The Girl and the Seabirds
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Maya lived in a little house on the coast, where the sea crashed against tall cliffs. Every morning, she pulled on her red rubber boots and mustard-yellow raincoat. She grabbed her canvas satchel, covered in bird stickers, and ran to watch the seabirds. They swooped and called over the water, and Maya never tired of their noisy, wonderful world.

Maya knew every kind of seabird by heart. She loved the puffins with their orange beaks and funny walk. She loved the gulls that squawked and the terns that dived like arrows. Her dark brown eyes sparkled as she watched them. Freckles danced across her nose when she smiled her gap-toothed smile. The cliffs were her favorite place in the whole wide world.

One spring morning, Maya saw a group of people in green fleeces on the coastal path. They carried clipboards and binoculars. A tall volunteer named Sam waved her over. 'We're here to help the seabirds while they're nesting,' Sam said. 'Would you like to join us?' Maya nodded so fast her two curly hair puffs bounced. She was ready to help.

Sam showed Maya the nesting cliffs. 'Seabirds come here every year to lay eggs and raise their chicks,' Sam explained. 'But if people leave the coastal paths, they can step on hidden burrows or scare the parent birds away.' Maya listened carefully, her dark brown eyes wide. She wanted to learn everything about keeping the baby birds safe.

Near the path, a puffin popped out of a sandy burrow. Its black-and-white feathers were neat, and its orange feet pattered on the grass. It carried a beak full of tiny fish. 'That puffin is feeding its chick,' Sam whispered. 'If we stay on the path, the parent birds can come and go without fear.' Maya grinned. The puffin looked busy and comical.

Sam gave Maya a special job. 'You can help explain to visitors why they should stay on the coastal paths,' Sam said, handing her a sticker sheet. 'Your words can make a big difference.' Maya felt proud. She tucked the stickers into her satchel and practiced her speech. 'Stay on the path, keep the birds safe!' she said to the wind.

Soon a visitor in a blue anorak came along the cliff. He had a red backpack and a camera around his neck. He stepped off the path to get a better photo of the puffins. Maya's heart thumped. 'Excuse me!' she called politely. 'Please stay on the path. The baby birds are nesting right there.' The visitor looked surprised.

The visitor raised his eyebrows. 'I didn't know,' he said. 'I just wanted a picture.' Maya pointed to the burrow. 'If you step there, you might crush a chick or scare the parents,' she explained. 'If we stay on the path, the birds can rest and grow.' The visitor smiled. 'Thank you for telling me,' he said, and stepped back onto the trail.

Sam gave Maya a thumbs-up. 'Well done,' Sam said. 'That's exactly what we need.' Maya beamed. She spent the afternoon helping other visitors. She showed them the puffins and explained why the coastal paths were so important. People listened and smiled. They stayed on the path and took photos from a safe distance. Maya felt like a real conservation helper.

As the sun began to set, Maya and Sam walked along the cliff. The seabirds were settling down for the night. 'You did a great job today,' Sam said. 'Because of you, the puffins and their chicks can rest safely.' Maya looked at the burrows and felt warm inside. She had helped the wildlife, one small step at a time.

The next morning, Maya returned to the cliffs with her satchel full of stickers. She saw the same visitor in the blue anorak. He was standing on the path, taking photos. 'I told my friends about the nesting birds,' he said. 'We're all staying on the path now.' Maya's gap-toothed smile stretched wide. 'Thank you!' she said. 'The birds thank you too.'

Sam showed Maya a puffin chick peeking out of its burrow. It was fluffy and small, with a tiny orange beak. 'That chick is growing strong because we kept the path clear,' Sam said. Maya watched the chick waddle back into its burrow. She felt proud of her small part in keeping the seabird families safe and happy.

Word spread about the volunteers and the careful visitors. More people came to see the seabirds, but they all stayed on the coastal paths. They listened to Maya's cheerful explanations. The puffins, gulls, and terns nested peacefully. The chicks grew bigger every day. The cliff was full of happy bird sounds, and Maya knew that conservation worked when everyone helped.

At the end of the season, Sam gave Maya a special badge. 'You're an official seabird protector,' Sam said. Maya wore the badge on her mustard-yellow raincoat. She looked out at the sea and smiled. 'I'll keep helping,' she promised. 'Every small act of care helps the wildlife.' The seabirds called out as if to say thank you.

Maya still visits the cliffs every day. She watches the puffins with their orange beaks and the gulls wheeling overhead. She always stays on the path. Sometimes she sees visitors and tells them, 'Please stay on the path. It keeps the baby birds safe.' They listen, and the birds rest. Maya knows that even a small girl can make a big difference.

The seabird community thrives because of Maya and the volunteers. The chicks fledge and fly out to sea. The parents return to their burrows. The coastal paths stay busy with careful visitors. Maya's satchel is now covered in even more bird stickers. She smiles her gap-toothed smile and knows that conservation works when everyone does their part.