

# THE RACE THE TORTOISE LOST!

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After being soaked through and through from the dewdrops dripping off the different foliage's of the drenched jungle we felt as if we were in a Brazilian rainforest during an afternoon shower instead of the massive jungles of Africa. Combining the sweet and stale smells of the dampened jungle with the alluring aromas of the fresh flowers, which grew wild in the open plains, caused our thoughts to wander to the feelings we were on a great Safari hunt in search of lions, tigers, and all the dangerous animals that God had placed in the mighty jungles of Africa. We felt as if we were the Swiss Family Robinsons, Robin Crusoe, and Robin Hood with all his merry men (or in my sisters cases the merry women) all rolled into one. Adventurous dreams of this sort weren't any stretch of the imagination for children who were ten, eight, and seven plus a two year old to boot!

The vast and endless jungle of our young imaginative life was a ten-acre thicket located behind the house we were renting in rural Mississippi at the time, something new to us moving from the suburbs of a growing town, outside the capital city of the state of Alabama with nothing to play in but a fenced in backyard. The wild flower aromas from the wide open plains were the fresh daisies and dandelion our mother had planted at the edge of the over-grown thicket trying to improve the looks of the pasture like yard. Even though threatened daily that we would be skinned alive if we didn't stay out of the woods, we couldn't help ourselves because the mysteries of this quaint but subtle jungle drew us in like a tick to the loose skin of a red bone bloodhound!

This particular warm and wet morning while on Safari in the trickling forest we hit the jackpot or so we thought at the time. The jackpot was to be our newest pet to be displayed in the stagnate water of the round concrete and bricked goldfish pond in the yard beside the side of the house. Having no idea of what we were doing or what we had at the time, me and my two older sisters started on an adventure that surely would have even made Steve Erwin the Crocodile Hunter proud. The most risky escaped we were endeavoring on was the capture and confinement of a giant loggerhead snapping turtle with a shell measuring at least eighteen inches from head tail. To add to the difficult chore of transporting our unwilling prize the

twenty feet across the yard from the thicket of the woods to its new home we had to do it without discovery by our dear loving mother because if she apprehended us she would surely take no prisoners!

Thinking quickly how to avoid capture I sent my next to the youngest seven year old sister inside to acquire the services of our two year old baby sister to man the lookout post so we could begin our plan to conquer our mighty foe the Tortoise! After a lot of bribing, threatening, and promising our crafty toddler lookout, we negotiated a deal with the young shyster and began our endeavor of wills against our worthy adversary the dangerous and vicious turtle.

My eight year old (the oldest) sister was frightened of our enemy because of the ridges and points on its shell and head not to mention the colossal claws on its feet. The only thing she would agree to do to help us in our quest of entrapment was stand a half piece of paneling board in front of the menacing creature to hinder its escape back into the wooded thicket and from the clutches of me and my seven year old sister's aggressive and relentless attack. Having thought out our ill-devised plans as well as kids of that age could we began our careful assault using a push me pull me effect with a garden hoe and rack from the back porch, which our mother used to prune her flower beds. I would push our heavy ugly new pet with the hoe towards the cement pond until I couldn't reach our quarry anymore without endangering my bare feet and toes. Then my sister would use the teeth of the garden rake to grab the far side of our foes shell and pull with all her might while running backwards towards the concrete cell till the determined turtle would wiggle free of the garden rakes grasp. Upon his escape, he always gave chase to one of us for a short distance which even though a bit frightening would start a barrage of laughter and giggling amongst us. Before I realized it, our toddler sentry had abandoned her post and joined us in our festivities of fleeing and giggling from our slow adversary, which at the time was alright, with the rest of us because we were having a grand and wonderful time. Then absolute horror shuddered through the very souls of all of us including our inattentive preschool guard.

