

The Girl and the Rescue Hen



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Maya skipped down the gravel path in her yellow rain boots, her dark side braid bouncing. She loved helping Grandma Ruth on the farm. One sunny morning, she heard a soft cluck from behind the barn. There, in a dusty corner, stood a small rusty-brown hen with a pale feather on her left wing. The hen looked lonely and hungry, and Maya's heart went out to her.



Maya crouched down slowly, her brown eyes wide with wonder. "Hello, little hen," she whispered. The hen tipped her head and took a tiny step closer. Maya noticed the hen's bright amber eyes and small red comb. She didn't want to scare her, so she stayed very still. "You look like you need a friend," Maya said softly. The hen clucked again, as if she agreed.



Grandma Ruth walked over, her glasses swinging on their beaded chain. "That hen was rescued last week," she said gently. "She needs a safe place to live." Maya's gap-toothed smile grew wide. "Can I take care of her?" she asked. Grandma Ruth nodded. "Every farm animal deserves thoughtful care." Maya promised to do her very best.



Maya decided to build a special scratching and foraging area for the hen. She found a cozy corner of the yard with soft dirt and a few leafy bushes. Grandma Ruth helped her set up a low fence made of wooden stakes. "This will keep her safe," Grandma Ruth said. Maya clapped her hands. "She can peck and hunt for food here!"



The hen watched with curious amber eyes as Maya scattered seeds and small bits of lettuce into the dirt. "Here you go, little hen," Maya said. The hen stepped forward and gave a happy cluck. She scratched the ground with her strong feet and pecked at a seed. Then she looked up at Maya as if to say thank you. Maya giggled with delight.



Maya named the hen Hazel because of her warm brown feathers. She tied a red ribbon gently around Hazel's leg. "Now everyone will know you're my special hen," she said. Hazel fluffed her golden wings and settled into the foraging area. She scratched and pecked, finding tasty morsels hidden in the dirt. Maya sat nearby, watching with a happy heart.



Pip the barn cat padded over to see what was happening. His grey tabby fur shimmered in the sun, and his blue bell collar jingled. He sat at the edge of the fencing area and twitched his tail. Hazel clucked softly, but Pip just watched with curious green eyes. He didn't chase her; he simply kept her company. Maya smiled. "Good kitty," she said.



Every morning, Maya brought Hazel fresh food and water. She made sure the foraging area had plenty of seeds, grains, and green leaves. Hazel loved to scratch and peck, hunting for her breakfast. Sometimes she found a juicy bug and gobbled it up. "You're getting so good at foraging," Maya said. Hazel clucked proudly and puffed out her chest.



One afternoon, a gust of wind blew open the gate of the foraging area. Hazel wandered out into the yard. Maya's eyes went wide. "Hazel!" she called. But Hazel didn't run away. She waddled over to Maya and stood by her yellow boots. Maya scooped her up gently. "You're safe," she whispered. "I'll always keep you safe."



Maya checked the fence and fixed the latch so it wouldn't blow open again. Grandma Ruth helped her make the gate stronger with a little rope. "You're a thoughtful caregiver," Grandma Ruth said. Maya beamed. She added more leafy branches to the foraging area so Hazel would have shady spots to rest. Hazel clucked happily and scratched the fresh dirt.



As the days passed, Hazel grew plump and happy. Her rusty-brown feathers shone, and her amber eyes sparkled. She followed Maya everywhere—around the garden, past the barn, even to the porch steps. Pip the cat walked behind them both, his bell jingling softly. Maya laughed. "We're a little team!" she said.



Maya learned that caring for a hen meant more than just food and water. It meant keeping her safe, giving her space to scratch and forage, and watching over her like a friend. Grandma Ruth taught her how to check Hazel's feathers and make sure her comb was bright red. "A happy hen is a healthy hen," Grandma Ruth said. Maya nodded seriously.



One evening, Maya sat in the foraging area with Hazel on her lap. The sun was setting, and the sky turned pink and gold. Hazel made a soft, contented cluck and closed her eyes. Maya stroked her glossy feathers. "I'm so glad I found you," she whispered. Pip purred from his spot on the fence post, keeping watch.



Maya built a little wooden sign for the foraging area. It said "Hazel's Happy Place" in wobbly letters. Grandma Ruth helped her hang it on the fence. "You've created a wonderful home," Grandma Ruth said. Maya looked at Hazel, who was busy scratching and pecking. "She deserves it," Maya said. "All farm animals do."



Hazel loved her new space. She scratched and pecked all day, finding seeds and bugs. She followed Maya around the farm, clucking happily. Pip the cat became her quiet companion. Maya watched them together and felt proud. "Small acts of love can make a big difference," she told Grandma Ruth. Grandma Ruth smiled and hugged her.



Maya learned that farm animals deserve kind and thoughtful care. Every day, she fed Hazel, kept her safe, and made sure she had room to forage. Hazel grew strong and happy, and she loved Maya with all her little hen heart. As the sun set on the farm, Maya knew she had made a true friend. And that was the best feeling of all.