

The Quail.

The man heard the quail calling from a property or two away. It called and called. Finally, the man mimicked the call he'd heard countless times over the years he'd lived in his cabin.

Quail, the man reminded himself, are timid and reclusive birds. Their topknot always made the man smile as they ran from place to place, or as he watched them gather their clutch back together.

The man had made friends with a dove to the point she didn't fly away when he walked by, as her mate did, and he had made friends with many furry and feathered critters at his cabin.

The man stayed seated and, shockingly, the quail answered using the same call the man had learned, but in a pitch far higher and with a melody the man could never produce. The man called back, using his crude human call, and he waited; the quail called back.

Several hours went by, and the man would occasionally call, and the quail would answer or vice versa.

Later that evening, the man was once again sitting on his porch. He'd been there for an hour or so, and he was slowly puffing on a cigar, enjoying the evening as it grew quieter, when he happened to look to his left, and there, less than twenty feet away, was the quail. Its entire lower body rested on the ground, a sign that it felt safe and was comfortable lying there.

And so, the man and the quail both rested quietly and calmly, sharing peace and trust in the waning warmth of this late-spring evening.

As the evening air chilled, the man decided to go inside. He rose slowly so as not to startle the quail, and he smiled, feeling he'd been given a gift; the gift of friendship from a quail.

The man's heart beat contentedly because he knew the authenticity of their experience.

Written by Peter Skeels © 5-23-2026