

## After the Tortoise Won the Race

It was the strangest thing.  
She'd never cared before about winning.  
Life had been about basking in the sun  
at the entrance to her burrow.  
Sometimes when she was warm enough,  
she'd plod off in search of leaves.

Now, she thought about finish lines.  
The feel of the ribbon on her prehistoric nose.  
The roar of the crowd as she crossed.  
They say tortoises don't have feelings,  
no hippocampus in their small brains,  
but she'd felt it, the thrill of success.

She spent decades looking for another race  
she had a chance to win. None of her friends  
could understand. *Come dig in the sandy soil,*  
they said, but it wasn't enough anymore.  
She wished she'd never said yes to that race.  
She wished she could race the hare again tonight.

She wished she could stop defining her life  
by that one moment. Wished she could stop wishing  
for any life beyond the life she had now,  
sleeping in her burrow, cool and moist.  
Wished all she wanted were soft weeds and long-leaf pines.  
Wished she could hear that crowd. Just one more time.

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