

**Little Clam ©
and the
Giant
Mad Turtle
Pathway©**



**A short story by H. Melvin James
Illustrations by Diane Harwick**

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In a grassy meadow, far from the city, lives a young box turtle known as, "Little Clam." Little Clam lives with his mother and father. His mother's name is Shelly and his father's name is Stoney.



Like young puppies and kittens, or any young animal, Little Clam is curious about the world around him. One summer day he and his mother were searching for food in the grassy meadow. Little Clam hoped they would find sweet berries to eat. As they crawled through the grass Little Clam asked his mother, *"Momma, why am I called Little Clam?"* His mother smiled and said, *"When you broke out of your baby eggshell, your father laughed with joy. He said that you were so small that when you closed up inside your turtle shell, you looked like a little clam. From then on, we called you, Little Clam."*

As usual, Little Clam had other questions, *"Momma, where did Daddy go this morning?"* Shelly was pleased that her son was curious. *"Your father went to Lilly Pond. He went there to see if that would be a nice place for the three of us to spend the summer. This summer has been very warm and dry. There is little water for us to drink in this meadow. Also, the berries that we like to eat have dried and shriveled for lack of rain."*

Later, after Little Clam awoke from his afternoon nap, his mother had news for him. She told him that the mockingbird had delivered a message from his father. The message was, *"All was well at Lilly"*

Pond. You should join me here. Begin your journey early tomorrow morning. Be careful not to cross the Giant's Pathway."

The next morning Little Clam and his mother began the long journey from the grassy meadow to Lilly Pond. Little Clam was excited. He was anxious to see plants and animals that he had not seen before. Little Clam asked, "Momma, what new animals will I see?" His mother answered, "You will meet many new animals, large and small. As we travel you might see a big animal like a cow or a deer. At Lilly Pond you will meet frogs and fish. You might also see a clam in the pond. There are many other animals living in the meadow, the woods, the brook and the pond. Some of these animals are nice and friendly. The deer and the songbirds are friendly animals. Some animals are dangerous and mean. Coyotes and raccoons may try to harm turtles. If any animal is mean to you, just pull your head, legs and tail back into your shell and wait until trouble goes away.

"But Momma, if I see trouble I can just run away really fast!" "No Little Clam. You move fast for a small turtle, but the fastest turtle cannot outrun the slowest coyote. There is another dangerous animal you must not go near. These are the most dangerous animals of all. They are the giant mad turtles. No other animal can outrun the giant mad turtles. But if you stay away from their pathway they cannot harm you."

"Tell me about the giant mad turtles", Little Clam asked. "How big are they? Why are they mad?" Shelly answered, "The giant turtles are hundreds of times bigger than us. They crawl faster than the deer can run. Their legs move so fast that they appear to spin in circles. They roar and they snort, they trumpet and they squeal. Their breath smells like the smoke of a prairie fire. They are careless, rude, and very mean. Many animals that venture onto the giant mad turtle's pathway are never seen again."



Little Clam imagined how the giant turtles appeared. He wanted to know more about the giant turtles. *“Why are the giant turtles so angry Momma?”* His mother tried to explain but she did not have answers for all of Little Clam’s questions, *“No animal knows why the giant turtles are so angry and so mean. No other animals harm them. But they smash into any animal or bird that gets in their way. The giant mad turtles have even smashed into fast-running deer. The monster turtles seem to always be in a frightful hurry. The giant mad turtles make loud and ugly noises. They seem to be very unhappy.”*

“Momma, will we see the giant mad turtle pathway?” Little Clam asked. *“No Little Clam, we will not cross the giant’s pathway. We will travel farther to avoid that dangerous pathway. We will cross this meadow and pass the small woods. Then we will come to a valley. Lilly Pond is directly across the giant’s pathway from there. But we dare not cross the giant mad turtles’ pathway. Instead, we will turn east and travel down the valley until we come to a brook of water. From there we will only need to follow the brook all the way to Lilly Pond. The brook flows through a big tunnel that will take us under the giant’s pathway. Then the brook turns back west to Lilly Pond.”* Little Clam listened carefully as his mother explained their travel route.

