QUESTIONS TO SLEEP ON

Same Puddle?



Book 3 · For Lara and Zac



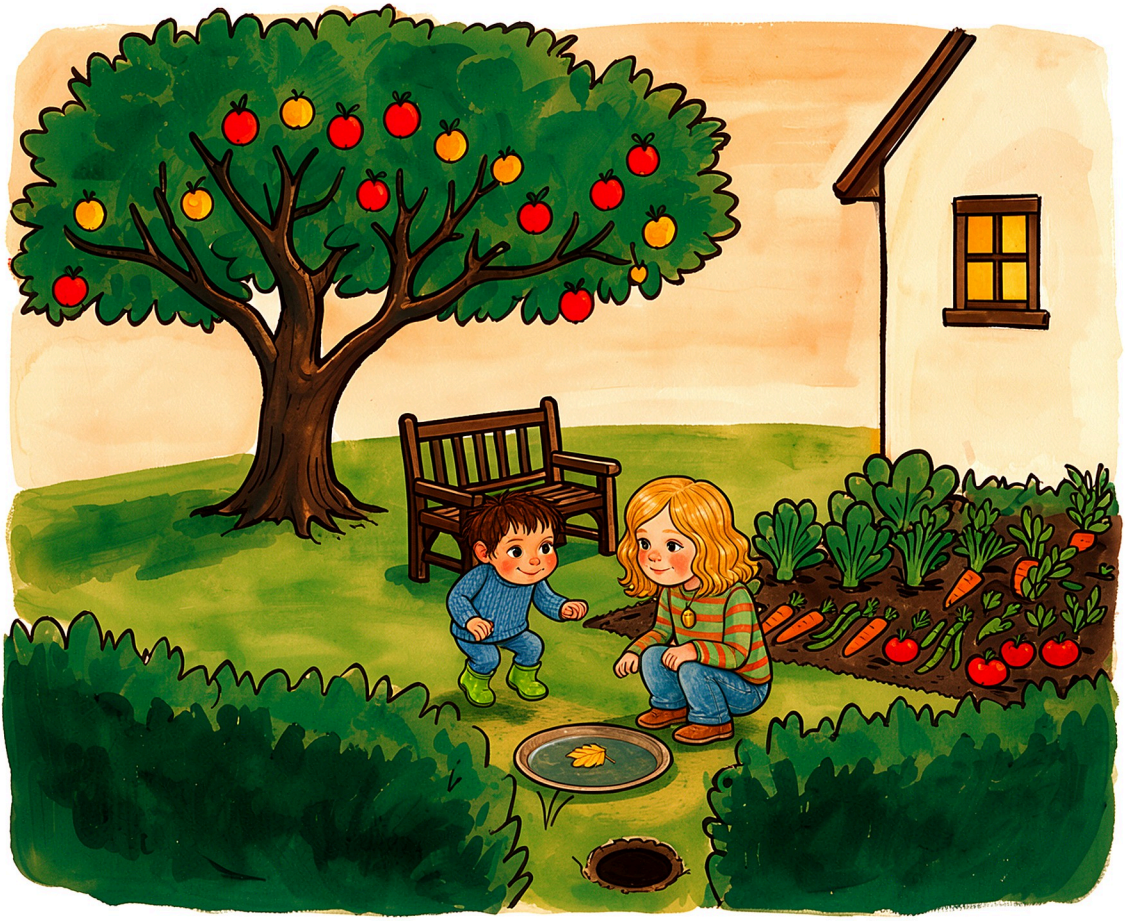
When the lamp goes warm and the garden goes quiet, Ponder comes out to wonder.

> Tonight there was a puddle. Not just any puddle. Zac's puddle. He had been jumping in it for three whole days.



On Monday it rained, and a puddle came, right in the middle of the path. **Splash!**

> It was a brilliant puddle. Round and brown and deep enough to splash right up to your knees. Zac named it Puddle, because that was what it was.



