The Boy and the Seal
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Henry lived in a little blue house near the sea. Every morning, he pulled on his bright yellow rain jacket and red rubber boots. He grabbed his canvas satchel and ran down to the beach. The sand felt soft under his boots, and the salty wind ruffled his curly black hair. Henry loved the beach more than anywhere else in the world.

Henry knew every shell and stone on that beach. He knew where the crabs hid and where the tide pools sparkled. But his favorite spot was the far end, where smooth rocks made a quiet cove. That was where the seals came to rest. Henry would sit quietly and watch them from a distance, his hazel eyes wide with wonder.

The seals were plump and sleek, with grey-brown spotted fur and dark round eyes. Their whiskered snouts twitched as they snoozed on the sand. The pups were paler and rounder, curled up like little pillows. Henry never went close. He knew they needed peace and quiet. 'I'll keep you safe,' he whispered, his gap-toothed grin showing.

One sunny Saturday, Henry hurried to the cove with his satchel. But when he got there, he stopped short. A crowd of visitors was walking right up to the seals! They waved their arms and shouted, trying to get a closer look. The seals lifted their heads, their dark eyes wide and frightened. Some slid toward the water, upset and scared.

Henry's heart thumped. 'They're too close!' he said to himself. 'The seals need space!' He wanted to help, but he didn't know how. Just then, he spotted two people in bright jackets walking toward the crowd. One wore a teal waterproof jacket with a marine rescue badge. The other had an orange life vest and binoculars around his neck.

The tall woman with grey-streaked braids stepped forward. 'Hello, everyone!' she called in a calm, strong voice. 'I'm Mara, and this is Finn. We're marine conservationists.' She held up a clipboard. 'These seals are resting. They need quiet and space to stay healthy.' The visitors shuffled their feet and looked sorry.

Finn, the young man with sandy-blond hair and a sunburnt nose, smiled kindly. 'Please watch from behind the rocks,' he said. 'Keep a safe distance. That way, the seals won't feel scared.' The visitors nodded and slowly backed away. The seals settled down again, but Henry could tell they were still nervous. He wanted to do something more.

Henry walked up to Mara and Finn. 'I'm Henry,' he said, his freckled nose wrinkling. 'I love these seals. But people don't always know how to act.' Mara knelt down. 'You're right, Henry,' she said. 'Signs could help. We need bright, clear signs that remind everyone to keep their distance.' Henry's hazel eyes lit up. 'I can help!' he said.

Mara showed Henry a map of the beach. 'We'll put signs here, here, and here,' she said, pointing. Finn brought a bucket of paintbrushes and some wooden boards. 'We'll paint big letters and pictures,' he said. 'What should the signs say?' Henry thought hard. 'Keep seals safe! Stay back! Give them space!' he said. Mara and Finn grinned.

They set to work. Henry painted a big grey seal with round eyes. Mara wrote the words in bold letters. Finn hammered the signs onto wooden posts. Henry's yellow rain jacket was splattered with paint, and his gap-toothed smile stretched wide. 'These signs will help everyone remember,' he said. 'And the seals can rest without worry.'

The next morning, Henry and the conservationists placed the signs around the cove. The bright boards caught the sunlight. One sign showed a seal with a pup and said, 'Please keep your distance.' Another said, 'Quiet voices, happy seals.' Visitors stopped to read them. They smiled and nodded, then walked quietly to the viewing rocks.

Soon, the seals noticed the change. The visitors stayed far back, and the beach grew calm. One big seal lifted its head and looked around. Then it flopped back down with a soft sigh. The pups snuggled close to their mothers. Henry watched from behind a rock, his heart swelling with pride. 'They're peaceful again,' he whispered.

Mara put a hand on Henry's shoulder. 'You did a wonderful thing,' she said. 'These signs will help people respect the wildlife for years to come.' Finn gave Henry a high five. 'You're a real conservationist,' he said. Henry's freckled cheeks turned pink. 'I just wanted the seals to be happy,' he said. And that was the best feeling of all.

From that day on, Henry visited the cove every morning. He checked the signs and picked up any litter. Sometimes he saw other children reading the signs with their parents. 'Look, they're keeping back!' he heard a girl say. Henry smiled his gap-toothed smile. The seals snoozed peacefully, their spotted fur glistening in the sun. The cove was safe and quiet once more.

Henry learned that respecting wildlife means giving animals space. The seals needed quiet to rest, and the signs reminded everyone to be kind. Henry felt proud of his helpful idea. He knew that even a small boy could make a big difference. And as the sun set over the sea, the seals barked softly, as if to say thank you.

Now, whenever Henry walks on the beach, he remembers the day he helped the seals. His yellow rain jacket still has a spot of paint on the sleeve. He wears it proudly. The signs stand tall, and the seals rest easy. And Henry knows that with a little care and a lot of kindness, everyone can share the beach happily.