

The Littlest Bunny

By

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Though Father Bunny has warned his nest about the dangerous Hoot Owls that lurk in the forest, the Littlest Bunny doesn't believe him and leaves the burrow to visit the meadow with her friend, the Fawn.

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST GLADE - EARLY MORNING

A brilliant, sunny morning. The forest is alive with the songs of birds.

PUSH IN on a small earthen mound beneath a tree, where a round hole framed by rocks marks the entrance to a cozy burrow.

Suddenly, from out of the burrow hops a family of bunnies: the MOTHER BUNNY, followed by her FOUR CHILDREN, and lastly the FATHER BUNNY. Father Bunny pauses and looks back into the burrow, then around the glade. His gaze stops as he sees:

THE LITTLEST BUNNY sits at the edge of the glade, watching the sun rise over the valley below. As she turns, she runs smack into Father Bunny who has come up behind her.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
Oh! Good morning, Father.

FATHER BUNNY
(sternly)
Little one, have you been watching
the sun rise again?

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
Oh, well...Mother said I could!

FATHER BUNNY
Did she?

The Littlest Bunny's ears droop beneath his scowl.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
(very quietly)
No.

FATHER BUNNY
Little one, what shall I do with
you?

The Littlest Bunny looks sadly at the ground.

FATHER BUNNY
You must never leave the burrow by
yourself, especially while the sun
is down and the hoot owls are still
lurking in the forest.

The Littlest Bunny looks up, as if fearing to see owls even now watching her in the trees overhead. Seeing nothing, she sniffs disdainfully.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

I've never seen any old hoot owls.

Father Bunny bows his head. He reveals a deep tear in one of his long ears.

FATHER BUNNY

I got this when I was just a young bunny. I was lucky I dodged just in time, for once in the hoot owl's talons, I would never have escaped.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

I can dodge, Father. See?

The Littlest Bunny hops rapidly back and forth, circling her father. Father Bunny sighs, and turns towards the burrow.

FATHER BUNNY

Come, little one.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

Where are we going?

FATHER BUNNY

I am going with your mother and brothers and sisters to forage in the forest. But you must stay in the burrow today.

They have stopped outside the burrow. The Littlest Bunny looks up, the sting of tears in her eyes.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

But, why? I want to go to the forest, too, Father!

FATHER BUNNY

You may go with us tomorrow, but you must learn to stay in the burrow when you are told. We shall be home well before sun-down.

Father Bunny hops away into the forest, where Mother Bunny and her brood are waiting, and they continue forward together along a rough path. Crushed, the Littlest Bunny turns and enters the burrow.

INT. BURROW - MORNING

The Littlest Bunny stops inside the doorway. Her lip begins to tremble and pout. Suddenly, she wails, crying fountains of tears.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
Whaaaaaa!!

She stomps the floor of the burrow with her fluffy back feet.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
Stupid Father Bunny! This is
torture! This is prison!

She cavorts through the burrow, upsetting the bedding and food stores.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
I don't think you even love me!

She breaks down into more wails and sniffles, wiping her eyes with her long ears.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - MORNING

The shadows in the glade shift, marking the transition to early afternoon.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - EARLY AFTERNOON

The Littlest Bunny lies in the burrow doorway, dully gnawing at a root vegetable. Across the glade a WOODPECKER is at work on a nearby tree, filling the glade with its distinctive hammering. A SNAIL crawls very, very slowly up one of the rocks that frame the doorway.

The Littlest Bunny bites off a chunk of vegetable, then spits it into the clearing. Entertained for the moment, she takes another bite and spits it again, farther this time. Biting off a third chunk of root, she spits again, hitting a rock with a small "ping!" The noise startles the Woodpecker, who flaps away into the forest.

The Littlest Bunny watches the Woodpecker go and sighs. Her eyes get heavy. Her eyelids droop lower and lower, until they close.

Suddenly, they open. She sits up, alert, straining to hear and peering intently into the forest. A hint of movement from inside the forest catches her eye. She rubs her eyes and looks harder.

There it was again, just behind that tree! Could it be?

The figure comes into view: a beautiful spotted FAWN. The Littlest Bunny's eyes widen in wonder. She calls:

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
Hello! Hello, there!

But the Fawn is too far away to hear and continues foraging. The Littlest Bunny whistles, but there is no response. The Fawn trots off into the brush.

The Littlest Bunny hops out of the burrow, straining to catch another glimpse of the Fawn. She looks back towards the burrow, then takes another hop and another.

She looks back once more at the burrow, basking in the lazy afternoon sun, then hops out of the glade and into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - EARLY AFTERNOON

The Littlest Bunny hops nimbly along the rough path. A lilting giggle comes from further in the brush.

The Littlest Bunny leaves the path, wiggling through the dense underbrush. She gets stuck, but with a furious wiggle suddenly bursts out of the bushes in front of the Fawn, who has been chasing a BUTTERFLY.

