The Girl and the Seal

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On the wild, windy coast, where the sea crashes and the gulls call, Mira lived with her grandmother, Nana Rose. Nana Rose kept the lighthouse, and Mira kept watch on the seals. Every morning, Mira pulled on her mustard-yellow raincoat and navy rubber boots. She slung her red canvas satchel over her shoulder and hung her small brass binoculars around her neck. Then she ran down to the rocks to see her favorite animals.

The seal colony lay on a cluster of flat grey rocks just offshore. Dozens of harbour seals lounged there, sleek and silver in the sun. Mira's favourite was Pip, a plump seal with spotted grey fur and long white whiskers. Pip had dark, round eyes that seemed to watch Mira right back. Mira sat quietly on a flat rock and lifted her binoculars. She could watch for hours, patient as a heron.

Nana Rose came down the path with her wooden walking stick, her teal cardigan wrapped tight. "What do you see today, my curious girl?" she asked. Mira pointed. "Pip is there, and three pups! They're all resting." Nana Rose smiled, her round glasses glinting. "Seals need quiet space to rest and raise their pups. We must never get too close, or they feel scared." Mira nodded solemnly.

One sunny Saturday, a crowd of visitors clattered down to the shore. They wore colourful jackets and sun hats, and they carried cameras. One small child held a red balloon that bobbed in the breeze. The visitors laughed and shouted, pointing at the seals. They stepped right onto the rocks where the seals rested. The seals lifted their heads, nervous and alert.

Pip's dark eyes went wide. With a splash, Pip slid off the rock and into the water. The other seals followed, one by one, until the rocks were empty. The pups looked confused and frightened. The visitors didn't notice. They just kept taking pictures and chattering. Mira's heart sank. "They don't know," she whispered. "They don't know they're scaring them."

Mira hurried back to the lighthouse, her boots squelching on the path. Nana Rose was polishing the big brass lamp. "Nana, the visitors got too close, and all the seals swam away!" Mira cried. Nana Rose set down her cloth. "People love to see seals, but they forget how easily seals are frightened. They need to learn about respectful distances." Mira frowned, thinking hard.

That night, Mira couldn't sleep. She thought about Pip's frightened eyes and the empty rocks. Then an idea began to glow in her mind, bright as the lighthouse beam. She would make a display to teach visitors! She would show them how to watch seals without scaring them. She would use pictures and simple tips. She would make it cheerful and clear. She sat up in bed, smiling.

The next morning, Mira gathered her materials. She found an old wooden board in the shed and painted it bright blue. She drew a big picture of Pip with white whiskers and dark eyes. She drew a happy visitor with binoculars, standing far away. She drew a red circle with a line through it over a person stepping too close. She wrote simple words in her best handwriting.

"Keep a safe distance," she wrote. "Stay behind the rope. Keep voices low. Let seals rest." She drew a seal mother with a pup, both peaceful and smiling. She added a picture of a camera with a big X through it, meaning no flash. She drew a child with a red balloon, standing quietly and watching. The display was bright and friendly, like a storybook.

Nana Rose helped Mira set up the display at the top of the beach path, where every visitor would see it. They tied it to a wooden post with rope. "This is wonderful, Mira," said Nana Rose. "You're teaching people to share the coast with care." Mira beamed her gap-toothed smile. She felt proud and a little nervous. Would the visitors read it? Would they listen?

The next weekend, the visitors came again. This time, they stopped at Mira's display. A man in a red jacket read the words aloud. "Keep a safe distance," he said. "Look, everyone! This says seals need quiet space." The child with the red balloon pointed at the picture. "The seal is sleeping!" she said. The visitors nodded and talked quietly among themselves.

Slowly, the visitors moved behind the rope. They kept their voices low and their cameras tucked away. They watched the seals from far off, respectful and calm. Mira stood nearby, her brass binoculars in her hand, ready to help. "You can see Pip there," she said softly, pointing. "And those are the pups. They're resting now." The visitors smiled and thanked her.

The seals lifted their heads, but they didn't swim away. Pip gave a big yawn, showing tiny teeth, and flopped back down. The pups snuggled close to their mothers. The visitors watched with wide, happy eyes. They had never seen seals so peaceful. "This is much better," whispered the man in the red jacket. "We can see them without scaring them." Mira's heart felt full.

From that day on, Mira's display stayed at the top of the path. Visitors read it and remembered to keep their distance. Some even brought friends to show them. The seals returned to their rocks, day after day. Pip rested with the pups, safe and calm. Mira watched from her flat rock, patient as ever. She knew that quiet space was a gift.

Nana Rose was proud of Mira. "You solved a problem with kindness and cleverness," she said one evening, as the lighthouse beam spun around. Mira looked out at the dark sea. "I just wanted the seals to be happy," she said. "And now the visitors are happy too. Everyone can enjoy the coast if we remember to be gentle." Nana Rose hugged her tight.

The seals rest happily on their grey rocks, and the visitors learn to share the coast with care. Mira still watches with her brass binoculars, but now she has a new job: helping others see what she sees. Respectful distances keep wildlife safe and wild. And a small girl with a big heart can make a big difference. The lighthouse shines on, and the seals sleep soundly by the sea.