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Slowly but Surely: A Journey of Strength and Purpose

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This artwork reflects my personal journey as a man searching for purpose and the true meaning of strength. Like the turtle, my path has not been fast, but it has been steady, guided by faith and perseverance. For a time, I believed that success was measured by achievements, wealth, and material possessions — and for some, that is a beautiful and meaningful path. However, as I walked (and crawled) through life's challenges, I realized that for me, strength is not about how much we have, but how much we can endure, how much we can grow, and how much faith we hold on to when the road gets tough. Faith has been my compass, a quiet but powerful force that has kept me going. Along the way, I have come to value what truly matters: time with loved ones, good health, family, and peace of mind. These are the treasures I now seek and value.

The turtle in this artwork reminds me that even slow progress is progress. That every small step taken with purpose and heart brings me closer to who I am meant to be, and to where my destiny leads me. The turtle also symbolises courage, strength and purpose. That despite how slow we can be in life; we can reach our destination because we have a sense of purpose, we hold on to our dreams, and we persist despite the odds, just like the turtle. We carry on and face obstacles despite how difficult they can be, just like the turtle. The smile on the face of the boy is also symbolic of optimism. That despite the struggles, suffering and pain, he always wears a smile on his face, a subtle indication of positivity, seeing the silver lining in the midst of darkness and despair.

To anyone on a similar journey, keep moving forward, slowly but surely. Embrace growth and purpose. Find strength in faith and perseverance. Value what truly matters in life: time, health, family, and compassion. Be patient and have courage to face the battles of life. And don't forget to dream, and work on that dream your way. Because dreams are not a race — like the turtle, dreams are a journey deserving to be enjoyed and lived. This life is no longer a race I strive to win. The city will keep running fast, but that does not mean I have to chase it. I make my own race.

Bionote

John Michael Caneda is a freelance illustrator and graphic designer with over a decade of experience in book illustrations and visual storytelling. He is also the founder of JMDA (Jumpstart: Make Dreams Attainable), a creative initiative that promotes growth, resilience, and hope through inspiring artworks and designs.