

The Boy and the Guinea Pig



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In a small house with a sunny garden, a boy named Leo lived with his mom and dad. Leo had warm light-brown skin, short wavy black hair, and big round dark-brown eyes. He loved animals more than anything. He often wondered what it would be like to have a pet of his own. One day, his mom said, "Leo, would you like to adopt two guinea pigs?" Leo's wide smile stretched from ear to ear.



The next morning, Leo and his mom went to a rescue center. A kind lady led them to a pen full of guinea pigs. One guinea pig was plump and round with glossy chocolate-brown fur and a white patch over one eye. "This is Cocoa," said the lady. "She's bold and curious." Then she pointed to a smaller guinea pig with cream and caramel fur and a dark mask around her eyes. "And this is Pepper. She's shy and sweet."



Leo carefully carried the guinea pigs home in a soft carrier. Cocoa poked her tiny pink nose out first, whiskers twitching. Pepper stayed behind, peeking out with her big glossy black eyes. Leo set them in a cozy corner of his room. He sat on the floor and watched them. "Hello, Cocoa. Hello, Pepper," he whispered. "I'm going to build you a wonderful home."



The next day, Leo got to work. He found a big, shallow plastic tub and filled it with soft bedding. He added a food bowl, a water bottle, and a little wooden house. But something was missing. Leo remembered that guinea pigs love to hide. So he cut a doorway in a small cardboard box and placed it inside. "There," he said. "A hiding place for you."



Cocoa was the first to explore. She waddled out of the carrier, her short little legs moving quickly. She sniffed the bedding, nibbled a piece of lettuce, and then dashed into the cardboard box. Pepper watched from the corner, her nose twitching. Leo gently placed Pepper near the box. "It's okay, little one," he said softly. "Cocoa is waiting for you."



Pepper took a tiny step, then another. Soon she was inside the box with Cocoa. They snuggled together, their soft fur touching. Leo smiled. He added a tunnel made from a paper towel roll and a soft blue fleece hideout. "Now you have lots of hiding places," he said. "You can feel safe and cozy." The guinea pigs explored every corner, nibbling and snuggling.



Each day, Leo spent time with Cocoa and Pepper. He fed them fresh vegetables and changed their water. He watched them popcorn—little happy jumps—when they were excited. Cocoa always came to greet him first, while Pepper hung back until she felt safe. "You two are best friends," Leo said. "I can tell." He noticed how Pepper always followed Cocoa, and how Cocoa waited for Pepper.



One afternoon, Leo decided to test something. He gently placed Cocoa in a separate pen for a moment. Pepper immediately started to squeak, a worried little sound. She ran back and forth, looking for her friend. Cocoa squeaked too, her nose pressed against the bars. Leo quickly put them back together. They snuggled close, happy to be reunited. "You really need each other," Leo said softly.



Leo learned that guinea pigs are social animals. They need companionship to feel happy and safe. He remembered reading that a lonely guinea pig can get sad. "I'm glad you have each other," he told them. "And I'm glad I have you." He sat by their habitat, watching them nibble a carrot together, their little noses wiggling. It made him feel warm inside.



As the weeks passed, Leo's friendship with the guinea pigs grew. Cocoa would climb onto his hand when he offered a treat. Pepper, still shy, would let him stroke her soft fur if he moved slowly. They would squeak happily when they heard his footsteps. "You know my voice," Leo laughed. He loved the way they popcorned around their habitat when he came home from school.



One evening, Leo noticed that Pepper seemed extra cuddly. She pressed herself against Cocoa and closed her eyes. Cocoa licked Pepper's ear gently. Leo realized how much comfort they gave each other. He thought about his own friends at school. When he felt sad, a friend's hug made everything better. "Animals need friends, just like people do," he said to his mom.



Leo decided to make their habitat even better. He added a second fleece hideout and a little ramp for them to climb. He placed a small mirror near their food bowl—guinea pigs like to see other guinea pigs. Cocoa and Pepper explored the new changes, popcorned with joy, and then curled up together in the blue fleece hideout. "A cozy home for two friends," Leo said.



That night, Leo lay in bed and listened to the soft sounds of Cocoa and Pepper rustling in their habitat. He felt happy. He had learned something important: friendship makes life sweeter. Whether you are a boy or a guinea pig, having a friend to snuggle with, to explore with, and to share quiet moments with is the best feeling in the world.



The next morning, Leo woke up early. He sat by the habitat and watched Cocoa and Pepper greet the day. They stretched their little legs, nibbled hay, and chased each other around the tunnel. Leo laughed out loud. "You two are so funny," he said. "I'm so glad you're my friends." He reached in and gently petted them both.



Leo's mom came in and smiled. "You've taken such good care of them," she said. "They look very happy." Leo nodded. "They make me happy too," he said. "I think everyone needs a friend." He looked at Cocoa and Pepper, snuggled together in their hiding place. "Even guinea pigs," he added. And he knew it was true.



From that day on, Leo spent time with his guinea pigs every day. He built them new hiding places and fed them fresh treats. And every night, he said goodnight to Cocoa and Pepper. The three of them—boy and guinea pigs—were the best of friends. And Leo knew that as long as they had each other, they would always be happy.