The Fawn jumps and stands splay-legged facing the bunny, her large, gentle eyelashes fluttering in surprise. However, she quickly recovers and approaches the bunny, sniffing curiously.

FAWN
Hello!

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
H-hello.

FAWN
You're a funny-looking squirrel.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
Oh, I'm not a squirrel; I'm a bunny.

The Fawn giggles as if this is a very funny joke.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
Are you a-a hoot owl?

FAWN
What's a hoot owl?

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
My Father says it's a terrible
creature that lives in the
trees...!

The Fawn giggles again, bounding nimbly around the Littlest Bunny.

FAWN
There's no such thing!

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
Really?

FAWN
I've never seen such a thing, and
I've been from the ridge top to the
meadow below.

The Littlest Bunny's eyes open in wonder.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
You've been to the meadow?

FAWN
Of course! All us fawns love
playing in the meadow.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
What's it like?

FAWN
The whole field is covered in white
and yellow daisies. And when the
fireflies come out and dance under
the moon, it is the most beautiful
sight in the world!

THE LITTLEST BUNNY
Oh, I should like to see that!

The Fawn laughs again.

FAWN

Come with me, and I will show you!

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

Oh, but...is it far?

FAWN

No, not far. Come, come!

The Fawn giggles as she kicks up her heels and dances deeper into the forest. The Littlest Bunny looks back one last time in the direction of the burrow. Her wistfulness is replaced by defiance, as she shakes her long ears and sniffs.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

After all, the Fawn said there aren't any such things as hoot owls!

And she hops away.

EXT. FOREST - AFTERNOON

MONTAGE: The Littlest Bunny follows the Fawn through the forest. They pass over trickling streams, clamber through berry-laden thickets (where the Littlest Bunny stops to grab a sweet snack), and slide down steep hillsides littered with dry leaves.

EXT. MEADOW - LATE AFTERNOON

The trees finally fall away, and the Littlest Bunny and the Fawn stand on the edge of the meadow. A sea of flowers washes gently over the little hillocks and gullies. A light breeze covers the meadow in shining ripples like waves. The BIRDS add their cheerful songs, serenading nature's beauty.

The Littlest Bunny's eyes glow with excitement. The Fawn giggles and springs forward.

FAWN

Come! Come!

She disappears in the thick grasses, her white tail bounding above the flowers like a flag. The Littlest Bunny hops into the grass. She is surrounded by wildflowers, and inhales deeply with a sigh.

The Fawn's giggle can be heard again. The Littlest Bunny chases after it, and the two crisscross the meadow in large arcs. The Fawn lets the Littlest Bunny get close to catching her, but always springs away at the last second.

The Fawn bounds into a patch of daisies, and pauses to listen. Nudging forward, she steps timidly out of the daisies. Crouching behind the grasses, the Littlest Bunny wiggles her bottom and lunges forward, catching the Fawn by surprise. The two roll in the grass, and lie panting, exhausted.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

I wish I could stay here forever!

FAWN

Stay, then, little bunny. Stay and play with me! And we can be the best of friends.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

(sighing in happiness)

The best of friends!

The Fawn giggles. Rolling to her feet, she jumps over the bunny and springs away down the slope.

FAWN

Race you to the creek!

The Littlest Bunny rolls to her feet and dashes after the Fawn.

EXT. MEADOW CREEK - LATE AFTERNOON

The Fawn slows as she comes to the edge of a little creek. As she bends to drink, the Littlest Bunny arrives behind her. Weaving between the Fawn's long, slender legs, the bunny comes to the edge of the creek and takes a gulp of the clear water. She closes her eyes and sighs with contentment.

EXT. MEADOW CREEK - SUNSET

Involuntarily, the Littlest Bunny shudders. She opens her eyes to see the faint amber circle of an early harvest moon in the sky above. Alarmed, she turns and finds the sun sunk low in the sky. A chill wind has sprung up. The cheerful songs of the birds have ceased, replaced by the distant cawing of a solitary crow.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

Oh, dear! The sun is setting!
Father Bunny will catch me out of
the burrow!

FAWN

Stay! Stay and play with me! And we
can be the best of friends!

The Fawn giggles and leaps around the Littlest Bunny.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

We'll play again soon. But I must
get home, Fawn!

FAWN

Stay and play, stay and play!

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

No, no. I must go now. Goodbye,
dear Fawn!

The Fawn giggles again and bounds away, her white tail
disappearing in the grass.

EXT. MEADOW - TWILIGHT

The meadow looks black and stormy in the falling light as
the Littlest Bunny hops quickly through the waving grasses.
Ahead, the forest looms even darker.

At the edge of the forest, the Littlest Bunny takes one last
look at the meadow, where the first fireflies have begun to
play. The tiny blinking lights look strange and otherworldly
in the roiling sea of grass.

The Littlest Bunny turns and enters the forest.

