



Rufus Crumbsnout and the Big Feelings

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Rufus Crumbsnout, a round, stripy, and very handsome raccoon, stood proudly amidst a mountain of cookies. For Rufus, cookies were more than just snacks; they were breakfast, lunch, emotional support, and sometimes even daring hats.



One peaceful night, Rufus lay tucked in his cozy bed, dreaming of crumbs and dramatic naps. Suddenly, his brain popped up like a mischievous jack-in-the-box, startling him with a loud 'HELLO!'



Rufus sat bolt upright as his brain whispered unsettling questions: 'WHAT IF TOMORROW IS... DIFFERENT?' and 'WHAT IF YOU FORGET HOW TO RACCOON?' His tummy did a glorp, his chest thumped, and his tail tied itself into a nervous pretzel.



Trying to calm his racing thoughts, Rufus munched on a cookie, but the 'big feelings' came back, wearing a hat! He ate another, but soon the feelings sat heavily on his chest, refusing to leave. Rufus groaned, 'WHY AM I LIKE THIS?'



Just then, a dramatic squirrel crashed through the window, crying, 'I SENSED EMOTION!' and immediately fainted onto a pillow. A nervous pigeon shuffled in behind him, whispering, 'I brought anxiety.'



They all turned to the Ancient Cookie Jar, which rattled ominously. It declared Rufus's 'engine is racing' and instructed him to slow it, not with cookies, but with his own body. Rufus looked confused, 'I have a body?'



Following the Cookie Jar's guidance, Rufus placed one paw on his tummy and one on his chest. He took a slow breath in, smelling 'chocolate chip with confidence,' and blew out slowly, like cooling a hot cookie. The squirrel tried and fell over, while the pigeon panicked about oxygen.



After several attempts, a surprising calm began to settle. Rufus noticed his heart wasn't galloping, his tummy stopped flipping, and his tail loosened. The big feelings didn't vanish, but they definitely shrank, a brand new sensation.



The next mornings, the feelings returned, smaller but still a bit bossy. The dramatic squirrel, insisting on 'THEATRE,' led them in a chant: 'Paws on belly, paws on chest, Smell the cookie, it's the best!' Even the pigeon joined in, albeit nervously.



Slowly, day by day, the feelings stopped shouting and started knocking first. One night, Rufus smiled, telling his brain, 'Not tonight. I've got steps. And a chant. And snacks.' His impressed brain let him sleep, dreaming of crumbs.