

The Girl and the Little Finch



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Every morning, a girl named Maya sat by her window with her chin in her hands. She had warm brown skin, curly black hair in two short puffs, and freckles across her nose. She watched a little finch with a bright yellow body and a black cap flutter onto the sill. The finch peeked in with one dark, round eye. 'Hello, little finch,' Maya whispered. 'I wish you could stay.'



The finch came back every day. It had a short beak and white wing bars that flashed when it flew. Maya noticed it liked to peck at tiny seeds on the ground. She smiled her gap-toothed smile and said, 'You need a garden, little friend.' Her dark brown eyes sparkled. She pulled on her brown boots and went outside to look at the bare patch of dirt near her window.



Maya asked her neighbor, Mr. Lee, about the finch. He said, 'That's a finch. They love seeds from native plants—plants that grow well here.' Maya clapped her small hands. 'Then I'll plant a garden just for finches!' She put on her yellow overalls and green garden gloves. She picked up her red watering can. 'Come on,' she said to the finch. 'Let's get to work.'



Maya and her mom went to the plant store. They looked for native plants that finches like. Maya chose sunflowers with big yellow heads, purple coneflowers, and feathery grasses. She also picked a small bush with tiny red berries. 'These will grow well in our soil,' her mom said. Maya nodded. 'And the finches will have seeds to eat!' She loaded the plants into a wagon.



Back home, Maya dug holes in the dirt with her small trowel. Her green gloves got muddy, but she didn't mind. She patted each plant into the ground. She gave them a drink from her red watering can. The finch watched from a branch above. 'Wait and see,' Maya called up to it. 'This will be the best finch garden ever.'



Days passed. The plants grew taller. Maya watered them every morning before school. She pulled tiny weeds and checked for bugs. The finch would flutter down and hop around her boots. 'Are you helping?' Maya laughed. 'Or just waiting for seeds?' The finch tilted its black-capped head as if it understood. Maya felt patient and happy.



One morning, Maya saw tiny green buds on the coneflowers. The sunflowers were as tall as she was! She ran to tell her mom. 'The garden is growing!' she said. Her curly puffs bounced as she skipped. The finch landed on a sunflower leaf and chirped. 'You see?' Maya said. 'Good things take time.' She filled her watering can again.



Then the sunflowers opened their big yellow faces. The coneflowers bloomed purple and pink. The grasses swayed in the breeze. Maya sat very still by the window. The finch flew down and landed on a sunflower. It pecked at the seeds. 'It's working!' Maya whispered. She didn't want to scare her little friend. The finch ate and ate, its yellow body bright against the green.



The next day, the finch came back with a friend. Then another finch came. They fluttered around the sunflowers, chattering and pecking. Maya counted five finches! They were all yellow with black caps and white wing bars. 'You brought your family!' Maya said. She watched them from behind the curtain. Her garden had become a lively gathering place for local birds.



A new bird arrived. It had a vivid blue back, a rusty orange chest, and a white belly. It perched on the berry bush and looked around calmly. 'Oh, you're beautiful!' Maya breathed. The bluebird hopped down and ate a tiny berry. Maya wondered what other birds might come. She decided to learn more about the visitors to her garden.



Maya went to the library and found a book about native plants and birds. She read that native plants give birds food and homes. The seeds feed finches. The berries feed bluebirds. The tall grasses make safe places for nests. Maya's eyes grew wide. 'So my garden is like a little bird neighborhood!' She couldn't wait to tell her mom.



Maya added more native plants to her garden. She planted a small oak tree and some milkweed. 'Different plants bring different birds,' she told her mom. Soon, a hummingbird came to the red flowers. A family of sparrows moved into the grasses. The bluebird returned every day to the berry bush. 'It's like a party!' Maya said, clapping her hands.



The finches led the way. They fluttered in for seeds, their yellow bodies flashing in the sun. The bluebird sat calmly on a branch, watching. Maya learned to tell the birds apart. She knew the finch by its black cap. She knew the bluebird by its orange chest. She felt proud of her little garden. 'You made this happen,' she told the finch.



Maya's garden grew lush and green. Neighbors stopped to look. 'How did you get so many birds?' they asked. Maya showed them the native plants. 'These plants grow well here,' she said. 'And they feed the birds.' Her round cheeks glowed. She gave her mom a big gap-toothed smile. 'Even a small space can help wildlife,' she said.



The finch still visits Maya's window every morning. Sometimes it brings its friends. Maya watches them from her window, her dark brown eyes shining. She knows that her garden is a home for many birds. And she knows that native plants are the secret. 'Thank you, little finch,' she whispers. 'You showed me how to help.'



Maya's garden is a lively gathering place for local birds. Finches flutter in for seeds. Bluebirds stop by for berries. And Maya is happy. She learned that native plants give birds food and homes. She learned that even a small space can help wildlife. And she learned that one little finch can lead to a whole garden of friends.