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opening extract from

Hare and the Tortoise

written by

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illustrated by

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For Sydney, Jaya, Shidu and Paul — R. B.
For Pia and Isabel — G. P.

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The Hare and the TORTOISE

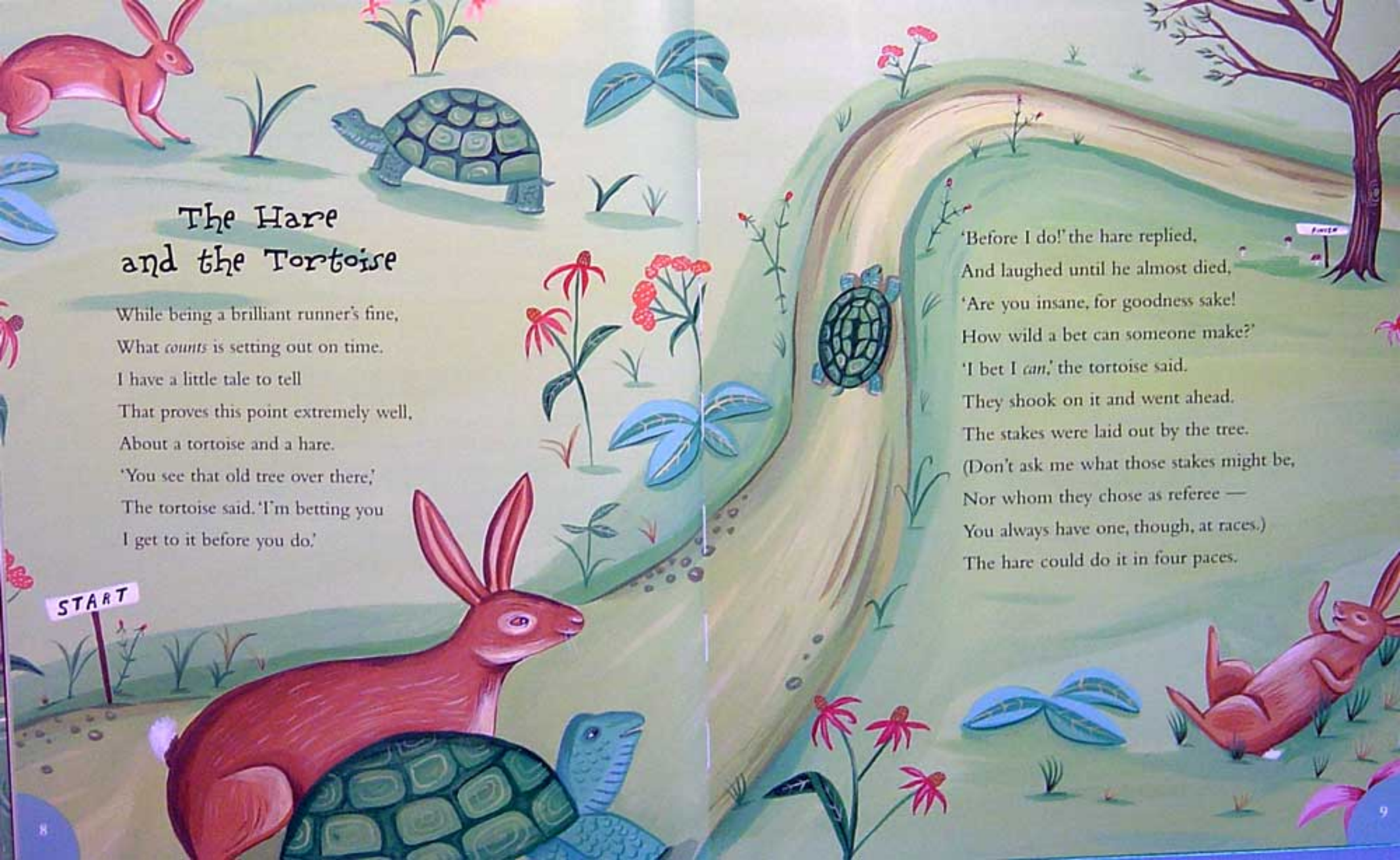
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Translated by Ranjit Bolt *Illustrated by* Giselle Potter