Hearing the creaking and the slamming of the spring loaded rickety screen door, we reacted in a timely manner to save our threatened hides. Quickly thinking my oldest sister placed the paneling board between the turtle (who to all of our surprise didn't make a run for it) and our mother so she would think we were just playing and having a good time. It was not as if we were disobeying her by design. We were hoping and trying to have a new friend and pet in this new town. After rendering a quick survey of our playground, slash battlefield, she barked the order for us to continue as she

abruptly did an about face marching back to the rear of the house. Upon hearing the screen door slam once more, we continued to execute our relentless conquest of turtle entrapment for about another hour, comprising the total time of turtle transport to the cement pond around two hours.

Thinking we had pulled off the perfect caper while eating our peanut butter and jelly sandwiches at lunch, our Benedict Arnold toddler lookout ratted us out ruining our well-planned Safari adventure! After our traitor baby sister had turned on us, we waited for our mother's loving but firm reprisal, hoping for the best but expecting the worse. Sitting there quaking from fear we awaited, for her verdict when she exposed her hand saying, "Wait until your father gets home!"

Even though our dread and fear was sincere, it in no way diminished our preliminary joy of victory at least until our father arrived home that day.

Upon our father and uncles arrival home from work, our beloved mom met them at the doorway with the tale of our adventurous day, which in turn caused them to burst into a fit of laughter. Telling my uncle to retrieve the gun from the work truck and for our mom to get them a cold drink our dear ole dad circled the house to the turtle's prison to carry out our prisoner's execution with me begging and pleading all the way to spare the convicts meager existence. Laughing at me for crying (I was only ten) they popped the tops on their drinks taking a big swig. Then my six foot three uncle set down his drink taking aim at the huge head of the snapping turtle with the twelve-gauge shotgun, relieving the poor turtle from the torture it had been enduring since we had shoved it into its prison cell.

Unfortunately, for our new pet my sisters and I knew very little about taking care of turtles. First off, we thought it was an herbivore instead of a carnivore, so we threw leaves, branches, and clumps of grass for it to eat. My sisters and I were not overly smart kids for sure because our second wrong assumption would have also resulted in the prisoner's death, but in a less humane way. We thought turtles were like fish not understanding that they were air-breathing creatures like us and they needed a log or island so they could rest. The cell we had trapped him in had an overflow pipe that kept the water level of the stagnant water at least eight inches down from

the ground level, too tall for him to climb, thus leaving the turtle only one of two choices, sink or swim.

Still laughing at my expense my dad and uncle discarded the poor prisoner's remains into a shallow grave, which our mixed bred dogs Jigs and Cochise dug up that night. They didn't realize what upset me so much wasn't that I liked the turtle the same way I loved the dogs or even the fact they had killed an animal not to be used for food or clothing. I understood some critters needed killing, because once a month dad and I had to kill the one-foot file tail rats that snuck into the screened in back porch to keep them from eating the dry dog food and possibly giving us diseases.

I cried that day because of all the work and effort my sisters and I had involved in the capture of the reptilian beast, was instantly undone by the loud report of the shotgun. The turtle was our dangerous dinosaur we were going to put on display like the mighty King Kong, which would have surely made us world renown and famous!

Drifting back thru the fabric of time to my youth so many years ago to the day my sisters and I battled with a ferocious and highly capable foe. We were on that day glorified big game Safari hunters who had succeeded in the capture of one of Gods most stubborn and dangerous creatures to ever crawl across His most glorious earth. At that time, we were both proud and humbled by our great accomplishment and the feeling of pride we had.

The day of our first and magnificent achievement!  
To voice it in a classical way we;  
**THE HARES OUT RAN THE TORTOISE**  
The day my sisters and I became  
King and Queens of the mighty jungle!

# CRADLE

This place of shelter,  
This bed of toys,  
This sign of safety,  
This home of joys!

The beginning of life,  
The school of learning,  
The building of basics,  
The start of yearning!

What is this place?  
What is its function?  
What is its purpose?  
But a place of junction!

He made her complete,  
He knew all her secrets,  
She made him compete,  
For all of her affection!

He's went on before,  
To start their new life,  
She soon followed him,  
To again be his wife,  
Together in heaven,  
In a new cradle of life!

