

The Girl and the Seal



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Maya lived in a little blue house by the sea. Every morning, she pulled on her yellow raincoat and blue rubber boots. She grabbed her canvas satchel with her notebook and pencil. Then she ran down to the shore to watch the ocean. She loved the salty wind and the crashing waves. But most of all, she loved watching for a special seal.



The seal was named Pip. He was a harbor seal with sleek grey-brown spotted fur and dark glossy eyes. White whiskers stuck out from his small rounded head. Pip had a thin scar on one flipper from an old fishing line, but he swam just fine. Maya thought he was the most wonderful animal in the whole wide ocean. She wanted to learn everything about him.



Maya sat on a rock and opened her notebook. She wrote down everything Pip did. She drew his spotted fur and his long whiskers. She counted how many fish he caught. She noticed he always rested on the same flat rock at low tide. Pip would stretch out and close his eyes. Maya watched quietly and did not move. She wanted Pip to feel safe.



One morning, Mr. Hale came by. He was a retired lighthouse keeper with a neat grey beard and round glasses. He wore a green fisherman sweater and a flat cap. "Watching Pip again?" he asked with a smile. Maya nodded. "I want to know everything about him," she said. Mr. Hale sat beside her and told her about seal behavior.



“Harbor seals are shy,” Mr. Hale said. “They need space to rest and feel safe. If people get too close, Pip might dive into the water and lose his resting time. That makes it hard for him to stay warm and healthy.” Maya wrote this down carefully. She drew a little picture of Pip on his rock. She wanted to remember every detail.



The next day, Maya saw a family walking toward Pip's rock. They were laughing and pointing. They got closer and closer. Pip lifted his head and looked nervous. Maya felt worried. She stood up and waved her arms. "Please stay back!" she called. "Pip needs room to rest!" The family stopped and looked at her. They stepped back.



The family listened to Maya. They watched Pip from a safe distance. Pip relaxed and went back to sleep on his rock. Maya smiled. She realized that many people just didn't know how to watch wildlife kindly. They needed someone to teach them. That gave Maya a big idea. She would make a guide for everyone.



Maya hurried home and told Mr. Hale her plan. "I want to make a coastal viewing guide," she said. "It will have simple rules for watching Pip and other seals." Mr. Hale's eyes twinkled. "That's a wonderful idea," he said. "I can help you print it." They sat down together and wrote the rules.



Maya wrote: "Keep a polite distance. Stay calm and quiet. Never feed the seals. Watch from the path or the rocks. Let seals rest." She drew a picture of Pip on his rock. She added a big red circle with a line through a person getting too close. Mr. Hale helped her make copies at the little print shop in town.



On Saturday, Maya and Mr. Hale stood by the shore with a stack of guides. They gave one to every person who walked by. "Please read this before you watch the seals," Maya said. People smiled and took the guides. Some read them right away. They nodded and looked at Pip from far away. Pip slept peacefully on his rock.



Soon more and more people came to watch Pip. But now they kept a polite distance. They stayed calm and quiet. They did not feed him. They watched from the path. Pip stayed relaxed and happy. He dove for fish and rested on his rock. Maya watched from her favorite spot and felt proud. Her guide was working!



One day, a little boy asked Maya, "Why can't I get closer to the seal?" Maya knelt down and showed him her notebook. "Seals need space to feel safe," she said. "If we get too close, they get scared and can't rest. When we watch quietly, we help them stay healthy." The boy nodded and took a guide. "I'll tell my friends," he said.



Mr. Hale patted Maya on the shoulder. “You’ve made a real difference,” he said. “People are learning to respect wildlife because of you.” Maya smiled her gap-toothed smile. She looked out at Pip, who was floating on his back with his flippers in the air. He looked happy and safe. Maya knew that respectful observation protects wildlife.



Word spread about Maya's coastal viewing guide. The town put up a sign with her rules. More people came to watch the seals, but they all followed the guide. Pip stayed on his rock and swam in the waves. He even brought a friend, another seal with a speckled back. Maya added new notes to her notebook and drew both seals side by side.



Maya kept watching Pip every day. She learned even more about seal behavior. She saw how Pip flicked his whiskers to sense fish. She saw how he hauled himself onto the rock with his strong flippers. She wrote it all down. Her notebook was full of drawings and facts. She felt like a real scientist, and Pip was her best teacher.



Now, when the sun sets over the ocean, Maya sits on her rock and watches Pip. The sky turns pink and orange. Pip bobs in the water, his dark eyes shining. Maya knows that the ocean is home for Pip and for many other creatures. She will always watch quietly and kindly. And she will always respect the wildlife that shares our world.