

The Tales of Peter the Pixie
By
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Images

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Peter and the Ants Pt 1.

It was a bright, warm spring morning. The air was fresh and crisp, the diamond droplets of dew stood tiptoe on the leaves, ready to float back heaven wards into a clear blue sky. The forest stream leaped and danced her way down towards the eternal ocean, full of herself and the melting snows of the highest reaches.

Bobbing gaily within the flood, amid the snow and ice sailed a large golden oak leaf, a very large leaf. On and on the leaf sailed, dipping and diving through the fast flowing waters, until the stream was split in two by a large boulder. The water of course split and flowed round the sides of the obstacle, except for one small area of water that would become trapped and spin round and round right where it should have gone left or right.

Into this whirling water wheel the large leaf slipped and so became trapped. The leaf spun round and round, and then something most interesting happened. A pair of pale green hands appeared and grabbed the sides of the leaf, and then there followed a head to match.

The small pixie who was a passenger in the large leaf was becoming very dizzy spinning round and round. His skin was acquiring a faint tinge of blue and he was starting to feel rather sick. The only thing to do was to get off of the leaf. As he spun round towards the

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boulder he took a big leap towards it.

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Unfortunately, he miss-timed his jump slightly and just missed the rock, he did find the water however, but that was not his intention.

Splash! The water was icy cold on the poor the little man's skin, he scrambled out of the freezing river onto the rock.

"Now what am I to do?" He moaned to himself.

There didn't seem to be anything to continue his journey in, and there was no way he could see to rescue his leaf. Not only couldn't he continue, but there was no-where for him to shelter on the rock.

"Well Peter," he said to himself, "you can't stop here all cold and wet, and if you can't go on, you'll just have to find somewhere to stay."

But where was the little pixie to stay? Yes he couldn't stop on the rock, but there didn't seem to be any way to get over to the river bank.

It was then that he noticed what was floating down the river, large chunks of ice, that must have broken off from a frozen lake high up in the mountains. Larger and larger pieces were heading towards him down the fast flowing river. Peter waited, and thought. Now thinking wasn't something that Peter did very well, (or often for that matter), but somewhere he knew that these still frozen blocks could help him escape his rocky island.

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The biggest blocks were coming nearer and nearer, and as they flowed around the rock, some of them became caught for a few moments. This caused other pieces to stop as they were blocked by those caught on the island. Quick as a flash, Peter saw what he had to do, he jumped from ice chunk to ice chunk, his floating bridge didn't stay still for long, but before all the big chunks had freed themselves and floated off, Peter had made it to the other side.

Peter shivered; he was very cold from his icy bath. He began to do a little dance on the spot to keep a bit warm, but as he started to move, he noticed that he was standing on something very soft. The leaves that he was standing on must be covering and filling quite a large hole. Peter dug down into the hole at his feet; it was quite deep, and warm at the bottom. Peter smiled to himself as he slid under the thick pile of warming leaves.

"I like this place," he said to himself, as he yawned and fell into a deep, deep sleep.

And there he stayed, sleeping in the hole, washing in the river and collecting shoots, berries and nectar to eat and drink. He was quite content to live like this, rough and ready, carefree and casual, until the day came when the sun didn't wake him, as it usually did, shining in his eyes. The morning was grey and sullen, the sky was grey and sullen, Peter was grey and sullen.

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"I do wish the clouds would go away and the sun would come out."

But the clouds did not go away, in fact they grew thicker still, and heavier and darker, and then it started to rain. Peter slid down under his deep pile of leaves, hoping to find some shelter. It seemed that the rain had the same idea, it too slid down under the pile of leaves, it was cold, and being rain, it was also very wet.

"Oh bother," cried Peter, climbing out of the cold muddy hole. He ran towards the woods, at least the trees there would give some shelter from the horrible rain.

It seemed a very long way to the beginning of the forest proper, lots of slushy muddy puddles, lots of slippery patches of grass, in fact lots of things just there to slow Peter down and make him colder, wetter and grumpier than ever. It was not a happy Peter that slumped down beside the old birch tree.

