

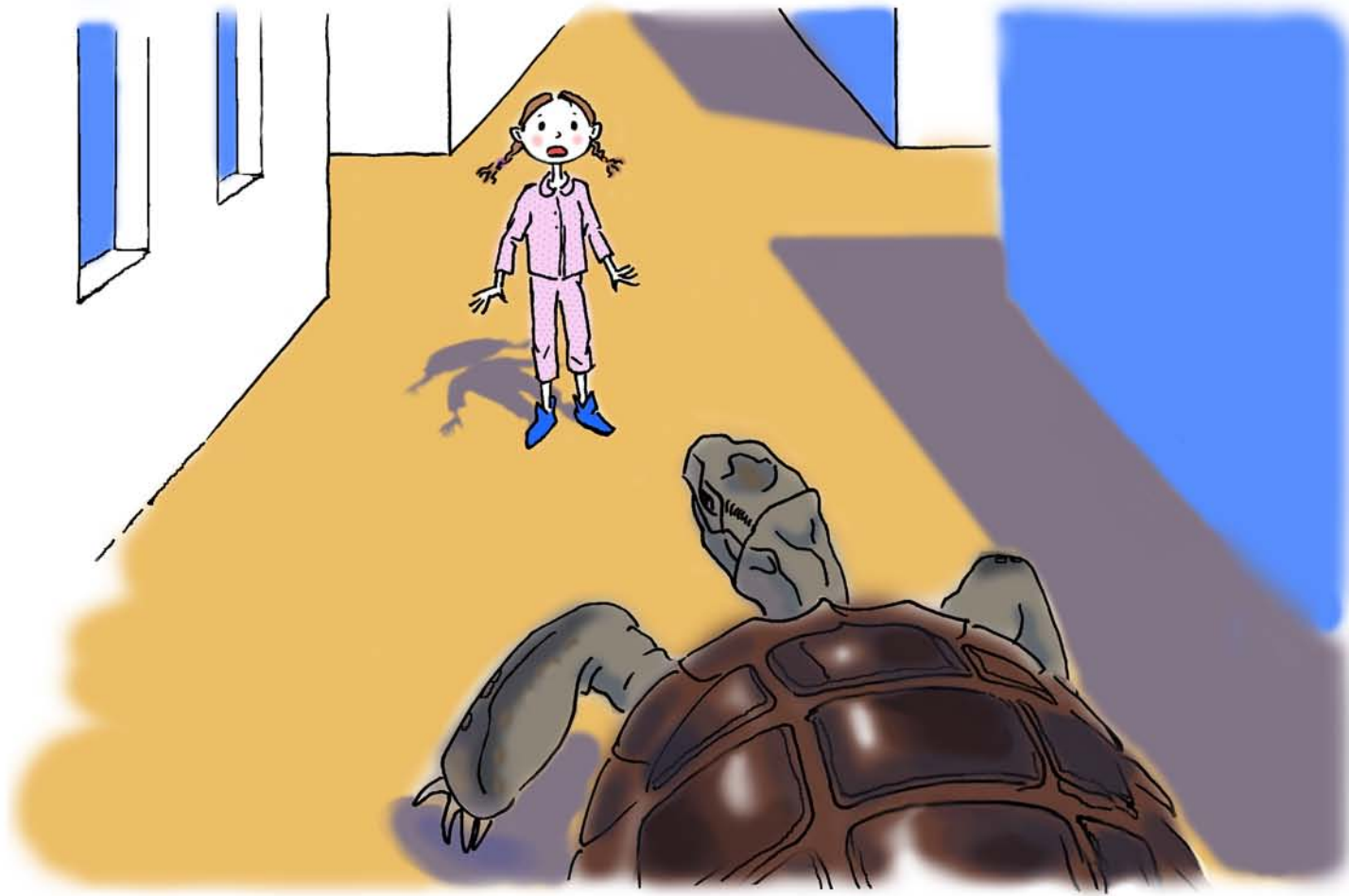


# The Tortoise

Story and illustrations by **Karina Kudymova**



One day Sonia was strolling down a strange street in a strange town... of course it was just one of Sonia's dreams. Sonia was completely alone, with only her shadow for company. The streets were empty! The sun was bright and she could almost hear birds chirping.



Sonia was in a wonderful mood! Until suddenly, she heard a loud thumping noise. When she spun around, Sonia saw an enormous dark tortoise! The tortoise was so large that Sonia could easily ride on top of it! Sonia was so frightened that she quickly sprinted around the corner. While she ran Sonia glanced carefully behind her and was astonished to see that the tortoise was slowly following her! Sonia was terrified!



This caused her run faster and faster until her heart was beating like a drum. Sonia turned the corner once more. This street was empty like the others. And all the doors where locked! Not a place to hide anywhere!

Sonia rushed forward again. When she reached another corner she spun around and saw that the mysterious tortoise was still on her track! It was still quite far away because tortoises move very slowly. (Not that this would calm Sonia down in the least!) She yelled, “HELP!”, and ran as fast as she could. She tried turning left and right, in order to confuse the tortoise.



Eventually she got so tired she had to slow down. Still, there wasn't a soul in sight, tears were rushing down Sonia's cheeks, and she was panting from exhaustion! Suddenly, after Sonia turned once again into an alley, she saw the black tortoise in front of her! It was moving forward not realizing that there was someone behind it! "That's weird?", she thought to herself, "Why is it that I'm following the tortoise, when I had just been running away from it?"





Sonia quietly followed the strange tortoise. The air smelled very sweet, and Sonia was quite hungry! She moved a bit closer to the tortoise. Its black shell glistened in the sunlight, suspiciously resembling a chocolate bar. “Hmmm...”, thought Sonia. Since Sonia is very curious, she gently touched the tortoise’s shell. And to Sonia’s surprise, there appeared a shiny drop of chocolate on Sonia’s finger! Sonia licked her finger and reached for another scoop. Soon she was grabbing the chocolate with both hands! Eventually, the tortoise had noticed. It turned around, and Sonia innocently glanced up, all covered with chocolate. She looked rather funny and the tortoise suppressed a chuckle.



“Sonia! You can’t even imagine how long I have been following you around hoping that you could help me by eating all that heavy chocolate off my back!”, the tortoise shook her head. To which a delighted Sonia replied, “You have found yourself the perfect little girl for THAT job! I will happily help you with your problem!” Naturally, Sonia and the tortoise became friends right that very minute! And together they talked (and ate chocolate) until Sonia woke up.