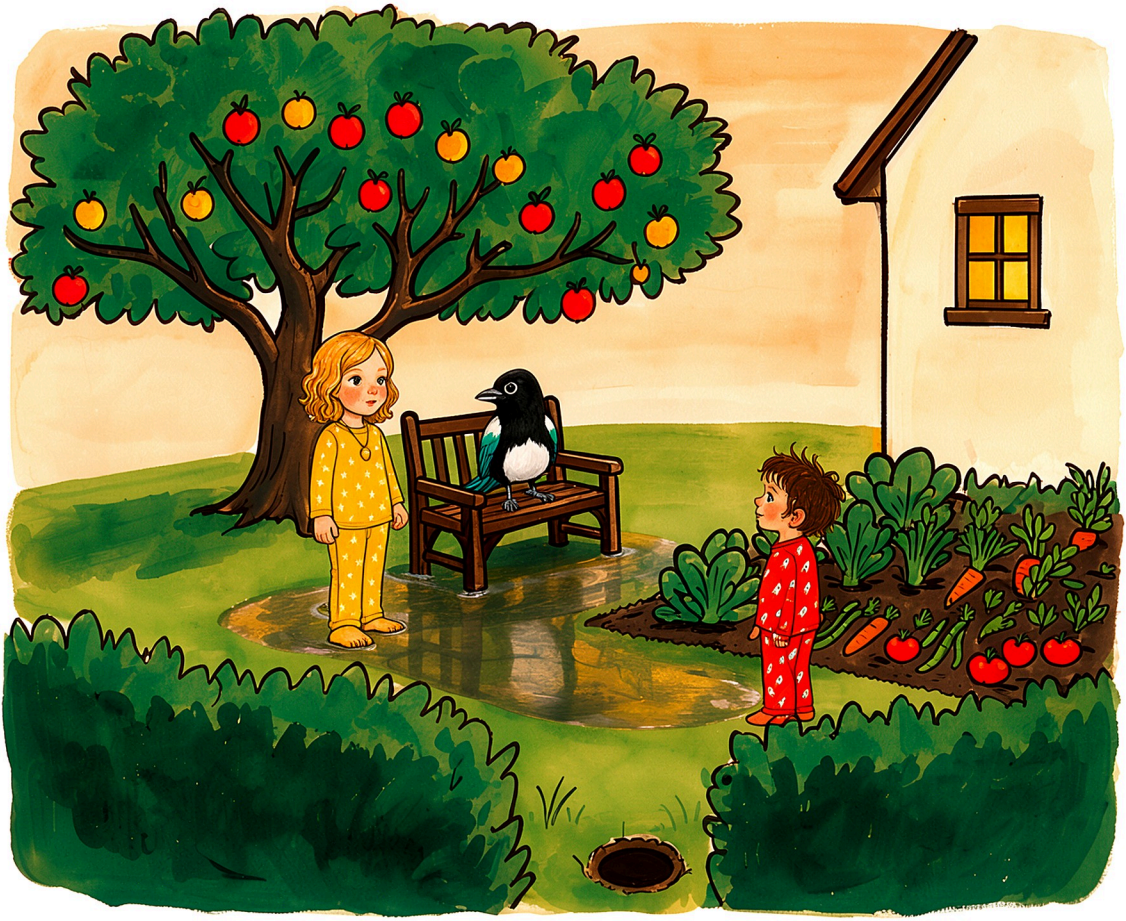
On Tuesday the sun came out, and Puddle shrank. “**Splash! Same puddle!**” said Zac.

> Now Puddle was only as big as a dinner plate, and the splash was only a small one. A yellow leaf floated in the middle, like a tiny boat.



On Wednesday it rained again, and Puddle grew ENORMOUS. “**Splash! Same puddle!**”

> Now Puddle reached all the way to the bench. It had a new wiggly edge and a new long arm. And the yellow leaf had sailed right over to the side.



