



Turtle's Flute

A Brazilian folktale

Once upon a time, on the banks of a river, Turtle played her flute. When Turtle played, lions, elephants, butterflies, snakes and monkeys danced to Turtle's music.

One day, a man heard Turtle's music. "Ahh," he thought. "That must be Turtle making music. Turtle would taste very good right now." So he called out: "Turtle! Show me your beautiful flute." Turtle slowly walked to the door and held out her flute. But the moment the man saw Turtle, he grabbed her by the neck and began to run. Turtle tried to cry for help, but she couldn't make a sound. She closed her eyes, holding tightly to her flute for good luck.

When the man reached his hut, he put Turtle into a cage and shut it. Then he turned to his children: "Don't let Turtle out of her cage." And off he went to the fields. The children began to play outside. Turtle sat very still inside her cage, thinking about the father's words. She began to play a sweet tune on her flute, and the children ran to the cage. "Is that you playing, Turtle?" they asked, their eyes wide with wonder. "Yes," Turtle said. She kept on playing, for she could see the children were delighted.





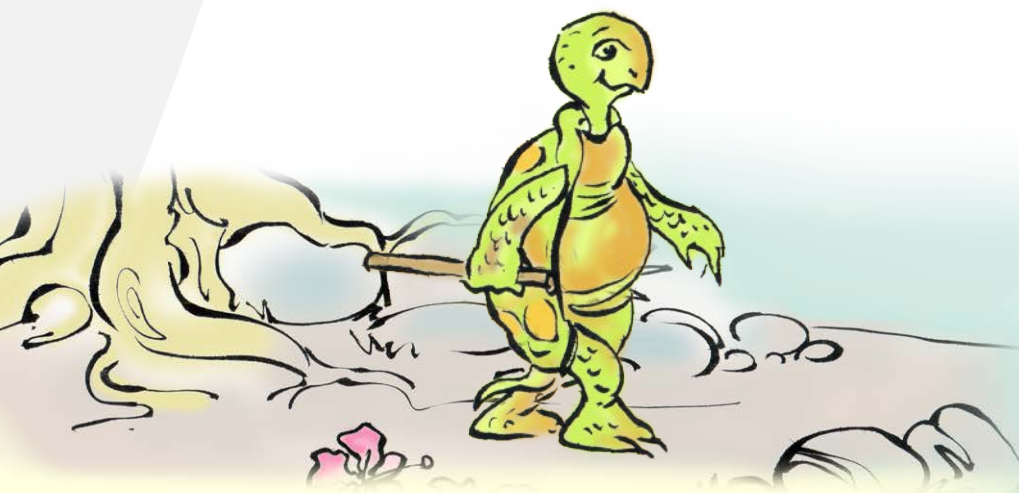
At last she stopped. "I can dance even better than I can play," she said. "Would you like to see?" "Oh, please!" the little boy cried. "I'll show you how to dance and play at the same time," said Turtle. "But you must open the cage. There is no room in here." So the little boy opened the cage and Turtle began to dance and play. The children laughed and clapped their hands, for never had they seen such a wonderful thing.

Then Turtle stopped. "Don't stop!" the children cried. "Oh," Turtle groaned. "My legs are stiff. If I could just walk a little bit to loosen them ..." "Don't go too far," the little girl cautioned. "Come right back." "Never fear," said Turtle. "You wait right here." Turtle crawled off toward the jungle. The moment she was out of sight, she raced all the way back to her house.

Nobody ever found Turtle again. But to this day, if you strain your ear, you can hear the sweet sound of a flute in the forest.

THE END

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