “This tastes awful,” he said. “You might like to eat this green stuff, but I really can't stand it! Isn't there something else around here that might taste better?”

Benny smiled and said, “Furball, these are not that bad, and we have not had anything to eat for a few days now. You must give it a chance to taste the sweetness and enjoy the crunch when you bite into them. Besides, after this we are going to the pea-pod part of the garden to try those sweet things.”

“Oh no!” Furball exclaimed, “Not more of this green stuff to eat Benny? You know, I can smell something I would eat coming from that fenced area over there. I can see some feathered animals scratching the ground and pecking. I bet they would taste good, don't you think?”

Benny looked in that direction and thought the same thing, but it looked dangerous because it was fenced, also there was a large multi-colored bird that bigger than the rest that looked very mean. He turned to Furball and said, “You know you are probably right, but we can't take chances because I have seen the people in this farmhouse shoot a gun or something at my parents when they tried to get close to the birds. I was just a baby and had sneaked along behind them to see where they were going.

It really scared me, and my parents ran away, and I was left by myself in the pasture, The sound of the gun was terrifying! That's the last I saw of my parents"

Despite his better judgment Furball edged to the end of the garden and smelled the chickens and wondered what they tasted like. He was about to cross under the fence to get a closer look when he heard the farmhouse door open and a voice that yelled "Get out of my garden, you lousy varmints'!"

Both Benny and Furball quickly spun around with horrified looks on their faces. They quickly fled the garden and scooted under the fence that led to the pasture. They ran as fast as possible to seek cover of the tall grass and were soon hidden from view of the farmhouse. They stopped to catch their breath and looked back at the open doorway. A man stood there in overalls and a red flannel shirt. He held something that Benny knew was a gun.

The farmer raised his shotgun to shoot at them but his daughter, Mary, said "No daddy, don't shoot they must have been hungry and really didn't take much. Besides I think they're cute!"

The farmer looked at this daughter and smiled at her concern for the wild animals and said "I may have to trap them and give them to the animal control people who will relocate them." He then aimed over their heads and fired the shotgun twice and watched as they scampered across the pasture.

Mary smiled and was glad her dad didn't shoot them and thought *maybe I will go across the pasture and have a picnic. I'll take my favorite doll Monica with me one day soon. I bet they live somewhere close to that old fallen tree in the oak grove.*