

The Girl and the Rescue Cockatoo



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Maya loved puzzles more than anything. She wore a yellow shirt printed with puzzle pieces and carried a green satchel full of game supplies. One sunny morning, her Aunt Rosa invited her to the bird rescue centre. Maya's dark brown eyes grew wide with excitement. She hoped to meet a bird that loved puzzles just as much as she did.



At the rescue centre, Ms. Okafor welcomed Maya with a warm smile. She wore a purple cardigan and held a clipboard. "We have a special cockatoo named Pip," she said. "Pip is very clever and loves to play." Maya peeked into the bird room and saw a white cockatoo with a soft yellow crest. The bird tilted its head and looked right back at her.



Aunt Rosa explained that Pip was a rescue cockatoo. The bird had a slightly ragged wing tip from old neglect. "Pip needs lots of attention and interesting things to do," Aunt Rosa said. "Cockatoos are smart birds. They get bored easily." Maya nodded. She knew exactly how Pip felt. Puzzles always kept her busy and happy.



Maya sat beside Pip's cage and watched the cockatoo hop from perch to perch. Pip picked up a small wooden block and dropped it, then looked at Maya as if to say, "Your turn!" Maya laughed. She reached into her green satchel and pulled out a simple puzzle. It had three cups and a treat hidden under one. Pip's dark round eyes followed every move.



Maya placed the puzzle inside the cage, and Pip climbed down right away. The cockatoo lifted the first cup with its pale grey beak. No treat. It tried the second cup. Still no treat. Then Pip lifted the third cup and found a tiny piece of apple. Pip let out a happy squawk and flapped its wings. Maya clapped her hands. "You solved it!" she cheered.



Aunt Rosa smiled but held up one finger. "Remember, every puzzle must be supervised," she said. "We need to make sure the pieces are safe and that Pip doesn't get too excited." Maya nodded seriously. She wanted to be a good friend to Pip. With Aunt Rosa's help, she began planning bigger and better puzzles for the clever bird.



Ms. Okafor brought a clipboard and sat with Maya. "Let's plan some enrichment activities," she said. "Enrichment means giving Pip interesting things to do." Maya thought hard. She drew a puzzle with sliding doors. She drew another with hanging cups. Aunt Rosa checked each idea. "These are safe if we use bird-friendly materials," she said. Maya's gap-toothed smile stretched wide.



The next day, Maya built a puzzle with three little drawers. Each drawer had a wooden knob. Pip watched from the perch, rocking back and forth. When Maya placed the puzzle on the table, Pip swooped down. The cockatoo grabbed the first knob and pulled. The drawer slid open. Inside was a sunflower seed. Pip gobbled it up and looked for more.



Pip solved the other two drawers in seconds. Maya was amazed. "You're so clever!" she said. Pip bobbed its head and made a kissing sound. Aunt Rosa laughed. "Pip loves a challenge," she said. "But smart birds need new puzzles all the time. Otherwise they get bored and unhappy." Maya nodded. She was already thinking of the next game.



That afternoon, Maya made a puzzle with colored rings on a rope. Pip had to slide the rings to find a treat. The cockatoo studied the puzzle with its bright eyes. Then it used its beak to push each ring along the rope. In no time, Pip reached the treat. Maya cheered. "You did it again!" she said. Pip flapped its wings proudly.



But soon Pip seemed restless. The cockatoo chewed on a perch and squawked loudly. Aunt Rosa explained, "Pip has solved all the easy puzzles. A clever bird needs a bigger challenge." Maya thought hard. She wanted to help her friend. "What if we make a puzzle with two steps?" she asked. "Pip has to solve one part before the next."



Ms. Okafor helped Maya plan a two-step puzzle. First, Pip had to lift a flap. Then, Pip had to pull a string to get the treat. Aunt Rosa checked every piece. "This is safe and supervised," she said. Maya placed the puzzle in front of Pip. The cockatoo tilted its head. It lifted the flap, then pulled the string. A peanut rolled out. Pip squawked with joy.



Pip solved the two-step puzzle faster than Maya expected. The bird seemed so proud, fluffing its yellow crest. Maya laughed. "You're the cleverest cockatoo in the world!" she said. Aunt Rosa gave Maya a high five. Ms. Okafor wrote on her clipboard. "This is wonderful enrichment," she said. "Pip is happy and busy." Maya felt warm inside.



From that day on, Maya visited Pip every week. She brought new puzzles made from safe materials, always supervised by Aunt Rosa. Pip learned to open boxes, slide doors, and even ring a little bell for a treat. Each challenge made their friendship stronger. Maya learned that clever birds need attention and activity to stay happy. And Pip learned that Maya was a friend who understood.



Maya also learned about patience and kindness. She watched Aunt Rosa care for every bird with gentle hands. She saw how Ms. Okafor planned activities to keep the birds healthy. Maya decided to make a puzzle book for the rescue centre. She drew all her ideas and wrote notes about safety. Aunt Rosa and Ms. Okafor praised her clever thinking.



On Maya's last visit of the summer, Pip solved a puzzle with three steps. The cockatoo lifted a latch, slid a door, and pulled a string. Then Pip flew to Maya's shoulder and nibbled her curly bun. "You're my friend forever," Maya whispered. Pip squawked softly. Maya knew that intelligent birds like cockatoos need attention, activity, and friendship. And she was glad to give all three.