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New Words
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In the heart of the green forest, where sunlight danced through leaves, lived a cheerful parrot named Polly. Her feathers were bright emerald green, her tail a splash of red, and her wing tips a sunny yellow. On one leg she wore a small vine anklet with tiny blue beads. Polly loved words more than anything. She listened to every sound and repeated every word she heard.

Polly could say almost anything. She mimicked the river's gurgle, the wind's whoosh, and the bees' buzz. But her favorite words were the ones her friends used. 'Good morning!' she'd squawk. 'Thank you!' she'd chirp. 'See you later!' she'd call. Her friends smiled at first, but Polly never knew when to use which word. She just liked the way they sounded.

One day, Polly visited her friend the rabbit, who was sad because her garden flowers had wilted. Polly tilted her head and said brightly, 'Congratulations!' The rabbit looked confused. 'Why congratulations?' she asked. Polly didn't know. She just liked the word. The rabbit sighed and turned away. Polly didn't understand why her friend seemed upset.

Later, Polly saw the deer family arriving for a visit. 'Goodbye! Goodbye!' she called out happily. The deer stopped, puzzled. 'We just got here,' said the mother deer. Polly blinked her round amber eyes. 'Goodbye!' she said again, proud of the word. The deer shook their heads and walked on. Polly wondered why no one wanted to stay and chat.

At the forest gathering, the animals shared their news. When the mouse told everyone that her grandmother had passed away, Polly perked up. 'Hooray!' she shouted, flapping her green wings. The mouse began to cry. The other animals looked at Polly with frowns. 'That was not kind,' whispered the squirrel. Polly's crest drooped. She hadn't meant to be unkind. She just didn't know what to say.

Polly flew to a quiet branch and thought. Why did her words make her friends unhappy? She repeated them so well! But something was missing. She watched the other animals talk. They looked at each other's faces. They waited. They nodded. Polly didn't do any of that. She just said words. Maybe there was more to talking than she thought.

Just then, a slow, gentle voice spoke from below. 'Polly, come down here.' It was Old Shell, the tortoise. He was very old, with a mossy green shell and round spectacles on his nose. Polly fluttered down. 'I've noticed you have trouble with words,' Old Shell said, blinking slowly. 'Would you like to learn a secret?' Polly nodded eagerly. 'Words are like seeds,' he said. 'They grow best when planted at the right time.'

Old Shell explained, 'Before you speak, watch the other animal's face. Are they smiling? Are they sad? Listen to their voice. Is it happy or worried? Then choose a word that fits their feeling.' Polly tilted her head. 'Watch and listen?' she repeated. 'Yes,' said Old Shell. 'And wait. There is no rush. Kindness needs time.' Polly promised to try.

The next day, Polly practiced. She saw the rabbit looking at her wilted flowers and said nothing. Instead, she watched the rabbit's drooping ears and sad eyes. Polly flew down and sat beside her quietly. After a moment, she said softly, 'I'm sorry your flowers are sad.' The rabbit looked up and smiled a little. 'Thank you, Polly,' she said. Polly felt a warm glow.

Later, Polly saw the deer returning. This time she watched their faces. They looked tired from their journey. Polly remembered how they had felt before. She flew to greet them and said warmly, 'Welcome back! You must be tired.' The deer's eyes widened with surprise. 'What a kind welcome!' said the mother deer. Polly's crest lifted with joy. She was beginning to understand.

One afternoon, a tiny sound came from a bush. Polly peeked in and saw a very young bird named Pip. Pip was a fluffy chick with pale blue-grey down and big, round black eyes. His tiny orange beak trembled, and his wings shook. He clutched a fallen leaf under one wing like a blanket. 'I'm lost,' Pip whispered. 'And scared.'

Polly remembered Old Shell's lesson. She didn't say 'Congratulations!' or 'Goodbye!' She looked at Pip's frightened eyes and trembling wings. She listened to his soft, shaky voice. Then she spoke gently. 'It's okay to be scared,' she said. 'I'm here with you. You are not alone.' Pip looked up. His trembling slowed. 'Really?' he asked. 'Really,' said Polly softly.

Polly stayed with Pip. She told him about the safe places in the forest. She described the warm hollow where he could rest. She said, 'I will help you find your family.' Pip's eyes grew less round with fear. He even gave a tiny chirp. 'You're kind,' he said. Polly felt her heart swell. These words felt different. They felt true.

With Polly's help, Pip found his family in a cozy nest nearby. His mother thanked Polly warmly. 'You have a gift for kind words,' she said. Polly's blue-bead anklet jingled as she hopped with happiness. She realized that repeating words was easy, but choosing the right words for a friend's feelings was something special. It made her feel warm inside.

Polly returned to Old Shell. 'You were right,' she said. 'Watching and listening makes all the difference.' Old Shell smiled his wise smile. 'Now you know that words are not just sounds. They carry feelings. When you pay attention, your words can heal.' Polly nodded. She looked at her friends, who were now smiling at her. She felt proud and grateful.

From that day on, Polly still loved words. But she loved her friends more. She watched their faces and listened to their hearts. She learned that kindness makes every word count. And whenever she spoke, she made sure her words fit the moment. The forest was happier, and so was Polly, because she finally understood the true power of talking.