QUESTIONS TO SLEEP ON

Brave Zac, Scared Zac



Book 9 · For Lara and Zac



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

> That morning, at the park, there had been a slide. Not a little slide. THE slide. The tall one, with the twisty bit.



At the park there was a slide so tall it nearly touched the clouds. Well, nearly nearly.

> Lara whizzed down it three times. Zac stood at the bottom holding Bunny, looking up, and up, and up.



Zac climbed the ladder, one step at a time. At the top he stopped. “**Not yet...**” he whispered.

> His tummy felt wobbly, like jelly on a plate. From up there, the ground looked a very long way down, and the twisty bit looked very twisty.



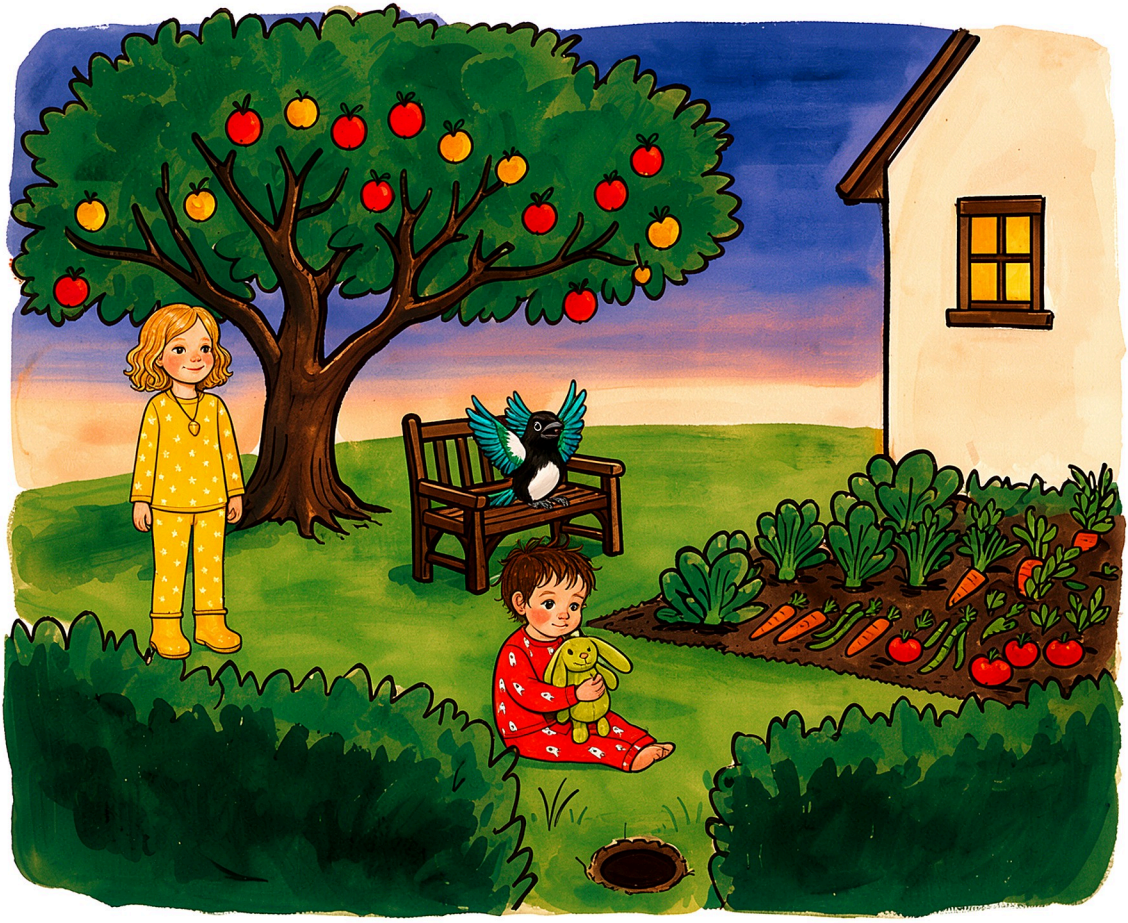
Pip landed on the rail. “Scared? I’m never scared,” he said. “Watch!”

He hopped off the top and swooped down in a loop-the-loop. “See? Easy.” “But you can FLY,” called Lara from the bottom. “That’s not fair.”



