

The Girl and the Rescue Duck



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Maya skipped down the gravel path in her red rain boots, her curly black hair bouncing in two puffs tied with yellow bands. Her blue overalls were splashed with mud from puddle-jumping. Suddenly, she heard a soft, sad quack near the tall reeds by the pond. She pushed the leaves aside and found a little white duck with a grey patch on its left wing. It had a blue ribbon loosely around its neck and looked very lost.



Maya knelt right down, her dark brown eyes wide with worry. 'Oh, you poor thing!' she whispered. The duck's orange bill trembled, and its dark eyes watched her carefully. It tried to flap its wings, but one wingtip drooped. Maya's first thought was to scoop it up and take it straight home. She was eager to help, but she didn't know the first thing about ducks.



She carried the duck gently in her arms. It felt soft and warm, and she could feel its heart beating fast. 'Don't worry,' she said, 'I'll take care of you.' But when she got home, she didn't know what to do next. Should she give it bread? Should she put it in a box? She didn't want to make a mistake. So she decided to ask someone who might know. She ran to find her neighbor, Grandpa Joe.



Grandpa Joe was in his garden, wearing his straw hat and green gardening apron. He had a white moustache and kind, crinkly eyes behind wire-rimmed glasses. He kept ducks himself, so Maya knew he would have answers. 'Grandpa Joe!' she called. 'I found a lost duck! What does it need?' He smiled, his smile lines deepening. 'Well now,' he said, 'let's find out together.'



Grandpa Joe gently examined the duck. 'First, she needs clean water,' he said. 'Not just for drinking—ducks need water to splash and wash in, too.' Maya nodded. She ran to get a shallow pan and filled it with fresh water from the tap. The duck eagerly dipped its bill in and swished it around. Maya watched the duck drink, then splash its feathers. 'She's already looking happier!' Maya said.



Next, Grandpa Joe said, 'She needs a safe shelter, away from foxes and busy roads.' Maya thought for a moment, then remembered an old wooden crate in the shed. With Grandpa Joe's help, she dragged it to a quiet corner of the yard. She lined it with dry straw and placed it under a bush. 'This will be her little house,' she said. The duck waddled inside and sat down.



But Maya still had questions. 'What does she eat?' she asked. Grandpa Joe explained that ducks eat grains, vegetables, and special duck food—not bread. Maya opened her small canvas satchel and pulled out a notebook. She wrote down everything: clean water, safe shelter, proper food. 'I want to do this right,' she said. Grandpa Joe nodded. 'That's the best way to help—learn first, then act.'



Every morning, Maya filled the pan with clean water and checked the shelter. She brought the duck fresh greens and grain. At first, the duck was shy and stayed near its shelter. But slowly, it began to trust her. It would quack softly when she came near. Maya named it Pip, after the tiny sound it made. 'Good morning, Pip!' she would say, and Pip would tilt its head.



One afternoon, Pip took its first real swim in the pond. Maya sat on the bank, watching. Pip paddled in circles, flapped its wings, and dipped its head under the water. The droopy wingtip still lagged behind, but Pip didn't seem to mind. When Pip came out, it shook its feathers and waddled straight to Maya. 'You're getting stronger!' she cheered.



Maya noticed that Pip's grey wing patch was looking shinier, and its eyes were brighter. The duck was growing stronger and happier every day. It followed Maya around the garden, quacking softly. 'I think she likes you,' said Grandpa Joe. 'She feels safe with you.' Maya beamed. She had learned that responsible kindness means finding out what to do before you do it.



One day, a strong wind blew through the yard. Maya ran outside to check on Pip. The little shelter was still standing, but a branch had fallen nearby. Pip was huddled in the corner, looking nervous. Maya spoke softly and gently moved the branch away. 'It's okay, Pip,' she said. 'Your shelter is still safe.' She sat beside the crate until Pip calmed down.



Grandpa Joe came over and praised Maya. 'You kept your cool and fixed the problem,' he said. 'That's what good care looks like.' Maya smiled, her gap-toothed grin wide. She realized that she had learned a lot about clean water, safe shelter, and friendship. 'I couldn't have done it without your advice,' she told him. 'That's what neighbors are for,' he said.



From that day on, Maya and Pip were best friends. They played together every afternoon. Maya would hide a small treat in the grass and Pip would find it. Then Maya would toss a ball, and Pip would waddle after it, flapping its wings. Sometimes Pip would swim in the pond while Maya splashed her boots in the shallow water. They were always happy together.



Maya watched Pip splash in the clean water and felt proud. She had learned that helping an animal takes more than just wanting to. It takes knowledge, patience, and asking for advice. 'You're the best duck ever,' she told Pip. Pip quacked loudly, as if to agree. Maya knew they would be friends for a long, long time.



Grandpa Joe told Maya, 'You did a wonderful job. You learned what Pip needed and gave it to her.' Maya thought about how much she had learned. She had given Pip clean water to drink and swim in, a safe shelter away from danger, and lots of love. Pip was strong and happy now. Maya felt proud and happy, too.



Now, every morning, Maya fills Pip's water pan and checks her shelter. She knows that responsible kindness means learning how to help before you act. And she knows that with clean water, safe shelter, and a good friend, any duck can thrive. Pip waddles over and tucks its head under Maya's arm. 'You're my best friend, Pip,' she whispers.