

The Boy and the Little Donkey



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Leo was eight years old, with warm light-brown skin, big brown eyes, and a bright gap-toothed smile. One sunny Saturday, his mother took him to the animal sanctuary. She wore a yellow cardigan and carried a woven tote bag. Leo wore his red t-shirt, blue overalls, and green rubber boots. He was curious and kind, and he couldn't wait to see the animals. His small canvas satchel was empty, but he hoped to fill it with treats.



At the sanctuary, a tall woman with deep brown skin and round glasses greeted them. Her name badge said 'Maya.' She wore an olive-green work shirt and a tool belt. 'Welcome!' she said with a wide smile. 'We have many animals who need care.' Leo's eyes grew wide as he looked around. He saw goats, chickens, and a gentle old horse. Then he heard a soft, funny sound: 'Hee-haw!'



Maya led Leo to a small paddock. There stood a little donkey with a soft grey-brown coat, a cream muzzle, and long floppy ears. It wore a simple red halter. 'This is Clover,' Maya said. 'He's young and playful.' Leo stepped closer. Clover's dark eyes were gentle, and a fluffy tuft of hair fell over his forehead. Leo's heart gave a happy thump. 'Hi, Clover,' he whispered.



Clover trotted over and sniffed Leo's empty satchel. Leo giggled. 'Sorry, no treats yet!' Maya showed Leo how to brush Clover's soft fur with a special brush. 'He loves this,' she said. Leo brushed gently, and Clover leaned into him. 'His coat is so soft,' Leo said. 'And his ears are so long!' Clover's ears flopped, making Leo laugh. He felt proud to help.



Every day after school, Leo's mother brought him to the sanctuary. Leo learned to feed Clover fresh hay and make sure his water bucket was full. 'A donkey needs more than food and water,' Maya said. 'He needs company and kindness.' Leo nodded. He liked spending time with Clover. He told Clover about his day, and Clover listened with his floppy ears.



One day, Maya said, 'Clover is healthy, but he seems a little bored. Donkeys are smart and curious. They need fun things to do.' Leo thought hard. He wanted to help his friend. 'Can we make a game for him?' Leo asked. Maya smiled. 'That's a wonderful idea! Let's create some safe enrichment activities.' Leo's eyes sparkled with excitement.



Leo and Maya planned a treasure hunt for Clover. They hid small pieces of carrot and apple around the paddock. Leo's satchel was now full of tasty treats. 'Donkeys love to search,' Maya explained. 'It keeps their minds busy.' Leo placed a carrot under a log and an apple slice near a fence post. Clover watched with curious eyes, his ears perked up.



When the hunt began, Clover sniffed the air. He trotted to the log and found the carrot. Crunch! He gobbled it up. Then he found the apple slice. He let out a happy little 'hee-haw!' Leo clapped his hands. 'You found them!' he cheered. Maya said, 'You see? Enrichment is important for a donkey's happiness.' Leo beamed with pride.



Leo wanted to do more. He made a puzzle feeder from a safe plastic container with holes. He filled it with hay and a few treats. Clover nuzzled and rolled it, and treats tumbled out. 'You're a clever donkey!' Leo laughed. He also hung a sturdy rope with a soft toy on it for Clover to nuzzle. Each day, Leo invented new games with Maya's help.



Leo learned that responsible care means more than food and water. It means spending time together and showing kindness. He brushed Clover every day, fed him, and took him on gentle walks around the sanctuary. They walked past the goats and the old horse. Clover's red halter gleamed in the sun. Leo talked and Clover listened, and they were happy together.



One afternoon, a cold wind blew. Clover seemed a little sad. Leo sat beside him and stroked his long ears. 'What's wrong, Clover?' he asked softly. Maya came over. 'Donkeys can feel lonely sometimes,' she said. 'He needs extra companionship today.' Leo nodded. He stayed with Clover, telling him silly stories and singing songs. Clover rested his head on Leo's shoulder.



Leo's mother watched from the gate. She smiled her gentle smile. 'You're doing a wonderful job, Leo,' she said. 'You're showing Clover love and care.' Leo felt warm inside. He realized that being kind and spending time with Clover was just as important as feeding him. 'I love Clover,' Leo said. 'And I think he loves me too.' Clover nuzzled Leo's pocket for a treat.



From that day on, Leo made sure to give Clover extra companionship. He brought a small radio to play soft music, and Clover's ears relaxed. He sat and read books aloud while Clover munched hay. Maya said, 'You've learned a big lesson, Leo. Responsible care includes companionship.' Leo smiled his gap-toothed smile. He was proud to be Clover's best friend.



Clover grew happy and healthy. His grey-brown coat shone, and his eyes sparkled. Each morning, he waited by the gate for Leo. When Leo arrived, Clover brayed with joy. They played treasure hunt and puzzle games. Leo brushed Clover's soft fur and fed him fresh hay. Their friendship showed how love and kindness make a donkey thrive.



One day, Maya asked Leo to help teach other children about donkey care. Leo stood proudly in his red t-shirt and overalls. He showed them how to brush Clover and hide treats. 'Donkeys need food and water,' Leo said, 'but they also need friendship.' The children listened. Clover stood calmly, his red halter bright, as if he knew he was loved.



Leo's mother hugged him at the gate. 'I'm so proud of you,' she said. 'You've shown that kindness and companionship make a big difference.' Leo waved goodbye to Clover. 'See you tomorrow, friend!' he called. Clover brayed softly. Leo knew that their friendship would keep growing, and he would always care for Clover with love and kindness.