# PURTY TOES

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“Girl that tickles,” I screeched loudly jerking way smiling from ear to ear as the three old giggled but determinedly continued in the task she had talked me into letting her do. Being a man, I have always been a sucker for younger women especially when they are three and call me daddy Roy, not to mention I have always allowed women of all ages to torture me, mashing bumps, plucking unwanted hairs, et cetera. The little Sierra had been a part of my life for over a year and a half and though talking plainly at this age she had been my very own personal and private therapist since the first day that I strained to understand her at the age of eighteen months. God blessed me with her to help heal my broken heart and soul, by placing her into my life to replace my only daughter who died at the age of eighteen in a car accident the year previous. She was both a blessing and a curse at times, a sincere blessing because of her unconcealed love for me and the joy she brought me, a curse because watching her play and live her little life I sometimes saw my baby girl when she was that age, which in turn made me cry. I am thankful for the time allowed for me to know her though now her I miss too!

Being a divorced man of many years is not an easy thing because of children. Allow me to explain, when you progress in a relationship with a new and exciting woman she brings you into her none dating life and you meet her children. If all goes well an attachment develops to her kids but after the newness of the relationship fades away you often do not make it, thus the children lose another step daddy. This breaking children’s hearts deeply troubles me so after a breakup I will not date for years. I worry so about the children and the long-term effects, because all they ever know is men abandoning them, which can lead to mistrust of men. Their mothers are grown up girls and they can handle the breakup with nothing more than a shrug, (slight pun), but the children still believe in fairy tells and happily ever after so I become gun shy and want to never be the killer of young dreams ever again. So Sierra now six, her nine year old brother Donald, and I have become estranged after their mothers and mine breakup a year and a half ago, though every time they see me they still climb me like a tree

covering me with hugs, kisses, and love! Enough of the self-pity and now back to the story!

Sierra was turning into a full-fledged little girl at the age of three with the obvious help of her beautician mother and like all young girls; she of course wanted to be like her mother, so thence the night of the purty toes! As I said earlier, I was wrapped, unlike the music from the new generation, but the wrapped all decent men of the world experience after becoming wrapped around the little finger of a precious little girl who loved you. Not for your looks, your money, or prestige but rather she loved you because you were plain ole you. Oops, there I again down another rabbit hole!

The thing that was tickling so badly was her applying nail polish, and to prove my ignorance, I agreed to a multi-color theme. Between her petite little fingers and the bristles from the many nail polish brushes, I was being tortured on top of her scolding, "To stay still."

"I am trying baby girl Sierra," I said.

"Try harder daddy Roy," she exclaimed with authority.

"Only for you girl," I said trying hard to concentrate on my breathing.

"You better," she said attacking the next toe.

"I will," I promised while admiring her artwork and giggling as she tried hard to paint between the lines so to speak, which is all but impossible for a three year old. To add to the spectacle of the different colored paints on all my toe nails and little piggy's was the cotton balls she had pinched between all my digits, which in its own right was quite ticklish.

Suffering through the ticklish torture of that night, I was glad it was the dead of winter so no one would see my feet, giving the nail polish time to dissolve before flip-flop time. Thinking my secret was safe because winter would conceal her masterpiece, (which Sierra commented upon daily by saying, "They are so purty"), then my worst fears were exposed because I was continuously narced out. Donald her six year old brother at the time was the first to rat me out at church one night saying, "Daddy Roy has girly toes!"

Since that first night at the church Sierra had joined her brother in the festivities of exposing my secret as they both informed the public, at malls, restaurants, stores, in front of the families, etc. but all things must come to an end and the nail paint wore off. I now have regrets that I did not let her reapply the nail color once again, if I had only known that soon after our friendship would come to an end remembering the escapades of that joyful and ticklish night I now would welcome the high adventure known as the PURTY TOES!

# CURTAIN

No one was welcome, no one was allowed in,  
No one could see her, no one she called friend,  
She was always so distant, she was so all alone,  
She was always in hiding, never felt quite at home.

