

The Overly Cautious Tortoise

Nigel was a tortoise who was very slow and small
In fact it took him forever to do anything at all.

He was so overly cautious that he never left his home.
He was scared of almost everything when he was left on his own.

In fairness to Nigel though it wasn't all his fault;
He had an older brother from whom he was taught,

That outside of their house everything was really scary.
His tales of many fearsome beasts had made Nigel wary.

His brother was called Norman and he was brave and bold.
He often went out to find as much food as he could hold.

And when he returned home, he would always remark;
"Oh let me tell you of the creatures I've met, out there in the dark.

The huge spotted leopard with sharp teeth and claws
And the gigantic great Buffalo crashing their horns."

He would speak as well about the earth shaking roar
Of an elephant demanding food, who always wanted more.

So when Norman went off on his latest food quest,
A terrified Nigel, sat alone in his nest.

He waited and waited for his brother to come back,
He only ever travelled for one day on the track.

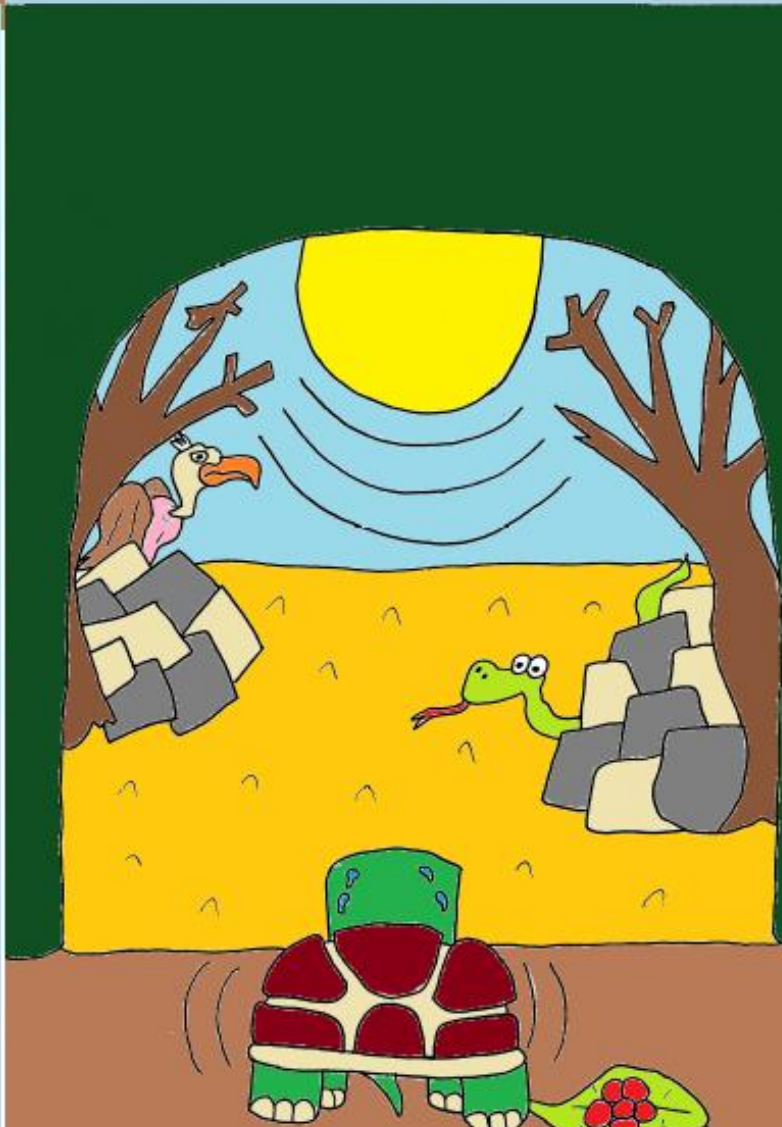
But two days and three days went by and then four,
Nigel sat waiting at home by the door.

