

Tommy the turtle poked out his wrinkled head
On his face, neck and tail he had yellow threads
He looked around the bottom of Jim Smith Lake
His spectacled eyes were just barely awake

Tommy had slept all night on a rock down deep
In the mud and had enjoyed a restful sleep
Dreaming of chasing tasty crustaceans
Like crayfish and shrimp in the big blue ocean

He saw a school of colorful rainbow trout
And smelled the water with the holes in his snout
He looked way up and saw the bright sun was out
And decided to paddle up for a scout

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It was very chilly down here in his bed
And Tommy wanted to warm up his cold blood
So he sloooowly started to stroke his webbed feet
And swam his way up in search of comfy heat

Tommy was headed for his favorite log
Near the shore and reeds beside a quiet bog
He reached the surface and clambered up the branch
Then sunbathed like he was in the south of France

It felt sooooo good to bask in the summer morn
If Tommy could, he'd toot a song on his horn
To tell everybody how happy he was
The birds, animals, fish and insects that buzz

The blazing sun shone on his dark, smooth, hard shell

His blood flowed faster and he woke from his spell

His tummy grumbled and he tobogganed down

Tommy slipped in the pond and left Turtle Town

He skimmed the surface for his favorite bugs

Then dove to the bottom to hunt in the mud

Stirring up prey jutting his head in the weeds

And later munching on white water lily seeds

After his breakfast Tommy was cold and tired

And climbed up a warm, dry rock to retire

With a full belly he soon dozed, snored and dreamed

This time he had a nightmare but couldn't scream

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He was being hunted by Rocky Raccoon
If he didn't escape 'twould be over soon
For Rocky had flipped Tommy onto his back
With his sharp claws—Tommy was being attacked!

Tommy's painted under shell of orange and red
Was exposed and he was filled with fear and dread
He kicked, scratched and bit poor old Rocky Raccoon
Then flipped over and rolled like a kayak can do!

Tommy tucked in his tail and head in his shell
And sat and waited a while 'til all was well
Finally Rocky grew impatient and moved on
And he woke from his bad dream, sighed and yawned

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Tommy T. had lived here for 55! years
And had been in many scrapes, close calls and fears
But he was always careful and very wise
So he'd seen many days with blue sunny skies

'Twas hard to believe he was once in an egg
Cracked the white shell and tested new wobbly legs
Waddling to the water with sisters and bros
A dozen hatchlings—dangerously exposed!

To people and animals like snakes, foxes,
Skunks, badgers, crows, bald eagles and ospreys
Not all survived the journey from nest to lake
You had to be lucky and make no mistakes!

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Now Tommy had slept from fall to spring
For fifty raw winters hibernating
Burrowed on the lake bottom down in the mud
With his heart barely pumping his stone, cold blood

Tommy clambered up to the top of the rock
From here he could see the distant beach and dock
He streeetched his neck just a little farther
That was the start of a sudden departure!

Tommy lost his balance too close to the edge
And ZOOMED down the slope like an Olympic sled
He flew off a ridge and did a double flip
And belly-flopped with a SPLASH! to end his trip

When he bobbed back up he heard laughs and applause

Myrtle and Gyrtle the turtle clapped their claws

And giggled at the most spectacular show

Tommy was so embarrassed his red face glowed

"That looks awesomely amazing!" Gyrtle cried

"Well, it was exciting but quite a surprise"

"Let's give it a try," brave Myrtle suggested

And scrambled up where her diving was tested

Her first launch attempt was not very graceful

CRASHING! on her back and swallowing a mouthful

Gyrtle learned from Myrtle and did a swan dive

And Tommy gave her a score of 9.5!

They played for a while until they tuckered out
Then said, "Race ya to Turtle Town!" with a SHOUT
But Tommy was older and ignored the dare
"I'll meet you when I eventually get there"

So Myrtle and Gyrtle zipped across the bay
And Tommy took his time, ambling on his way
Enjoying the sights and sounds as he explored
Of the swift, red-winged blackbirds along the shore

When Tommy arrived the big, old log was packed
With twenty-two turtles tanning back to back
Turtle Town was too crowded and loud for him
So he paddled on to a quieter limb

He was chilled and tired so the sun felt good
And he thoroughly relished this bed of wood
Warming his old bones and re-energizing
For more meal foraging and adventuring

Once again Tommy drifted off to dream land
And was sunbathing in the shiny, white sand
Of a tropical island way, way down south
And he had tasty, tiny crabs in his mouth

This was the home of his huge cousin Shelly
A giant sea turtle, always so friendly
Where waves lapped steady upon the silver strand
And palms swayed gently in this paradise grand