

Rocky and the Squirrels

by RV Staff Writer J.C.

Rocky Raccoon was playing by himself at the park. He noticed a group of squirrels nearby, playing soccer with an acorn. It looked like fun, and Rocky wished he could play too. However, thinking about talking to others made him nervous and he wasn't sure how to start.

Why would they want to play with me? He thought. I'm not special. Maybe there's a way I could make myself different. Then they might be more interested in me.

Rocky scratched his furry chin and wondered what he could do. If he pretended to be from another country, the squirrels would think that was cool. He could change the way he talked to sound different. He looked around for anything to help him look different, too. There wasn't much in the park except for an empty potato chip bag. Rocky grabbed it and placed it on his head.

"Here goes nothing," he mumbled, and with a swaggering step he ambled over to the squirrels. They stopped chasing each other to look at the raccoon. "G'day mates," he said.

"Uh, hi ..." replied a couple of the animals, not sure what to make of Rocky in his funny hat and strange accent.

"How's it going? Fine arvo for a game of footy, don't ya think?" Rocky said.

The squirrels just looked at him. One of them shrugged his shoulders. Finally, one replied, "What did you just say?"

"Uh ... nice afternoon for a soccer game, right?" Rocky stammered, embarrassed.

"Oh, yeah, sure it is. Sorry, we didn't understand you at first."

"That's probably because I'm from Australia," replied the raccoon. "It's really far away."

"Is that so? How did you get here?" asked a curious squirrel.

"I'm kind of a world traveler," boasted Rocky.

A little brown squirrel spoke up. "I have a squirrel cousin in Australia. He told me they don't have raccoons in that country."

Rocky's smile dropped. Was that true? Now they must know he was faking his accent. How embarrassing! Maybe he should just run away from them. He took a deep breath.

"I'm sorry. That wasn't the truth. I made up being from Australia so you would think I'm interesting

and want to play with me. But I'm just a regular raccoon." He looked at the ground, afraid they would laugh at him.

But the squirrels did not laugh. They gathered closer around him. A grey squirrel reached out and patted Rocky on the shoulder. "Let me tell you something, buddy, you may not be from Australia, but you are certainly very interesting!" He smiled.

The little brown squirrel piped up, "Yeah, you don't have to pretend to be something you're not. If you wanted to come play soccer with us, you could have just asked!" The others nodded in agreement.

"Do you still want to play?" The grey squirrel tossed the acorn to the raccoon.

Rocky nodded shyly. "Yes, please. That would be great."

"Then come on! But first you might want to take that – thing – off your head." He gestured to the chip bag Rocky was still wearing.

With a laugh, Rocky knocked the empty bag off his head and ran off to play with his new friends.

Questions

1. Why did Rocky want to be different?
2. What did the raccoon do to try to appear more interesting?
3. What does piped mean here: "The little brown squirrel piped up, "Yeah, you don't have to pretend to be something you're not."
4. If you had been one of the squirrels, what would you thought of Rocky?