

The Girl and the Little Lemur



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Maya stepped off the boat onto the sandy shore of Madagascar. Her yellow leaf-print shirt flapped in the warm breeze, and her curly puffs bounced with excitement. She clutched her sketchbook and pencil, ready to draw everything she saw. Her cousin Tavy, wearing his backwards red cap, waved from the path. "Come on, Maya! The forest is this way!" he called, grinning widely.



Mrs. Razafy, the forest guide, met them at the edge of the trees. She wore an olive-green ranger shirt with a lemur badge and a wide-brimmed straw hat. "Welcome to the island forest," she said with a kind smile. "Many amazing animals live here, and some are found nowhere else on Earth." Maya's large dark brown eyes grew wide with wonder.



As they walked, a tiny creature peeked from behind a leaf. It was a mouse lemur, no bigger than a kitten! He had huge round amber eyes, a long fluffy tail, and a white chest patch. "That's Kely," Mrs. Razafy whispered. "He's curious and brave." Kely tilted his head, then scurried down the trunk and stopped right in front of Maya.



Kely chattered softly and tugged at Maya's sketchbook. "He wants to show you something!" Tavy laughed. The little lemur led them through the forest, leaping from branch to branch. Maya hurried after him, her red sneakers crunching on fallen leaves. Kely's huge amber eyes sparkled as he guided them deeper into the green shadows.



Kely stopped at the foot of a giant baobab tree. Its trunk was as wide as a house, and its branches reached high into the sky. "Wow!" Maya gasped, tipping her head back. She quickly drew the tall tree in her sketchbook. Kely sat on a root, nibbling a small fruit, his fluffy tail wrapped around his tiny body.



Next, Kely led them to a bush covered in bright red berries. He picked one with his nimble hands and offered it to Maya. She tasted it—sweet and juicy! "Mmm!" she said. Tavy tried one too and grinned. "These are so good!" Kely chirped happily and grabbed another berry, his round eyes shining with delight.



High above, more lemurs swung through the branches. Some had ringed tails, and others had fluffy white ears. Maya sketched them all. "There are so many kinds!" she said. Kely jumped onto a low branch and pointed with his tiny hand. "He's showing you his family," Mrs. Razafy explained. Maya felt lucky to see them.



But then Maya noticed something troubling. Some trees had been cut down, leaving empty spaces. "Why are there so few trees here?" she asked. Mrs. Razafy sighed. "People need wood and land, but the forest is getting smaller. Lemurs need trees to live in and fruits to eat." Kely looked up at Maya with his big eyes, as if asking for help.



Back at the camp, Maya sat with her sketchbook. "I want to help," she said. "What can we do?" Tavy suggested making a guide. "We can draw the forest and the animals, and tell people why it's important to protect them." Maya's round cheeks flushed with excitement. "Yes! An illustrated Madagascar habitat guide!"



Maya and Tavy worked all afternoon. Maya drew Kely with his fluffy tail and amber eyes. She drew the tall baobab and the sweet berries. Tavy wrote fun facts under each picture. Mrs. Razafy helped them add simple tips. "Plant trees, protect habitats, and share what you learn," she said. Their guide was colorful and cheerful.



The next day, Maya and Tavy shared their guide with the village children. They passed around the drawings and told stories about Kely and the forest. The children loved it! "I want to see a lemur too!" one girl said. Maya smiled. "If we take care of the forest, the lemurs will always be here."



Mrs. Razafy pinned the guide to the community board. "This will teach everyone how to help," she said. Maya felt proud. Kely, who had followed them, climbed onto her shoulder and chattered softly. "He says thank you," Tavy joked. Maya laughed. "We did it together—with a little help from a little lemur!"



On her last day, Maya walked to the forest edge with Kely. She held out her hand, and he placed a tiny leaf in her palm. "I'll never forget you," she whispered. Kely's amber eyes blinked slowly, then he scurried up a tree and waved his fluffy tail. Maya waved back, her heart full.



Back home, Maya hung her sketch of Kely on the wall. She told her friends about the island forest and the lemurs. "Did you know lemurs only live in Madagascar?" she asked. Her friends listened with wide eyes. Maya gave each of them a copy of her habitat guide. "We can all help protect forests," she said.



Maya's guide traveled from hand to hand. Her teacher invited her to present it to the class. Maya stood proudly in her yellow leaf-print shirt and showed her drawings. "Protecting island forests helps lemurs and people too," she explained. "Trees give us clean air and homes for animals." Her classmates clapped and promised to help.



That night, Maya looked at the stars and thought of Kely. She knew the little lemur was safe in his forest, jumping from tree to tree. She smiled her gap-toothed smile. With a sketchbook, a pencil, and a lot of heart, even a small girl can make a big difference—just like a tiny lemur showed her.