

The Boy and the Hamster



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Nathan had a small golden hamster named Pip. Pip was no bigger than Nathan's palm, with soft honey-gold fur, a creamy white belly, and shiny black bead eyes that sparkled with curiosity. Nathan loved Pip more than anything. Every morning, he would sit beside the cage and watch Pip wake up, twitch his pink nose, and stretch his tiny paws. 'Good morning, Pip,' Nathan whispered, smiling.



Pip lived in a plain cage with a wheel, a bowl, and a little house. But Pip didn't stay in his house much. He loved to dig in the bedding, pushing it with his nose and paws. He would burrow until only his round bottom showed. Nathan watched him and thought, 'Pip really loves to dig and explore. I wish I could give him more places to do that.'



One afternoon, Nathan sat on his bedroom floor with a pencil and paper. He watched Pip squeeze under the water bottle, then tunnel through the bedding to the other side. 'You're a little explorer,' Nathan said. Pip poked his head out, whiskers twitching. Nathan grinned. 'I have an idea. I'm going to build you a home with tunnels and hiding spots. A home made just for you.'



Nathan gathered empty cardboard tubes, small boxes, and safe glue. He measured the cage with a ruler and drew a plan. 'First, a tunnel here,' he said, 'and a cozy hideout there.' Pip ran on his wheel, squeaking softly, as if he was cheering Nathan on. Nathan worked carefully, making sure every piece was smooth and safe, with no sharp edges that could hurt Pip's tiny paws.



The first tunnel was a long cardboard tube. Nathan placed it along the side of the cage. Pip sniffed it, then zoomed through, his little paws pattering. He popped out the other end, eyes bright. 'You like it!' Nathan laughed. Next, Nathan made a hideout from a small box, cutting a doorway just big enough for Pip. He filled it with soft bedding and a tiny piece of apple for a treat.



Pip loved the hideout. He stuffed his cheeks with bedding, carried it inside, and made a fluffy nest. Then he peeked out, his nose wiggling. Nathan added a ramp made from a folded piece of cardboard, leading up to a little platform. Pip climbed it slowly, then sat on top, looking around like a king on a hill. 'You're so brave,' Nathan said, feeling proud.



Nathan kept building. He made a maze of tunnels with three exits, and a sandbox corner for digging. He used a shallow dish with clean sand, and Pip dug happily, sending little puffs of sand into the air. 'This is your very own landscape,' Nathan said. Pip ran from tunnel to hideout, burrowed in the sand, and peeked over the ramp. His little heart seemed to dance with joy.



But then Nathan noticed something. Pip squeezed through a tunnel and got stuck halfway because it was a little too narrow. Pip wiggled and pushed, then popped out with a squeak. Nathan frowned. 'Oh no, that tunnel is too small. I need to fix it.' He carefully widened the tunnel and checked all the others. 'I want you to explore safely,' he told Pip.



Nathan also saw that Pip loved to climb, but the ramp was too steep. Pip slid down with a surprised squeak. Nathan didn't laugh; he wanted Pip to feel safe. He made the ramp gentler and added little steps made from craft sticks. 'There,' he said. 'Now you can go up and down without slipping.' Pip tested the steps and climbed up easily, looking pleased.



Nathan realized that caring for Pip meant paying attention to what Pip needed. He watched Pip's happy burrowing and decided to add more bedding so Pip could dig deeper. He piled it high in one corner, and Pip dived in, disappearing completely. Then his head popped up, covered in soft flakes, and Nathan giggled. 'You look like a fluffy snowball!'



That evening, Nathan sat beside the cage and watched Pip explore his new home. Pip ran through the tunnels, dug in the sand, climbed the ramp, and nestled in his hideout. He looked so happy, his black eyes shining. Nathan felt warm inside. 'I'm glad I watched you, Pip,' he said softly. 'You taught me what you need to be happy.'



The next day, Nathan's friend Mia came to visit. 'Wow!' she said. 'Pip's cage looks like a little playground!' Nathan showed her the tunnels and the hiding spots. 'I made them because Pip loves to dig and explore,' he explained. 'Pets need homes that suit their natural behavior.' Mia nodded. 'That's really kind, Nathan. Pip is lucky to have you.'



Pip peeked out from a tunnel and twitched his nose at Mia. She laughed. 'He's so cute!' Nathan beamed. He gave Pip a tiny piece of carrot, and Pip stuffed it into his cheek pouch, making his face look extra round. 'He's storing it for later,' Nathan said. 'Hamsters do that.' Mia watched Pip scurry into his hideout, his cheeks full, and smiled.



From that day on, Nathan checked Pip's tunnels every morning. He cleaned them and made sure they were safe. He added new cardboard tubes when the old ones got chewed. Pip always greeted him with a happy squeak, running to the front of the cage. 'Good morning, little explorer,' Nathan would say, and Pip would wiggle his whiskers as if to say, 'Ready for a new day!'



Nathan learned that caring for a pet means more than food and water. It means watching, listening, and building a home that makes the pet feel safe and happy. 'Pip's home is made just for him,' Nathan told his mom. 'And making it was fun!' His mom hugged him. 'You're a thoughtful caregiver, Nathan. Pip is very lucky.' Pip burrowed happily in his bedding, as if he agreed.



And so, Nathan and Pip shared many happy days. Pip explored his tunnels, burrowed in his bedding, and peeked out from his hideout. Nathan watched and smiled, knowing that he had created a wonderful miniature landscape for his little friend. 'We make a good team,' Nathan said. Pip twitched his nose and scurried into a tunnel, ready for another adventure.