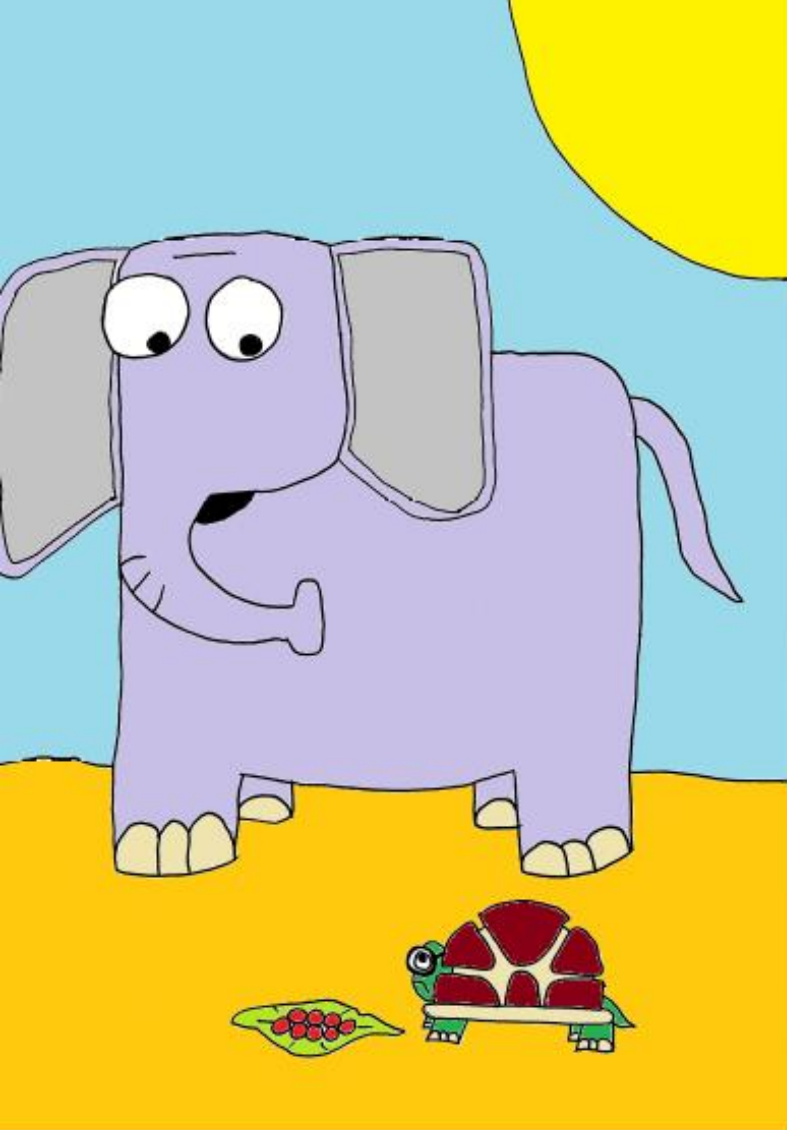
By the fifth day Nigel cried, all scared and befuddled,
"Norman is brave and smart, but he could be in trouble."

So he nervously peeped out of the den,
And thought I must go out and find him.

He got himself ready and put berries on a leaf,
Just in case Norman needed something nice to eat.

Then cautiously set off along the barren desert track,
Hoping and praying he'd bring his lost brother back.





He walked through the sand; it was dry and it was hot,
Then heard a strange sound and into his shell he shot.

Loud earth shaking footsteps were approaching him fast.
He closed his eyes hoping it would soon pass.

But the creature stopped just where Nigel lay
And said, "Hello I'm an elephant, please don't hide away."

Nigel squeaked, "I'm a tortoise and I'm definitely not food.
I don't suppose you've seen my brother have you?"

The elephant smiled and said, "I would never eat you,
I only eat leaves, roots and sometimes fruit too."

