

The Tortoise and the Scorpion

There was once a tortoise and a scorpion faced by a huge incoming flood. Fearful, but wanting to do the right thing, toward his own kind, the tortoise had told the scorpion he would carry the deadly creature across the raging waters to safety, if the scorpion would promise not to sting him. The scorpion gave his word and climbed onto the tortoise's back. The mighty water engulfed them both and the tortoise's short, strong legs swam powerfully, seeking a patch of land the currents hadn't touched.

The waves crashed over them, sending them reeling back. The tortoise swam and swam and swam, struggling to bring them forward, never making progress, for the mighty waves swept them back each time. The waves grew fiercer. The tortoise became tired. Soon, even the light weight of the scorpion began to seem like a heavy chain threatening to drag him under. The tortoise, however, refused to ask the scorpion to jump off, remembering his promise to the scorpion, and more, truly believing he had made a new friend where, as before, lines had been drawn. These thoughts made the tortoise swim harder, and finally a shoreline appeared into view. They were really going to make it.

And then, just like that, the scorpion stung him. Dug his pincher deep into the tortoise's back, allowing the poison to sink deep into his flesh. The tortoise looked back in shocked bewilderment, the poison burning his blood and shocking his mind. His legs turned instantly to lead. He could no longer move. They both began to drown. At the last minute of life, with salty brine filling his mouth and nostrils, the poor tortoise cried, "Why did you do such a thing? You have killed us both."

The scorpion replied simply — "Because it is my nature."

An ancient parable sent by Anthony Sanchez

