

The Little Hippo's Friend



Jane MEADOW

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Henry the hippo lived by a peaceful riverbank where the water was cool and the grass was sweet. He had soft grey-purple skin, small round ears, and a wide pinkish muzzle with two tiny white tusks. Every morning, he munched on fresh green plants and watched the river flow by. Life was quiet and calm, and Henry liked it that way.



One sunny day, a white bird landed near Henry's big round nose. She had long graceful neck, slim black legs, and bright amber eyes that sparkled with curiosity. "Hello!" she chirped. "My name is Ella. What's yours?" Henry blinked his tiny dark eyes and smiled. "I'm Henry," he said slowly. "Welcome to my riverbank."



Ella the egret was full of questions. She asked about the river, the trees, and the muddy banks. Henry answered each one patiently, his deep voice rumbling like soft thunder. They soon became friends, and Ella promised to visit every day. Henry felt happy to have someone to talk to, even if she was much smaller than him.



The next morning, Ella flew over the riverbank and saw a group of animals looking worried. A family of rabbits, a pair of turtles, and a young deer were huddled together. "What's wrong?" asked Ella. "We need a safe place to rest," said the mother rabbit, "but the path is blocked by fallen branches, and we can't find a cozy spot."



Ella quickly flew to find Henry, who was resting in the shallow water. "Henry!" she called. "Our friends need help. There are fallen branches blocking the path, and they can't find a safe place to rest." Henry climbed out of the river, his big round body glistening in the sun. "Show me the way," he said gently. "We'll help them together."



Henry and Ella followed the animals to the edge of the forest. Tall branches and tangled vines had fallen across the path, making it hard to pass. The animals were too small to move the heavy wood. "Don't worry," said Henry. "I can push these aside." He pressed his strong body against the branches and began to clear the way, step by step.



Ella flew above, her sharp amber eyes scanning the ground. "Watch out for that sharp rock!" she called. "And there's a hole on the left!" Henry moved carefully, following her directions. With every push, the path grew wider. The animals watched in wonder as the gentle hippo cleared a safe trail for them.



Once the path was clear, Ella flew ahead to look for a cozy resting spot. She spotted a quiet clearing under a large oak tree, with soft grass and plenty of shade. "Over here!" she chirped. "This place is perfect!" The animals hurried over, their eyes bright with relief. Henry followed slowly, making sure everyone was safe.



The rabbits hopped into the soft grass and sighed happily. The turtles found a warm, sandy patch to rest on. The young deer lay down under the oak tree, feeling safe at last. "Thank you, Henry and Ella!" they all said. "You make a great team!" Henry smiled, and Ella puffed out her white feathers proudly.



From that day on, the animals knew they could count on Henry and Ella. Whenever someone needed help, the two friends were ready. Henry used his big size to clear paths and push aside fallen logs, while Ella used her sharp eyes to spot danger and guide the way. They worked together, and their friendship grew stronger every day.



One afternoon, a little bird came to Ella with a worried chirp. "My nest fell from the tree, and I can't find a safe place for my eggs!" Ella flew to Henry at once. "We need to help," she said. Henry nodded. "Let's find a cozy spot together." They set off, with Ella leading the way and Henry close behind.



Ella flew high and spotted a hollow in a tall tree, safe from the wind and rain. "There!" she called. "That hollow is perfect for a nest." But the branch was too high for the little bird to reach. Henry gently pushed a fallen log beneath the tree, making a step. "Now you can hop up," he said kindly.



The little bird hopped up the log and into the hollow. She tucked her eggs safely inside and chirped with joy. "Thank you, Henry and Ella!" she sang. "You are the kindest friends in the forest!" Henry's tiny eyes twinkled, and Ella's crest feathers fluttered with happiness. Helping others felt wonderful.



As the sun began to set, the animals gathered around Henry and Ella. "You two are so different," said the mother rabbit, "but you make the best team!" Henry looked at Ella, and Ella looked at Henry. "We may be different," said Ella, "but that's what makes us strong." Henry nodded slowly. "Friendship can grow between anyone," he said.



That night, the riverbank was peaceful once more. Henry rested in the shallow water, and Ella perched on a nearby branch. They watched the stars twinkle in the sky, feeling happy and content. "Goodnight, Henry," said Ella softly. "Goodnight, Ella," rumbled Henry. "See you tomorrow." They knew that tomorrow would bring new adventures and new friends to help.



And so, the little hippo and the curious egret remained the best of friends. They showed everyone that kindness and teamwork can solve any problem, and that friendship can grow between very different friends. Their unusual partnership was meaningful, and the animals of the riverbank lived happily together, always ready to help one another.