As they crawled through the tall grass, Little Clam imagined the new and strange things his mother had told him. Soon the sun was high in the sky and the temperature grew hot. Little Clam was getting tired and thirsty. They passed a big hairy animal that was biting off

clumps of grass. The animal was so big it could have swallowed Little Clam with one bite. The big animal took time to chew its grass as it watched Little Clam and his mother slowly pass by. After they had safely passed, Little Clam spoke nervously, *“Was that a giant monster mouse Momma?”* *“No Little Clam that was a friendly cow.”*

Little Clam saw the forest trees towering ahead, high above the tall grass. *“I see the forest Momma. I will race to the forest as fast as the wind and I will wait at the edge of the forest until you catch up with me!”* Little Clam was making so much noise pushing through the grass that he did not hear his mother telling him to stay close to her. But after making his legs move as fast as he could for a short while, Little Clam grew weary. He decided to rest until his mother caught up. Soon he heard his mother crawling through the grass. But the sound of the rustling grass did not come any closer. Little Clam stretched his neck as high as he could to look back through the grass. Little Clam saw that his mother was struggling to move. He hurried back to his mother.

“Little Clam, I am caught in these thorny vines. They are wrapped around my neck and three of my legs. Even my tail is caught. If I try to pull away, the thorns poke me. The harder I try to get loose, the tighter the vines wrap and the more the thorns poke.”

Little Clam was worried. His mother could not bite through the vines because she was too tangled to bend her neck or turn her body. Little Clam worked hard to bite through the vines, but his jaws were too small and not strong enough. Little Clam looked for the friendly cow to help but the creature was nowhere near.



“Little Clam, you will have to do the job of a grown-up turtle and hurry on to Lilly Pond by yourself. Tell your father to come rescue me from these vines. Follow the directions that I told you and beware of the giant mad turtle pathway.”

Little Clam did not want his mother to worry. “I will go to Lilly Pond as fast as a rabbit, Momma. Then Daddy will run back here as fast as a giant turtle.” As Little Clam scampered away, not nearly as fast as he imagined, his mother called after him, “Remember, Little Clam, do not cross the giants’ pathway!” But Little Clam did not hear his mother because the dry grass was rustling noisily across his shell as he went.

Soon into his journey, Little Clam came face to face with a snake. The snake was looking for something to eat such as a mouse or a frog. The snake knew that he could not swallow a hard shell turtle so he just tried to ignore Little Clam. “Hello mister snake,” Little Clam said as boldly as he could pretend. “I am on a journey to meet my Daddy at Lilly Pond. He is big and strong.” Little Clam hoped that his description of his father would make the snake hesitate to do him any

harm.



“I have been to Lilly Pond,” replied the sly snake, ***“I know the best route. If you are in a hurry, and you do seem to be in a hurry, as if slow little turtles could hurry...”*** the snake laughed, then cleared his long throat, and he said, ***“If you want to get to Lilly Pond before winter snow falls, you should cross the valley and go directly across the giant pathway.”***

“But Momma told me the pathway is dangerous. It is the path of giant mad turtles. Momma told me not to go near it.” ***“Nonsense,”*** snapped the sneaky snake. ***“The pathway is wide, so it is called a giant pathway. I have crossed the pathway twice and I did not see any giant turtles. If you had cousins who were giants, surely, they would not harm a little one of their own kind. Well, are you in a hurry or are you not, little turtle?”*** Little Clam could not decide what he should do. He wanted the snake to give him more advice. ***“Yes, I must hurry,”*** replied Little Clam. ***“My Momma is caught in thorny vines and I must tell Daddy to rescue her!”*** The snake was growing impatient. ***“That settles it then, my little hard top friend. If you take***

the long way, your mother will die from the heat. So, you must cross the pathway of the giants. Now be gone from here. You are keeping me from finding my lunch.” The snake chuckled and grinned as Little Clam altered his direction and began crawling directly toward the giant mad turtle pathway.

