

# The Boy and the Baby Goat



Jane MEADOW

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Charlie lived on a small farm with a red barn and a wide green field. He was eight years old, with short wavy brown hair and freckles across his nose. On a bright spring morning, his father carried a baby goat into the yard. The little kid had a cream and brown patched coat, soft floppy ears, and a red collar with a tiny brass bell.



The baby goat was about knee-high to Charlie. It had dark round eyes and two tiny budding horns. When Charlie knelt down, the kid wobbled over and sniffed his hand. "Hello, little one," Charlie said softly. "I think I will call you Pip." Pip gave a happy little bleat, and the brass bell on his collar jingled.



Charlie's father smiled and put a hand on his shoulder. "A baby goat needs care every single day," he said. "Fresh water, good food, and someone to keep it company." Charlie nodded slowly. He looked at Pip's floppy ears and short fluffy tail. "I can do that," he said. And that very first day, Charlie's new job began.



Pip was playful from the start. He loved to jump and run across the yard. He kicked up his small hooves and bounced sideways like a fuzzy spring. Charlie laughed out loud at the funny tricks. "You are a silly kid!" he said. But Charlie also noticed that Pip liked to climb on everything he could find.



Charlie knew that a young goat needs safe things to climb and explore. He found a strong wooden box and set it near the barn. He placed a wide, flat stone beside it. "There you go, Pip," he said. "Try these." Pip hopped right onto the box, then up onto the stone, and stood there proudly.



Every morning, Charlie carried fresh water to a low bucket in the yard. He filled a small dish with food and set it beside the fence. Pip trotted over, his bell jingling, and ate with a happy wag of his short tail. "Good breakfast?" Charlie asked. Pip answered with a tiny, cheerful bleat, as if to say yes.



Keeping Pip company was part of the job too. Charlie sat on the grass while Pip explored around him. He talked about school and the weather and the birds in the trees. Pip wiggled his floppy ears and listened. Sometimes the kid nibbled a bit of grass, then trotted back to Charlie for a gentle scratch behind the ears.



One afternoon, Pip tried to climb a tall, wobbly board that leaned against the fence. It tipped and slid, and Pip scrambled off with a surprised little hop. Charlie hurried over, his red sneakers skidding on the grass. "Not that one, Pip," he said gently. "That is not safe for you." He pushed the board flat on the ground.



So Charlie made Pip a better place to play. He stacked two wooden crates side by side, steady and strong. Then he set a wide flat stone on top, like a little step. Pip climbed up, then down, then up again, his bell jingling bright. "You did it!" Charlie cheered, and Pip gave a proud, happy bleat.



Charlie learned that caring for Pip meant daily attention. He could not skip a morning or forget an evening. Water, food, a safe place to play, and company too. Some days he felt tired, but Pip always bounced over to greet him. The little kid's happy jingle made every chore feel lighter and more fun.



As the weeks passed, Charlie watched Pip grow bigger and stronger. The kid was no longer quite so wobbly on his legs. His jumps grew higher, and his little horns began to grow. "You are getting so big!" Charlie said one morning. Pip leaped from the crate to the flat stone without any wobble at all.



One windy day, a gate swung open, and Pip darted through it into the tall grass. Charlie's heart thumped, but he stayed calm and called softly. "Pip! Come back, little friend!" Pip turned his head, ears flopping, and the bell jingled. Charlie held out a handful of fresh food, and Pip trotted right back to him.



Charlie scooped Pip up and hugged him close. "You had me worried," he said with a shaky laugh. Then he fixed the gate so it could not swing open again. Pip nuzzled his cheek with a soft nose, as if to say sorry and thank you at the same time. The boy and the baby goat stayed close the rest of the afternoon.



Soon Pip was bigger than Charlie's knees and full of playful energy. He still loved to jump and run, but now he could leap from crate to stone to box in one happy bounce. Charlie laughed at every funny trick. "You remember when you could not even climb the box?" he asked. Pip answered with a proud, ringing bleat.



Charlie's father watched from the porch one evening. "You have taken good care of that kid," he said. "It takes time and daily attention." Charlie looked at Pip, who was nibbling grass near the safe crates. His freckles spread in a wide, warm smile. "Taking care of Pip makes me happy," he said. "Being responsible is fun."



Pip trotted over and rested his head against Charlie's arm, the little bell jingling softly. Charlie understood something important now. A young animal grows bigger and stronger because someone shows up for it every day. Water, food, safe climbing, and company: small acts given again and again. And caring for another creature can fill your heart right up with joy.