"It's just not fair," complained Peter, to no-one in particular.

"What's not fair?" queried a small voice, coming from somewhere on the forest floor.

"Who are you?" asked Peter to the voice, feeling surprised but also curious as to who or what the voice belonged to.

"I'm a gatherer, an ant gatherer." And as the little chap spoke, he climbed onto a piece of dead bark where Peter could see him.

"Pleased to meet you," he continued, waving his antennae and bowing to Peter at the same time.

"Well I'm Peter and I'm not pleased to meet anyone,"

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grumbled Peter.

"What's wrong?" asked his new friend.

"What's wrong?! Can't you see what's wrong? I'm all cold and wet and muddy."

And with that, the lonely, sad, little pixie started to cry. Poor Peter, huddled into a small ball, laying under the tree, crying.

Some little time later he noticed something, it felt like a gentle breeze stroking him, flowing up and down his body, and he was starting to feel a little warmer. He stopped crying, opened his eyes a little, and then very wide in total surprise. What he had been feeling wasn't a gentle breeze at all, but hundreds of little ants, running up and down his body, and the warmth that he was beginning to feel was due to layers and layers of leaves and pieces of moss that the ants had carried to cover him up with.

He started to feel better already, partly because of the warmth that he was feeling from his leaf and moss blanket, but he had also begun to notice a warmth inside, the warmth that comes from feeling loved and cared for.

"Thank you ants," he whispered gratefully, and fell into a blissful, happy sleep.

Being so cold, tired and exhausted, Peter slept through into the late afternoon. He finally opened his eyes as the sun was about to set, stretched luxuriously, and sat himself up.

"Good afternoon."

"Hello gatherer ant."

"How are you feeling now?"

"Much better now thank you, oh how wonderful!" Peter had just noticed a pile of fruit that must have been gathered for him.

"We thought that you would be hungry."

"You are very kind."

"No, we are just sensible, you would not have eaten, therefore you would be hungry." Suddenly Peter had a thought, (not a very good one, I might add), the smile went from his lips and his eyebrows came together.

"What do you want?"

"We do not understand, 'what do we want'."

"What I mean is, why are you being so nice to me? You must want something in return. And another thing, why do you keep saying 'we'?"

"I say we, because I am part of the ant colony, and we all think together, the same." Peter knew that what the ant was saying must make sense, but it didn't to Peter. "And as for why we do these things for you, it is because it makes more sense to us for you to be alive than dead, someday we might need your help."

"You mean that you went to all this trouble today because maybe someday I might be able to help you?"

"That is sensible, yes?" Peter stopped and thought for a while, and then he stopped and thought some more.

"Yes," he finally concluded, "that is very sensible, yes it most truly is."

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Peter and the Ants Pt2.

It was the day after Peter had met the gatherer ant when he had two thoughts. Now for Peter to have a real thought was unusual, but to have two on the same day, that was very special indeed.

The first thought was that he really needed somewhere warm and dry to sleep, (after all he had gotten very wet the previous day) and the second thought, which carried on from the first, was that he needed to find some others to help him build a real house.

The first job, to organise somewhere warm and dry to sleep was quite easy to manage, (he was clever, even for such a young pixie). He searched out a number of twigs from the forest, twisted them together in a criss-cross pattern, and leant them against a tree. He then covered the twigs with some of the moss and leaves that the ants had covered him with. Peter made what is called a bivouac, (although he didn't know the word for it).

When Peter had finished building his shelter, he sat down to think about his other job, 'to find some help to build a real house', (he knew that it was too big a job to build one by himself).

"Now," said Peter to himself, "who do I know?" Well, that didn't take very long to list.

"The ants, but they're much too small to be much help."

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At that Peter became stuck, he had come to the end of his line of thought, but he hadn't come up with the answer he hoped would be there. So he ate some food, and went to sleep.

The next few days soon passed, gathering food and improving his shelter, the question of the house crossed his mind a few times, but as he had no more ideas on the subject, they soon passed, and being a very optimistic Pixie, Peter knew that sooner or later the answer would come, and so it did

There was a small scurrying noise in one of the bushes near to Peter's shelter.

