

The Little Zebra's Friend



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On the wide, golden savanna, where the grass swayed like a soft sea, lived a little zebra named Zara. Her black and white stripes shone in the sun, and her warm brown eyes sparkled with curiosity. Every morning she trotted past the acacia trees, saying hello to the hippos and the giraffes. Zara loved to run, but more than anything, she loved making new friends.



One day, Zara heard a worried voice near the tall grass. "Oh dear, oh dear," it said. "I can't do it!" Zara peeked through the blades and saw a young ostrich. His fluffy grey-brown feathers were ruffled, and his long pinkish legs trembled. He wore a tiny red scarf around his thin neck. "Hello," said Zara gently. "I'm Zara. What's wrong?"



"I'm Ollie," said the ostrich, his large amber eyes wide with worry. "The big savanna race is next week, and I'm scared. What if I trip? What if I'm too slow? What if everyone laughs?" Zara smiled her big friendly smile. "Everyone feels nervous sometimes," she said. "But you don't have to practice alone. I can help you." Ollie blinked. "You would do that for me?"



The next morning, Zara met Ollie at the edge of the savanna. "Let's start slow," she said. "We'll run to that crooked tree and back. No hurry." Ollie's long legs wobbled. "But what if I fall?" Zara trotted beside him. "Then you get up, and we try again. Ready?" Ollie took a deep breath and nodded. They set off at a gentle jog, Zara matching his pace.



Ollie's long neck bobbed as he ran, and his fluffy feathers bounced. "This isn't so bad," he puffed. Zara cheered, "You're doing great!" But then Ollie stumbled on a small rock. His amber eyes filled with tears. "I knew I couldn't do it!" he cried. Zara nuzzled his wing. "Everyone trips. Look—you're already up again. That's what matters. Let's try once more, nice and easy."



Day after day, they practiced. Zara showed Ollie how to lift his long legs high and how to lean forward just a little. "Keep your eyes on the path," she said. "And breathe." Ollie listened carefully. Slowly, his worry began to fade. He still felt nervous, but with Zara beside him, the big race didn't seem so scary. "You're getting faster," Zara said. Ollie's small beak curved into a tiny smile.



The day before the race, they rested under a shady tree. Ollie's red scarf fluttered in the breeze. "What if I come last?" he whispered. Zara thought for a moment. "Then you'll have run your best, and I'll be proud of you. But more importantly, did you have fun practicing?" Ollie nodded. "Then that's what counts," said Zara. "The race is just a game. Let's enjoy it."



That night, Ollie couldn't sleep. His mind raced with worries. He imagined the other animals watching, and his long legs tangled. He imagined falling behind. But then he remembered Zara's warm smile and her gentle words. He remembered how they had laughed when a butterfly landed on his beak. Slowly, his amber eyes closed, and he drifted into a peaceful sleep.



Race day arrived bright and warm. All the savanna animals gathered—giraffes, hippos, monkeys, and birds. The race path stretched across the golden grass, marked with bright ribbons. Ollie's thin neck trembled as he stood at the starting line. Zara stood right beside him. "Remember," she whispered, "just do your best. I'll be with you the whole way."



The whistle blew! The animals dashed forward. Ollie's long legs stretched out, and Zara galloped at his side. "You've got this!" she called. At first, Ollie was nervous, but then he found his rhythm. His feet thumped the ground, and the wind ruffled his feathers. He forgot about winning. He forgot about the crowd. He just ran, feeling free and happy.



Halfway through, Ollie saw a fallen branch ahead. "Watch out!" Zara shouted. Ollie leaped high—higher than he ever had—and cleared the branch with a graceful bound. "Wow!" cheered the monkeys. Ollie's heart swelled with pride. Zara laughed with delight. "That was amazing!" Ollie's amber eyes shone. He wasn't just running; he was flying!



The finish line came into view. Ollie was near the middle of the pack, but he didn't care. He saw Zara cheering wildly, her stripes flashing in the sun. He gave one last push, his long legs carrying him across the line. He didn't win, but he had finished. And he had done it with his best friend beside him.



After the race, the animals gathered around. "You were so fast, Ollie!" said a little monkey. Ollie blushed under his feathers. Zara hugged him. "I'm so proud of you," she said. "You were brave and you never gave up." Ollie looked at his friend. "I couldn't have done it without you," he said. "You helped me believe in myself."



From that day on, Ollie was different. He still felt nervous sometimes, but he remembered Zara's encouragement. He practiced running every day, and soon he could race with the best of them. But more than racing, he loved spending time with Zara. They explored the savanna together, chasing butterflies and laughing under the acacia trees.



One evening, as the sun set over the golden grass, Ollie turned to Zara. "Thank you for being my friend," he said. "You taught me that having fun matters more than winning. And that a good friend makes every challenge easier." Zara smiled her big, warm smile. "That's what friends are for," she said. "And you taught me that being brave means trying, even when you're scared."



And so, on the wide, golden savanna, a little zebra and a young ostrich became the best of friends. Ollie's confidence grew with every step he took, and Zara's kindness shone like the sun. They knew that whatever challenge came their way, they could face it together. Because a good friend makes every challenge easier—and every race more fun.