



Jill's Fair Race



Jill loved to hop, and she loved to race even more. One sunny morning, she hopped across the meadow to find her friends. Tom the turtle sat by a flat rock that he used as a table. He had a bottle of water on it.



Little Jim the mouse sat beside him, eating a piece of apple. "Come and race me to the old oak tree!" said Jill. Tom shook his head. "No, thank you," he said in his gentle voice. "You are much too fast. You win every time, and that is no fun for us."



Jim nodded. "By the time I take ten steps, you are done," he said. Jill sat down in the grass. She did not want to race by herself. She did not want her friends to feel bad, either. It was a puzzle.



How could a race be fair for a slow turtle, a tiny mouse, and someone as fast as her? She kicked a pebble and thought hard. Then she jumped up. "I have a simple plan!" she said. "We will not all start at the same place. Jim, you start in the middle of the meadow."



Tom, you start by the purple thistle, near the tree. I will start way back at the puddle. I will have to hop twice as far!" Tom and Jim looked at each other. "That might work," said Tom slowly. So Tom plodded over to the purple thistle.



Jim ran to the middle of the meadow. Jill hopped all the way back to the puddle and stood at the edge, with mud up to her ankles. "Ready, set, go!" yelled Jill. She pushed off, but her feet slipped in the mud and she fell with a splash.



She jumped up and hopped as fast as she could. Tom took one slow step after another. Jim's little legs were a blur. Jill passed the middle of the meadow, but Jim was still ahead of her, and Tom was almost at the tree.



All three of them touched the oak tree at the very same moment. Nobody could tell who had won. Tom began to giggle, then Jim, and then Jill. Soon they were rolling in the grass, laughing. "Can we go again?" asked Jim. Jill grinned and hopped back to the puddle.