As he neared the edge of the forest, just before he began to go around the trees in the direction of the giants’ pathway, Little Clam heard a strange sound, ***“Who, who?”*** Then after a pause, again the questioning words came again, ***“Who, who?”*** ***“I am Little Clam! That is who I am. Who is asking, please?”*** Little Clam tried to talk bravely and not show that he was afraid. On a tree limb above, Little Clam saw the bird as it replied. ***“I am Awesome Owl. I am awesome because I know many things. I know that you are a young turtle. A young turtle should not be here alone. Where is your mother and your father, young turtle?”***

“Momma is in the meadow and Daddy is at Lilly Pond. I am going to Lilly Pond to tell my Daddy that Momma needs his help. I must hurry or Momma will die. I must cross the giant turtles’ path to get to Lilly Pond as fast as I can.” ***“As a wise owl, I will advise you little turtle. Let me reason. You can travel east to the brook and follow the brook under the monster’s path, then back west, but that will take a long time for such a little turtle. On the other hand, you could cross the pathway but you will probably be trampled under the feet of the giants. If the giants step on you, you will never get to Lilly Pond. My wise advice is that you should do neither. If you go one way you will probably be flattened. If you go the other way you will be too late to save your mother and that would cause your father to be very angry with you. I suggest that you forget about going to Lilly Pond. You could enter this forest and live here as long as you like.”***

“That may be a wise thing to do mister owl, but that would be a mean and selfish thing to do,” answered Little Clam. Without saying another word, the owl turned and flew away as the little turtle quickly resumed his journey across the little valley that followed along the side of the giants’ pathway.



As Little Clam began to crawl up the other side of the valley he could hear the terrible monsters on the ridge above. Their noises were more horrible than anything he had ever heard. The ground under Little Clam's shell shook and rumbled from the giant monster's pounding footsteps. Gradually, slowly, Little Clam pulled with his front legs and pushed with his back legs, up the valley slope toward the top of the ridge. With each step the noise of the giants grew louder. The earth beneath him rattled against his thin underside shell. When he reached the edge of the big wide path Little Clam could smell the monsters' awful breath as they flashed by so fast that they made gusts of wind. The monsters were much bigger than Little Clam imagined. They were even bigger than the cow and much faster than the rabbit.



Little Clam was very scared. He wanted to cry. To make himself braver, he began to talk to himself aloud, *"If I am going to get to Lilly Pond quick enough for Daddy to save Momma, I will have to be brave and cross the path of these monsters."*



Little Clam slowly stepped out from the edge of the grass and onto the big pathway. The giant monster turtles had pounded the earth so hard that no plants grew in their path. They had hammered the ground until it had turned into a solid stone.

The monster's path was very hot from the sun. Little Clam's belly began to feel the burn of the heat coming through his underside shell. He was frightened and he was very uncomfortable from the heat, the noise, and the smelly monsters' breath that caused tears in his eyes.

"If I can step out at just the right time," Little Clam thought, *"I can dash across without the monsters stepping on me."* Arguing with himself he mumbled, *"But they are so fast. And there are so many of them. They are coming and going in both directions at once. And they are so big and it is such a wide pathway to cross."*

Biting his jaws together tightly, Little Clam pulled his legs into his best starting position and poised himself for a fast start. As quickly as the next giant flashed by, he bolted out onto the monster's path. His shell wiggled this way and that with every push of his legs. He worked as hard as he could to try to go as fast as the giants.

But the little turtle was not fast enough. In an instant, quicker than a lightning flash, Little Clam saw a giant's front leg zip by his face.

He felt a sting on the tip of his nose. He quickly began to pull his head, legs, and tail into his shell as he saw the blur of the monster's back leg swirling toward him. Then just as instantly, before Little Clam had time to close his shell all the way, the monster's back foot slammed down on the front edge of his shell. Just as quickly as the clip to his nose, Little Clam was spinning like a top. Immediately Little Clam peeked his head from his shell and was startled to see that he was flying high above the earth. *"Wee, I am flying,"* shouted Little Clam in his excitement. *"Momma did not tell me that turtles could fly, but I am flying. I am flying like the mockingbird and the crow. Hooray!"* Little Clam made his legs go up and down just like the birds' wings flap up and down when they fly. But he could not fly. He was soon dropping very fast toward the ground. Suddenly Little Clam hit the ground with a terrible jolt. He bounced back into the air. When he came down again, he spun in circles and slid to a stop.

When he finally stopped sliding and spinning, Little Clam found himself upside down, rocking like a teeter-totter on his round back, his four feet in the air. He was disappointed to see that he was back on the same side of the pathway as he was before. Little Clam was glad that he had landed on the soft grass at the side of the hard pathway. His nose was a little sore but his shell was not cracked, and he did not feel hurt anywhere. He was simply very frightened and worried.