Nigel nervously poked out his head and quietly said,
"In that case would you like to try some of these berries instead?"

The elephant gratefully beamed, "Thanks for sharing your food,
And I really do hope you find your brother soon."

And with that Nigel's new huge friend lumbered slowly away
With his big heavy body all wrinkled, blue and grey.

Nigel carried on through the sand, it was dry and hot,
Then he heard a strange sound and into his shell he shot.

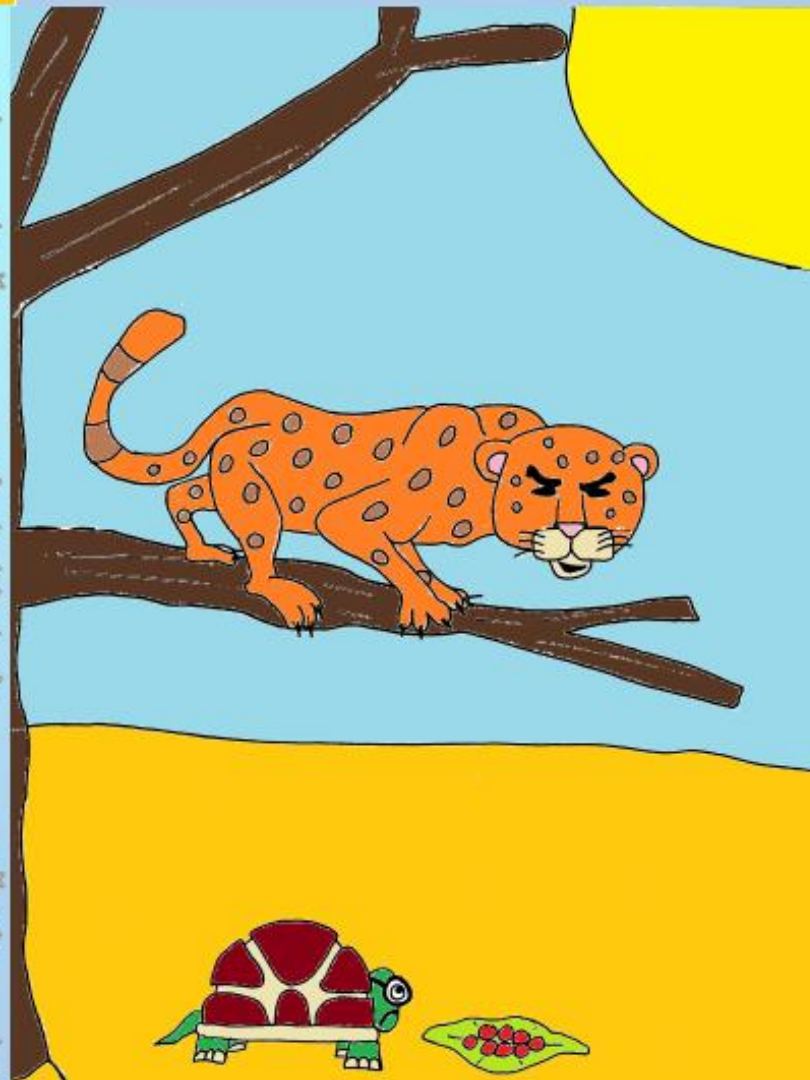
Some gentle, soft footsteps were approaching him fast,
He closed his eyes hoping it would soon pass.

But the creature stopped just where Nigel lay
And said, "Hello I'm a leopard, please don't hide away."

Nigel squeaked, "I'm a tortoise and I don't want to be food,
For a creature as big and as scary as you."

The leopard thought and spoke with a grin "I wouldn't eat you,
I only eat leaves, roots and sometimes fruit too."

Nigel, all too trusting, poked out his head and said,
"In that case would you like to try some of these berries instead?"





The leopard growled, "Thanks for sharing your food,
But to tell you the truth I'd rather eat... YOU!!!"