"Hello," called Peter, "who's there?"

"H-h-hello", replied a little smiling voice, "it's me." And with that a small furry head with long furry ears popped out of the bushes. It was a baby rabbit.

"Hello, my name's Peter."

"I'm R-r-robin, Robin the Rabbit." Said the little bundle of fur appearing out into the open, and standing very straight and proud. "What are you?"

"I'm a Pixie, I came down from the mountain in a leaf, and I now live here in the forest."

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"Don't you like people then?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Because no-body knows that you're here, and that must mean that you don't want anyone to know."

"But, I do. I just didn't realise that there were other creatures in the forest."

"W-w-would you like to meet some of them?"

"Yes, please," replied Peter, starting to feel as excited as the young rabbit.

"Come on then." And with that, they were off, two young excited creatures of the earth.

Robin introduced Peter to many of the forest folk. There was Horace the Humming Bird, who was the postman, (and forest gossip), Oswald the Old Owl, (who was a bit pompous and posh), Terrance the Tortoise, very careful and steady, Freddy the Fox, just the opposite, fast and flighty, Marvin and Melissa the Moles, Grandma Squirrel and all Squirrels and of course all the wonderful rabbits.

They were all very friendly and welcomed Peter in there own special ways.

"Hello-Peter-very-pleased-to-meet-you," zipped Horace the Humming Bird, "so-how-old-are-you, when-did-you-

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arrive, where-do-you-live?"

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"How do you do, young man? I am exceptionally pleased to make your acquaintance." Was only to be expected from Oswald.

And so on and so forth. And not only were they all nice to him, but he was invited to tea by three different families, the rabbits, the moles and the squirrels. Of course he chose to have tea with his new friend Robin, but promised to come back over the next few days and have tea with the others.

And so it was that Peter nestled into his soft, warm bed that night, full and happy with the world.

"What more could a Pixie want?" He happily asked himself. It was then the answer came. "A house, that's what more a Pixie could want, and now I know people that could help me build it."

And that's when Peter started on his plan, for you see, Peter reckoned that if he was specially nice to people and helped them and did favours for them, then when he decided that it was time to build his house everyone would owe him so many favours that they would be only too happy to help him out.

And so he started. Every morning he was out bright and early, hanging around the clearing looking for favours that he could do. Favours like helping Horace deliver birthday cards to the rabbits, who all seemed to have their birthdays on the same day.

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And fetching fresh dandelions for the moles so they could make some tea, when it was too bright for them to go out and get it themselves. Even crawling through a prickly gorse bush to retrieve Oswald's pince-nez glasses, when he coughed on a fluff ball and dropped them off the end of his nose.

In fact he was so helpful that everyone in the forest started to notice, (especially since every time he did something to help, he would mention very loudly how helpful he was). Unfortunately, his helpfulness didn't include everyone, in fact it only included people that he thought might be good to help him build his house. He helped those that could dig and organise and cut and build, but if someone that couldn't help him needed his help, he was always 'just a little too busy for the moment'.

- This also did not go unnoticed.

After a week or so of putting his plan into action Peter decided that he had done enough favours, and it was time that he 'called in' these favours and got his house built.

So he started to hint, to mention how cold it was sleeping under his shelter, how nice it be to have a real home of his own and how nice it is for people to be able to return favours to 'very helpful people'.

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And nothing happened!

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For a while Peter continued to be helpful, and to hint about his house, but by the end of the week he had realised that his plan wasn't going to work and so he stopped helping anyone at all.

Peter sat under his shelter and sulked.

That night there was a big storm and it was very, very windy. The trees bent and creaked, the leaves danced a wild jig, Peter was even a little frightened, but he slid down under his blanket of moss and leaves, and, thankfully slept.

The next morning was clear and bright, the sun shone, the sky was blue and the storm was forgotten.

"Peter, Peter!". A little voice was calling to him from the forest floor.

"Oh hello Gatherer Ant," answered Peter, when he realised who it was that was calling him. "Quite a storm last night."