“Now, I must remember what Momma taught me about how to turn over when I find myself upside down. It had something to do with putting one leg down as far as I can stretch. Then I reach up and out with my opposite leg as far as I can. Then I try to make myself rock sideways and use my tail.... Oh my, I do not remember exactly what to do with my other two legs. This is so very difficult.” Little Clam was very tired and thirsty. The hot sun was burning at his underbelly shell. He had not had a drink of water all day and no matter how hard he tried, he could not turn himself upright.

Little Clam worried that he might never turn over. Then he worried that even if he could eventually turn over, he would be too late to save his mother. He also worried that a giant turtle might step to the side of the pathway and smash him as he lay helpless on his back. He worried even more that his Momma would not survive if he did not get to Lilly Pond to tell his Daddy that she needed help. Little Clam began to cry.

“Hello!” came a soft voice to Little Clam’s hearing. He cleared his teary eyes with a few quick blinks, and he saw a furry rabbit nibbling grass. The rabbit looked funny to Little Clam because Little Clam was upside down. ***“What are you doing there little turtle?”*** asked the rabbit as he chewed his bite of grass and wiggled his nose. ***“Are you***

taking a nap in the sun or are you playing a game? If you are playing a game, may I play too?” “I am not playing!” answered Little Clam, “I am helplessly upside down. Would you please help me?” “How did you get upside down? Why can you not just turn over? Look at me.” teased the rabbit, “I can turn over and over any direction and flip in the air at the same time.”

“Silly rabbit, I am a turtle and turtles are not able to jump or flip,” answered Little Clam. “A giant monster turtle kicked me high into the sky and I landed this way. Please help me to turn over.”

The rabbit finally understood and easily used his nose to flip Little Clam over onto his four feet. *“Now do not go back out onto that mad monster turtle pathway,” scolded the rabbit. “The next time you try to cross you will surely be stomped as flat as a beaver’s tail.”*



“But what will I do now?” cried Little Clam. “If I go all the way to the brook to cross under the monster’s pathway, it will take too much time. Momma needs help soon. She is tangled in the thorny vines. I must find a way to cross the giants’ pathway here and now. I cannot take the time to go all the way to the brook and back up the other side

of this pathway,” Little Clam stated sadly. “I have no advice for you,” said the rabbit. I must go now and fast,” shouted the rabbit as he quickly left. Little Clam shouted to the rabbit, *“Thank you for turning me over,”* but the rabbit was already far away.

Soon a coyote arrived, sniffing here and there. Little Clam pulled himself into his shell and peaked out at the coyote. *“You have nothing to fear of me little turtle. I am not as foolish or hungry as to try to eat a hard-shell turtle. But I am hungry for a soft rabbit, and I smell a rabbit nearby. Where is that rabbit?”*

Little Clam did not want the rabbit to be eaten by the coyote so he told him that he could not betray the rabbit because the rabbit had done him a favor by turning him upright. *“I am in a hurry to find my father at Lilly Pond. I must tell him that Mother is caught in thorny vines and he must go quickly to rescue her,”* Little Clam told the coyote. *“I tried to cross the pathway, and I was almost stomped under the monster’s feet.”* The coyote bragged that he had crossed the pathway many times without harm because he was fast and he was smart.

Then the coyote’s eyes grew big and he grinned to show his many sharp teeth. *“I will do a bigger favor for you than the rabbit did for you,”* snarled the coyote, *“If you will show me the way the rabbit hopped then I will take you across the pathway.”* *“I accept your offer,”* Little Clam exclaimed quickly, *“I will show you the way the rabbit hopped, as best I can, I promise, but we must hurry. Momma must be getting very worried by now.”*

The coyote snapped Little Clam up between his teeth, looked left and right, paused for a short moment and then dashed out onto the pathway, flying like a shooting star. Little Clam saw the monster turtles stream by in front of the coyote and behind the coyote. The monsters screamed and screeched. They made loud bellowing sounds as they roared past. Then, in a few seconds the coyote released the little turtle onto the grass on the other side of the monster’s pathway.



