

Tiptoes meets the Sunset Angels

Chapter 24 from The Midsummer Mouse

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Tiptoes flew into the darkening sky. Far away in the west the clouds were wonderfully colored. So were the ones over her head—these were wispy and glowed pink and violet. The wind had shifted and a delta breeze was blowing from the sea. It followed Running River inland and cooled the land far from the ocean. The breeze caught Tiptoes' wings and lifted her up. Up and up and up she flew, higher and higher. She flew so high that she saw the peaks of the Snowy Mountains to the east. The highest ones were still covered with snow and shimmered reddish-gold in the evening light.

Tiptoes flew higher. She wanted to get to the wispy clouds. She knew that they were as high as clouds could be, so up, and up, and up she soared. And the higher she flew the further she could see. Now she saw the hills running along the coast miles and miles away. Now and then, in a gap in the hills, she caught a glimpse of the golden sea. The whole western world was a mass of orange and violet and gold—and above her head the heavens were a deep violet-blue.

At last she reached the wispy clouds and saw the color angels weaving around her. They were weaving the light from the setting sun into the coming darkness. The air and delicate clouds were full of them. And they weren't just weaving the colors—they took the darkness and light into themselves and the colors were born inside them.

"What are you doing, my youngest of sisters, so high in the sky?" asked one of the color-weaving angels.

Her speaking was more like poetry or singing.

"Just watching," said Tiptoes. "It looks like you are painting the sky."

"Yes," agreed the color angel. "The sky we are painting—our task is to make lovely, in light that is dying, the clouds of the world."

Tiptoes nodded. She was full of wonder. The color angel was weaving the colors as she spoke, and her breath was shaping the delicate clouds.

"I'd like to be able to color the clouds too," said Tiptoes.

The angel smiled, and her edges turned golden. "Your task it is different," she said. "You have to tell stories, to children and mouslings, on earth down below—but you can do small things, when your heart is unfolding."

"Like what?" asked Tiptoes.

"In stories you're telling, be mindful of speaking, of colors as living," said the angel. "For from them come secrets, that heads cannot fathom, but hearts can divine."

"I'll try," said Tiptoes. "And I have another question."

"What is it you're asking?" the color angel sang.

"How do you get resin out of gnome's beards?"

The angel smiled hugely; she laughed so hard her colors flashed yellow and pink and living green. She didn't know. Then she waved goodbye, and flew away singing—

*"The sunlight is dying—
what comes from its waning
as warmth in the making
to knowing within?"*

*The darkness is dawning—
what's hidden within her
this mother of secrets
and keeper of will?*

*So seek then the beauty
in colors' creating,
in clouds that are shining,
the life of the soul."*

Then Tiptoes spiraled down out of the heights until the sky above her was filled with stars. She flew into her acorn house and lay down in bed with a tired sigh. Tomorrow she would definitely have to find out how unresin and untangle Pine Cone and Pepper Pot's beards.

