

The Girl and the Little Parrot



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Maya skipped up the path to Nana Rosa's rescue centre, her red sneakers crunching on the gravel. She wore her yellow t-shirt with the green leaf print and her green canvas apron full of craft sticks. Nana Rosa met her at the door, her lavender blouse fluttering in the breeze. "Ready to meet someone special?" Nana Rosa asked, her dark eyes crinkling. Maya nodded so fast her curly buns bounced.



Inside a sunny room, a small parrot perched on a branch. His feathers were bright emerald green, his tail a flash of scarlet, and his face a soft peach. One wing had a tiny white bandage. "This is Pip," Nana Rosa said gently. "He was rescued and needs a safe home." Pip tilted his head and looked at Maya with glossy black eyes. Maya's freckled nose wrinkled in a happy grin.



Maya stood very still and spoke softly. "Hello, Pip. I'm Maya." The parrot blinked and shuffled his grey beak. Nana Rosa smiled. "He's a little shy, but he's very clever. Parrots are smart animals, and they need fun things to do." Maya's dark brown eyes grew wide. "Like games?" she asked. "Exactly," said Nana Rosa. "Smart animals need stimulation, or they get bored."



The next morning, Maya watched Pip peck at his food bowl, then hop to the same perch, then back again. "He looks bored," she said. Nana Rosa nodded. "Parrots in the wild spend their days finding food and solving puzzles. Pip needs play and learn time." Maya thought hard. She reached into her apron pocket and pulled out a craft stick. "I have an idea!" she said.



Maya found a small cardboard box and cut a hole in the lid. She dropped a piece of apple inside. "Look, Pip!" She showed him the box. Pip hopped closer, curious. He stuck his grey beak into the hole and wiggled it around. Out came the apple! "He did it!" Maya cheered. Nana Rosa clapped her hands. "A foraging game—perfect for a clever parrot."



The next day, Maya made a puzzle. She threaded big wooden beads onto a thick string. "Can you pull them off, Pip?" she asked. Pip watched with one black eye, then grabbed a bead with his beak. Click! It slid off the string. He pulled another and another. Soon the beads were scattered on the floor. Maya laughed. "You're so smart!" Pip bobbed his head happily.



Maya wanted to teach Pip a game they could play together. She hid a tiny treat under one of three cups. "Which cup, Pip?" she asked. Pip walked along the table, studying each cup. Then he tapped the middle cup with his beak. Maya lifted it—there was the treat! "You found it!" she squealed. Nana Rosa said, "He's learning to solve problems. That keeps his mind busy."



Every day after school, Maya hurried to the rescue centre. She made new games: a paper tube filled with seeds, a hanging ring to swing on, a little bell to ring. Pip loved them all. He rang the bell whenever he wanted Maya to come play. Ring-ring! Maya would drop her craft sticks and run over. "Okay, okay, I'm coming!" she giggled.



One afternoon, Pip grew quiet. He sat on his perch and didn't want to play. Maya worried. "Is he sick?" she asked Nana Rosa. Nana Rosa checked his bandage and smiled. "He's just tired of the same games. He needs something new." Maya bit her lip. What could she make that was different? She looked at her apron pocket and got an idea.



Maya gathered small, safe items: a pinecone, a smooth stone, a crumpled paper ball. She put them in a shallow dish. "Pip, look!" She showed him how to drop the paper ball into a cup. Pip watched closely. Then he picked up the pinecone and dropped it in the cup. Clunk! "Yes!" Maya cheered. Pip flapped his good wing. Nana Rosa said, "You're helping him learn and play. That's wonderful."



Soon Pip had a whole routine of games. In the morning, he foraged in his box. After lunch, he solved the cup puzzle. And every afternoon, he and Maya played the drop game together. Pip stayed busy and happy. His feathers looked glossier, and his eyes were bright. Maya felt proud. "He's not bored anymore," she told Nana Rosa. "He's a happy parrot."



Nana Rosa put an arm around Maya. "You've made a big difference," she said. "Smart animals like Pip need stimulation—fun things to do and problems to solve. You gave him that." Maya looked at Pip, who was busy stacking beads. "I learned that parrots are clever," she said. "And they need kindness and play." Nana Rosa nodded. "And you gave him both."



One day, a family came to the rescue centre. They wanted to adopt a parrot. Nana Rosa showed them Pip. "He's very smart," she said. "He needs daily games and play." The family watched Maya and Pip play the cup game. Pip found the treat every time! "We can make games for him," the mother said. Maya smiled. "I can show you how," she offered.



Maya wrote down all her game ideas on a piece of paper. She drew pictures of the foraging box, the bead string, and the cup puzzle. "Pip loves these," she told the family. "And he likes it when you play with him." The little girl in the family, who was six, nodded seriously. "I'll play with him every day," she promised. Pip squawked, as if to say, "Yes, please!"



Before Pip left, Maya gave him one last treat. "Be happy, Pip," she whispered. Pip tilted his head and gently touched her finger with his beak. Then he stepped onto the little girl's hand. Maya waved as they drove away. She felt a warm glow inside. She had helped a clever parrot learn and play, and now he would have a happy home.



Back at the rescue centre, Maya helped Nana Rosa clean the cages. "You know," Nana Rosa said, "you can teach other children how to make games for rescued animals." Maya's eyes lit up. "I could start a play-and-learn club!" She pulled a craft stick from her apron and wrote "Club" on it. Nana Rosa laughed. "That's a wonderful idea. Kindness and play make a big difference." Maya grinned, ready for her next adventure.