



The Boy and the Hedgehog Trail

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In a cozy house with a big garden lived a boy named Sam. He had light brown skin, messy dark hair, and freckles across his nose. Every morning, he pulled on his mustard yellow raincoat and red rubber boots. Then he grabbed his folded paper map and a stubby pencil. Sam loved to explore every corner of the garden, drawing what he saw.



One misty evening, Sam heard a rustle in the bushes. He tiptoed closer and peeked through the leaves. There, snuffling in the grass, was a round, spiny hedgehog. Its reddish-brown spines had creamy tips, and its little black bead eyes blinked at him. Sam knelt down quietly. 'Hello, little one,' he whispered. The hedgehog wiggled its tiny black nose.



Sam watched the hedgehog hurry toward the garden fence. But the wooden boards were tight, with no gap to squeeze through. The hedgehog bumped its nose and turned back. 'You can't get through,' Sam said softly. He looked at his paper map. 'Maybe I can find a safe way for you.' He pulled out his stubby pencil and began to draw.



The next day, Sam walked all around the garden with his map. He marked the hedges, the walls, and the fences. Everywhere he looked, the hedgehog's path was blocked. 'Hedgehogs need to roam at night,' he said. 'They can't climb over walls or squeeze under gates.' He drew little arrows showing where the hedgehog got stuck.



Sam knocked on his neighbor's door. Mrs. Patel was in her garden, wearing her lavender cardigan and green gloves. She snipped at her roses with secateurs. 'Mrs. Patel,' Sam said, 'can we cut a small hole in your fence? The hedgehogs need a safe path.' Mrs. Patel pushed her silver glasses up her nose and smiled. 'What a kind idea,' she said.



Mrs. Patel cut a little archway in her fence, just big enough for a hedgehog. 'There you go,' she said. 'And I'll plant lavender along the trail. It smells lovely and helps the hedgehogs find their way.' Sam drew the new path on his map with a happy swoop. 'Thank you!' he said. The hedgehog would have a safe route now.



The girl next door came bouncing over. She had black puff buns and a bright green jumper. 'What are you doing?' she asked, her dark eyes wide. Sam showed her the map. 'I'm making a safe trail for hedgehogs,' he said. 'Can I help?' she asked. 'I have a watering can!' Sam nodded. 'We can color the map together.'



The girl, whose name was Maya, helped Sam color the map with bright crayons. They drew green paths and little hedgehog footprints. 'We should ask more neighbors,' Maya said. 'The more gardens we connect, the better!' Sam agreed. They went door to door, showing the map and explaining their plan. Most neighbors smiled and said yes.



One neighbor, Mr. Green, wasn't sure. 'A hole in my fence?' he said. 'Won't other animals get in?' Sam explained patiently. 'Hedgehogs are small and gentle. They eat slugs and beetles. They help the garden.' Mr. Green thought for a moment. 'Alright,' he said. 'I'll cut a small hole.' Sam drew another path on the map.



Soon, many neighbors had cut small holes in their fences. They planted flowers and bushes along the trails. Maya watered the new plants with her watering can. Sam checked his map and added new paths. The garden was becoming a network of safe passages. 'This is going to be great!' Maya said, her gap-toothed grin wide.



That night, Sam sat quietly by the fence. He waited and watched. Then, a rustle. The hedgehog appeared, its spines catching the moonlight. It snuffled along the new trail, through the little archway, and into Mrs. Patel's garden. Sam held his breath. The hedgehog paused, then continued on its way. 'It works!' Sam whispered.



Sam told everyone the good news. 'The hedgehog used the trail!' he said. The neighbors were delighted. They decided to make the trail even better. They planted more flowers and added little signs. Maya brought her friends to help. The whole neighborhood joined in. 'Even small changes can protect wildlife,' Sam said, looking at his map.



The hedgehogs now had a friendly path to follow. They snuffled through gardens, safe and sound. Sam saw them often, and each time his heart felt full. He kept his map on the wall, a reminder of what they had done. 'We made a difference,' Maya said. 'And we can do more,' Sam replied, his hazel eyes shining.



Word spread about the hedgehog trail. Other kids came to see the map and learn about wildlife. Sam showed them how to draw safe paths. 'You can help too,' he told them. 'Look for blocked ways and find small solutions.' The children nodded, eager to start their own trails. Sam felt proud. His small idea had grown big.



Mrs. Patel invited everyone for a garden party. They sipped lemonade and watched the hedgehogs at dusk. 'To our hedgehog heroes,' Mrs. Patel said, raising her glass. Sam and Maya grinned. The hedgehogs snuffled happily along the trail, their spiny bodies glowing in the evening light. The neighborhood had become a friendly place for wildlife.



Sam looked at his map one last time. It was wrinkled and colorful, covered in paths and footprints. He folded it carefully and put it in his pocket. 'There are always more ways to help,' he said to Maya. She nodded. 'And more gardens to connect!' They ran off to play, ready for the next adventure. The hedgehogs had a safe home, thanks to small changes and big hearts.