

The Girl and the Little Sparrow



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Every spring, Mira waited for the little sparrows to come back to her neighborhood. She stood by the window in her green overalls and yellow rain boots, watching the empty branches. Her straw hat with the blue ribbon hung by the door, ready for garden days. The sky was soft and blue, and the air smelled like rain.



Mira loved how the sparrows hopped and chirped. She watched them flutter from roof to roof, looking for a place to rest. Their tiny wings moved so fast! She wished they would stay in her garden. But the garden had only trimmed grass and one big tree. There were no cozy spots for little birds.



One morning, Mira saw Grandma Rosa digging in the garden. Grandma Rosa wore her purple cardigan and long floral skirt. Her round glasses sparkled in the sun. 'Spring is here!' she said. 'The sparrows are looking for homes.' Mira nodded. 'I want them to live here,' she said. 'Can we help them?'



Grandma Rosa smiled. 'We can plant native shrubs,' she said. 'They give birds food and safe places to hide.' Mira's dark-brown eyes grew wide. 'Really? Let's do it!' She pulled on her yellow boots. Grandma Rosa handed her a trowel. 'First, we must choose the right shrubs,' she said. 'Ones that grow well here.'



They walked to the garden center. Mira's curly black hair bounced in two puffy buns. She pointed at a bush with tiny white flowers. 'What about this one?' Grandma Rosa read the tag. 'That's a native shrub,' she said. 'Birds love its berries.' Mira clapped her hands. 'Let's get it!' They picked three more shrubs, all native and bird-friendly.



Back home, Mira dug holes in the soft soil. Her round cheeks turned pink with work. Grandma Rosa showed her how to pat the earth gently around each root. 'Native shrubs need less water,' she said. 'And they feed the birds all year.' Mira planted each one carefully. 'These will be cozy homes,' she whispered.



Days passed. The shrubs grew green and leafy. Mira watered them every morning. She watched for sparrows. Then one day, a little brown bird landed on a branch. It had a white cheek patch and a tiny black bib. It hopped quickly and sang a happy song. 'You're the first one!' Mira whispered. The sparrow cocked its head and sang again.



The next day, more sparrows came. They fluttered around the shrubs, chirping and hopping. Mira sat on the grass and watched. One sparrow had a thin silver band on its right leg. It was bold and friendly, hopping close to her yellow boots. 'Hello, little one,' she said. The sparrow chirped as if to answer. She named him Pip.



Pip led the other sparrows to the shrubs. They hid in the leafy branches and peeked out with bright black eyes. Mira brought a notebook and drew pictures of them. She counted seven sparrows. Then ten. 'They're telling their friends,' Grandma Rosa said with a laugh. 'Your garden is becoming a sparrow hotel!'



Mira wanted to learn more. Grandma Rosa showed her a book about native shrubs. 'See?' she said, pointing. 'These shrubs give berries in fall and seeds in winter. And their branches are safe from cats and hawks.' Mira nodded. 'So the shrubs help the birds all year,' she said. 'That's why they keep coming back.'



One afternoon, a strong wind blew through the garden. The shrubs swayed, and some branches bent low. Mira worried. 'Will the birds be okay?' she asked. Grandma Rosa put an arm around her. 'Native shrubs are strong,' she said. 'Their roots hold tight.' Mira watched Pip hop into the thickest bush. He poked his head out and sang, as if to say, 'We're fine!'



After the wind, Mira checked the shrubs. They stood tall, and the sparrows were busy flitting in and out. Pip sang from the top branch. Mira smiled her gap-toothed smile. 'They feel at home,' she said. Grandma Rosa nodded. 'You made a difference,' she said. 'Native shrubs give birds a safe place to rest and hide.'



Soon, more birds came each day. They sang happy songs from dawn to dusk. Mira listened and smiled. Her garden was busy and cheerful. Neighbors stopped to watch. 'What a lovely garden!' they said. Mira told them about native shrubs. 'They help the birds,' she said. 'And they make spring even more wonderful.'



One morning, Mira saw Pip hopping near a new shrub. He had a bit of grass in his beak. 'Are you building a nest?' she asked. Pip chirped and flew into the bush. Mira peeked inside. A tiny nest sat in the branches! 'Grandma Rosa!' she called. 'Pip is making a home here!' Grandma Rosa came and smiled. 'Your garden is his home now,' she said.



Mira felt warm and happy. She sat quietly and watched the sparrows. They splashed in a small birdbath and sang from the shrubs. She thought about how much she loved spring. 'Native shrubs are like little houses for birds,' she said. Grandma Rosa nodded. 'And you planted them with your own hands,' she said. 'That's something to be proud of.'



Now every spring, Mira waits for the sparrows. They come back to her garden, and new ones come too. She puts on her straw hat and yellow boots and walks among the native shrubs. She listens to the happy songs and smiles. 'Spring is wonderful,' she says, 'because the little sparrows have a home here.' And she knows she helped make it.