

# The Girl and the Rescue Raven



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Maya skipped up the path to the wildlife sanctuary, her yellow raincoat flapping in the breeze. Her curly black hair bounced in two puffy buns, and her gap-toothed smile stretched wide. She carried a canvas satchel filled with paper and pencil. Today she would meet the animals and maybe draw them. She could hardly wait to see what was inside.



Keeper Rosa met Maya at the gate. She wore a green sanctuary polo shirt and a tool belt with clips and rope. Her round glasses sparkled as she smiled. "Welcome, Maya! We have a very special bird here," she said. "His name is Onyx, and he is the cleverest raven I have ever known." Maya's big dark brown eyes grew even bigger.



Rosa led Maya to a large aviary with trees and branches inside. Onyx sat on a high perch, his glossy black feathers shining with a purple-blue sheen. One white feather stood out on his left wing, and a small red band circled his leg. His bright dark eyes watched Maya closely. He tilted his head as if to say, "Who are you?"



Rosa explained that Onyx was very smart. "Ravens need lots of things to think about," she said. "If he gets bored, he feels unhappy. We try to give him puzzles and games, but he solves them so fast!" Maya watched Onyx pick up a twig and poke it into a knot in the wood. He seemed to be looking for something to do.



Maya had an idea. "I like puzzles too!" she said. "Could I make some safe games for Onyx?" Rosa nodded. "That would be wonderful, as long as I check everything first." Maya opened her satchel and pulled out her paper and pencil. She began to draw and think. What kind of puzzle would a clever raven enjoy?



First, Maya made a simple puzzle. She put a tasty nut inside a small paper cup and covered it with a leaf. Onyx hopped down and watched. With a quick flick of his sturdy beak, he flipped the leaf and grabbed the nut. He gobbled it up and looked at Maya. "That was easy!" his bright eyes seemed to say.



Maya giggled. "Okay, Onyx, try this one!" She hid a nut under a small cup and placed two other cups beside it. She moved them around slowly. Onyx watched every move. Then he pecked the correct cup without a single mistake. Rosa clapped her hands. "He is a clever raven indeed!" she said.



Next, Maya made a game with sticks. She poked a nut onto a stick and placed it in a shallow bowl of water. Onyx had to pull the stick out to get the nut. He studied the bowl, then grabbed the stick with his beak and lifted it. The nut fell onto the ground, and he ate it happily. Maya wrote in her notebook: "Onyx likes water games."



For the next game, Maya tied a nut to a short string and hung it from a branch. Onyx had to pull the string up to reach the nut. He pulled and pulled, then held the string with his foot. In seconds, he had the nut. Maya laughed. "You are too smart for me!" she said. Onyx flapped his wings and gave a playful croak.



Rosa brought a small box with holes in the lid. Maya put nuts inside, and Onyx had to figure out how to open it. He tapped the lid, then found a small latch. He flipped it open and pulled out a nut. He looked at Maya with his head tilted. "More!" he seemed to say. Maya drew a picture of Onyx in her notebook, labeling it "The Puzzle Master."



The next day, Maya brought a new game. She made a little maze with cardboard and hid a nut at the end. Onyx had to walk through the maze to get it. But this time, Onyx surprised her. He didn't walk. He flipped the maze over with his beak and grabbed the nut from underneath! Maya stared. "He solved it a different way!" she said.



Rosa smiled. "That's what ravens do," she said. "They are problem-solvers. Onyx needs games that make him think in new ways." Maya nodded. She thought hard. Then she had an idea. She would make a puzzle that needed two steps. First, Onyx had to pull a string to open a door. Then he had to find the nut behind it.



Maya built the two-step puzzle carefully. She tied a string to a small cardboard door. Onyx had to pull the string, then push the door open, then take the nut. Onyx watched as Maya set it up. He pulled the string, opened the door, and grabbed the nut. Then he did a little hop. Maya was sure he was proud of himself.



After that, Onyx started following Maya around the aviary. When she sat on a bench, he hopped onto the armrest beside her. He made soft croaking sounds. Maya talked to him and showed him her drawings. Once, he gently took her pencil in his beak and dropped it at her feet. Maya laughed. "You want to draw too?" she asked.



Rosa watched them together. "You have made a big difference, Maya," she said. "Onyx is much happier now. He has games to play and a friend to play them with." Maya smiled. "I learned that smart animals need lots of stimulation," she said. "And making puzzles is fun for me too!" Onyx croaked as if he agreed.



On the last day of her visit, Maya gave Onyx one more puzzle. It was a little box with three latches. Onyx opened them all and found a nut inside. Then he hopped onto Maya's shoulder and gently nibbled her ear. "I'll come back soon," Maya promised. As she walked away, she knew that a little kindness and clever thinking had made a big difference for a special bird.