

RABBIT RACES WITH TURTLE

It is true that Rabbit loved to brag and exaggerate about all the things he could do, but one thing that everyone agreed on was that he was a very fast runner. Turtle loved to boast too however and one day he told the people that he was even faster than Rabbit. Rabbit heard about Turtle's claim and they began to argue so fiercely that everyone agreed the only way to settle the matter was to have a race between the two. It was decided that Turtle and Rabbit would race over four mountain ridges, and the one who came over the fourth ridge first would be the winner. Now, no one had ever seen Turtle move at anything but the slowest of paces, so Rabbit was certain of his ability to win. So sure was he that he told Turtle, "You know you can't run. You could never win-a race with me. I will give you the first ridge. You will have to cross only three, while I cross all four." Turtle agreed to Rabbit's terms, but that night he called together all his turtle relatives. "You must help me put an end to Rabbit's boasting," said Turtle. He explained his plan to his family, and they all agreed to help.

When the day of the race came, all the animals gathered. Some came to the starting point to see the runners off. Others waited on the fourth ridge to declare the winner. Rabbit came to the starting point, but Turtle had gone ahead to the next ridge as Rabbit had arranged. The others could just see his tiny back through the long grass. The signal was given, and the race began!

Rabbit burst from the starting point with his long jumps, trying to win the race before Turtle could even make it down his first ridge. Imagine his surprise when he came to the top of ridge and saw Turtle disappearing over the top of the next mountain! Rabbit ran even faster, and when he came to the top of the old mountain, he looked all around, expecting to see Turtle where in the long grass. He looked up -and there was the sun glinting off Turtle's shell as he crossed the third ridge!

Now Rabbit was truly surprised, and he was beginning to be worried. He gave his longest jumps ever to catch up. When he reached the top of the third ridge, he was so tired and out of breath he could only fall over and cry as he watched Turtle cross the fourth mountain and win the race! The other animals gave the race to Turtle, and everyone wondered how slow Turtle had managed to beat Rabbit. Turtle just smiled and never spoke of it, but it was really very easy.

All Turtle's relatives look just alike, so Turtle had placed near the top of each ridge. Whenever Rabbit had come into sight, a Turtle relative had crawled to the top of the mountain ahead of him and then hidden in the tall grass. Turtle himself climbed the fourth ridge to cross the finish line. So Turtle won the race with a very good trick of his own. But if he had hoped to stop Rabbit's bragging, he was surely disappointed. No one has ever been able to do that.