

Tiptoes Tells How She Was Born

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"My ears are telling me things," said Ompliant the Elephant when he saw them all sitting on the lowest branch of the oak tree.

"Yes," said Tiptoes, "your ears are telling you that a story is to be told!"

"Hoo-humpf! That's true," agreed Ompliant, flapping his ears. "You're going to tell us how you were born because it's your birthday!"

Tiptoes laughed and nodded her head. "Yes," she said, "now listen quietly."

"A long time ago the whole valley where this tree stands was covered with forest. The forest stretched as far as the mountains on one side, and as far as the sea on the other. One day the Sun was shining and the Wind Mother was dancing above the valley. Oh, how the forest loved the Wind Mother when her feet lightly touched the trees. Then the tree tops swayed and danced in her breeze.

But, deep in the forest, far down below the tree tops, there grew a little tree. It was an oak tree, not very old, with only a few leaves and one green acorn. It was much too small for the wind to reach because it grew in the shelter of so many big trees.

'Oh, Mother Wind,' cried the little oak tree, 'how I would love to feel your cool breezes on my branches. Oh, Father Sun, how I long for your light to fall on my leaves.'

The Wind Mother heard the little oak tree and plunged down into the forest. In and out between the tree trunks she blew, sending leaves scattering over the forest floor. She found the little tree, and round and round it she swirled.

'Little Oak Tree,' said the Wind Mother, 'I cannot always dive down into the forest, and the Sun Father cannot always reach you either. But we will give you a gift,' and she took the acorn in her hand and blew on it. In that moment a ray of sunlight shone down on the acorn too.

'From now on,' said the Wind Mother, 'a daughter of the sun and wind will live with you. She will stay in this little acorn and always look after you.'

'But what shall I call her?' asked the little tree.

The Wind Mother pondered deeply. 'My daughter will be a child of light and of color,' she replied, 'and she will also dance as lightly as a breeze—I shall call her Tiptoes Lightly.'

Then the Wind Mother swirled away through the forest. Up through the branches she blew, passing away over the trees and herding the clouds like sheep."

"So that's how you were born!" exclaimed Jeremy Mouse, clapping his hands together.

"We like your birthday story!" cried the mouslings. "Is your acorn house that very same acorn?"

"Yes," said Tiptoes, "it is."

"Then it must be very old! This whole tree must be very old!"

"Yes, it is," said Tiptoes, nodding her head. "Far older than anyone knows."

"Then you must also be very, very old," said the mouslings in awe.

Tiptoes laughed. "Yes," she agreed. "I am very, very old!"

"But you look so young!" exclaimed Ompliant.

"Thank you, Ompliant," smiled Tiptoes. "I'm glad you said that! I am both young and old."

Then Tiptoes flew up into the sky, and round and round the oak tree she went, singing in the breeze and glittering in the sunlight.