

THE TORTOISE AND THE HARE a fable by Aesop
For two children to perform
Adapted by Marian Scadden

CHARACTERS:
TORTOISE
HARE

Setting: A forest near a pond. The pond is off right but, if represented, can be slightly visible on stage; most of the pond should be off stage.

At Rise: Tortoise is sitting at center and munching slowly on carrots, lettuce, or some other food. Hare enters from left, running, and stops to talk to Tortoise (Hare runs in place even when talking to Tortoise; Hare is moving almost all the time).

HARE: (speaking quickly) Hi, Tortoise. What are you doing?

TORTOISE: (speaking slowly) Just having breakfast. (continues eating)

HARE: Oh! I forgot to eat breakfast. Bye, Tortoise! (exits left)

TORTOISE: Bye—(Hare is gone before Tortoise can respond; continues eating)

HARE: (enters from left) Hi, Tortoise. I finished breakfast because I'm so fast.

TORTOISE: (munching on food) Mm-hm.

HARE: (laughing) Are you still eating?

TORTOISE: Yes.

HARE: You are so slow. (laughs again)

TORTOISE: I like to eat slowly.

HARE: Well, I'm faster than you.

TORTOISE: So?

HARE: That makes me better.

TORTOISE: Not really. (finishes eating; stands up)

HARE: Are you finally done?

TORTOISE: Yes.

HARE: What are you going to do now?

TORTOISE: Take a walk. (starts walking very slowly right)

HARE: Why don't you run, like me?

TORTOISE: I want to walk.

(Hare watches Tortoise walking very slowly for a moment, then bursts out laughing)

HARE: You better start running because at that pace, you might get to the edge of the pond by midnight.

TORTOISE: What's so funny?

HARE: (laughs again) You should see yourself! You're barely faster than a tree!

TORTOISE: A tree doesn't walk.

HARE: (laughing louder) Exactly! It's a good thing you sleep in your shell; otherwise you'd have to turn around and go home when you've walked only five feet.

TORTOISE: Yes, it is a good thing that I carry my home with me.

HARE: I don't have to carry my home with me because I can run fast. I can run anywhere I want and get back home instantly.

TORTOISE: (still walking slowly) That's nice.

HARE: Watch this! (runs off left; enters running, carrying a magazine) Hi, Tortoise. I'm going to the pond to lay in the sun and read. (exits right)

TORTOISE: The sun is nice.

HARE: (enters from right, still carrying magazine) I'm done now, Tortoise. (exits left)

TORTOISE: Mm-hm.

HARE: (enters from left with a kite—or jump rope or ball, etc) Now I'm going to go play for a little while. (exits right)

TORTOISE: (still walking slowly right) Playing is fun.

HARE: (enters from right, carrying kite) I'm done, so I'm putting my things away. (exits left)

TORTOISE: That's very tidy of you.

HARE: (enters from left) Do you see, Tortoise?

TORTOISE: See what?

HARE: That I'm fast and you're slow.

TORTOISE: I like walking slow.

HARE: I've already read a magazine while laying in the sun, and I played with my kite and I put everything away. But you're still walking to the pond. (chanting and shouting while running around) I'm faster than Tortoise. I'm better than Tortoise. I'm faster than Tortoise. I'm better than Tortoise.

TORTOISE: (stops and faces Hare; a bit angry) You are being rude, Hare. I challenge you to a race.

HARE: What? A race? (laughs) You must be joking because you can barely walk.

TORTOISE: Do you accept my challenge or not?

HARE: I might as well; it'll give me something else to do today. Of course, it will only take me a minute to beat you. Besides, watching you run will be funny! On your mark...

TORTOISE: Wait. We haven't chosen the course yet.

HARE: Let's go around the pond and back to here. Hold on, I have a ribbon to mark our finish line. (exits left; enters with ribbon) Here it is. (stretches it out at center)

TORTOISE: That's good.

HARE: (standing even with Tortoise) On your mark...get set...GO! (exits right)

(Tortoise runs slowly but faster than his/her walk; exits right)

HARE: (enters from right but doesn't go near finish line; looking back) Tortoise is still way back there. I'm going to win this race easily. Tortoise shouldn't have challenged me to a race. (yawns and stretches) I'm a bit tired from all the things I've done today. I think I'll take a quick nap. (lays down and falls asleep)

TORTOISE: (enters from right; heading towards finish line) One foot. The other foot. One foot. The other foot. Almost there. Almost there. (crosses finish line) I did it!

HARE: (jerks awake) What? (sees Tortoise) You can't beat me in a race.

TORTOISE: I just did. I believe you owe me an apology.

HARE: For what?

TORTOISE: For boasting and being rude.

HARE: I'm sorry for boasting and being rude to you. But how could you beat me in a race?

TORTOISE: Because slow and steady wins the race.

HARE: Oh.

TORTOISE: And just the right kind of running shoes.

END

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