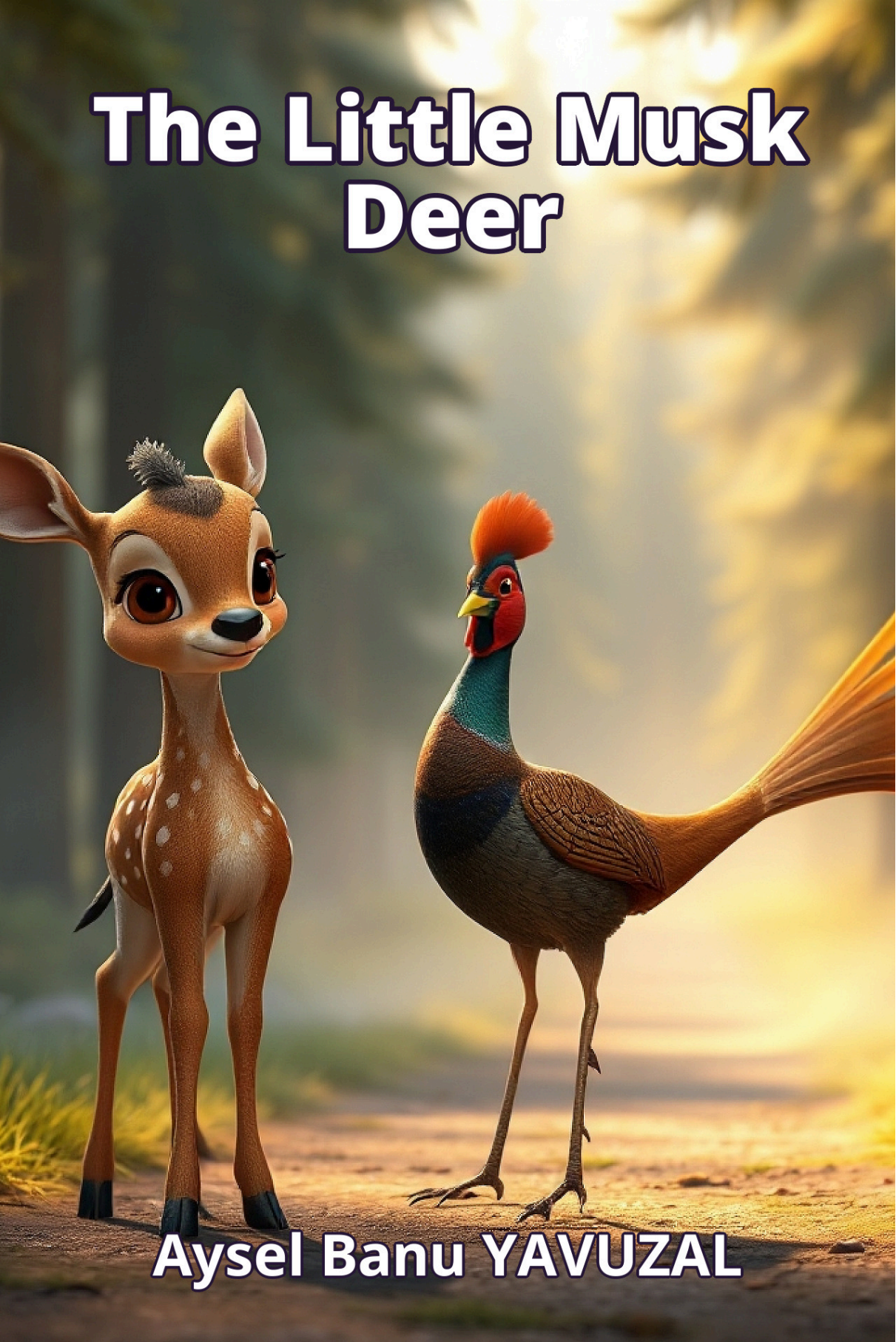
The Little Musk Deer



Aysel Banu YAVUZAL

The Little Musk Deer

Aysel Banu YAVUZAL

High on a misty mountain, where the clouds touch the treetops, lived a little musk deer. His coat was soft and warm brown, dotted with pale cream spots along his back. His belly and throat were creamy white, and his big dark eyes were gentle and kind. He had tiny budding antlers and thin, delicate legs. Every morning he woke to the sound of birds singing in the tall pines.

The forest was quiet and green, full of ferns and mossy stones. The little deer loved to wander between the trees, sniffing the cool air. But he was shy and easily frightened. When a twig snapped, he jumped. When a shadow moved, he hid. "The world is so big," he whispered, "and I am so small." He wished he had a friend to walk beside him.

