The Girl and the Llama

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Nora zipped up her yellow rain jacket and pulled on her red boots. Today was special! She was visiting Mountain Mist Farm with her green backpack. The farm sat high on a green hill, where clouds touched the tops of the mountains. Nora could hear birds singing and a stream bubbling nearby. She wondered what animals she would meet.

Farmer June met Nora at the gate. She wore green overalls and a wide straw hat. "Welcome, Nora!" she said with a warm smile. "We have sheep, goats, and a very special llama named Maple." Nora's eyes grew wide. She had never met a llama before. "Can I see her?" Nora asked. Farmer June nodded. "Follow me, but remember to be calm and quiet."

They walked to a sunny meadow where Maple stood. The llama had soft cream and light brown fleece, a long neck, and big dark eyes with long lashes. A red harness with a tiny brass bell was around her neck. Maple stood very still, watching Nora. Nora thought Maple looked gentle and a little shy. She wanted to say hello right away.

Nora took a quick step forward, waving her hand. Maple's ears twitched, and she stepped back. The brass bell jingled softly. "Oh!" Nora whispered. Farmer June spoke gently. "Maple doesn't like sudden movements or loud noises. She feels safer when we move slowly and speak softly." Nora nodded. She wanted to be Maple's friend, so she would try very hard to be calm.

Nora crouched low and stayed very still. She spoke in a soft, quiet voice. "Hello, Maple. I'm Nora." Maple's long neck slowly turned. Her big eyes looked at Nora. One small ear flicked forward. Then Maple took a slow step closer. The bell jingled again, but this time it sounded friendly. Nora smiled. Being quiet felt nice.

Farmer June showed Nora how to hold out her hand flat, with a little bit of hay. "Let Maple come to you," she said. Nora waited patiently. Maple stretched her neck and sniffed. Her soft nose tickled Nora's palm. Then she ate the hay. Nora giggled softly. Maple's ears relaxed. "She likes you," Farmer June said. Nora's heart felt warm and happy.

All morning, Nora practiced being calm. She walked slowly beside Maple. She whispered instead of shouting. When Maple stopped, Nora stopped too. When Maple wanted to sniff a flower, Nora waited. The llama's brass bell jingled gently as they walked. Maple began to follow Nora around the meadow. They were becoming good friends.

Farmer June told them about the mountain walking event that afternoon. "Families walk together on a safe path, and each person can bring an animal friend," she explained. "Would you like to walk with Maple?" Nora's eyes sparkled. "Yes, please!" she said. Maple's ears perked up, as if she understood. Nora felt excited but also a little nervous.

At lunch, Nora sat quietly near Maple. She shared her apple slices with the llama. Maple ate them gently from her hand. Some other children ran by, laughing loudly. Maple flinched and stepped closer to Nora. Nora reached out and patted Maple's neck. "It's okay," she whispered. "I'm here." Maple calmed down. Nora felt proud to help her friend.

When the walk began, Nora held Maple's lead rope loosely. They started up the mountain path with other families. The path was wide and safe. Farmer June walked at the front, keeping an eye on everyone. Maple walked calmly beside Nora. The brass bell jingled with each step. Nora felt happy and peaceful. The mountain air smelled fresh and clean.

Halfway up, the path got a little rocky. Nora watched where she stepped. Maple picked her way carefully too. Some children behind them shouted excitedly. Maple's ears went back, and she stopped. Nora remembered what Farmer June taught her. She stood still and spoke softly. "It's all right, Maple. Just a noise." Slowly, Maple relaxed and walked on.

At a bend in the path, they saw a small waterfall. Nora gasped softly. "Look, Maple!" she whispered. Maple looked at the water with calm, dark eyes. They stood together, quiet and still. Nora realized Maple liked quiet moments best. That was how Maple talked—with her ears and her gentle steps. Nora understood her without words.

Farmer June came over. "You two are doing wonderfully," she said. "Maple trusts you because you are kind and patient." Nora beamed. She felt proud of herself. She had learned to move slowly and speak softly. And Maple had taught her that friendship can be quiet. They walked on, side by side, with the bell jingling a happy song.

As they neared the top, the view opened wide. Mountains stretched like green waves under the sky. Nora and Maple stood together, looking out. Other walkers gathered around. Everyone was smiling. Maple stood close to Nora, calm and content. Nora felt a warm glow inside. She had made a true friend on the mountain.

On the way down, Nora and Maple walked in easy silence. Nora thought about how Maple had shown her friendship in her own way. Maple didn't need words. She needed kindness, patience, and a quiet heart. Nora smiled. She would always remember this day. The brass bell jingled softly, as if Maple agreed.

Back at the farm, Nora hugged Maple goodbye. "I'll come back soon," she whispered. Maple nuzzled her shoulder gently. Farmer June smiled. "You have a gift for understanding animals," she said. Nora waved as she left. She knew that quiet friendship was the best kind of all. And she would carry Maple's gentle spirit in her heart forever.