

The Tortoise and the Snake

By Julia

One bright morning, a call rang throughout a small village. ‘Hey Thoughtful Tortoise!’ called Skip-ahead Snake.

‘Good day,’ replied Thoughtful Tortoise. He was wearing a small grey vest that hung over his miniscule shoulders. Slowly, he trudged towards the great, green snake. Skip-ahead Snake was waving a small leaflet in the air, his eyes gleaming. On it were the large words in bold ‘*Race today, win tomorrow!*’ It sounded perfect. ‘Let’s enter this race!’ Skip-ahead Snake cried.

‘It doesn’t sound like the right thing,’ Thoughtful Tortoise said, ‘we’ll lose and just get mad at each other. I’m sorry, but no.’ Skip-ahead Snake slid around the grey prairies of the town, trying to convince the wise tortoise to compete with him. Unfortunately, the tortoise kept repeating the same word: *no*. ‘Why can’t you think of other people Snake? You’re so selfish!’ cried the tortoise, his ears steaming with rage. This made Skip-ahead Snake very upset and suddenly he trudged off leaving his friend behind. Thoughtful Tortoise’s face fell. What had he done? During the long, gloomy weeks that followed, Skip-ahead Snake entered the race and lost, hanging his head in shame. From then on, the town had an awful atmosphere that lingered in the air. After the argument, Thoughtful Tortoise moved to his parent’s house to avoid Skip-ahead Snake and to have a different neighbour. The two friends had never had an argument like this before, they were the closest people in the village-until now-and even Mrs. Tigywinkle (who was as old as time) had never seen an argument like this.

One fateful day, Skip-ahead Snake decided to use dynamite and blow up Thoughtful Tortoise’s house! Sneakily, he planted them in the overgrowth of Thoughtful Tortoise’s garden. ‘Finally, I can get my revenge on that old tortoise,’ muttered Skip-ahead Snake, dreadful plans unveiling in his devilish mind. Thoughtful Tortoise wrote apology letters day and night to the plotting snake. Sadly, Skip-ahead Snake just threw them away without as much as a glance. He was as ravenous as a bewildered dragon.

Thoughtful Tortoise wept and wept after hearing not so much as a reply from his old friend. Uncertainty, filled the creature’s hearts with dread.

What if the snake never forgave Tortoise? What if Tortoise dies? Skip-ahead Snake shook his scaly head. No. He wouldn't let fear and anxiety get the better of him. He had waited for this day for so long. Skip-ahead Snake shook the nightmares away. But, even then, confusion and horror filled his bones and clouded his heart.

It was time. Skip-ahead Snake hid in the bushes behind Thoughtful Tortoise's house.

BEEP, went the button on the remote.

Tortoise's house crumbled but unexpectedly brought Skip-ahead Snake's house down with it. When the tortoise got home from his groceries and saw the ruins of his home, he gasped.

As quick as a flash he ran towards his old house and pulled out a morsel of the picture of his parents. 'I failed you. I'm so sorry Ma, Pa,' he sobbed in despair, 'Snake? Snake!' The guilty, grievous snake slithered out into view, from his hiding place, behind Tortoise, who's eyes widened and grew bigger and bigger at the wonderful sight of his friend-the snake-alive. 'I am sorry Tortoise. So sorry!' he choked. The forgiving tortoise ran to the snake and embraced him tightly in his arms. The snake's face fell at the horror of his home. 'No *I'm* sorry,' whispered the tortoise.

After knowing each other for a long time, Tortoise knew the whole story and why it had occurred. The sorry snake begged for mercy but the tortoise just laughed and smiled, 'Don't worry!'

For a few awkward moments the whole village stared at the two friends, standing aimlessly. After the reunion the snake and tortoise announced that they would rebuild the houses as one! With the help of the whole village, the houses were rebuilt in less than a week and Skip-ahead Snake now knew to think before he skipped ahead.

