

# The Boy and the Little Hedgehog



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One sunny morning, a boy named Sam stepped into his garden. He wore his favorite mustard-yellow t-shirt, blue denim overalls, and red rubber boots. His small green canvas satchel bounced at his side. Sam loved to explore among the flowers, watching for butterflies and listening to the birds. Today, something rustled under the big leafy bush near the fence.



Sam knelt down slowly, his big brown eyes wide with wonder. There, tucked among the leaves, was a tiny hedgehog. Its soft brown spines were tipped with cream, and its little black nose twitched. The hedgehog looked up with shiny black bead eyes. 'Hello, little one,' Sam whispered. 'Are you lost?' The hedgehog just blinked and snuffled the ground.



Sam ran to fetch Mrs. Green, his neighbor. She was short and round, with silver hair in a loose bun and round glasses. She wore a lavender cardigan and a floral apron. 'A hedgehog!' she said, smiling. 'They need safe paths to travel and find food. Let's see if this little one is hungry.' She sprinkled some mealworms near the bush.



The hedgehog nibbled the food eagerly. Sam watched its tiny pink paws and twitchy snout. 'Why did it come here?' he asked. Mrs. Green explained, 'Hedgehogs roam at night, but fences and walls block their way. They need gaps to pass through and bushes for cover.' Sam frowned. 'So our garden is like a maze for them?' Mrs. Green nodded. 'Exactly.'



Sam looked at the fence around his garden. It was solid wood, with no way through. 'We should make a little door for the hedgehogs,' he said. Mrs. Green clapped her hands. 'What a kind idea! I have some tools. We can cut a small opening in my fence too.' Sam's gap-toothed smile grew wide. 'Let's do it!'



They started with Sam's fence. Mrs. Green showed him how to measure a hedgehog-sized gap. 'About the size of a CD,' she said. Sam held the measuring tape while she marked the wood. Then she used her pruning shears to snip a small opening. 'There!' she said. 'Now the hedgehogs can come and go.' The little hedgehog poked its nose through the new gap.



Next, they visited Mr. Patel, who lived next door. He was tall and sturdy, with warm brown skin and a neat moustache. He wore a green sweater vest and carried a wooden toolbox. 'A hedgehog highway?' he said, stroking his chin. 'I like that! I can build fence gaps and plant bushes for cover.' He pulled out his tools and got to work.



Mr. Patel cut a neat little arch in his fence. Then he planted a bushy shrub beside it. 'This will give the hedgehogs a safe place to hide,' he said. Sam helped by carrying small plants and patting the soil. The little hedgehog watched from the first gap, its nose twitching. 'It's like a tiny doorway for our spiky friend,' Sam said.



Word spread around the neighborhood. Other neighbors came to help. They cut small openings in their fences and planted bushes and flowers. 'Hedgehogs need connected paths,' Mrs. Green explained. 'So they can travel from garden to garden.' Everyone worked together, smiling and chatting. Sam felt proud. Even small actions were making a big difference.



Soon, the gardens were linked by little gaps and green bushes. The hedgehog had a safe route to explore. It scurried through the openings, snuffling for beetles and worms. Sam followed at a distance, watching quietly. 'It's happy now,' he whispered to Mrs. Green. 'And it has a whole neighborhood to roam!'



That evening, Sam sat in his garden with a glass of lemonade. The sun was setting, and the air was cool. Suddenly, he saw the little hedgehog again. But this time, it wasn't alone. Two more hedgehogs followed it through the gap! They snuffled and explored, their tiny paws pattering on the grass. Sam's eyes sparkled. 'Friends!' he breathed.



The hedgehogs became regular visitors. They munched on slugs and beetles, helping the garden stay healthy. Sam learned that hedgehogs are good for gardens. 'They're like little gardeners,' Mr. Patel said with a chuckle. Neighbors often stopped to watch the hedgehogs. The garden felt livelier and friendlier than ever before.



One day, Mrs. Green called everyone together. 'Our hedgehog highways are a success!' she said. 'But we can do more. Let's make sure there's always food and water for our wildlife.' So the neighbors planted more bushes and put out shallow dishes of water. They even left piles of leaves for hedgehogs to sleep in. Sam beamed. 'We're helping them thrive!'



The little hedgehog grew plump and happy. It often carried a fallen leaf on its spines, like a tiny umbrella. Sam would giggle when he saw it. 'You look like a little explorer,' he said. The hedgehog just twitched its nose and continued its rounds. It had many friends now, and a whole network of safe paths to enjoy.



Sam realized that even a small boy could make a big difference. By cutting little gaps and planting bushes, he and his neighbors had created a home for wildlife. 'You see,' Mrs. Green said, 'small actions add up. When we work together, we can help our animal friends.' Sam nodded, his freckled face glowing with pride.



And so, the boy and the little hedgehog became the best of friends. Every evening, Sam would sit in the garden and watch the hedgehogs scurry through the gaps. The neighborhood was full of life and kindness. Sam knew that no matter how small you are, you can always help. And that was the best feeling in the world.