"Yes it was," replied the ant. "Peter, we need your help."

"Oh yes?"

"A branch from a tree broke off in the storm and landed on our ant hill, will you lift it off for us, so we can rebuild our home."

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The ant's mention of 'home' reminded Peter of how upset he was that no-one had offered to build his house for him.

He answered in a not very helpful voice. "I suppose I do owe you a favour."

"Don't you want to help us?" The ant sounded very surprised. Peter explained to the patient little creature all about the favours and the house.

"Oh Peter, I am so sorry."

"It's not your fault."

"Oh but it is." Peter waited for the ant to explain. "When I said that it was logical to help others because at some time they might help us, I did not explain properly. It is also necessary to want to help because we enjoy helping, did you not feel the love as we covered you that night?" Peter thought back to the cold, wet night when thousands of ants that he didn't know and didn't know him, had covered him with leaves and moss and love.

"I remember," smiled Peter, "it felt so warm, not just outside, but inside too." Then he stopped speaking, he started to think and to feel at the same time.

"You cared for me, even though you didn't know me."

"For us that is logical, I apologise for not explaining better."

"That's okay," chirped Peter suddenly, "where's your ant hill?" And with that they were off. It only took Peter a minute to remove the branch but the ants were very thankful.

"Think nothing of it, it's my pleasure," smiled Peter, and off he went. Along the path he met Grandma Squirrel, she was someone that couldn't help him with his house, so he never had time to help her. Today however he did not think about what he could get from people, just of the pleasure of helping them. He took the heavy sack of nuts she had collected, and whistling a happy tune, he carried them to her home.

And so the forest met a new, kind, helpful Peter, who helped because that was what he enjoyed doing. Some days later Horace the Humming Bird brought a message that Oswald the Owl needed Peter to do him a large favour.

"Good day young Peter, I have a rather considerable request to ask of you".

Peter thought for a moment before replying, "I'll help if I can."

"Thank you Peter, your assistance is most appreciated. During the storm one of the herb gardens was spoilt, most of the herbs we can replace locally, but there is a

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special mint that only grows on the other side of the forest, would you obtain some for us?"

"Yes," said Peter, without even thinking about it. He had changed hadn't he?

The next morning Peter got up early and set off for the other end of the forest, it was hard going, especially as he hadn't been there before. It was nightfall before he found the wild mint, so he settled down for the night and slept and had lovely minty dreams.

It was late afternoon before Peter arrived back with the mint, and he was very tired, and more than a little hungry. He had hoped that maybe Oswald would have invited him in for tea after all the effort that he put into getting the mint, but he didn't.

Peter shrugged his shoulders and tiredly strolled back to his shelter but it wasn't there!

"Oh bother!" complained Peter.

"Something wrong?" inquired a little voice.

"Hello gatherer, something's happened to my home."

"Yes I know," said the ant, "we've moved it."

"Moved it?" shouted Peter, "where? why? "

"We moved it back to the edge of the stream where you

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wanted to live, and we did it because you've learnt to give without expectations." None of this did Peter really understand, and in a very tired, dreamlike way he walked to the edge of the forest and looked towards the stream.

"What!" he cried in surprise, for there, where the little hole was where he had first stayed, he saw the most beautiful, little wooden house. It looked so wonderfully warm and friendly, he could even see some smoke softly curling out from the chimney.

He gently opened the door.

"Welcome Home!" chorused his many new and real friends. And then they all sat down to a delicious hot supper.

Peter's Surprise

It was a bright clear morning when Peter decided that he would go out for a nice, long walk. He had made his bed, had his breakfast, washed up and tidied up his house, all his chores were done, and the day was calling to him.

'Now where should I go?' he asked himself, 'I know, I'll let my feet decide for me. Where ever my feet want to go, that'll be fine with me'. And with that sensible thought, he set out into the forest.

In the strange way that feet have, they led Peter in a direct line to his friend Elli's house. When he found himself outside her door he felt very satisfied with the choice his feet had made, and knocked on her door.

"Hello Peter, what a nice surprise, do come on in." Peter entered the fairy's little house.