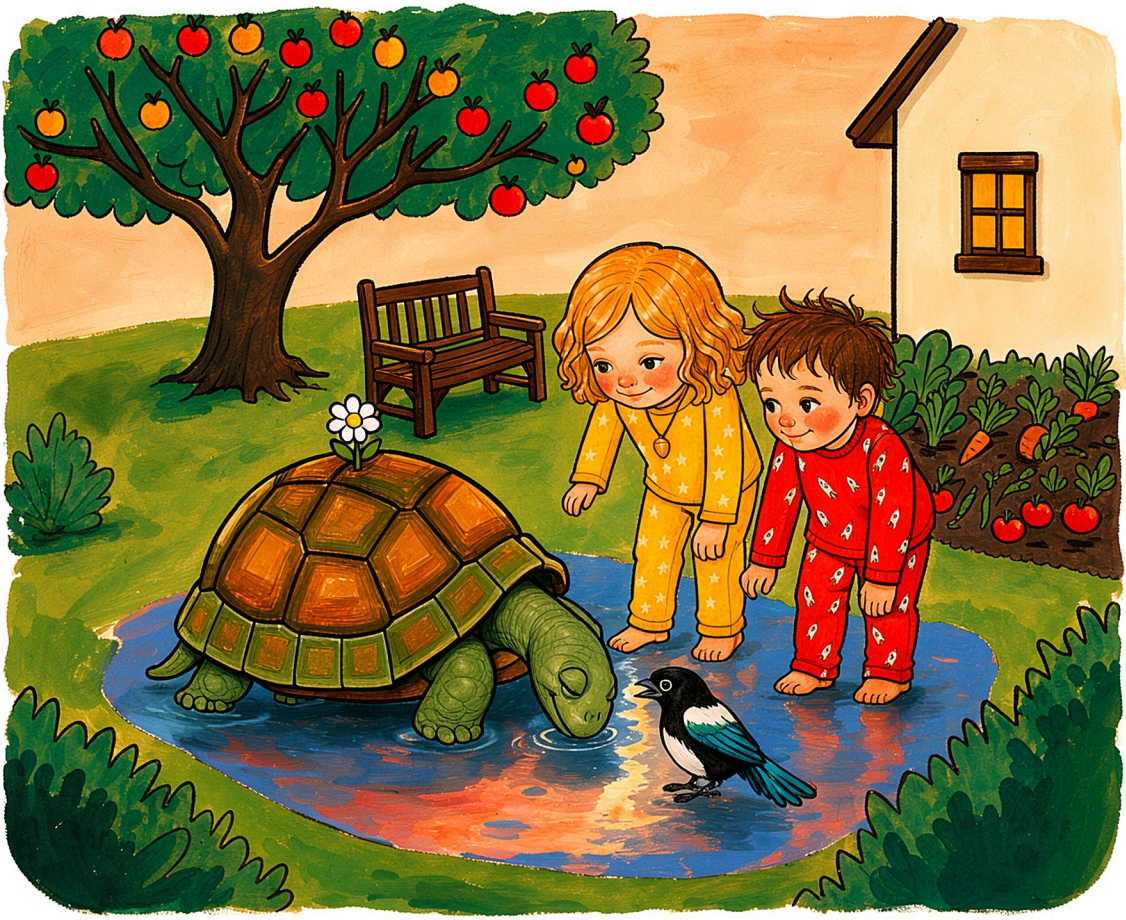
That evening, Pip landed on the bench. “That’s not the same puddle,” he said. “It’s a NEW one.”

> “The Monday water dried up in the sun,” said Pip. “This is all new water, from new rain. New water, new puddle. Simple.” He looked very pleased with himself.



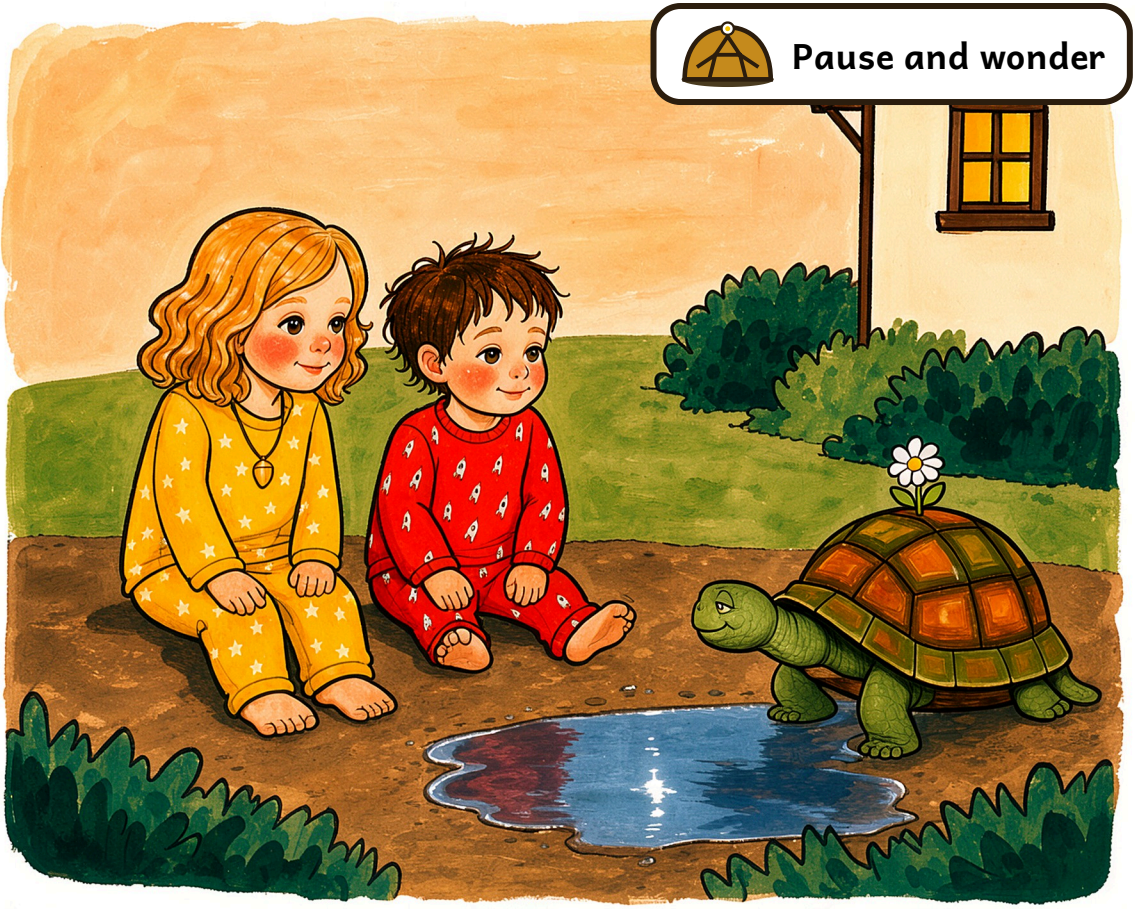
“It IS the same puddle,” said Zac. “It’s in the same place. It’s MY puddle.”

