An Extract From

The Hare And The Tortoise

By

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Soon the starting gun was heard Said the hare: ‘I’ll stop and eat.’

And a secretary bird So she did, and very soon

Gently murmured: ‘It’s begun. She was singing out of tune,

Ma’am, perhaps you ought to run.’ And she lurched towards the wood,

‘No,’ the hare laughed-‘Oh, no, no! Shouting to the neighborhood:

Teddy Tortoise is so slow. ‘Boring, boring, life is boring,

Let him have a little start. Birdies help me go exploring.

I don’t want to break his heart.’ Let’s go off the beaten track.

In a minute I’ll be back.’

But the tortoise plodded on

Like a small automaton,

Muttering, as he held his pace:

‘I have got to win this race.’

Two hours passed. In satin shorts

Cut for fashion more than sports,

Ms. Hare once again appeared,

Yawning softly as she neared:

‘Two o’clock! My beauty sleep!’

‘Ma’am the race-?’ ‘The race will keep.

Really, it’s already won.’

And she stretched out in the sun.

Two hours passed. The hare awoke

And she stretched and yawned and spoke:

‘Where’s the tortoise?’ ‘Out of sight.’

‘Oh-‘the hare said ‘Really? Right!

Time to go-‘and off she bounded,

Leaving all her friends astounded

At her rocket-fuelled pace.

‘Sure!’ they said,’ she’ll win this race.’

She was out of sight already

On the heels of Tortoise Teddy.

Suddenly the dizzy hare

Saw a field of mushrooms where

Champignons and chanterelles

Mixed with devils-of-the-dell.

(This last mushroom, I suspect,

Has a cerebral effect.

Every time I eat one, I

Feel I’m floating in the sky.)

‘How delicious! What a treat!’

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Meanings:

Secretary bird: a slender long-legged African bird of prey that feeds on snakes, having a crest likened to a quill pen stuck behind the ear.

Murmured: to speak in a low voice

Ought: should

Plodded: to walk slowly with heave steps

Automaton: to move in a mechanical way

Muttering: speak under your breath

Pace : speed

Satin: A silky material that does not breathe well

Bounded: leap or jump

Astounded: shocked or astonished

Dizzy : Giddy

Mushroom: a type of fungus that is eaten

Chaterelles: a type of small, yellow mushroom that grows in forests and is used in cooking

Champignons: any of various edible mushrooms, esp. the meadow mushroom

Cerebral: of or related to the brain

Floating in the sky :

Delicious: highly pleasant to taste

Treat: an item that gives pleasure and is not something you get ususaly

Lurch: walk unsteadily

Exploring: travel to an unknown place

Beaten track: the path taken by many