"What's that white stuff on your nose?"

"Oh, that, it's just flour, I'm baking some pies, would you like to help?" Now Elli baked some of the best pies in the whole forest, and Peter often baked pies himself, but today he wanted to go walking in the woods.

"No thank you Elli, I really want to go walking today. Why don't you leave your baking for now, and come with me?"

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"I would really love to Peter, but I promised some pies to the rabbits this afternoon, it's their birthday. And I've already been out today; I had to make three trips to carry all the berries."

"Okay then," said Peter, "I'll see you later." And off he went.

'Right feet,' he said to them after he had left Elli's house, 'where to next?' Not very surprisingly, next turned out to be Timothy's rock.

"'Ello Peter." Came a deep voice from under the rock.

"Hello Timothy," replied Peter, as the big grizzly Toad slid out from the entrance of his hole, "what are you doing?"

"Cleanin'," replied his friend, none too happily from the sound of it.

"Why don't you come for a walk with me instead?"

"Now that's a much better idea," the old toad cheered up, but then he shook his head, "no, better not, I've been puttin it off for days now, and I've company coming round tomorrow. No, better not. Wouldn't mind a bit o' help though, me and the old broom are pretty worn out, both."

Peter stopped and thought awhile, he was a very helpful little pixie by nature, but he did so much want to go for a walk that day.

"Would it be alright if I didn't help you today Timothy, I

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do really want to go for a walk in the woods?"

" 'Course it is, 'ave a nice walk, and I'll see you later."

"Bye Timothy."

"Bye Peter". And so the feet were in charge again. This time they didn't take him to a friend's house, but on a wonderful walk through the wonderful forest. Towards the afternoon he met a weaver bird busy working with some long grass stalks.

"Hello weaver bird."

"Hello pixie."

"What are you doing?"

"I'm weaving a nest."

"May I watch you?"

"Of course you can, why don't you stand over here so that you can see better." And so Peter spent the rest of the day with the weaver bird, helping to collect grasses and stuff, and learning all about weaving. It was starting to get quite dark before Peter's stomach insisted that he went home.

"Good night weaver bird, thank you for showing me how to weave."

"Good night Peter and thank you for all your help."

On the walk home Peter got to thinking about weaving, and how much he had enjoyed helping the weaver bird.

It was then that he had idea of making a surprise, actually two, one for Elli and one for Timothy. He was

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quite excited by the time he had got home and started making his supper.

The next morning he was up bright and early, had a sandwich for breakfast, and then rushed out. He spent most of the morning collecting grasses for making the surprises, he was feeling very pleased with himself.

After lunch he settled himself down to work, and started to weave. Now, as this was his first proper weaving job it was going to take quite a long time, but he didn't mind, he was making a surprise.

It was about teatime when he heard a knock on the door.

"Who is it?"

"Hello Peter, its Elli." Oh, thought Peter, what do I do now, if I let her come in she'll see what I'm doing and that will spoil the surprise.

"I'm busy."

"Can I come in Peter?"

"No, you can't, not just now."

"Are you alright? You didn't come to the birthday party; I bought you a piece of pie." Peter had almost opened the door, when he stopped himself.

"Could you leave it outside?"

"Alright then," Elli didn't sound very happy about that,

"I'll see you tomorrow then."

"Maybe the next day."

"Oh, okay then, bye." And off she went. It was hard

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keeping a secret, but it would be worth while in the end, you see he was making Elli a big shoulder basket so when she next went out picking berries she wouldn't have to make three journeys.

Peter went back to his weaving, and was soon cheerfully whistling to himself again.

The next morning he was again out collecting grasses, when who should he bump into, but Timothy.

" 'Ello Peter, are you better now?"

"Better? I haven't been sick."

"I saw Elli last night and she was worried that you weren't well."

"I am perfectly alright thank you; I'm just very busy right now, good bye."

And very quickly, so Timothy didn't have time to notice what he was doing, or to ask any more questions, he left.

It was some days later that he had finished both Elli's basket and Timothy's new broom. Thankfully no one had tried to call round in that time, so there was no problem there.