He would always be patient, hung in from the start,  
He knows the place hidden, that harbors her heart,  
Yet cold; he knew in her was a great love for certain,  
A love when blossomed would pull back her curtain!



## HALE FIRE

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“Anita! Where are you,” Andy answered gazing frantically for his wife amongst the frightened throng of entwined bodies dodging back and forth from the massive pieces of falling rubble.

“Anita, can you hear me?”

“Andy I am over here! I’m over hear,” Anita yelled loud as she could, jumping up and down while waving her arms trying to catch her husband’s attention.

“Don’t move baby I’m coming to you,” he hollered dodging more debris pummeling from the upper levels of their great city.

“I am honey,” she screamed keeping an eye on the large chunks of wreckage dropping to the foundations of their mighty city where they abode was located.

“Anita what are you doing standing there, you are going to be killed,” Arlene screamed as her and her husband Alan,( Andy and hers friends), grabbed Anita by her arms dragging her towards the entrance way which led to the upper levels.

“Stop it! I said STOP it.” Anita screamed yanking loose from her best friends grasp.

“Hold on Alan I’m here,” Andy said.

“I am sorry Anita but we thought you were frozen in fear and we could not leave you behind,” Alan said.

“Okay line up behind me and we will try to work our way to the upper levels,” Andy said taking charge of the situation. “ Do not, I repeat do not, let any of the foul smelling liquid get on you because whatever it is, it will burn your skin like an acid!”

“Have either of you seen Luke or Henry,” Arlene screamed above the noise of the commotion of the panicked and freaked out Bottom Dwellers.

“I haven’t,” Anita, said studying the upper levels for the strange liquid and falling debris.

“I haven’t seen your brothers either,” Andy, said leading his wife and best friends around another group of Bottom Dwellers frozen stiff from fear.

Bottom Dwellers... that was the name embellished upon all of them who lived below the surface levels of their mighty city. Thinking to himself as he halfway drug his betroth through the doorway of the passage way which led to the upper levels of their immaculate city. He knew every one of his small group were worried about someone that lived in the city. Brothers, sisters, moms, dads, friends, and family. He was worried too about his sister Amy and new brother-in-law Arty who lived two levels down from the surface level. While running to Anita, previously he had to steady keep his eyes on the surface levels to avoid rubble from landing on him and during this time of self-preservation, he scanned the destruction of the city. Much to his dismay, he saw the section of the city his sister lived in vastly destroyed. He wished her and her husband luck because that was the only thing he could do under the circumstances and hope none of the bodies which had plummeted from the high rise apartments were theirs.

"Watch out Andy," Anita screamed breaking him free from his deep and depressing thoughts as she jerked against his arm making him dart to the right. Looking down for a brief moment as he sidestepped, he caught glimpse of a toddler who couldn't have been older than two years old.

"I didn't see you down there little fellow," he said picking him up so the panicked crowd wouldn't trample over him.

"Where's my mommy? Mister, have you seen my mommy," the young one asked.

"I haven't seen your mommy but we will look for her on the way to the top of the city. What's your name little fellow," Anita asked as she surveyed the little boy to make sure he didn't have any injuries.

"My name is Arnold."

"Well Arnold I'm sure your mommy is going to the surface level just like us so we will keep an eye out for her," Andy said fearing some disaster had done took her but there was a chance his mother had lost him in the maddening throngs of Bottom Dwellers.

"We are fixing to be exposed to the central sanctuary of the city," he said. "Anybody hurt?"

"I'm fine if you don't count this breather," Alan said wheezing.

"I'm with him on the breather part baby."

"Why are they attacking us and who are they?"

"Your guess is good as mine Arlene but there is one thing for certain they are kicking our buns right now. I am sure Queen Ann has our military leaders preparing a counter attack against whatever or whoever our foes are but it's safe to assume all the Bottom Dwellers are on their own," Alan surmised and deducted.

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