The Girl and the Little Duck
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Maya loved to explore the world around her home. One sunny morning, she put on her yellow rain boots and blue denim overalls. She grabbed her green canvas satchel and tied her black braids tight. "I'm off to the pond!" she called to Grandma Rose. With a bright smile, Maya skipped down the path, eager to see what she might find.

The pond was not far from Maya's house, but it had seen better days. Leaves and twigs floated on the water, and the edges were muddy. Maya frowned. "This pond needs some care," she said. Just then, she heard a tiny sound. Peep! Peep! She looked down and saw a small duckling with fluffy yellow feathers and a tiny orange beak.

The duckling had shiny black button eyes and a little tuft of fluff on its head. It looked up at Maya and peeped again. "Hello, little one," Maya said softly. "Are you all alone?" The duckling waddled closer, its tiny orange feet leaving prints in the mud. Maya's heart melted. She knew she had to help this little creature.

Maya carefully picked up the duckling. It felt warm and soft in her hands. "I'll call you Pip," she whispered. Pip snuggled against her palm. Maya looked around the pond. The water was dirty, and there was no safe place for a duck to rest. "We need to fix this," she said. "But how?"

Maya hurried home with Pip tucked safely in her satchel. Grandma Rose was in the garden, wearing her lavender cardigan. "Grandma," Maya said, "I found a duckling at the pond. The water is dirty, and there's no shelter. What should I do?" Grandma Rose smiled kindly. "Animals need clean water and a proper shelter," she said. "Let's help you make a sanctuary pond."

Grandma Rose explained that clean water is important for ducks to drink and splash in. "We can remove the leaves and twigs," she said. "And we can add fresh water from the hose." Maya nodded, her dark-brown eyes wide with interest. "What about a shelter?" she asked. "A shelter should be dry and cozy," Grandma Rose said. "We can build one with wood and straw."

The next day, Maya and Grandma Rose went to the pond. Maya wore her yellow rain boots and carried a rake. Pip followed close behind, peeping happily. They raked the leaves and twigs from the water. Maya scooped out the muddy bits with a small net. "This is hard work," she said, "but it's worth it for Pip."

After cleaning the water, they added fresh water from the hose. The pond sparkled in the sunlight. Pip flapped its tiny wings and jumped in. Splash! It paddled around, dunking its head and shaking its tail. "Pip loves the clean water!" Maya laughed. Grandma Rose smiled. "Clean water makes a duck happy and healthy," she said.

Next, they built a shelter. Maya found some wood and straw. Grandma Rose showed her how to make a small house with a roof and a soft bed inside. Maya painted a blue ribbon on the front. "For Pip," she said. Pip waddled over and peeked inside. It let out a happy peep and snuggled into the straw. "It's perfect!" Maya said.

Every day after that, Maya visited the pond. She brought duck food in her green satchel and made sure the water was clean. She checked Pip's shelter to keep it dry and cozy. Pip would swim to greet her, splashing and quacking. "You're my best friend," Maya told Pip. The duckling tilted its head and peeped as if to say, "You too!"

One afternoon, a strong wind blew through the pond. It rattled Pip's shelter and sent leaves swirling. Maya ran to check on Pip. The little duck was shivering. "Don't worry," Maya said. "I'll fix it." She gathered more straw and strengthened the roof. She held Pip close until the wind died down. "You're safe now," she whispered.

Grandma Rose came to see the sanctuary pond. She beamed with pride. "You've taken wonderful care of Pip," she said. "You kept the water clean and built a proper shelter. That's what animals need to stay safe and well." Maya smiled. "I couldn't have done it without your help, Grandma." Pip quacked in agreement, splashing in the fresh water.

As the days passed, Maya noticed how happy Pip was. The duckling grew stronger and more playful. It loved splashing in the clean water and resting in its warm home. Maya felt a warm glow inside. She had learned that caring for an animal takes time and love. "I'll always take care of you, Pip," she promised.

Maya's friends came to visit the pond. They saw how clean the water was and how cozy Pip's shelter looked. "Can we help too?" they asked. Maya nodded. "Everyone can help keep the water clean and the shelter safe," she said. Her friends brought fresh straw and helped pick up leaves. Pip loved the extra attention.

Grandma Rose told Maya, "You've created a true sanctuary. Animals need clean water and suitable shelter, and you've given Pip both." Maya looked at the sparkling pond, the cozy shelter, and her happy duck friend. "It feels good to care," she said. "And it's fun too!" Pip splashed in the water as if to agree. Grandma Rose gave Maya a big hug.

From that day on, Maya visited the pond every morning. She made sure the water was clean and the shelter was warm. Pip would swim over and peep a happy hello. Maya knew that taking care of Pip was important. She learned that animals need clean water and a proper shelter to stay safe and well. And she knew she would always be there for her little duck friend.