



The Great Race

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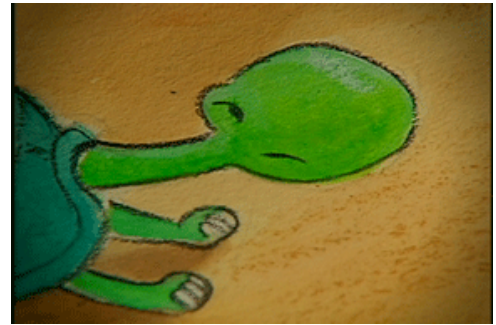
Hey, hi there! Hello! Welcome to the annual turtle festival. It's a fantastic celebration!



Turtles have come from all over the world. Mmmm, this tomato is scrumptious!

See that huge turtle? He's the great Caribbean turtle and he can eat two pounds of lettuce in one minute. And see the one

that's as tiny as a mosquito? That's a turtle from the Amazon and when he gets angry he changes color. All of them have come to have a great time at our fair.



I'll bet you're wondering what we're celebrating? Well, we're celebrating quite a remarkable feat: the day a turtle won a race against a hare.

It all started on a day like today when Pepa the turtle went out for a stroll because it was such a beautiful day outside. While Pepa was out walking, she came across a hare and stopped to greet her in her neighborly way.

"Good day, Mrs. Hare," said Pepa.

But the hare paid her no mind. Pepa, who was very polite, repeated her question.

"Good day, Mrs. Hare," she said again.



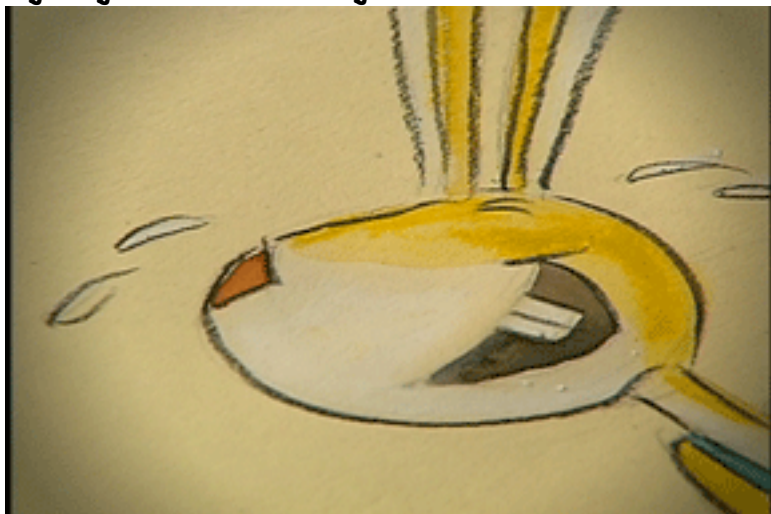
Since the turtle was so insistent, the hare, who was a very conceited braggart, had no choice but to ask:

"What are you doing in the forest, turtle?"

"I'm taking a walk," answered Pepa.

"A walk, a walk!" said the hare, imitating Pepa in a mocking tone. "How can you walk with such short legs? You're not even an inch above the ground and your shell is all scratched from dragging it around so much!"

Pepa wasn't at all happy about being teased by the hare. She didn't like her laughing at her short legs one bit. So without thinking twice, Pepa said:



"Oh, yeah?...Your legs may be longer and stronger than mine, but I'll bet that if we had a race, I'd win!"

When the hare heard that, she burst out laughing until big button-like tears started rolling down her cheeks. She just couldn't believe her ears. The turtle, the pokiest animal she knew, was challenging her, the hare, the speediest animal in the

forest.

"You must be joking, little turtle? How do you expect to be faster than me?"

"I'm not joking. Just tell me where and when you want to race and I'll be there, rest assured."

Pepa was so insistent that the hare finally agreed.

"It's not my fault you're such a fool. That's your problem. Let's make it for this afternoon at six o'clock on the dot. The starting line will be that olive tree over there and we'll race to the pine tree on the other side of the hill. Okay?"

"I'll be there," said Pepa.

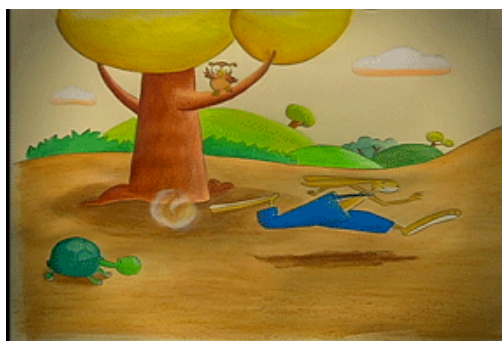
."And what's the prize?" asked the hare.

"The honor of being the fastest animal in the forest."

At six o'clock sharp Pepa arrived at the olive tree where the hare was waiting for her. They asked Mr. Owl to give the start signal.

"(Coughs) Why do they always wake me up to work?" protested the owl. "Let's see,... on your mark, get set,... go!"

And the race began. The hare darted out of



sight so quickly that in just a few seconds the turtle couldn't even see the cloud of dust she was kicking up behind her.

When the hare reached the top of the hill, she stopped for a breather. She had run very fast. She looked behind and couldn't see a trace of the turtle. "I don't know why



I'm bothering to run so fast," she thought, "Turtles can't run."

Encouraged by her big lead, the hare decided to stretch out under the shade of a fig tree and rest a while.

"Ahhhhhh!!!! How nice it feels to be in the cool shade," thought the hare. "I'll rest here for a while and when I see the turtle coming, I'll start running again and I'll win the race easily. That slow turtle doesn't stand a chance against an animal as slim and nimble as me!"

The hare was so comfy that she fell into a deep sleep; she was sleeping so soundly she couldn't even hear the chirping of the birds playing nearby. When the turtle passed by, she was very surprised to see the hare curled up and snoring among the roots of the fig tree. But the turtle didn't stop, not even for a drink of water. Pepa plodded on and on.

After a while, the turtle came to the finish line. All the animals that had gathered there began to cheer loudly with cries of hurray! There was the duck, the hedgehog, the squirrel,...

"Hurray for Pepa!" they all cried out.

Even Mr. Mole peaked out from his underground home to celebrate the victory. And Little Mouse gave Pepa a bouquet of flowers.



To everyone's amazement, Pepa the turtle had beat the arrogant hare who had made the mistake of being overly confident.

Ever since that day, the turtle is one of the most respected animals in the forest. We're famous for our constancy and that's why no hare has ever dared to challenge us



to a race again.

Now that you know the story of the great race and why turtles gather together once a year to celebrate it, we can have some fun. And do you know what we're going to do? We're going to play "Hit the Hare", my favorite game.

THE END

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