

The Girl and the Donkey's Birthday



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Maya skipped along the dusty path to Sunny Meadow Sanctuary, her curly black hair in two short puffs bouncing with each step. She wore her favorite yellow t-shirt with the little carrot print and green overall shorts. Today was a very special day. It was Biscuit the donkey's birthday! Maya had been counting down the days all week. She couldn't wait to celebrate with her gentle friend.



Biscuit stood in the shade of a big oak tree, his long floppy ears twitching as he listened to the birds. His soft grey-brown coat shimmered in the sunlight, and his cream muzzle twitched happily when he saw Maya. He wore his woven blue halter with the small brass tag, just like always. Maya ran up and gave him a gentle pat on his lighter belly. "Happy birthday, Biscuit!" she whispered.



Mr. Alden, the sanctuary caretaker, came over with a warm smile. His olive green work shirt was rolled up at the sleeves, and his canvas apron had a pocket full of apple slices. "So, Maya, what's the plan for Biscuit's big day?" he asked. Maya's large dark brown eyes sparkled. "I want to give him the best birthday ever!" she said. "But I need your help to make it just right for him."



Maya and Mr. Alden sat on a wooden bench near the barn to plan. Maya thought about what Biscuit loved most. "He doesn't like loud noises," she said. "Last time the tractors rumbled, he hid behind the fence." Mr. Alden nodded. "That's true. Biscuit is a gentle soul. He prefers calm and quiet." Maya frowned, thinking hard. "So no loud decorations or noisy games?" she asked. "I want him to be happy, not scared."



Maya remembered how Biscuit loved slow snacks and soft brushing. She had seen him relax when she gently combed his grey-brown coat. "I know!" she said. "We can make him special treats that are safe for donkeys. And we can set up quiet activities he enjoys." Mr. Alden's warm hazel eyes crinkled with a smile. "That's a wonderful idea, Maya. Thinking about what Biscuit truly needs is the best gift of all."



First, they went to the sanctuary kitchen to make treats. Maya washed her hands and put on a small apron. "What can donkeys eat?" she asked. Mr. Alden showed her a list: carrots, apples, and a little molasses. "No sugar or chocolate," he said. "Those can make Biscuit sick." Maya carefully chopped carrots into small sticks and sliced apples into thin pieces. She mixed them with a tiny bit of molasses and oats.



Maya shaped the mixture into small, round treats and placed them on a baking tray. While they baked, she prepared a special bucket of water with a few apple slices floating in it. "Donkeys need lots of water," Mr. Alden said. "And these apple slices will make it a fun surprise." Maya smiled, her gap-toothed grin wide. She imagined Biscuit's dark friendly eyes lighting up when he saw his treats.



Next, they set up enrichment activities in Biscuit's paddock. Mr. Alden helped Maya hang a sturdy rope from a low branch with a big, soft brush tied to the end. "Biscuit can rub against it if he wants," Maya explained. "It's like a gentle scratch." They also placed a few large, smooth stones in a circle. "Donkeys like to sniff new things," Mr. Alden said. "These stones have different smells from the meadow."



Maya filled a shallow tray with sand and hid some carrot pieces inside. "Biscuit can dig for his treats," she said. "It's like a treasure hunt!" She also made a simple puzzle feeder from a clean plastic bottle with holes cut in it. When Biscuit rolled it, small oat pieces would fall out. "This will keep him busy and happy," Mr. Alden said. "You've thought of everything, Maya."



As they worked, Maya noticed Biscuit watching them from behind the fence. His long ears were perked up, and his cream muzzle twitched with curiosity. "He's wondering what we're doing," Maya giggled. "Don't worry, Biscuit! It's a surprise!" Mr. Alden laughed. "He's a smart donkey. He knows something special is happening." Maya felt a warm glow in her chest. She couldn't wait to see Biscuit enjoy his gentle celebration.



Finally, everything was ready. Maya led Biscuit into the paddock with a soft lead rope. His blue halter looked smart, and his small white forehead patch gleamed. When Biscuit saw the tray of treats, his dark eyes widened. He sniffed the air and let out a soft, happy bray. "Happy birthday, Biscuit!" Maya cheered. Biscuit took a carrot stick gently from her hand, his lips soft and careful.



Biscuit explored the enrichment activities one by one. He rubbed his grey-brown coat against the brush, his long ears flopping contentedly. He sniffed the smooth stones and rolled the puzzle feeder with his nose, nibbling the oats that tumbled out. Maya and Mr. Alden sat quietly on a hay bale, watching him enjoy his special day. "He looks so peaceful," Maya whispered. "That's exactly what I wanted."



Mr. Alden brought out a small, donkey-safe cake made from oats and carrots. It had a single carrot on top as a candle. Maya held it while Mr. Alden sang "Happy Birthday" softly. Biscuit's ears swiveled toward the song, and he stepped closer to sniff the cake. Maya blew out the carrot for him. "Make a wish, Biscuit!" she said. Biscuit nuzzled her shoulder gently, as if saying thank you.



After the cake, Maya gave Biscuit a gentle brushing with the soft brush. He stood still, his eyes half-closed, enjoying the attention. "You know, Maya," Mr. Alden said, "you didn't need loud decorations or big crowds. You gave Biscuit a day that suits him perfectly. That's true kindness." Maya smiled, her round cheeks glowing. "I just wanted him to be happy," she said. "And he is!"



As the sun began to set, Maya gave Biscuit one last hug. "Thank you for being my friend," she whispered. Biscuit leaned his head against her, his floppy ears soft against her cheek. Mr. Alden handed Maya a small jar of leftover treats. "For next time," he said. "You're always welcome here." Maya waved goodbye, her heart full. She had learned that thinking about someone else's needs is the best gift of all.



On the walk home, Maya thought about the day. She had skipped loud, scary decorations and chosen calm, happy activities instead. Biscuit had enjoyed every quiet moment. "Being thoughtful is like giving a piece of your heart," she said to herself. And she knew that Biscuit's gentle celebration would be a memory she would always treasure. The best birthdays are the ones filled with kindness and care.