Lara looked. It was in the same place. But it was a different size, and a different shape, and the leaf had moved. “Hmm,” said Lara, who sometimes sounded a bit like Ponder. “Same place. Different water.”



Slowly, slowly, Ponder came down the path and dipped her nose in. “Hmm,” she said. “**Same puddle?**”

She took a long, slow sip. Everybody waited. “Tastes like puddle,” said Ponder at last. Which did not help at all.



“Ponder,” said Lara, “is it the same puddle, or a new one?”

> Ponder lifted her dripping nose. “Hmm,” she said. “I wonder. If all the water is new… then what is it that stays the same?” She looked at Zac. “What do you think?”



“Long ago,” said Ponder, “a man called Heraclitus said you can’t step in the same river twice.”

> “Because the water keeps flowing away,” said Ponder, “and new water keeps coming. And because you keep changing too.” Lara looked at her feet. Zac looked at his feet. They seemed the same.



Zac stepped into the puddle with one welly. Then the other. “**Splash! Same puddle?**”

> “Different water,” said Pip. “Same splash,” said Zac. Lara laughed. “Same Zac?” Zac looked down at his muddy pyjamas. “Muddier Zac,” he said.



After his bath, Zac was pink and clean and fluffy. “Same Zac?” asked Lara.

> Zac thought about it. His mud had gone down the plughole. His hair stuck up like a dandelion. “Same Zac,” he said. “Cleaner.” And he climbed into bed with Bunny.



“Some questions are for sleeping on,” said Ponder. “Night night, Ponder.”
“Hmm. Night night. I wonder…”

Outside, the rain began again, very softly. Pitter. Patter. Filling up the puddle. Or a new one. Or the same one.

Ponder's question

Is it the same puddle?

ZAC

Same or different? Thumbs up for same, thumbs down for different.

LARA

If all the water is new, what is it that stays the same?



Some people think...

It's the same puddle, because it's in the same place.

It's a new puddle, because it's all new water.

It's the same puddle, just bigger, like you're the same you when you grow.

Or something else?

You're allowed to agree. You're allowed to disagree.

For grown-ups

The question: If something keeps changing (its water, its size, its shape), is it still the same thing? And what about us?

Its name: Identity through change; Heraclitus and the river (the doctrine of flux). Story 11 comes back to this with Bunny and the Ship of Theseus.

Where it comes from: Heraclitus (about 500 BC), as reported by Plato in the *Cratylus* (402a), translated by Benjamin Jowett (1871, public domain). Plato's Socrates says Heraclitus "compares them to the stream of a river, and says that you cannot go into the same water twice."

QUESTIONS, LITTLE TO BIG

1. Is it the same puddle on Wednesday? (Thumbs up or down.)
2. Why does Pip say it's a new one?
3. Have you ever changed but stayed you, after a haircut or a bath or a birthday?
4. What if we scooped the puddle into a bucket and poured it out somewhere else? Same puddle?

WHAT THEY MIGHT SAY

Zac (3): "It's MY puddle!" At three, whose something is can stand in for what makes it the same. Ask what would make it a different puddle.

Lara (6): Six-year-olds often pick one test (same place, or same water) and stick to it. Offer a case that splits the tests, like the bucket question.

TOMORROW

Pour water into a tray and mark the edge with a pen. Leave it in the sun, then top it up with new water. Same water? Same puddle?

How to wonder together: ask, then wait. Say their words back to them. "Can you say more?" "Someone might say…" Don't say "right" or give your answer; Ponder never does. Too big for tonight? "Let's wonder about that at breakfast." (Then do.)