

The Little Gazelle's Race



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In a sunny meadow, a little gazelle named Zola loved to run. Her golden-tan fur shone, and her red racing scarf fluttered as she raced the wind. She had tiny horns and long, slim legs that could leap over small bushes. 'I'm the fastest in the meadow!' she cheered, kicking up dust with her green shoes. All the animals watched and clapped for speedy Zola.



One morning, Zola's friend Tuck the tortoise arrived. He wore a yellow sun hat and round glasses, and carried a small orange backpack. Tuck was calm and kind, but very slow. 'There's a race today,' he said softly. 'Will you race with me, Zola?' Zola laughed. 'You? You're too slow! But okay, it will be fun.'



The race would go through the forest, over big rocks, and across a wide stream. All the animals gathered to watch. The rabbit waved a little flag. 'Ready, set, go!' he shouted. Zola zoomed ahead like a golden arrow. Tuck plodded behind, his short legs working hard. 'Wait for me!' he called, but Zola was already far away.



Zola loved the wind in her fur. She ran past tall trees and colorful flowers. But soon she came to a pile of big rocks blocking the path. They were too high to jump and too wide to go around. Zola stopped. 'Oh no,' she said. 'How will I get over these?' She looked back and saw Tuck slowly catching up.



Tuck reached the rocks and smiled. 'We can help each other,' he said. 'I can push you up, and you can pull me over.' Zola nodded. She climbed onto a small rock, and Tuck pushed from behind. Then Zola reached down and pulled Tuck up. Step by step, they worked together. 'Thank you, Tuck,' Zola said, surprised.



After the rocks, the path led to a wide stream. The water was deep and fast. Zola could jump far, but not far enough to reach the other side. She looked worried. Tuck arrived and saw the stream. 'I can float!' he said. 'Climb on my shell, and I'll carry you across.' Zola hesitated. 'But you're my friend. I should help you too.'



Tuck floated on the water like a green boat. Zola climbed carefully onto his shell. It was slippery, but she held on tight. 'You're doing great, Tuck!' she cheered. Tuck paddled with his sturdy legs. 'And you're not too heavy,' he joked. They both laughed. The stream carried them gently, and soon they reached the other side.



On the bank, Zola shook off the water. 'I'm sorry I ran ahead,' she said. 'I wanted to win so much that I forgot about you.' Tuck smiled. 'That's okay. Racing is fun, but friends are better.' Zola looked at her red scarf. 'Let's race together from now on,' she said. 'No more running alone.'



The finish line was just ahead. Zola could see the ribbon between two trees. She started to run, then stopped. She looked back at Tuck, who was walking slowly. 'Come on, Tuck!' she called. 'Let's cross together.' Tuck's eyes twinkled behind his glasses. 'Really?' he asked. 'Really,' said Zola. She waited for him to catch up.



Side by side, they walked toward the finish line. Zola matched her steps to Tuck's slow pace. The animals cheered. 'Here they come!' shouted the rabbit. Zola and Tuck crossed the line at the same time. Everyone clapped and stamped. 'You did it!' cried Zola. 'We did it!' said Tuck, and they hugged each other tight.



The rabbit gave them both a shiny medal. Zola looked at hers and then at Tuck's. 'I didn't win,' she said. 'But I feel like a winner.' Tuck nodded. 'That's because you helped a friend. That's the best prize of all.' Zola smiled. 'You're right. Kindness is better than winning.'



From that day on, Zola and Tuck raced together often. Sometimes Zola ran fast, then waited for Tuck. Sometimes Tuck found a shortcut, and Zola followed. They helped each other over rocks and across streams. And they always laughed. 'A friendly race is the best race,' Zola said. Tuck agreed. 'Especially when you race with a friend.'



The other animals learned from Zola and Tuck. They began to help each other too. The rabbit shared carrots with the squirrel. The deer helped the hedgehog cross the road. Everyone saw that helping was more fun than winning. Zola's red scarf fluttered in the breeze, and Tuck's yellow hat bobbed along. They were happy.



One sunny afternoon, Zola and Tuck sat by the stream. 'Remember our first race?' asked Zola. Tuck chuckled. 'You were so fast!' he said. 'And you were so kind,' said Zola. 'I learned that winning isn't everything. Friends are.' They watched the water flow and smiled. The meadow was peaceful and warm.



Zola tied her red scarf a little tighter. 'Want to race to the big oak tree?' she asked. Tuck put on his glasses. 'Only if we go together,' he said. 'Always together,' said Zola. They started off, side by side. Zola slowed her steps, and Tuck hurried a little. They laughed and chatted all the way.



And that is how the little gazelle learned that kindness and friendship matter more than winning. A friendly race is the best race of all. So if you ever see a golden gazelle and a green tortoise running together, cheer for them both. They will smile and wave, and maybe they will invite you to join their race.