

The Girl and the Seal Colony



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Maya pulled on her mustard yellow raincoat and blue rubber boots. She packed her red canvas backpack with a clipboard, paper, and crayons. Today was special: Ranger Lee was taking her to the protected beach to see the seal colony. Maya's curly black hair bounced in two puffs as she skipped along the path. She couldn't wait to see the seals with her own eyes.



At the beach entrance, Ranger Lee waited in his khaki uniform and wide-brimmed hat. His binoculars hung around his neck, and his green eyes twinkled behind round glasses. 'Welcome, Maya,' he said with a weathered smile. 'Remember, these seals are wild animals. We must respect their space.' Maya nodded seriously, her freckled nose crinkling. She was ready to learn.



They walked quietly over the dunes. Suddenly, Maya gasped. Ahead, on the golden sand, lay a whole colony of harbour seals. They looked like smooth, grey stones scattered along the shore. One seal, a mother with a pale spot on her side, watched calmly with big dark eyes. 'That's Spot,' whispered Ranger Lee. 'She's the heart of this colony.'



Maya crouched low behind a grassy bank. She pulled out her clipboard and began to draw. Spot stretched her flippers and gave a big yawn. Her white whiskers twitched. Maya sketched the sleepy seals, their spotted fur shining in the sun. She felt a warm glow inside. 'They're so peaceful,' she breathed. 'I want to keep them safe forever.'



Just then, a boy named Pip raced down the beach. His orange sun hat flew off, and his sneakers kicked up sand. 'Seals! Seals!' he shouted, running toward the colony. The seals lifted their heads, startled. Spot slipped toward the water. 'Stop!' called Maya. 'You'll scare them!' Pip froze, his blue eyes wide. He hadn't meant to frighten anyone.



Ranger Lee hurried over. 'It's all right, Pip,' he said gently. 'But loud noises and quick movements scare the seals. They need to rest on the sand to stay healthy.' Pip looked at the ground. 'I just wanted to see them up close,' he mumbled. Maya had an idea. 'Maybe we can make a guide for kids,' she said, 'so everyone knows how to watch without scaring them.'



Back at the ranger station, Maya spread her paper on a table. She drew three clear pictures with her crayons. First, a child staying far back behind a rope. Second, a finger pressed to lips for quiet. Third, a big heart with arrows showing space. 'Stay back, keep quiet, give space,' she wrote in neat letters. Ranger Lee smiled. 'That's perfect, Maya.'



The next day, Maya brought her guide to the beach. She hung it on a wooden post near the path. It showed a happy child with binoculars, watching seals from a safe distance. Pip came by with his family. He read the guide carefully. 'Oh, I get it now,' he said. 'We have to be calm and quiet.' He sat down quietly beside Maya.



From their spot behind the grassy bank, Maya and Pip watched the seals. Spot relaxed again, her pale spot rising and falling as she breathed. The colony settled back into sleep. 'They look so cozy,' whispered Pip. Maya nodded. 'When we give them space, they let us watch,' she said. 'It's like a secret gift.' They stayed still and silent for a long, happy time.



More children arrived with their families. They saw Maya's guide and read it. Some put fingers to their lips. Others stayed behind the rope. Everyone watched the seals with wide, wondering eyes. Ranger Lee beamed. 'Your guide is working, Maya,' he said. 'You've taught everyone how to share the beach with wildlife.' Maya's gap-toothed smile stretched from ear to ear.



That afternoon, a group of children started to creep too close to the colony. Maya felt nervous. She remembered her guide. 'Wait!' she called softly. 'Look at the picture. We need to stay back.' The children paused and looked at the guide. They nodded and stepped back. Spot lifted her head, then relaxed. Maya's heart swelled with pride. Her guide was making a difference.



Ranger Lee gathered the children around. 'Thanks to Maya, we all know how to watch the seals kindly,' he said. 'Would you like to add more tips?' Maya thought for a moment. She drew a picture of a seal with a heart above it. 'Seals are wild, so we let them be wild,' she said. 'That's the best way to love them.' The children cheered quietly.



As the sun began to set, the seals slipped into the water one by one. Spot gave a final look at the beach before diving in. Maya felt happy. She had watched the seals, kept them safe, and helped others do the same. 'You've done a wonderful thing,' said Ranger Lee. 'You've shown that respect means giving wildlife space.' Maya hugged her clipboard tight.



On the walk home, Maya thought about the seals. She had learned that watching wildlife is a privilege. It comes with a promise to be gentle and careful. She couldn't wait to come back and see Spot again. Maybe she would make more guides for other animals. After all, every creature needs space to rest and be wild.



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Maya told her family all about the seal colony. She showed them her guide and explained each rule. Her little brother promised to remember when he visited the beach. Maya felt proud. Her guide was helping children far beyond the sandy shore. It was a small piece of paper, but it carried a big message: respect wildlife by giving it space.



The next weekend, Maya returned to the protected beach. She saw new signs with her drawings and words. Children were watching the seals quietly, staying far back. Spot rested peacefully on the sand, her pale spot shining. Maya smiled. She knew that giving animals space is the kindest way to share the beach with them.