

The Little Flamingo



Aysel Banu YAVUZAL

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At the edge of a wide, shallow lagoon, a little flamingo stood on his long thin legs. His feathers were soft and pale pink, and his curved neck bent like a gentle question mark. He had big round dark eyes that watched the other birds splash and chatter. But when he stepped closer, the birds grew quiet. He felt too tall, too pink, too strange.



Every morning the little flamingo waded in the warm water and looked at his own reflection. Long legs, curved neck, small grey-black beak. The ducks and gulls nearby looked nothing like him. They had short legs and quick wings and loud, easy voices. He wished he could be small and plain and fit right in.



By afternoon the sun made the water shine like a mirror, but the little flamingo stayed alone. He tucked his downy head under one wing and sighed. 'Nobody wants to stand beside me,' he whispered. 'I am too different.' The reeds swayed softly, and the water rippled, but nobody answered.



Then, near the muddy bank, something moved. It was a tiny bird, speckled brown and white, with a short straight beak and bright quick eyes. The little sandpiper hopped closer, curious and bold. 'Hello!' she chirped. 'What long legs you have! May I walk beside you?' The flamingo blinked his big dark eyes in surprise.



'You are not afraid of me?' asked the little flamingo. The sandpiper tilted her plump brown body and laughed a tiny laugh. 'Why would I be? You have kind eyes.' She hopped right up beside his foot, and she was hardly bigger than it. The flamingo felt something warm and new inside his chest. 'I am different from the other birds,' he said quietly.



'So am I,' said the sandpiper. 'I am the smallest one here, and my feathers are plain speckled brown.' She looked up at his pale pink down and smiled. 'But different is not bad. Different is interesting!' They stood together by the water, a tall pink bird and a tiny speckled one, and neither of them felt lonely anymore.



The sandpiper looked out across the wide water and her bright eyes sparkled. 'I know a place,' she said. 'It is a sheltered lagoon beyond the tall reeds. Birds of every size and color rest there. Some are small, some are tall. Will you fly with me and see it?' The little flamingo's heart beat fast, but he nodded.



They lifted off together, the flamingo's long wings spreading wide and the sandpiper fluttering quick beside him. They flew over the shining water, past the noisy ducks and gulls. 'Keep close!' called the sandpiper. The flamingo's curved neck stretched forward, and the wind felt cool and friendly on his downy head.



Down below, the water sparkled and the reeds swayed. The little flamingo had never flown so far. His long thin legs trailed behind him, and his pale pink feathers caught the light. Beside him the tiny sandpiper darted and dipped, cheerful as a little brown leaf in the wind. 'Almost there!' she chirped. 'Follow my small tail!'



Then they saw it: a quiet, sheltered lagoon, ringed by soft green reeds and tall grasses. The water was calm and warm, and many birds rested there. Small brown birds, tall grey herons, tiny bright-eyed sparrows, and one big white swan. Every size, every color, all resting together in the gentle sun.



The little flamingo landed softly and looked around with his big dark eyes. Nobody stared. Nobody whispered. A grey heron nodded kindly, and a tiny sparrow hopped over to say hello. The sandpiper stood proudly beside him. 'See?' she said. 'This is the sheltered lagoon. There is room for everyone here, exactly as they are.'



The flamingo felt something loosen in his chest. He looked at the sandpiper, so small and speckled, and at his own long pink legs. 'You were kind to me when I was lonely,' he said. 'And you never once minded that I look different.' The sandpiper smiled. 'Friendship is not about looking alike,' she said. 'It is about being kind.'



So the little flamingo decided to stay, and the sandpiper stayed with him. They rested side by side in the sheltered lagoon, a tall pink bird and a tiny brown one. The other birds came and went, and every one of them was welcome. Different sizes, different colors, different beaks, all sharing the warm, calm water together.



From that day on, the two friends flew out often to find other lonely birds. 'Come with us,' the flamingo would call, bending his curved neck low. 'There is a place for you.' And the sandpiper would hop and chirp, leading the way. Slowly the sheltered lagoon filled with birds of every size, and not one of them felt too strange to belong.



When evening came, the water turned golden and pink, just like the little flamingo's feathers. He stood tall on his long thin legs and looked at his friend. 'I used to think different meant lonely,' he said. 'Now I know it just means special.' The sandpiper tucked her small speckled head against his warm side, and they watched the sun go down together.



And if you ever visit that quiet lagoon, you may see a pale pink flamingo and a tiny speckled sandpiper standing side by side. They will tell you, if you listen, that being different is fine. Friendship is not about looking alike. Sharing kindness matters most of all, and kindness always finds a way to bring friends together.