

The Girl and the Little Fox



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Maya pulled on her yellow rain jacket with the fox patch and her green rubber boots. She hung her red binoculars around her neck and tucked a small notebook and pencil into her pocket. Today was special: she was visiting the forest reserve for the very first time. Her curly dark brown hair bounced in two puffy buns as she ran to the gate.



At the gate, a tall ranger with a wide-brimmed hat and a wooden walking stick smiled down at her. "Welcome to the reserve, Maya! I'm Ranger Tom," he said. His olive green uniform had a shiny badge, and a small scar curved on his chin. "Here, we watch animals but never touch them. They need to stay wild and free."



Maya nodded and stepped onto the soft forest path. Tall trees whispered overhead, and ferns brushed her boots. She heard a rustle in the bushes and lifted her red binoculars. Through the lenses, she saw something small and orange. Her heart went thump-thump. "A fox!" she whispered, holding very still and quiet.



The little fox had bright orange-red fur and a white chest. Its legs and ear tips were black, and one ear flopped down in a funny way. Around its neck was a thin green tracking collar. The fox peeked out, shy and cautious, its amber eyes watching Maya. Its bushy white-tipped tail swished once, then froze.



Maya wanted to run closer, but she remembered Ranger Tom's words. She stayed on the path and watched quietly through her binoculars. The little fox sniffed the air and took one small step. It was curious but careful. Maya didn't feed it or chase it. She just watched and let it be wild.



The fox darted behind a bush, then poked its head out again. Maya giggled softly. It seemed playful, hopping over a twig and chasing a falling leaf. She wrote in her notebook: "Foxes like to play, but they need space." She drew a tiny picture of the fox's floppy ear and its white-tipped tail.



A twig snapped behind her, and Maya jumped. Ranger Tom appeared on the path, leaning on his walking stick. "How's the watching going?" he asked with a warm smile. Maya showed him her notebook. "I'm keeping a safe distance," she said. "The fox stays wild, and I stay quiet." Tom nodded proudly.



Ranger Tom explained more rules. "Never feed wild animals, even if they look hungry. Human food can make them sick. Don't chase them or try to pet them. And always watch from a distance. That's how we show respect." Maya wrote each rule down carefully, her pencil scratching across the page. She wanted to remember everything.



The sun peeked through the clouds, and the forest glowed. The little fox trotted along a fallen log, its floppy ear bouncing. Maya followed slowly, keeping far behind. She watched it dig in the dirt and sniff a fern. Every few steps, the fox glanced back, as if checking she kept her distance. And she did.



Near a stream, the fox stopped to drink. Maya sat on a mossy rock and opened her notebook again. She drew the fox with its green collar and wrote: "A fox is wild. Wild means it belongs to the forest, not to me." She felt happy and calm, like she was part of the forest but also apart from it.



Back at the ranger station, Maya spread her notes on a wooden table. "I want to make a guide for other kids," she said. "So they can watch animals the right way." Ranger Tom's eyes crinkled. "That's a wonderful idea, Maya. What will you call it?" She thought hard, tapping her pencil on her chin.



"I'll call it 'Watch, Don't Catch!'" Maya said. She wrote fun tips: bring binoculars, wear quiet shoes, stay on the path, and never feed or chase. She added silly drawings of a fox with sunglasses and a rabbit with a notebook. Ranger Tom laughed. "This will teach kids to respect wildlife," he said.



Maya added a big star at the top of her guide: "The best way to love wild animals is to leave them wild." She drew the little fox on the cover, with its white-tipped tail and floppy ear. Ranger Tom taped the guide to the station wall. "Now every visitor can learn from you," he said, giving her a high five.



Before leaving, Maya walked back to the stream one last time. The little fox sat on a log, watching her with its amber eyes. It didn't run away. It just watched, calm and curious. Maya smiled and waved goodbye without moving closer. "Stay wild, little fox," she whispered. The fox's tail swished, and it slipped into the ferns.



On the way home, Maya held her notebook tight. She thought about the fox and its playful hops and its cautious glances. She hadn't touched it or fed it, but she had watched it and learned from it. Being patient and quiet had given her the best gift: a wild fox, free and safe in its forest.



Maya hung her red binoculars by the door and put her notebook on her desk. She couldn't wait to tell her friends about the reserve and her guide. She knew now that the best way to love wildlife is to leave it wild. And she promised herself she would come back to watch, quiet and respectful, again and again.