

The Little Saola



Aysel Banu YAVUZAL

The Little Saola

Aysel Banu YAVUZAL



Deep in a green forest, where ferns uncurled like sleepy fingers, lived a little saola. Her coat was soft chestnut-brown, and her dark eyes were long and gentle. Two short, straight horns sat between large, rounded ears. Around her neck, she wore a thin woven grass collar with tiny blue flowers. She loved to wander and sniff the sweet forest air.



One morning, as sunlight spilled through the leaves, the little saola heard a rustle. Out from the ferns stepped a magical pheasant. Its feathers shimmered turquoise and emerald, and its long golden tail swept the ground. Bright amber eyes blinked, and a small silver crest glinted on its head. A glowing silver charm hung on its chest. 'Hello,' said the pheasant softly. 'I am looking for a friend.'



The saola's heart thumped with joy. 'I will be your friend,' she said. The pheasant's amber eyes sparkled. 'Then follow me,' it said, and its wings let out faint sparkles. They walked together through the tall ferns, past mossy logs and bubbling brooks. The saola's small black nose twitched at every new scent. She felt brave with her new friend beside her.



The pheasant led the saola up a winding path. 'Where are we going?' asked the saola. 'To a secret place,' said the pheasant, its silver charm glowing. They climbed over roots and under branches. The forest grew quieter, and the air smelled of wild mint. The saola's rounded ears swiveled at every sound. She trusted her friend and kept close.



At last, the trees parted, and the saola gasped. Below them lay a hidden mountain valley, full of flowers and quiet streams. Red poppies nodded, and bluebells rang silent bells. Water murmured over smooth stones. 'It's beautiful!' whispered the saola. The pheasant smiled. 'This is our secret,' it said. 'We must keep it safe.' The saola nodded solemnly.



Every day, the two friends played in the valley. They chased butterflies and splashed in the streams. The pheasant's golden tail left sparkles in the air. The saola nibbled sweet clover while the pheasant sang a soft, warbling song. 'You are the best friend I ever had,' said the saola. 'And you are mine,' said the pheasant, its amber eyes warm.



One afternoon, the pheasant grew still. Its silver crest stood up straight. 'Do you hear that?' it whispered. The saola listened. Far away, a heavy thump-thump echoed. The pheasant's feathers ruffled. 'Something is coming,' it said. 'Something big and shadowy.' The saola pressed close to her friend. 'We must be brave,' she said, though her heart beat fast.



That night, the saola saw glowing yellow eyes in the dark. A shadowy grey silhouette loomed beyond the trees, much bigger than her. Heavy paws crunched leaves, and faint rust-red fur showed in the moonlight. The saola trembled. 'It's the danger,' said the pheasant. 'It wants our valley.' The saola took a deep breath. 'We won't let it hurt our home.'



The next morning, the friends made a plan. 'We can't fight,' said the pheasant. 'But we can be clever.' The saola nodded. 'I can run fast and lead it away,' she said. 'And I can make sparkles to confuse it,' said the pheasant. They practiced every day. The saola ran through the flowers, and the pheasant swooped above, leaving trails of light.



One evening, the shadowy danger crept closer. Its yellow eyes gleamed. The saola stepped forward bravely. 'Follow me!' she called, and dashed toward the stream. The danger lumbered after her. The pheasant flew above, its wings sparking bright. The sparkles dazzled the shadowy creature, and it stumbled, confused. The saola led it far from the valley, then hid behind a rock.



When the danger was lost in the forest, the saola returned to the valley. The pheasant landed beside her. 'You were so brave!' it said. The saola smiled. 'We did it together.' They stood side by side, watching the quiet streams. The valley was safe again. 'Rare animals like you deserve love and protection,' said the pheasant. 'And so do you,' said the saola.



From that day on, the friends protected their secret valley. They watched for danger and kept the streams clear. Other forest animals came to play, and the saola welcomed them all. 'Kindness is our best shield,' she said. The pheasant nodded. 'And teamwork makes us strong.' The valley filled with happy sounds, and the shadowy danger never returned.



The saola grew a little taller, but her heart stayed kind. She wore her blue flower collar proudly. The pheasant's silver charm glowed brighter than ever. They knew that some animals are rare and need care. 'We will always protect this place,' said the saola. 'And we will always be friends,' said the pheasant. They touched noses gently.



One warm evening, they sat on a mossy rock and watched the sun set. 'Do you remember when we first met?' asked the saola. The pheasant chuckled. 'You were so curious,' it said. 'And you were so magical,' said the saola. They watched fireflies dance over the streams. The valley was peaceful, and their friendship was strong.



The little saola learned that even small creatures can do big things. With courage and a good friend, no danger is too great. She hoped that all rare animals could find love and protection, just like she did. The pheasant agreed. 'The world is better with kindness,' it said. And they promised to share that kindness with everyone they met.



And so, the saola and the pheasant stayed best friends forever. They played in the hidden valley every day, among the flowers and quiet streams. Their secret was safe, and their hearts were full. If you listen closely, you might hear the pheasant's soft song and see a flash of chestnut-brown between the ferns. The valley remains a place of friendship and protection, just as it should be.