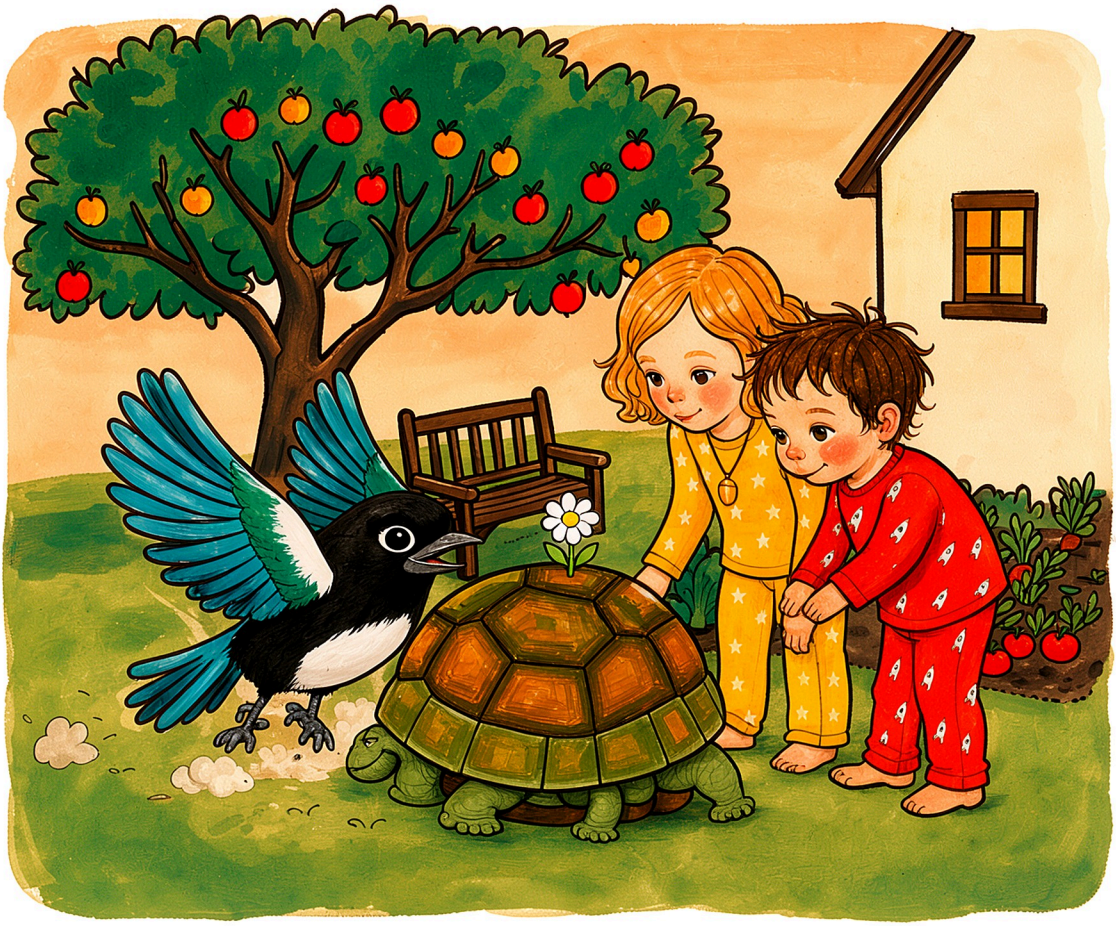
Zac held Bunny very tight, shut his eyes, and... “**Wheeeee!**”

> He whooshed round the twisty bit and landed bump on his bottom at the bottom. His eyes were wide. His hair was wild. “Again,” said Zac.



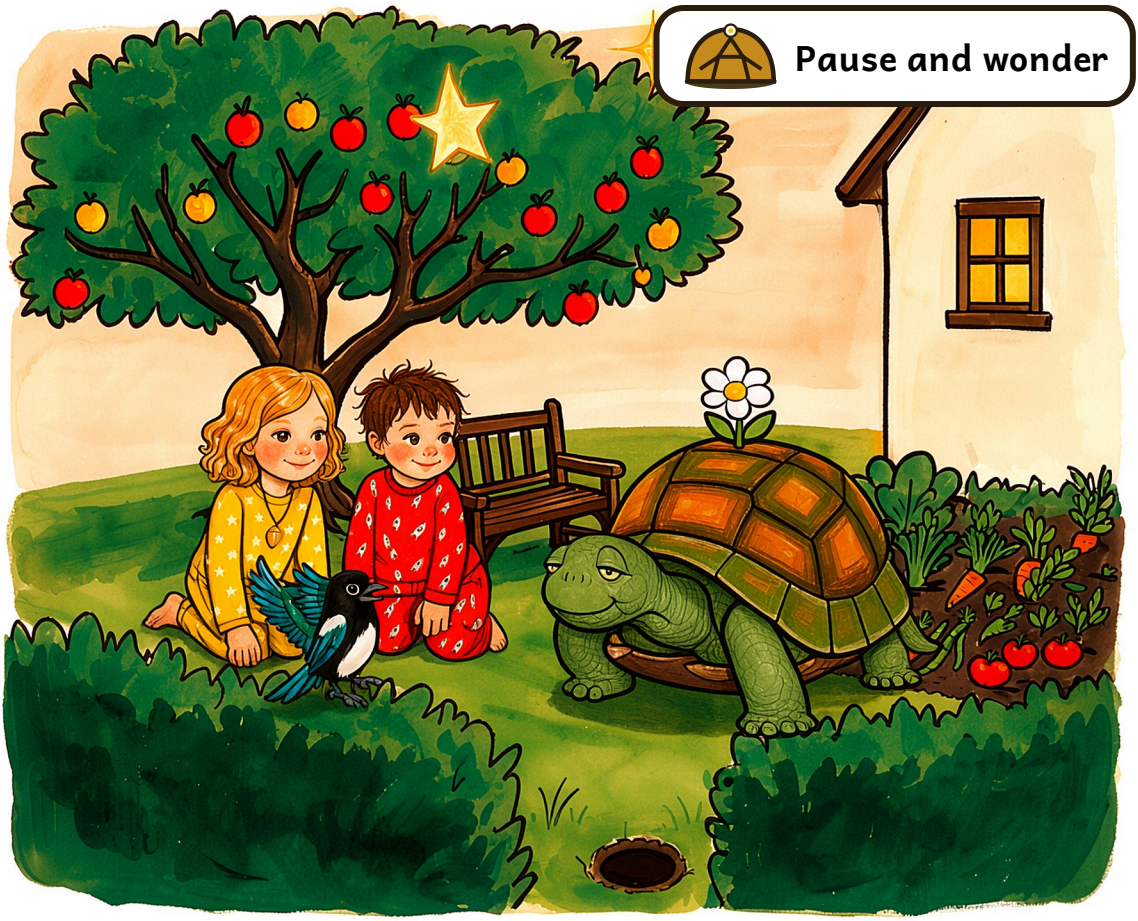
That evening, in the garden, they argued about who was the bravest.