Nigel panicked and screamed and tried hard to run,
But the leopard was fast and thought the chase was fun.

He teased the small tortoise, who was helpless and alone,
And who was now wishing he'd stayed in his dark, safe home.

The leopard grabbed Nigel tight in his jaws,
Then rushing through the trees came an ear splitting roar.

The elephant came charging and when he got near,
The leopard dropped Nigel and fled fast in fear.

Nigel was shaken and taken by fright
And the elephant told him, "Come now small friend it's alright.

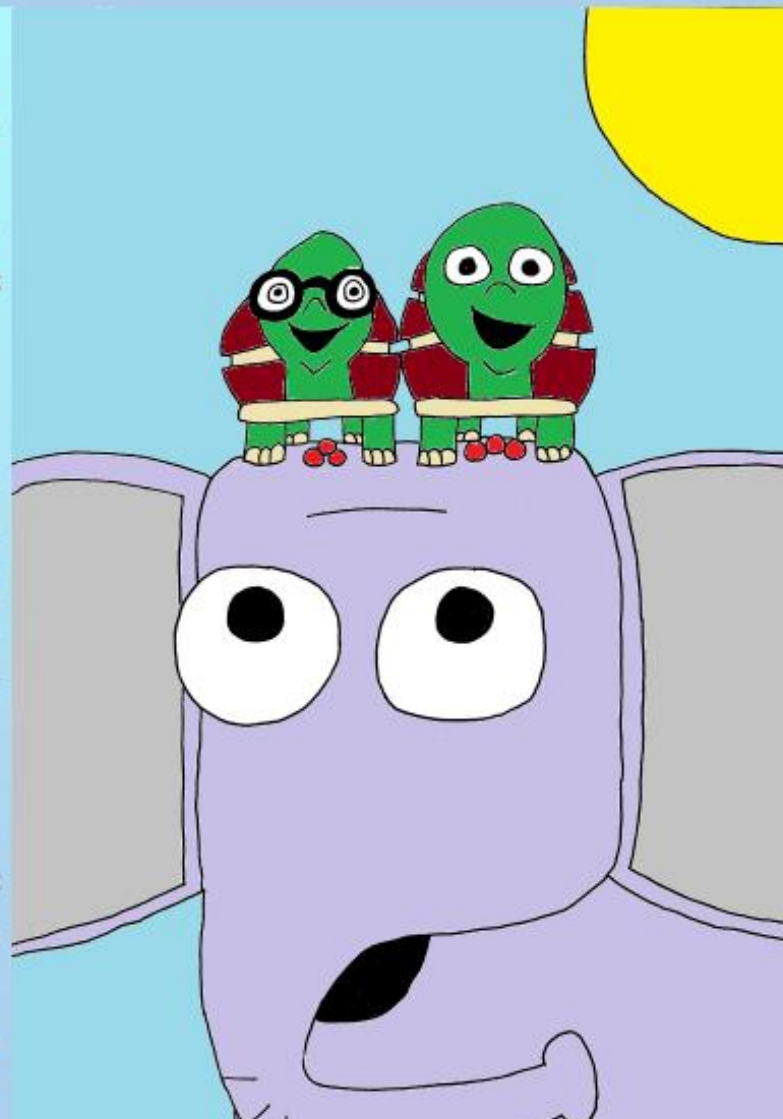
You're safe now, please let me take you home."
"But what about my brother Norman?" Nigel groaned.

Suddenly a small speck appeared on the elephants head,
"Don't worry, I'm safe," the little speck said.

