The Girl and the River Dolphin
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Maya loved the river that ran behind her town. Every Saturday she pulled on her bright yellow rain boots and walked down to the water. She carried a green canvas tote bag for collecting trash. Her curly black hair bounced in two puffy buns as she hopped along the path. The river sparkled in the morning sun, and Maya wondered what secrets it held.

One Saturday, something rose from the water with a gentle whoosh. It had smooth grey-pink skin, a long slender snout, and a playful smile. Maya gasped. "You're a river dolphin!" she whispered. The dolphin dipped its head and clicked softly, as if it were saying hello. A tiny water droplet sparkled on its snout. Maya sat very still, her big dark brown eyes wide with wonder.

"Hello," said Maya softly. The dolphin swam close and blew a little fountain of bubbles. She laughed, and her gap-toothed smile spread across her round cheeks. "I'm Maya. I'll call you Splash!" Splash wiggled his small triangular fin and splashed his tail. He seemed happy to have a friend. Maya promised to visit him again the very next day.

The next morning, Maya told her teacher, Mr Lee, about the dolphin. He pushed his thin round glasses up his nose and smiled warmly. "River dolphins are very special," he said. "But they are endangered, which means there are not many left in the world." Maya frowned. "Why are there so few?" she asked. Mr Lee's warm dark eyes grew gentle.

"Dolphins need clean water to live and play," Mr Lee explained. "When trash and dirty water get into rivers, dolphins get sick." Maya thought about Splash and his playful smile. She thought about his tiny round eyes and his gentle clicks. She did not want him to get sick. "We have to help him!" she said, and she meant it with all her heart.

That afternoon, Maya hurried to the river with her green tote bag. She picked up plastic bottles, wrappers, and old paper. Her blue overalls got muddy, but she did not mind. Splash swam beside her, watching with his tiny round eyes. "Look, Splash!" she called. "I'm cleaning your home!" Splash clicked and splashed, and Maya felt proud of every piece of trash she collected.

The next day, Maya asked her best friend Lily to help. Lily wore her pink dolphin t-shirt and a wide happy grin. "A real dolphin?" she squealed. "I'll help!" Together, the girls walked along the riverbank, filling their bags with litter. Lily's ginger ponytail swung as she bent to pick up cans. "This is fun!" she said. "And it helps Splash!"

Maya had an idea. "Let's make a school project about keeping rivers clean!" she said. Lily clapped her hands. With Mr Lee's help, they made bright posters with drawings of Splash and big, friendly letters. Mr Lee wore his olive green shirt and river park badge, and he smiled his warm smile. "Wonderful idea, Maya," he said. "Let's share it with the whole class."

On Friday, Maya stood before her class. Her heart beat fast, but Lily gave her a thumbs-up. "This is Splash," Maya said, pointing to her drawing. "He is a river dolphin, and he needs clean water." She shared tips with her friends: pick up trash, never pour things into rivers, and turn off taps to save water. The children listened with wide eyes.

Mr Lee nodded encouragingly. "Small actions make a big difference," he said. The class decided to start a clean-up club. Everyone wanted to help the river and its wildlife. Maya's round cheeks glowed with happiness. Her project was growing, and so was her hope. Splash was not alone after all. There were many friends ready to help him.

The next Saturday, the whole class came to the river. Maya wore her rain boots and blue overalls with the red star patch. Lily handed out clean water tips on little cards. Children picked up trash and laughed together. Mr Lee carried the full bags. Some parents joined too. The riverbank grew cleaner and greener with every passing minute.

Then Splash appeared! He leaped from the water and blew a sparkling fountain. "Ooh!" cried the children. Splash swam in happy circles, clicking and chirping. Maya waved, and her gap-toothed smile was brighter than ever. "Look how happy he is!" she said. Lily jumped up and down. "He loves his clean home!" Everyone cheered for the friendly river dolphin.

From that day on, Maya kept learning about wildlife and conservation. She read books and shared new facts with her friends. "Did you know river dolphins are shy and gentle?" she told Lily at lunch. Lily nodded. "Let's always keep our river clean," she said. Maya agreed. Learning felt like an adventure, and every new fact helped her protect the animals she loved.

Soon, other classes wanted to join. Maya's small project grew into a big one. Children made posters, picked up trash, and shared clean water tips with their families. Parents began to help too. "You started something wonderful," Mr Lee told Maya. She looked at her yellow boots and smiled. It had all begun with one curious girl and one friendly dolphin.

One evening, Maya sat by the river with Lily. Splash swam slowly past, his grey-pink skin shining in the sunset. "Thank you for being my friend," Maya whispered. Splash clicked softly, and a tiny droplet sparkled on his snout. Lily smiled. "Clean waterways protect wildlife," she said. "And every child can help!" Maya nodded, feeling warm and happy inside.

Maya kept her green tote bag by the door, ready for every Saturday. She knew that small hands could do big things. A clean river meant a happy home for Splash and all the wildlife around it. She waved at the sparkling water and promised to keep helping."Every child can make a difference," she said. And that was the truest thing of all, because she had done it, and so could you.