One bright morning, a flash of color swooped down from a high branch. It was a mountain pheasant, with copper-red and golden-brown feathers that shone in the light. His head and neck were glossy dark green, and a bright red patch glowed on his face. His long tail feathers swept behind him, barred with dark lines. "Hello, little deer!" he called cheerfully. "What a fine day for a walk!"

The little deer blinked his big dark eyes. "You are so bright and bold," he said. "I am just small and shy." The pheasant laughed, a warm and happy sound. "Small is fine! I am not so big myself. Let's be friends and explore the mountain together." The deer's heart lifted. "I would like that," he said softly. And just like that, they became friends.

They set off through the forest, the deer's tiny hooves tapping softly on the path. The pheasant walked beside him, his quick bright eyes looking this way and that. "What is your favorite thing in the forest?" asked the bird. "The cool moss," said the deer. "And the quiet." The pheasant nodded. "I like the tall trees best. They make me feel like I can fly forever."

Suddenly, the air grew cold and thick. A white fog rolled in between the trees, curling around the trunks like a soft, silent river. The little deer stopped. He could not see the path ahead. He could not see the ferns or the mossy stones. "Oh no," he whispered. "The fog is here. I can't see anything." His thin legs began to tremble, and his small ears flattened.

The mountain pheasant stepped closer. "Don't worry," he said gently. "I am right here beside you. We will find the way together." The deer looked at his friend's bright red face patch and glossy green head. "But what if we get lost?" he asked. The pheasant tilted his head. "Then we will get found again. Come on, take a slow step. I will watch for the path."

The fog was thick and white, and the tall trees loomed like quiet giants. The deer took a tiny step, then another. His heart beat fast. "I'm scared," he admitted. "I know," said the pheasant. "But you are not alone. I am here. You are brave, little deer. Just keep walking." The deer took a deep breath. With his friend close by, he felt a little warmer inside.

They walked on through the mist, the pheasant's long tail feathers sweeping behind him. "Look," said the bird, "that big stone looks like a sleeping bear." The deer giggled. "And that fern looks like a green umbrella!" They began to play a game, naming shapes in the fog. The deer's trembling stopped. He forgot to be afraid. "You make the fog feel friendly," he told his friend.

The pheasant led the way, his quick eyes spotting roots and rocks. "Step here," he said. "Now here." The deer followed, his small dark hooves finding safe spots. Sometimes the deer would spot a low branch the pheasant might bump, and he would call, "Duck down!" They helped each other, step by step, through the tall, quiet trees. The fog swirled around them, but they kept going.

Then the deer stopped. "Wait," he said. "I think I hear water." He listened with his small ears. Yes, a gentle splashing. "The stream is that way!" he said. "You found the path!" cheered the pheasant. "See? You are brave and clever too." The deer smiled, his big dark eyes shining. "We found it together," he said. And they walked toward the sound.

The fog began to lift, thin and wispy, like torn cobwebs. Sunlight spilled through the branches in golden ribbons. The little deer saw the stream sparkling ahead, and the mossy stones he loved. "We made it!" he cried. The pheasant fluffed his copper-red feathers. "You made it," he said. "I just walked beside you." The deer shook his head. "No, I could not have done it without you."

They stood by the stream and drank the cool water. "You know," said the deer, "I used to think courage meant not being scared. But now I think it means walking on even when you are." The pheasant nodded. "And it helps to have a friend who cheers you on." The deer looked at his friend. "Thank you for staying close." "Always," said the pheasant. "That is what friends do."

From that day on, the little musk deer was not so shy. He still had big dark eyes and tiny budding antlers, but now he held his head a little higher. Whenever the fog rolled in, he would remember his friend's warm voice. "Let's explore," he would say. And the pheasant would answer, "Lead the way!" Together they wandered the mountain, brave and happy.

They became the best of friends, the little deer and the bright pheasant. They explored every path and hidden hollow, always helping each other. When the deer felt afraid, the pheasant stayed close. When the pheasant needed a low branch spotted, the deer was there. Their friendship made the whole mountain feel like home. And the misty forest was never scary again.

So if you ever walk in a misty mountain forest, listen closely. You might hear a soft voice say, "We'll find the way together." And you might see a little spotted deer and a bright mountain pheasant, walking side by side through the tall trees. For they had learned the sweetest secret: friendship gives us courage, and courage makes us happy.