“Now show me the way the rabbit hopped,” growled the coyote. Little Clam giggled, “Well mister coyote, I will show you, just as you asked.” Then Little Clam stood high on the toes of his front legs and pushed hard and fast with his back legs. He jolted forward and then he did it again. “That was the way the rabbit hopped, as nearly as I can imitate him.” Little Clam was playing a game that he had played with his friends in the meadow. They called their game, “Walk this Way.” Little Clam and his friends, the hopping toad and the wiggly lizard, made a game of imitating the way various animals walked or hopped. The coyote’s poor choice of words gave Little Clam the idea of the trick.

The coyote did not find Little Clam’s game to be amusing. He snarled viciously, showing his clenched teeth. *“Tell me the direction the rabbit went or I will take you to the monster’s path and leave you there to be stomped.”* But just as the coyote opened his jaws to clamp onto the little turtle, he jumped backwards, turned and ran away. *“What a strange coyote,”* Little Clam thought. Then Little Clam turned quickly to continue his journey to Lilly Pond. As soon as he turned he saw why the coyote had left so quickly. A big black and white skunk was coming toward him. *“Thank you, mister skunk, for*

scaring that mean coyote away.” “Think nothing of it little turtle. I enjoy scaring coyotes and spraying them with my stinky skunk oil when they do not run away. If I spray a coyote, they cannot hunt my rabbit friends for several days because they cannot smell the rabbits or anything other than my stinky skunk oil. Also, the rabbits can smell the stinky coyotes from a mile away.” Then the skunk hurried on his journey and so did Little Clam.

Little Clam scurried down the grassy slope to the shallow valley and immediately sensed the cool moist air of Lilly Pond. In a quick moment he came to the edge of the water. To the little turtle, the pond seemed huge. In the meadow he had only seen puddles of water formed by rain showers.

Little Clam walked to the edge of the water and looked across the pond but he did not see his father. He looked to his left and he looked to his right but he did not see anyone. Little Clam began to walk hurriedly around the pond. He had to find his father soon. Suddenly Little Clam stopped with fright. He heard a loud roar, and it came from nearby. Then a gruff voice spoke, “Where do you think you are going little turtle? This is my side of Lilly Pond. I am the boss bullfrog of this corner of the pond. I do not allow anyone smaller than me to swim on my side of the pond.” “But Mister Bullfrog, I do not want to swim in the pond, unless I must do so to find my daddy. My mother is caught in thorny vines, and I must find my daddy, and find him quickly, so he can rescue my momma.” “In that case, perhaps I can help. Tell me your father’s name?” “My father is much bigger than me and he is strong. His name is Stoney because his shell is so hard and tough.” “I know your father. We talked this morning. He told me that you and your mother were coming here today. He is on the other side of the pond. You may swim directly across and find him. Swimming would be much faster than your slow crawling around.”



“But Mister Bullfrog, I am a land turtle, and I have never been in a pool of water deeper than my head,” Little Clam exclaimed. The huge frog talked gruffly, *“All turtles can swim, but we must not waste time discussing and having swimming lessons. You will have plenty of time to learn to swim later. I will swim across the pond quicker than you can catch your breath and I will send your father back immediately. He swims well for a turtle.”*

Little Clam watched the big bullfrog leap far into the water and dart through the water as swift as a scissor tail chases a flying insect in the sky. In a few moments Stoney popped up from the water and greeted his young son. Little Clam explained and told his father as nearly as he could, where his mother was caught in the vines.

His father knew where the vine patch grew near the woods. *“You stay here Little Clam and wait for me to return with your mother. I can swim in the waters of the brook much faster than I can crawl. The brook travels most of the distance to where your mother is trapped. Your mother and I will swim around the brook to return here. We will be back before the sky turns dark.”*

The sun was setting when Little Clam’s mother and father greeted him. The three turtles were very happy. Some of the animals that

lived in and around Lilly Pond greeted the turtles and welcomed them to the neighborhood. Little Clam was having a lot of fun playing with his new friends but by evening he grew tired and fell asleep.



The next morning Stoney took Shelly and Little Clam to the nearby wild berry patch, and they ate their fill of delicious, sweet and juicy berries. Near the pond and in the pond waters too, there was much for turtles to eat. And because they lived near the huge pond, they could drink cool fresh water as much and as often as they wanted.

Little Clam quickly learned to swim, and he enjoyed playing in the water and on the land with his many new-found friends.

THE END