> “Me,” said Lara, “because I went down three times and I wasn’t even scared.” “Me,” said Pip, “because I’m never scared of ANYTHING.” Zac didn’t say anything. He was thinking.



Pip landed with a THUMP, and Ponder pulled her head right inside her shell.

> “Ha! Scaredy-tortoise!” said Pip. Ponder’s head came out again, very, very slowly. “Hmm,” she said. “Or a sensible tortoise? I wonder.”



“Ponder,” said Lara, “who was the bravest? Me, or Pip, or Zac?”

> “Zac was the scaredy one,” said Pip. “I was scared,” said Zac, “and I went down ANYWAY.” Ponder blinked, very slowly. “Hmm,” she said. “I wonder. What do you think?”



“Long ago,” said Ponder, “a man called Socrates asked two soldiers, what is brave?”

> “Easy,” said the soldiers. “Brave is never running away.” But Socrates kept asking. What if running away is the clever thing to do? Is someone brave if they are not scared at all? The soldiers got very muddled.



“Ponder is half in and half out,” said Zac. “Ponder is half brave.”

Lara looked. It was true. Ponder had her head halfway out of her shell. “Maybe if you’re not scared at all,” said Lara slowly, “it doesn’t count as brave.” “It DOES count,” said Pip. “Not scared is the best kind.”



In bed, by the glow of the star nightlight, Zac whispered, “Tomorrow… **Wheeeee!**”

> “Were you scared AND brave?” asked Lara. Zac thought about it for a long time. “I was scared-brave,” he said. “Is that a thing?” said Lara. Nobody was quite sure.



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

And in her hollow under the hedge, Ponder tucked her head all the way into her shell. Which is what you do, if you’re a tortoise, when it’s time to sleep.

Ponder's question

Who was the bravest, Lara, Pip or Zac?

ZAC
Show me your brave face. Now your scared face. Can you do both at once?

LARA
If you are not scared at all, can you still be brave? Why?



Some people think...

Lara was the bravest. She went down three times without being scared.

Zac was the bravest, because he was scared and did it anyway.

Nobody was brave. Pip can fly, Lara wasn't scared, and Zac shut his eyes.

Or something else?

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

For grown-ups

The question: Is courage the absence of fear, or acting well in spite of it? And is it ever brave (or wise) to hold back?

Its name: The nature of courage. Socrates' question in Plato's *Laches*; Aristotle's idea of courage as a mean between rashness and cowardice.

Where it comes from: Plato, *Laches* (Benjamin Jowett's translation is public domain). The general Laches first says courage is standing firm and not running away. Socrates replies with the example of soldiers who fight by retreating, and the two generals end up agreeing they don't know what courage is.

QUESTIONS, LITTLE TO BIG

1. Was Zac scared at the top? (Point to his face in the picture.)
2. Why might Lara think it doesn't count if you're not scared?
3. Have you ever done something even though you were a bit scared?
4. What if Pip couldn't fly? Would he be brave on the slide?

WHAT THEY MIGHT SAY

Zac (3): "Me!" is a perfectly good answer. Ask what made it brave. Three-year-olds often explain bravery through feelings ("My tummy was wobbly"), which is exactly the point.

Lara (6): Six-year-olds often start with "brave means not scared", then get stuck on Zac. If they also notice that Ponder hiding might be sensible, they've reinvented Aristotle.

TOMORROW

Play "brave, scared or sensible?" Name small things (climbing a tree, saying sorry, touching a worm, crossing the road without looking) and sort them together.

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.)