

The Girl and the Little Parrot



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On a bright Saturday morning, Maya skipped down the sidewalk in her yellow raincoat-style jacket. Her curly black hair bounced in two puffy buns as she hurried toward the rescue center. Today was special: she was going to meet the rescued animals for the first time. Her canvas satchel, with its little parrot patch, swung at her side. She could hardly wait to see what was inside.



Ms. Rosa, who ran the rescue center, greeted Maya with a warm smile. Her green polo shirt had the center's logo, and a lanyard of keys jingled at her neck. "Welcome, Maya!" she said. "Ready to meet some animals?" Maya nodded so fast her buns wiggled. Ms. Rosa led her past cozy cages and happy barking dogs. Maya's big dark brown eyes grew wide with wonder.



At the end of the room, a small green parrot sat on a perch. His chest was orange-red, and one white feather stood out on his left wing. A blue leg band gleamed on his ankle. "This is Kiwi," said Ms. Rosa softly. "He's clever and cautious." Kiwi tilted his head and looked at Maya with bright amber eyes. Maya smiled and said, "Hello, Kiwi."



Kiwi hopped sideways, keeping his distance. Maya didn't rush him. She sat quietly on a stool and watched. Ms. Rosa explained, "Rescued parrots are smart. They need fun things to do, or they get bored and sad." Maya thought about that. "Like games?" she asked. Ms. Rosa nodded. "Exactly like games." Kiwi cocked his head, as if he was listening.



Ms. Rosa showed Maya a simple puzzle: a cup with a treat hidden under it. Kiwi watched with one eye. "Parrots in the wild solve problems all day," Ms. Rosa said. "Here, we must give them puzzles to keep their minds busy." Maya's gap-toothed smile grew. "I could help design some!" she said. Kiwi squawked softly, almost like he agreed.



Maya pulled a small notebook from her satchel. She drew a puzzle with cups and treats. "What if we hide a treat under one cup and let Kiwi find it?" she asked. Ms. Rosa clapped her hands. "That's a wonderful idea! We can supervise and make sure it's safe." Maya's cheeks turned pink with pride. Kiwi edged a little closer, curious about the notebook.



The next day, Maya brought her puzzle. She set three cups on a table, hiding a treat under one. Kiwi watched from his perch. Ms. Rosa stood nearby, ready to help. Maya lifted the cups to show Kiwi the treat, then covered them. "Find it, Kiwi!" she said. Kiwi flew down and studied the cups with his amber eyes.



Kiwi tapped the first cup. Nothing. He tapped the second cup. Still nothing. Then he nudged the third cup with his grey hooked beak, and it tipped over. A treat rolled out! "You did it!" Maya cheered. Kiwi gobbled the treat and puffed his orange-red chest. Ms. Rosa laughed. "He's a natural puzzle solver!" Maya beamed. Her first game was a success.



Each visit, Maya brought a new puzzle. She made a box with a small door that Kiwi could open. She made a string with a bead he could pull. Kiwi solved each one faster than the last. "He's so clever!" Maya said. Ms. Rosa nodded. "Smart parrots need challenges. You're giving him exactly that." Kiwi seemed to puff up with pride after every solved puzzle.



Maya noticed Kiwi watching her closely now. When she arrived, he would hop to the front of his perch and chirp. One day, she held out a piece of apple. Kiwi took it gently from her fingers. "He trusts you," Ms. Rosa said softly. Maya's heart felt warm. "I think we're friends," she whispered. Kiwi nibbled the apple and blinked at her.



Then Maya had a big idea. "What if we make a whole game with steps?" she asked. "Kiwi could open a door, then pull a string, then find a treat!" Ms. Rosa's eyes sparkled. "A puzzle course! I can supervise while you build it." Together, they planned the course. Maya drew arrows and boxes in her notebook. Kiwi watched, tilting his head.



Maya and Ms. Rosa built the course on a low table. First, a small door. Then a string with a bell. At the end, a cup with a treat. Kiwi landed on the table and looked at the steps. He opened the door, pulled the string, and tipped the cup. The bell rang, and the treat was his! Maya clapped. "You're a puzzle champion!" Kiwi squawked happily.



After that, Kiwi always greeted Maya with a special chirp. He would flutter to her shoulder and nibble her ear gently. "He's saying hello," Ms. Rosa said. Maya giggled. "Hello, Kiwi!" she replied. They played games every visit, and each time, Kiwi learned something new. Maya learned too: intelligent pets need fun and friendship to stay happy.



One rainy day, Maya arrived in her yellow jacket, a little sad because summer was ending. Kiwi hopped onto her finger and made a soft, cooing sound. "He knows you're blue," Ms. Rosa said. Maya smiled. "You cheer me up, Kiwi." She gave him a puzzle with three steps, and he solved it quickly. Then he snuggled against her hand.



Ms. Rosa took a photo of Maya and Kiwi for the rescue center's wall. "You've taught us all something important," she said. "Parrots are smart and need games to stay healthy." Maya looked at Kiwi, who was preening his green feathers. "And they need friends," she added. Kiwi whistled, as if to say, "That's right!"



Now Maya visits the rescue center every week. She and Kiwi have a special friendship built on puzzles and gentle care. She knows that clever pets like Kiwi need fun things to do, and she loves designing new games for him. As she walks home in her yellow jacket, she smiles, thinking of her little green friend. Some friendships are the best puzzle of all.