

The Girl and the Little Alpaca



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On a bright morning, a girl named Mia skipped down a dusty path near her grandmother's farm. Her curly dark brown hair bounced, and her yellow shirt and blue overalls were bright as sunshine. She carried a green satchel full of crayons and a notebook. Mia loved to draw everything she saw. Today, she hoped to find something new.



Behind a wooden fence, something soft and creamy-white moved. Mia peeked through the rails. A little alpaca stood in the grassy field, no taller than her knees. His fleece was fluffy, and one ear had a light tan patch. He wore a thin red halter with a tiny brass bell that went jingle-jingle when he turned. His big dark eyes blinked at her.



Mia's heart went thump-thump with excitement. "Oh, you're adorable!" she whispered. She climbed over the fence and ran toward him with open arms. But the little alpaca's ears flattened flat against his head. He let out a high, worried hum and skittered away. In a blink, he was at the far end of the field, his fluffy tail twitching.



Mia stopped. Her arms dropped to her sides. "Why did he run?" she wondered. She sat on a smooth rock and opened her notebook. She drew the alpaca with his ears flat and wrote one word: scared. Then she watched him from far away. He watched her back, his long neck stretched tall. Neither of them moved for a long, quiet minute.



The little alpaca took a step closer. His banana-shaped ears swiveled forward, like two question marks. He made a soft, low hum. Mia drew that too. She noticed his nose twitched when he sniffed the air. She wrote: ears forward means curious. She stayed very still, her crayon scratching softly on the paper, and let him look at her.



Next, Mia saw the alpaca's ears go back and his head lift high. He made a sharp click sound. A moment later, he trotted to the fence and stood there, stiff and alert. "That means he's nervous," Mia whispered. She drew a small picture of his ears pointing back and added a little lightning bolt. She was learning his secret language.



Mia turned the page and started a brand-new drawing. At the top, she wrote in big letters: HOW TO SAY HELLO TO AN ALPACA. First, she drew herself standing still with her hands at her sides. Under it, she wrote: move slowly. Then she drew a picture of giving space, with a wide gap between her and the alpaca. She smiled at her work.



She added more pictures. One showed her sitting quietly on the ground, not reaching out. Another showed her looking away, so the alpaca wouldn't feel stared at. She drew a small arrow pointing to his ears and wrote: watch his ears. If they go flat, step back. Her crayons squeaked happily as she colored the alpaca's soft cream fleece.



The next morning, Mia took her picture guide to the field. She climbed the fence slowly and sat on the grass. She did not run. She did not reach. She held her notebook open and waited. The little alpaca lifted his head. His ears swiveled toward her. He took one tiny step, then another. His brass bell jingled softly.



Mia's heart beat fast, but she stayed still. She remembered her guide: move slowly, give space, watch his ears. The alpaca came closer, his dark eyes wide. He stretched his long neck and sniffed her red sneaker. Mia did not grab him. She let him choose. He sniffed her knee, then her shoulder, and gave a low, gentle hum.



Then the alpaca did something wonderful. He stepped right up to Mia and gently nuzzled her cheek with his soft, twitchy nose. His ears were forward and relaxed. Mia giggled quietly. "Hello, little friend," she whispered. She slowly raised one hand and let him sniff it. He hummed again, a happy sound, and his bell jingled like a tiny song.



Mia opened her notebook and showed him the picture guide. "See? I learned your rules," she said. The alpaca tilted his head as if he understood. She drew one more picture: a girl and an alpaca sitting side by side, both smiling. Under it she wrote: respect makes trust. Then she closed her notebook and gave him a gentle scratch under his chin.



From that day on, they were friends. The alpaca trotted to the fence whenever he heard Mia's footsteps. They went on slow walks together, Mia matching his small steps. He hummed, and she hummed back. Sometimes he rested his soft head on her shoulder. Mia never rushed him. She always watched his ears and gave him space when he needed it.



Other children came to visit the farm. Mia showed them her picture guide. "Move slowly," she said. "Give space. Watch the ears." The children practiced, and soon the little alpaca trusted them too. He let them stroke his fleece and feed him handfuls of sweet grass. Mia felt proud. Her drawings helped everyone understand how to be kind.



One warm afternoon, Mia sat in the field with the alpaca curled beside her. His fleece was warm, and his bell was quiet. She drew a new picture for her notebook: a heart around the two of them. "Friendship grows when we show respect," she wrote. The alpaca hummed softly, as if he agreed. The sun sank low, painting the sky pink and gold.



Mia packed her crayons and walked home, her heart full and happy. She had learned that fast hugs can scare a friend, but patience and kindness can open a door. The little alpaca watched her go, his ears tall and relaxed. He knew she would come back tomorrow. And she did, every day, with her picture guide and her gentle, respectful heart.