EXT. FOREST - TWILIGHT

The Littlest Bunny struggles up a steep hillside. The dry
leaves slip under her paws, making her stumble.

She falls against a tree. Above in the branches, there is a
rustle of wings as a startled CROW takes flight, cawing as
he goes. The Littlest Bunny looks up in fright, then calms
as she realizes it was only a crow.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

(whispered)

I don't believe in hoot owls. There
are no such things as hoot owls!

She picks herself up and continues forward, trying to keep
her fears in check.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

The Fawn has never seen a hoot owl,
and she's been all over this
forest--from the ridge top to the
meadow.

The Littlest Bunny gains the top of the slope. She looks through the trees, where the western sky glimmers a deepening purple. She hurries on, her little paws beating a soft tempo on the forest floor.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

I just have to get home before
Father. I must get home before
Father!

BOOM UP to the forest canopy, where inside the hollowed knot of a rotting oak, two yellow-green eyes slowly slip open.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

The Littlest Bunny hops briskly past the berry bushes she had enjoyed earlier in the day. There is a sudden squeaking, and the bunny shrieks in fright. It is only a family of startled FIELD MICE. The bunny continues forward.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

There are no such things as hoot
owls! There are no such things as
hoot owls!

From deep in the forest comes a long, low call that sends a chill down the spine of the Littlest Bunny, freezing her in her tracks.

HOOT OWL

Hoooo!

TRACK with a gust of wind, that sends a whirl of leaves spinning ominously to the bunny's feet.

PAN UP to the Littlest Bunny's face. Sheer terror.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

(helpless)
There are no such things...

She turns and runs headlong into the forest.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The chase is on.

The Littlest Bunny rushes frantically through the forest, dodging trees, weaving through the dense brush. Behind her, the call comes again, louder:

HOOT OWL

Hooooo!

She crosses the trickling stream, her feet slipping and sliding on the wet stones. Diving again into the brush, she chokes back a sob, and cries out in desperation.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

Father! Father!

Her shriek echoes through the forest.

The beat of wings rustles the dark treetops as an inky shape crosses the bloody harvest moon.

The Littlest Bunny gets snagged on a bramble.

HOOT OWL

Hoo-hoo!

She pulls and finally breaks free, leaving a tuft of downy fur on the jagged thorns.

HOOT OWL

Hoo! Hoo!

The call seems to come from ahead. The Littlest Bunny veers to the left, tearing through a patch of wilted mayapples that leave bits of their clammy leaves clinging to her fur.

Another call comes, this time from the right.

HOOT OWL

Hoo! Hoo-hoo!

The Littlest Bunny veers left again. She runs blindly, tears filling her eyes, as she calls with piteous shrieks.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

Father! Father! Father!

She breaks through the brush to find herself back at the stream. The realization brings her up short. She hops to the right, then the left, in distressed confusion.

She listens, but all she can hear is the frantic beating of her own little heart.

TILT UP to where, in the branches above, glow two cold yellow-green eyes.

The HOOT OWL flaps its large wings. At the sound, the Littlest Bunny raises her eyes and sees the owl above her. She is frozen, trembling with fear. A large tear rolls down her cheek at the realization of her fate.

The Hoot Owl screams and descends upon her. The Littlest Bunny shrieks, bracing herself for the impact.

Suddenly, she is knocked aside. The owl's talons sink down, burying themselves into a soft body beside her.

The Hoot Owl rises, the Father Bunny in his grasp. The Father looks down at where the Littlest Bunny, shrinking rapidly, stands looking up at him in horror, before the treetops block her from view. He hears her scream come faintly on the wind.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

Father!

INT. BURROW - EARLY MORNING

The Littlest Bunny wakes in a cold sweat. For a moment, she is confused. Then she remembers.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

(whispers)

Father!

She looks around the burrow, where Mother Bunny and the other children are sleeping. But there is no Father Bunny.

Trembling, she goes to the door of the burrow. She takes one step out, then looks down, and draws her foot back inside.

Overcome, the Littlest Bunny weeps.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

Father, Father! I'm sorry I didn't listen. I'm sorry I didn't believe you. I'm sorry...I ever doubted that you really loved me!

Great tears roll down her cheeks.

EXT. FOREST GLADE - EARLY MORNING

A great paw pulls her out of the burrow into the soft embrace of Father Bunny. She looks up to see his eyes full of soft concern.

FATHER BUNNY

My poor little one! Did you have a bad dream?

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

Father? Oh, Father, you're alive!

FATHER BUNNY

Of course, little one!

She holds him tight and nuzzles against his cheek as he hops to the edge of the glade, where the sun has just risen over the valley below. Together, they watch as the Songbirds resume their cheery tunes and the SQUIRRELS chase each other from tree branch to tree branch.

THE LITTLEST BUNNY

Father, I love you.

FATHER BUNNY

I love you too, little bunny. I love you too.

Slow PULL OUT on the two bunnies, standing in relief against the rising sun.

FADE TO BLACK

