

The Girl and the Pig



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Maya skipped up the dusty path to Sunny Hill Farm, her green rubber boots kicking up little puffs of dirt. Her curly black hair bounced in two puffy buns, and her red overalls flapped in the breeze. She carried a canvas satchel full of pencils and a small notebook. Today she would meet the animals and learn all about farm life. Maya loved puzzles and couldn't wait to see what she might discover.



Farmer Jo met her at the gate, tall and broad in denim dungarees and a straw hat. 'Welcome, Maya!' they said with a weathered smile. 'The animals are eager to meet you.' Maya's gap-toothed grin stretched wide as she followed Farmer Jo past the henhouse and the muddy pond. She pulled out her notebook, ready to write down everything she saw. The farm was full of surprises, and Maya wanted to find them all.



In a shady corner of the yard stood a round, sturdy pig named Pippin. He had pink skin with darker patches, floppy ears, and a curly tail that wiggled when he walked. A soft blue collar with a little brass bell jingled around his neck. Pippin's bright amber eyes watched Maya with clever curiosity. He trotted over and gave a friendly snort, as if to say hello.



Maya knelt down and scratched Pippin behind his floppy ears. 'He's so smart,' Farmer Jo said, leaning on the fence. 'Pigs can solve problems, you know. Pippin once figured out how to open the feed bin all by himself!' Maya's eyes grew wide. She had never heard that pigs were clever. She opened her notebook and wrote: PIGS ARE SMART. Her mind started spinning with ideas.



Pippin nudged Maya's satchel with his muddy snout, curious about what was inside. Maya pulled out a pencil and a small notebook, but Pippin seemed more interested in the zipper. He nosed it back and forth until it opened with a zip! 'Look at that!' Maya laughed. 'He solved the zipper puzzle!' Farmer Jo nodded. 'Pigs love to figure things out. They get bored without a challenge.' Maya's pencil flew across the page.



Maya thought about her own favorite puzzles at home. If Pippin was smart, maybe he would like puzzles too! She asked Farmer Jo, 'Can we make a game for him? Something safe and fun?' Farmer Jo's green eyes twinkled. 'That's a wonderful idea. Pigs need enrichment, just like we do. Let's build something together.' Maya jumped up, ready to create.



First, Maya found a shallow wooden box and filled it with soft hay. She hid a few apple slices under little cups and set the box in Pippin's pen. Pippin trotted over, his bell jingling. He sniffed the cups, then used his snout to flip one over. An apple slice! He gobbled it up and snorted with joy. 'He did it!' Maya cheered. Her first puzzle was a success.



Next, Maya hung a rope from a low branch with a carrot tied to the end. Pippin had to pull the rope to reach the treat. At first, he just stared at it. Then he nudged the rope with his snout, and the carrot swung closer. With a clever twist, he grabbed it! The brass bell on his collar jingled as he munched happily. Maya wrote in her notebook: Pippin loves a challenge.



Farmer Jo helped Maya set up a bigger puzzle: a board with holes and treats tucked inside. Pippin had to figure out which holes held food. He snuffled and snorted, his bright amber eyes focused. One by one, he found the hidden treats. 'He's a natural!' Farmer Jo said. Maya beamed. She drew a picture of Pippin in her notebook, his curly tail wagging with delight.



Word spread around the farm, and soon the other animals gathered to watch. The hens clucked and the goats bleated as Pippin solved another puzzle. Maya made a maze out of hay bales, and Pippin navigated it with ease. He even figured out how to open a latch on a gate! 'Pigs are problem-solvers,' Maya told the hens. 'They deserve fun games every day.'



Maya realized that Pippin needed new puzzles all the time to stay happy and busy. She sat with Farmer Jo and planned a whole week of activities. They made a list: a treat ball, a snuffle mat, and a puzzle with swinging doors. 'We can change them every day,' Maya said. Farmer Jo nodded. 'That's enrichment. It keeps his mind sharp and his heart happy.'



The next morning, Maya brought a new puzzle: a ball with holes, filled with kibble. Pippin rolled it around, and treats tumbled out. He snorted and squealed with joy, doing a little happy dance. 'You're a smart pig, Pippin!' Maya laughed. Farmer Jo watched from the fence, smiling. 'You've made a real difference, Maya. Pippin has never been so engaged.'



Pippin figured out the treat ball in minutes. Then he looked at Maya as if to say, 'What's next?' Maya pulled out her notebook and showed him the list of puzzles. Pippin nosed the page, leaving a muddy smudge on the paper. Maya giggled. 'Don't worry, I have plenty more ideas!' She felt proud that she could use kindness and care to make Pippin's days fun.



As the sun began to set, Maya sat beside Pippin's pen and watched him play with a new puzzle—a hanging log with treats inside. He pushed it with his snout, and it swung back and forth. The brass bell on his blue collar jingled softly. Maya thought about how smart pigs really are. They need safe activities to keep their minds busy, just like people do.



Farmer Jo brought Maya a glass of lemonade. 'You've taught me something too,' they said. 'Our animals need more than food and shelter. They need puzzles and play.' Maya smiled her gap-toothed smile. 'Pippin taught me that!' She promised to visit often and bring new puzzle ideas. Pippin snorted in agreement, his amber eyes bright with happiness.



On her last day, Maya gave Pippin a special puzzle: a box with a mirror inside, so he could see himself. Pippin stared at his reflection, then oinked in surprise. Maya laughed. 'You're a clever pig, Pippin. Never forget that.' As she walked home, her notebook full of drawings and notes, she knew that farm animals like pigs deserve fun and kindness every single day.