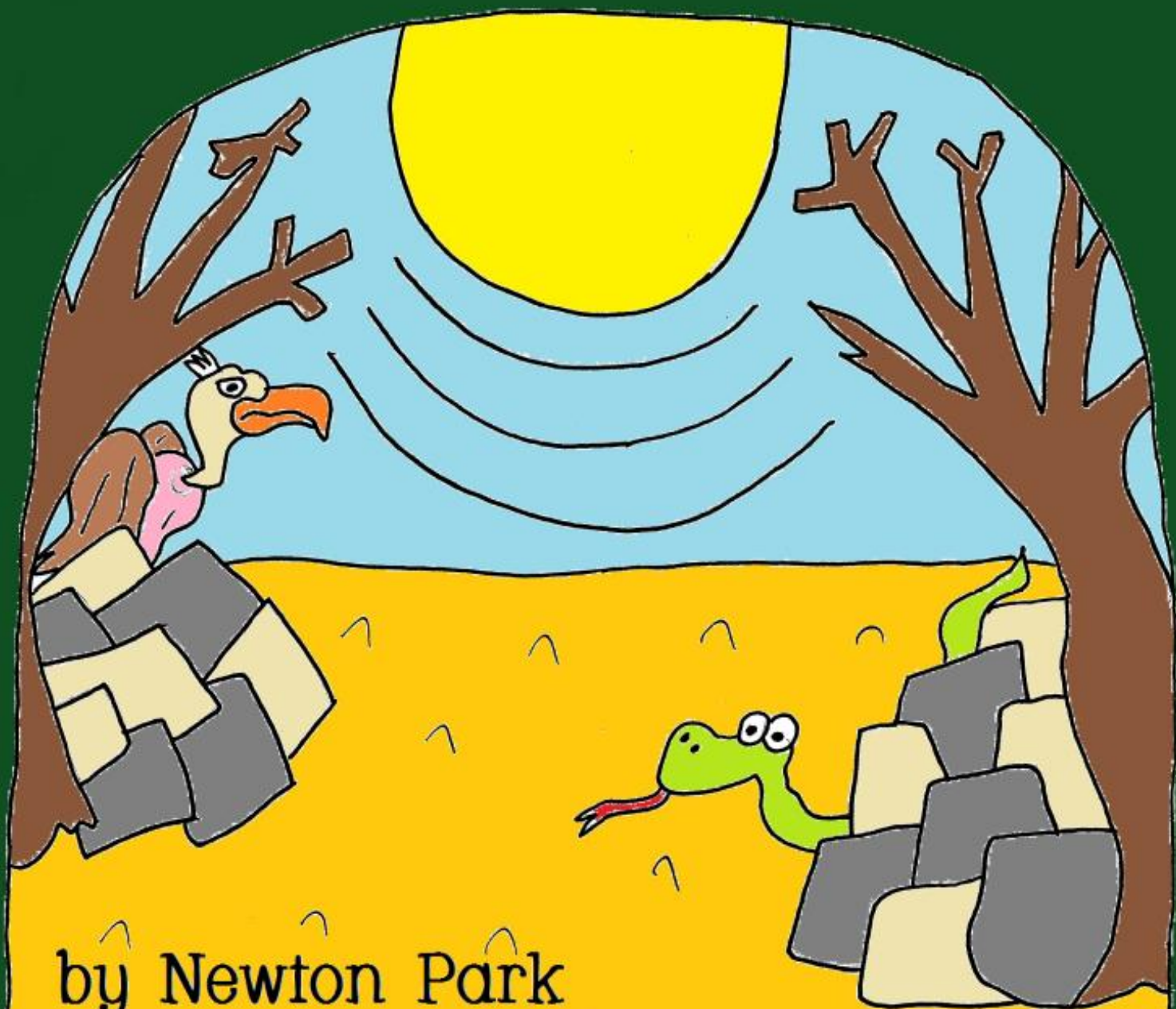
"I found your brother," the elephant boomed,
"He was lost and afraid and I thought he was you."

The elephant placed Nigel on his head next to his brother,
And whispered, "Good friends always look out for each other."

Then the elephant took them both safely back to their den,
And they all ate berries and were the best of friends.



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by Newton Park