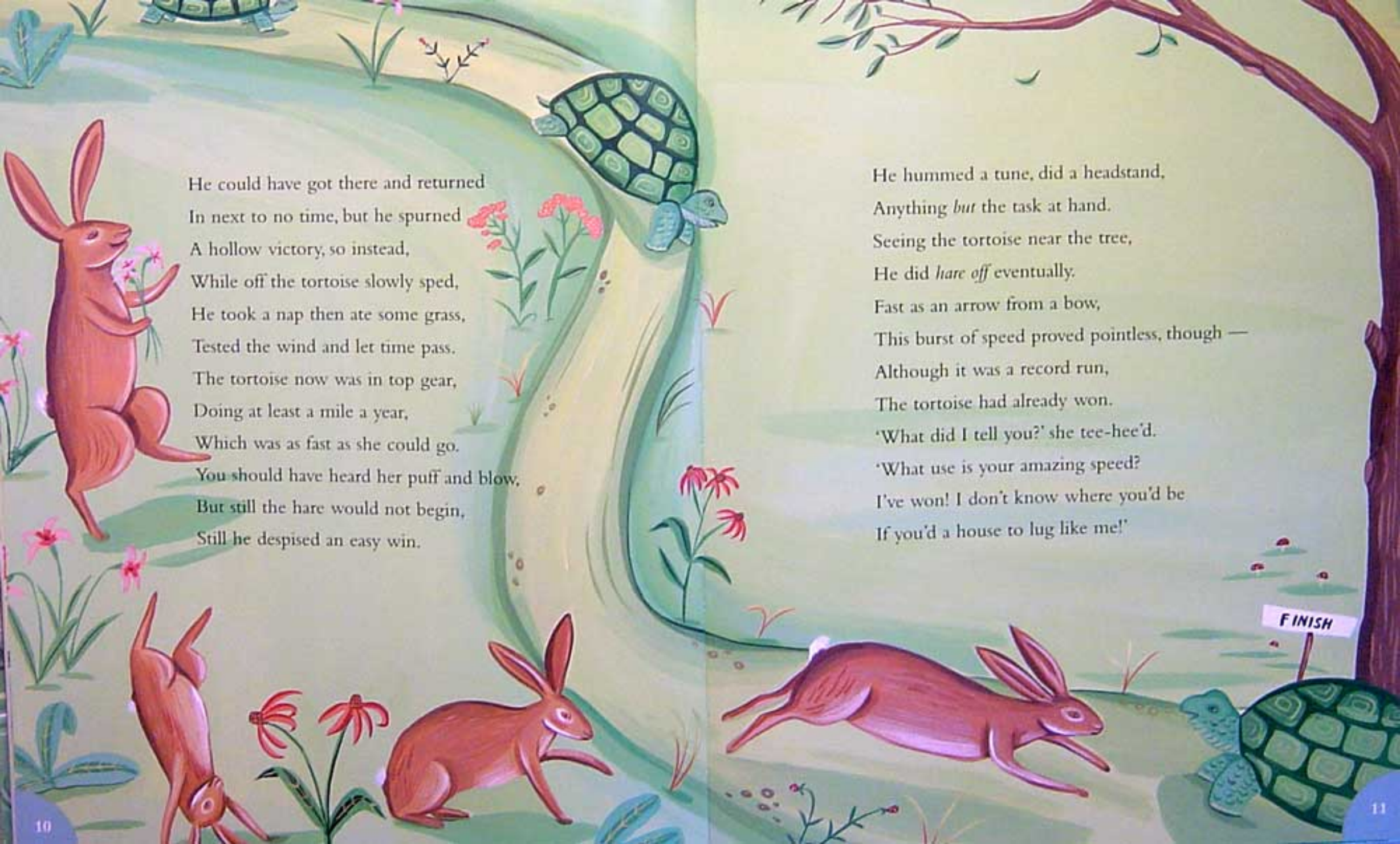
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The Hare and the Tortoise

While being a brilliant runner's fine,
What *counts* is setting out on time.
I have a little tale to tell
That proves this point extremely well,
About a tortoise and a hare.
'You see that old tree over there,'
The tortoise said. 'I'm betting you
I get to it before you do.'

'Before I do!' the hare replied,
And laughed until he almost died,
'Are you insane, for goodness sake!
How wild a bet can someone make?'
'I bet I *can*,' the tortoise said.
They shook on it and went ahead.
The stakes were laid out by the tree.
(Don't ask me what those stakes might be,
Nor whom they chose as referee —
You always have one, though, at races.)
The hare could do it in four paces.



He could have got there and returned
In next to no time, but he spurned
A hollow victory, so instead,
While off the tortoise slowly sped,
He took a nap then ate some grass,
Tested the wind and let time pass.
The tortoise now was in top gear,
Doing at least a mile a year,
Which was as fast as she could go.
You should have heard her puff and blow.
But still the hare would not begin,
Still he despised an easy win.

He hummed a tune, did a headstand,
Anything *but* the task at hand.
Seeing the tortoise near the tree,
He did *hare off* eventually.
Fast as an arrow from a bow,
This burst of speed proved pointless, though —
Although it was a record run,
The tortoise had already won.
'What did I tell you?' she tee-hee'd.
'What use is your amazing speed?
I've won! I don't know where you'd be
If you'd a house to lug like me!'