

# The Girl and the Rescue Parrot



Jane MEADOW

# **The Girl and the Rescue Parrot**

Jane MEADOW



On a bright Saturday morning, Maya skipped down the sidewalk with her canvas satchel bouncing at her side. Her two puffy braids swung like happy pendulums. She was going to the animal rescue center for the very first time. Her gap-toothed smile stretched wide as she wondered what animals she might meet.



Inside the rescue center, a tall woman with short silver curls and a bird-shaped pin on her forest green shirt greeted Maya. 'I'm Rosa,' she said warmly. 'We have a special parrot named Pico who needs a friend.' Maya's dark brown eyes grew round with excitement. She couldn't wait to meet the bird.



Rosa led Maya to a sunny room filled with perches and ropes. There sat a bright emerald green parrot with red and blue patches on his wings. His amber eyes sparkled, and a small blue band circled his leg. One wing tip looked a little ragged, but Pico seemed lively and curious. 'Hello, Pico,' Maya whispered softly.



Pico tilted his head and let out a cheerful whistle. Then he climbed down a rope and waddled close to Maya. She offered him a piece of apple from her satchel. Pico took it gently with his pale hooked beak and nibbled. 'He likes you,' Rosa laughed. 'But a smart parrot like Pico needs more than just food. He needs things to do.'



Maya frowned thoughtfully. 'What kind of things?' she asked. Rosa explained that parrots are clever and curious. Without interesting activities, they can get bored and unhappy. 'We make toys and games for them,' Rosa said. 'Would you like to help?' Maya nodded eagerly. She opened her satchel and pulled out twine, wooden beads, and colorful paper.



Rosa showed Maya how to string beads onto twine to make a chew toy. 'Parrots love to nibble and pull,' she said. Maya carefully threaded the beads, making a pattern of red, blue, and yellow. Her small fingers worked slowly but surely. 'This is fun!' she said. 'And it's for Pico,' Rosa smiled. 'You're already a great helper.'



Next, they made a puzzle feeder. Rosa cut holes in a cardboard tube and showed Maya how to hide treats inside. 'Pico has to figure out how to get them out,' Rosa explained. Maya dropped in pieces of nut and dried fruit. 'He'll have to think hard!' she giggled. Rosa nodded. 'That's the point. Smart birds need puzzles to keep their minds busy.'



Maya also made a swinging perch from a wooden ring and some rope. She hung it near Pico's favorite spot. Pico watched with bright amber eyes as she worked. When she finished, he hopped onto the swing and rocked back and forth. 'Look, he loves it!' Maya clapped. Rosa said, 'You see? A little care makes a big difference.'



Then Maya hid treats under cups for a finding game. She placed three cups on a table and showed Pico the treat under one. Pico watched closely. When she moved the cups around, Pico followed with his head. Then he lifted the right cup with his beak and grabbed the treat. 'He's so clever!' Maya cheered. Pico squawked proudly.



Rosa gave Maya a small notebook and pencil. 'You can write down what Pico likes best,' she suggested. Maya drew pictures of the toys and made check marks. 'He liked the puzzle feeder most,' she noted. 'And the swing.' Rosa said, 'You're learning to observe like a real caretaker. That's very important.' Maya beamed.



As the days passed, Maya visited often. Each time, she brought a new toy or game. She made a foraging box filled with shredded paper and hidden treats. Pico dug through it eagerly, tossing paper in the air. Maya laughed at his antics. 'He's like a little explorer!' she said. Rosa replied, 'And you're his favorite visitor.'



One afternoon, Pico grew quiet and sat on his perch with ruffled feathers. Maya worried. 'Is he sick?' she asked. Rosa checked him gently and said, 'He's just tired. Even clever birds need rest.' Maya nodded and spoke softly to Pico. 'It's okay, Pico. We can play later.' Pico blinked at her and fluffed his feathers comfortably.



Maya realized that caring for Pico meant more than just play. It meant paying attention to his moods and needs. 'He needs quiet time too,' she told Rosa. Rosa smiled. 'Exactly. Thoughtful care means understanding what he needs each day.' Maya felt proud. She was learning to be a truly kind caretaker.



The next week, Maya brought a special gift: a homemade foraging wheel. She had painted it with bright colors and filled it with Pico's favorite treats. Pico's eyes widened when he saw it. He spun the wheel and grabbed a treat, then squawked with joy. 'You made his day!' Rosa said. Maya's heart swelled with happiness.



Maya and Pico became the best of friends. She learned that smart animals like parrots need interesting things to do, and she was happy to provide them. Every visit, she brought a new game or toy, and Pico greeted her with whistles and head bobs. 'You've given him a joyful home,' Rosa said. Maya smiled, her freckled nose crinkling.



Now Maya knows that intelligent animals require thoughtful care. She spends her afternoons making toys and playing with Pico, and she wouldn't trade it for anything. 'We learn together,' she tells Rosa. Pico squawks in agreement and climbs onto Maya's shoulder. With patience, kindness, and a little creativity, Maya and Pico have found a friendship full of joy and discovery.