



The Girl and the Rescue Peacock

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Maya skipped down the muddy path to Aunt Priya's rescue centre, her yellow rain boots squelching with each step. She carried a canvas satchel full of feed for the animals. The air smelled of hay and fresh rain. Maya's curly black hair bounced in two puffy buns as she hurried. She loved helping at the centre more than anything.



Aunt Priya stood by a wooden gate, her denim apron dusty and her work gloves tucked in her pocket. 'Ready for a special job?' she asked, her crinkled eyes smiling. Maya nodded eagerly. Aunt Priya led her past pens of goats and rabbits to a quiet corner where a large enclosure stood. 'We have a new rescue,' she said softly.



Inside the enclosure, a peacock stood tall and wary. His neck shone blue-green like a jewel, and his long tail feathers fanned out in bronze and gold with eye spots. A silver band circled one thin leg, and one wing feather was slightly bent. Maya gasped. 'He's the most beautiful bird I've ever seen!' she whispered.



Aunt Priya shook her head gently. 'His name is Rajah. He came from a place where people only admired his feathers. They kept him in a small cage, so his wing never healed right. Beauty isn't enough, Maya. He needs space to walk, perches to rest on, and a safe place to sleep.' Maya frowned, thinking hard.



Maya looked at Rajah's enclosure. It was small and bare, with hard ground and no shade. Rajah paced back and forth, his tail dragging. 'He doesn't look happy,' Maya said. 'Can we make it better?' Aunt Priya nodded. 'That's our job today. We'll build him a proper home.' Maya's dark brown eyes sparkled with determination.



First, they measured a bigger space. Maya held the measuring tape while Aunt Priya hammered wooden posts into the ground. 'A peacock needs room to stretch his legs and fan his tail,' Aunt Priya explained. Maya's small, wiry arms carried planks and wire. Mud splashed her green overalls, but she didn't mind. She wanted Rajah to have the best enclosure.



Next, they built perches at different heights. Maya climbed a low stool to help attach a thick branch. 'Why do perches matter?' she asked. 'Peacocks like to roost high up to feel safe,' Aunt Priya said. 'And a flat board for resting keeps his feet healthy.' Maya carefully smoothed the wood so Rajah wouldn't get splinters.



They added a shallow pool for water and a dust bath for cleaning feathers. Maya scattered soft straw for a cozy sleeping spot. 'He needs shade too,' she said, so they planted a small bush. Rajah watched from his old enclosure, his head tilted. Maya waved. 'Soon you'll have a new home!' she called. Rajah blinked his dark eyes.



At last, the new enclosure was ready. Aunt Priya opened the gate between the old and new spaces. Rajah stepped cautiously, his silver leg band glinting. He took one slow step, then another. His bent wing feather quivered. Maya held her breath. Then Rajah spread his tail, just a little, as if testing the space. He looked around, curious and proud.



Every day after school, Maya visited with her satchel full of fresh food. She brought grains, seeds, and chopped greens. She filled the water pool and checked that the perches were sturdy. Rajah grew stronger. His blue-green neck gleamed brighter, and he began to strut across the enclosure. 'Look at him go!' Maya laughed, clapping her hands.



One morning, Rajah fanned his tail all the way open. The bronze and gold feathers shimmered like a sunrise. Maya gasped. 'You're beautiful, Rajah!' she whispered. But she knew his beauty wasn't the best part. The best part was that he could walk, perch, and rest in safety. Aunt Priya put a hand on Maya's shoulder. 'You gave him what he truly needed.'



Maya nodded. She thought about how people had only admired Rajah's feathers before. 'They didn't think about his home,' she said. 'They just liked how he looked.' Aunt Priya smiled. 'And you learned that caring for animals means more than that. It means giving them space, good food, and a safe place to be a peacock.' Maya felt warm inside.



Weeks passed, and Rajah's bent feather healed. He strutted proudly around his enclosure, his tail fanning wide. Maya brought fresh food and water every day, and sometimes she just sat and watched him. He would come close and tilt his head, as if saying thank you. Maya's freckled nose crinkled with a happy smile.



One afternoon, Aunt Priya showed Maya a photo of Rajah when he first arrived. 'Look how thin and sad he was,' she said. Maya compared it to the strong, proud bird in front of her. 'We helped him,' she said softly. 'You helped him,' Aunt Priya corrected. 'Your kindness made the difference.' Maya's heart swelled with pride.



Maya learned that beauty is not enough. A peacock needs room to walk, perches to rest on, and fresh food and water every day. She told her friends at school about Rajah. 'If you see an animal, think about what it needs,' she said. 'Not just how it looks.' Her friends nodded, and some asked to visit the rescue centre too.



Now, every time Maya visits the centre, Rajah fans his tail in greeting. She fills his water pool and scatters grain, and he struts beside her. Maya knows that caring for animals means giving them what they truly need. And as Rajah's feathers shine in the sun, Maya feels happy knowing she helped him grow strong and safe. That is the best feeling of all.