

The Boy and the Ocean Turtle



Ebru Mina TOMURCUK

The Boy and the Ocean Turtle

Ebru Mina TOMURCUK



Leo loved the beach more than any place on earth. On Saturday morning, he put on his yellow t-shirt, blue shorts, and red sneakers. He grabbed his canvas satchel and sun hat and ran down to the shore. The sand was warm under his feet, and the waves whispered hello. Leo smiled his bright, open smile and began his favorite walk along the water's edge.



As Leo walked, he spotted something big and round near the dunes. It looked like a giant rock, but it moved! Leo crept closer and saw a large ocean turtle with a green-brown patterned shell. The turtle's wrinkled grey-green skin and gentle dark eyes looked very old and very wise. Leo gasped. "Hello, turtle," he whispered softly.



The old turtle turned her head slowly. "Hello, little one," she said in a low, calm voice. "I am Tula. I have come to lay my eggs in the sand." Leo's dark brown eyes grew wide. "Eggs? Here on the beach?" Tula nodded. "Yes, in a nest. But I must find a quiet spot where no one will disturb them."



Tula used her flipper-like legs to sweep the sand away. Slowly and carefully, she dug a deep hole. Leo watched as she laid dozens of round, white eggs. Then she covered them gently with sand. "The sand will keep them warm," Tula explained. "In about two months, tiny turtles will hatch and race to the sea." Leo promised to keep the nest safe.



Just then, a girl with wavy red hair came running. She wore a pink sundress and white sandals, and sunglasses were pushed up on her head. "What are you looking at?" she asked eagerly. Leo pointed to the spot where Tula had hidden her eggs. "A turtle nest!" The girl, named Mia, was very curious. "Can I see the eggs?" she asked, already stepping forward.



Leo held up his hand. "Wait! We mustn't disturb the nest. If we dig, the eggs might get hurt. Tula said the sand keeps them safe." Mia looked disappointed. "But I want to help!" she said. Leo smiled. "You can help by keeping the nest safe. Let's tell others not to step here." Mia nodded, and her freckled face lit up with an idea.



Leo and Mia decided to make small signs. They used sticks and paper from Leo's satchel. "Please do not disturb," they wrote. Tula watched from the water's edge. "You are good helpers," she said. "But many people come to this beach. They don't know about nests. Could you teach them?" Leo thought hard. Then he had a wonderful idea.



Leo remembered the beach event happening that afternoon. A woman named Ms. Rivera was in charge. She wore a teal polo shirt with a turtle logo and a wide-brimmed hat. She held a clipboard and a whistle. "Ms. Rivera," Leo said, "can we add something about turtle nests to the event?" Ms. Rivera smiled warmly. "Of course! We need young helpers like you."



Leo and Mia worked all morning. They painted a big poster with a turtle and a nest. They made a model nest with sand and stones. "We'll show everyone why nesting areas should stay undisturbed," Leo said. Mia nodded, though she was a bit impatient. "Are you sure people will listen?" she asked. Leo smiled. "They will if we make it fun!"



When the event began, visitors gathered around. Leo stood on a low wooden platform. His sun hat shaded his eyes. "Sea turtles lay eggs in nests on our beach," he announced. "These nests are like tiny nurseries. If we step on them, the eggs might break." People listened closely. Mia handed out small cards that said, "Keep nests safe."



Ms. Rivera blew her whistle gently. "Let's play a game!" she called. "We'll pretend to be baby turtles trying to reach the sea without touching the nests." Everyone laughed and joined in. Leo and Mia showed the safe path. The visiting girl, who had been so impatient, now helped others. "This is fun!" she said. "And it teaches us to care."



After the game, an old fisherman raised his hand. "I didn't know nests were so important," he said. "I'll tell my friends to stay away from the dunes." Others nodded. Leo felt a warm glow in his chest. Tula, watching from the waves, lifted her head. "You have done well," she seemed to say. Leo waved at her, and she slowly swam away.



The sun began to set, painting the sky pink and orange. Leo and Mia sat on the sand near the nest. "You know," Mia said, "I thought protecting nature was just about not littering. But it's more. It's about caring for little lives." Leo nodded. "And it's our responsibility. Even small actions help." They smiled at each other, tired but happy.



Ms. Rivera came over and put a hand on Leo's shoulder. "You two did a great job today," she said. "Because of you, many people learned how to protect our turtle friends." She gave them each a small sticker with a turtle on it. Leo stuck his on his satchel. He felt proud. Mia stuck hers on her backpack and grinned. "I want to help again next year!"



As Leo walked home, he thought about Tula and the hidden nest. He knew the eggs were safe because he and Mia had cared. He looked back at the beach one last time. The waves rolled in and out, and the stars began to twinkle. Leo whispered, "Goodnight, turtles. Sleep tight." He felt a deep, quiet happiness inside.



That night, Leo told his family all about his day. "I learned that protecting nature is an important job," he said. "Even a kid can make a difference." His mother hugged him. "You certainly did," she said. Leo smiled and closed his eyes, dreaming of tiny turtles racing to the sea. He knew he would always care for the beach and its wonderful creatures.