

# The Leopard and the Tortoise



Jane MEADOW

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In the heart of the green jungle, where vines swung like ropes and parrots called from the trees, lived a young leopard named Lenny. His golden fur was covered in bold black rosettes, and his amber eyes sparkled with mischief. Lenny loved to run. He raced the wind, he raced the river, and he raced his own long spotted tail all day long.



One sunny morning, Lenny found a folded leaf pinned to a mango tree. It said, in tiny curly letters: A treasure waits in the jungle! Follow the clues, step by step. Lenny's tail flicked with excitement. 'A treasure!' he shouted. 'I will find it before lunch!' He grabbed his little green satchel and dashed off down the trail.



At the edge of the path sat Tilda the tortoise, wearing her wire-rimmed spectacles. Her domed brown shell shone like a polished stone. 'Good morning, Lenny,' she said slowly. 'Where are you rushing to?' Lenny skidded to a stop. 'There is a treasure in the jungle!' he said. 'Come along, but hurry!' Tilda smiled and began to walk.



Lenny zoomed ahead, kicking up leaves and dust. He ran past a tall fig tree, past a bubbling stream, past a rock shaped like an elephant's ear. His paws barely touched the ground. 'Clues, clues, where are the clues?' he muttered. But he was running so fast that the jungle became a blur of green and gold.



Far behind, Tilda walked with slow, steady steps. She looked left and right. She looked up and down. Near the fig tree, she spotted a leaf folded just like the first one. 'Lenny!' she called. 'Here is the first clue!' Lenny raced back, panting. On the leaf were the words: Where the water sings, look beneath the round stones.



'Beneath the round stones by the stream!' said Lenny. 'I know that stream!' And off he zoomed again, his spotted tail streaming behind him. At the stream he jumped from stone to stone, splashing water everywhere. He looked under one rock, then another, then another. 'Nothing!' he groaned. 'There is nothing here!'



Tilda arrived, slow and calm. She looked at the stream and listened to the water singing over the pebbles. Then she noticed a ring of round stones near the bank, and beneath the biggest one was a small wooden token. 'Here it is,' she said gently. 'You ran right past it, Lenny.' Lenny's ears drooped. 'I was too fast,' he said.



The token had a picture of a honeycomb carved into it. 'The next clue is somewhere with honey,' said Tilda. Lenny tried very hard to walk slowly. He took one step. Then another. But soon his paws itched to run. 'I will just go a little ahead!' he said, and zoomed away. Tilda shook her head and kept walking.



Lenny raced through the jungle, looking for honey. He passed a hollow log, a patch of yellow flowers, and a buzzing bee tree. But he was moving so quickly that he did not see the tiny arrow drawn in the dirt. He stopped at last, out of breath. 'Where is that clue?' he wondered. 'I have looked everywhere!'



Tilda came along the path, stepping carefully. Her dark brown eyes were kind and bright behind her spectacles. She saw the little arrow in the dirt and followed it with her eyes. It pointed to the hollow log. Inside, tucked in a crack, was a second token. 'Slowly, Lenny,' she said. 'The jungle hides its secrets for those who look.'



Lenny sat down beside her. His tail curled around his paws. 'I keep missing things,' he said quietly. 'Maybe being fast is not always best.' Tilda nodded. 'Speed is good for racing,' she said. 'But patience is good for finding.' She showed him the second token. It had a picture of a tall, twisted tree.



'The twisted tree!' said Lenny. 'It grows on the hill.' This time, he did not run. He walked beside Tilda, one slow step at a time. They looked at the leaves. They listened to the birds. Lenny noticed a line of tiny blue mushrooms, and a beetle rolling a seed, and a spider's web shining like silver thread.



At the twisted tree, Tilda spotted a third token hanging from a low branch. It had a picture of three stones stacked on top of each other. 'Three stones,' said Lenny. 'I know a place like that!' They walked together to a quiet clearing where three smooth stones stood in a little pile. And there, under the biggest stone, was a wooden box.



Lenny lifted the lid with trembling paws. Inside were shining river stones, a string of bright seeds, and a little jar of golden honey. 'Treasure!' he whispered. 'Real treasure!' Tilda smiled her slow, warm smile. 'You found it,' she said. 'We found it,' said Lenny. 'Together.' He shared the honey right there in the sunshine.



That evening, Lenny and Tilda sat on a warm rock and watched the sun sink behind the trees. 'I learned something today,' said Lenny. 'Racing is fun, but rushing makes me miss the best parts.' Tilda adjusted her spectacles and nodded. 'Patience is its own kind of treasure,' she said. And Lenny agreed.



From that day on, Lenny still loved to race through the jungle. But sometimes he walked slowly beside Tilda, step by step, looking at everything. He learned that the jungle is full of wonderful surprises for those who take their time. And whenever he found something special, he always shared it with his patient friend. The end.