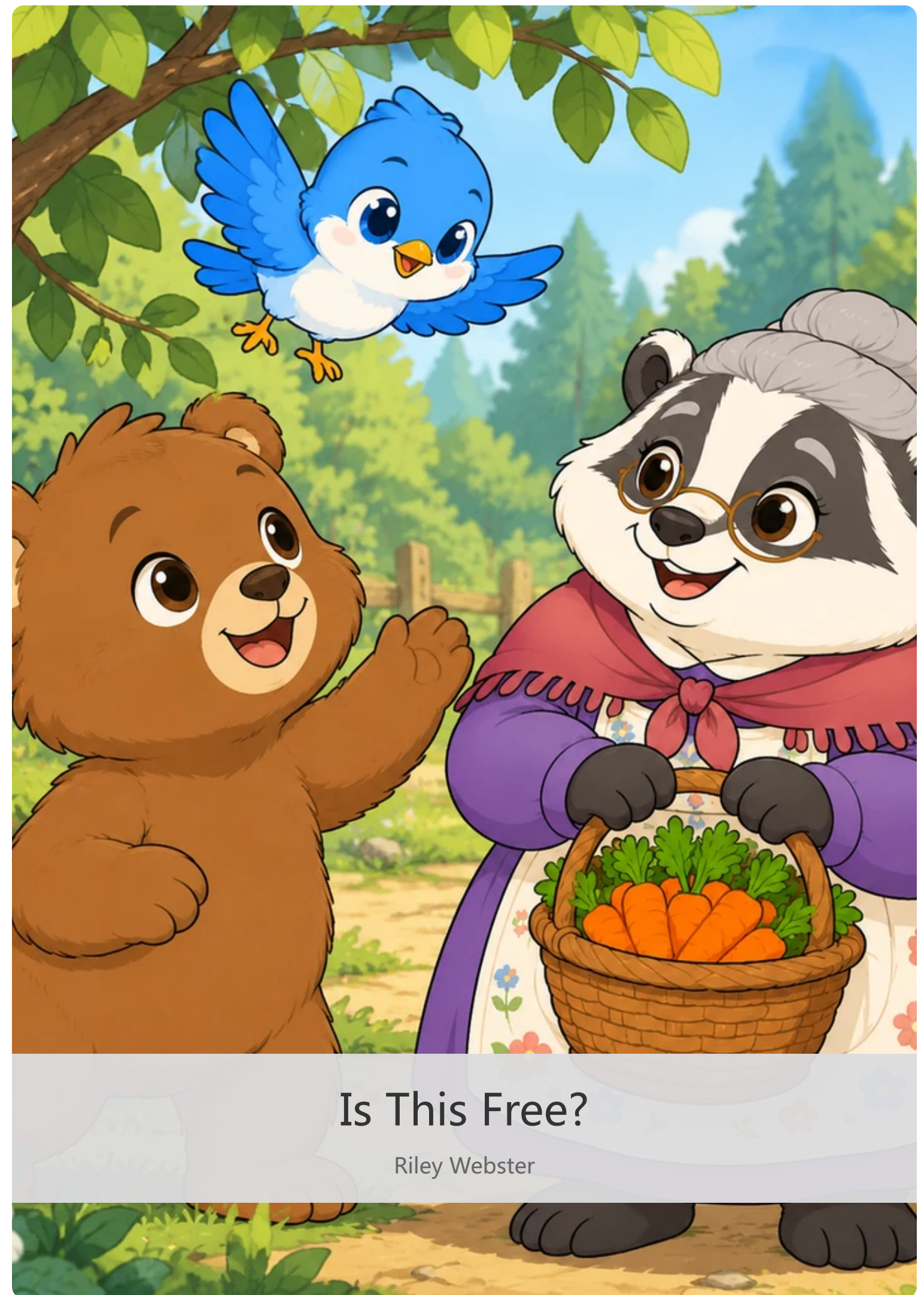




Is This Free?

Riley Webster



Barnaby the curious little bear stumbled upon a glistening patch of wild strawberries growing right at the edge of the sunny meadow. He blinked his round brown eyes, tilted his head in wonder, and wondered if the delicious treats belonged to anyone at all.



He gently poked a plump red berry with his fuzzy paw, looking around the quiet forest for a sign or a price tag. A friendly bluebird fluttered down from a leafy branch above, watching the confused bear with amusement.



Barnaby proudly picked up a shiny pebble in his mouth and placed it carefully beneath the berry bush as a fair trade. The bluebird tilted its head and chirped a cheerful tune, as if trying to explain how nature's gifts actually worked.



Just then, wise old Mrs. Badger waddled past with a basket of woven twigs filled with crunchy carrots. Barnaby pointed eagerly at the strawberries and asked the badger if the entire patch was entirely free for the taking.



Mrs. Badger chuckled warmly, her soft fur rustling as she explained that the forest provided its sweet treasures for everyone to share, not to buy. She plucked a berry and popped it into her mouth, demonstrating the true spirit of the woodland bounty.



Enlightened by the badger's wisdom, Barnaby's face lit up with a joyful smile that reached all the way to his fuzzy ears. He decided to invite all his forest friends to share the wonderful feast together instead of trying to pay for it.



Soon, squirrels, rabbits, and hedgehogs gathered around the vibrant strawberry patch, chattering happily and helping themselves to the sweet fruit. Barnaby felt a warm, fuzzy feeling in his chest that was even better than eating honey.



Squirrel scampered up with an extra acorn, trying to pay Barnaby for the strawberry he had just happily received. Barnaby giggled and shook his head, gently reminding his little friend that kindness is always given without any cost.



As the golden afternoon sun began to dip below the tall tree line, the happy animals finished their delightful berry feast. They danced in a circle around the bush, celebrating the magic of friendship and sharing in the heart of the woods.



Barnaby curled up in his cozy den that evening, drifting off to sleep with a happy heart and a belly full of sweet strawberries. He finally understood that the best things in life could never be bought, only shared with those you love.