

The Little Hartebeest



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On the wide, sunny savanna, a little hartebeest stood knee-high to his mother. His coat was warm tan, his belly lighter, and his long narrow face held dark, gentle eyes. Short curved horns were just budding on his head, and a woven grass bracelet circled one front leg. He loved to watch the tall grass sway and wonder what lay beyond.



One morning, the little hartebeest trotted to the edge of the herd. A flash of brown caught his eye. Out from the grass popped a slender mongoose with a tawny striped back and bright amber eyes. A tiny seed-pod pendant swung from a cord around its neck. 'Hello!' said the mongoose. 'I'm quick, and you're strong. Shall we be friends?'



The hartebeest nodded, his large ears twitching. 'I'm curious about the old trail,' he said. 'My mother says it's forgotten.' The mongoose grinned. 'I know that trail! It starts behind the thorn bush.' Together they set off, the hartebeest's slender legs stepping carefully and the mongoose darting ahead. The savanna hummed with heat and hidden wonders.



The trail began in a sea of tall, dry grass that rose above the little hartebeest's back. 'I can't see a thing!' he cried. The mongoose scrambled up a fallen branch. 'Follow my voice!' it called. 'Left, then right!' The hartebeest pushed through, his big strong body making a path. 'You're a good scout,' he said. The mongoose's tail with its dark tip wiggled with pride.



Soon the grass gave way to a puzzle of tricky rocks, smooth and round. The little hartebeest's hooves slipped. 'Ouch! These rocks are too wobbly for me.' The mongoose studied the ground. 'Step where I step,' it said, and showed him a zigzag way. The hartebeest watched the small quick feet and copied them. 'You make it look easy,' he said, and the mongoose laughed.



The path wound uphill, and the sun grew hot. The hartebeest's legs ached. 'Maybe we should turn back,' he sighed. The mongoose pointed its pointed snout forward. 'See that shady tree? Just a little farther.' They rested under the wide branches, and the mongoose told a joke that made the hartebeest snort. 'Friends make hard things easier,' said the mongoose.



A thorny bush blocked the trail ahead. The little hartebeest lowered his budding horns. 'I can push through,' he said. He leaned his sturdy body into the bush and cleared a way. 'You're big and strong!' cheered the mongoose. 'And you're clever and quick,' replied the hartebeest. They looked at each other and smiled. Teamwork felt good.



The trail turned into a winding path that twisted like a snake. 'Which way?' asked the hartebeest, confused. The mongoose closed its bright amber eyes, listened, then pointed. 'The wind smells like water.' They followed the mongoose's nose, around bends and over small hills. The hartebeest trusted his friend, and the path seemed less scary. 'You're a good guide,' he said.



Suddenly, a loud rustle made them freeze. A big shape moved in the grass. The mongoose's tail puffed up. 'Wait here,' it whispered, and crept forward. It came back quickly. 'It's only an old tortoise!' The hartebeest let out a breath. 'I was brave because you were with me,' he said. The mongoose smiled. 'And I was brave because you were big.'



They came to a small stream, cool and clear. The hartebeest drank, and the mongoose balanced on a stone. 'Look!' cried the mongoose. On the other side, the trail continued, but the stream was wide. 'I can jump it,' said the hartebeest. 'But you're too small.' The mongoose thought. 'I'll ride on your back!' And so they crossed together, the mongoose holding tight.



On the far bank, the trail grew faint. The mongoose sniffed around. 'The path is hidden,' it said. 'We need to look for clues.' The hartebeest noticed a line of flattened grass. The mongoose spotted a row of tiny stones. 'You found the grass, I found the stones!' they cheered. Together, they pieced the trail back together, step by step, like a puzzle.



At last, the trail opened into a hidden meadow full of bright flowers. Butterflies danced, and a gentle waterfall splashed into a pool. 'It's wonderful!' gasped the little hartebeest. 'We found it together,' said the mongoose. They sat side by side, the hartebeest's long face glowing and the mongoose's amber eyes shining. The forgotten trail had led them to a secret treasure.



As the sun began to set, the two friends started home. 'We faced tall grass, tricky rocks, and a winding path,' said the hartebeest. 'But we helped each other,' said the mongoose. 'Friendship makes challenges easier.' The hartebeest touched his grass bracelet and smiled. 'I'm glad I met you,' he said. 'Me too,' said the mongoose, and they walked side by side.



Back at the herd, the little hartebeest's mother nuzzled him. 'You've grown today,' she said. 'I learned to trust my friend,' he replied. The mongoose waved its long tail and promised to visit. From that day on, the little hartebeest and the clever mongoose explored the savanna together, always ready for a new adventure. Their friendship made every trail brighter.



And when other young animals asked about the forgotten trail, the hartebeest would say, 'Take a friend.' The mongoose would nod, its seed-pod pendant swinging. 'Big or small, quick or strong, we all need help sometimes.' The savanna stretched wide and warm around them, full of tall grass and tricky rocks, but never too hard when friends walked together.



So if you ever wander the sunny savanna and see a little hartebeest with budding horns and a grass bracelet, and a mongoose with bright amber eyes, you'll know they're off on another adventure. And you'll remember: friendship makes challenges easier, and every trail is better with a friend.