'Now, I'll just tidy up, and put the broom and basket where they'll see them when they come in.' And that's just what he did do, in next to no time his was all tidy again, all the bits of grass were swept up and the surprises were placed facing the door. Peter made himself a nice refreshing pot of mint tea, and sat down to wait for his friends to come. And he waited and waited and waited, it got late, so he went to bed.

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The next day he tidied again, and waited. It was on the third day that he realised that no body seemed to want to come and visit, he got angry, and then very sad, and then angry again.

'If no body likes me, why should I make all the effort to make them surprises?' Peter went over to the presents and picked up the basket he was about to break it, when he noticed that he had placed it on the pie dish that Elli had brought the piece of birthday pie round on, and he made her leave it outside the door.

Peter started to think, (something that sometimes came quite hard for him), his friends had tried to be friendly, maybe it was something to do with him. Maybe they thought that he didn't want to be friends anymore. And that's when he had a REALLY GOOD idea. He sat down at his table, and wrote out an invitation for both of them to come over and have a cup of tea.

And when they did arrive he had made them a wonderful surprise party to say that he was sorry that they thought he didn't want to be friends with them anymore.

And were they pleased with their presents?

It wouldn't surprise me if they were....

Selwyn the Squirrel

It was a bright warm autumn day as Peter the Pixie was strolling through the friendly forest, when he suddenly heard a small scurrying sound in the undergrowth nearby.

"Hello," called Peter in his usual friendly way, "who's there?" The sounds stopped, and then a small head suspiciously peered over the ferns.

"Who is it?" challenged a small high pitched voice, speaking rather quickly.

"It's only me," replied Peter.

"And just who might you be?"

"Peter the Pixie."

"And what might you want, Peter the Pixie?"

"Oh, just to say hello."

"Well you've said it now, so good day".

"I don't know you, what's your name?"

"My name, not that it is any of your business, is Selwyn."

"That's a very nice name, Selwyn. Where do you live?"

"You are a very nosey Pixie, aren't you?"

"Yes I am," replied Peter who didn't mind being nosey a bit.

"Well, I live in a large birch by that clearing," he indicated a spot behind him with his nose, "and I am very busy now, so good bye".

"What are you doing, Selwyn?" Selwyn gave out a short sharp breath, as if to say, 'what do I have to do to get rid of this nosey pixie?', but being much too polite to say that, he explained.

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"I am collecting nuts, which is how I survive the winter, by gathering and storing nuts, which I eat when there is nothing else available."

"Oh I'll help you."

"I can manage quite well enough thank you, now I really must be getting on, good day." And with that the grey old squirrel disappeared into the undergrowth, and was gone.

A few days later, Peter was having tea with his good friend Elli the Fairy. He had told her all about his meeting with the gruff but very polite squirrel, who didn't seem to have any friends or even want any.

"Maybe he just needs someone to help him learn to make friends," suggested Elli hopefully.

"Didn't I already try that? I even offered to help him collect his nuts for the winter, but he made it very clear that he didn't want any help".

"Maybe we should try something else".

"Like what?"

"Like, you'll see." And the little fairy's eyes twinkled, as she returned to drinking her tea.

The months soon passed, and for Selwyn the Squirrel they passed much too quickly.

You see, the squirrel needs a certain amount of nuts with which to survive the cold winter months, but this year there seemed to be hardly any nuts at all. Selwyn was quite worried, he was still trying to collect nuts when the snows started, and should have been safely tucked up in his tree. It was on one such cold and bleak afternoon that he returned from another not so successful foraging

day that he found, much to his surprise, two well wrapped individuals waiting by his tree.

"Hello Selwyn."

"Good afternoon, nosey Pixie," replied Selwyn, in none too good a mood.

"Hello Selwyn."

"Well, what have we here? Oh, I am honoured, good afternoon fairy". Selwyn stopped then shook his grey furry head. "I suppose I had better ask the two of you in, I presume that you have come to see me." And with that he led the three of them into the interior of the large beech tree, outside which they were standing.

"It is nice in here," said Elli looking around.

"And so lovely and warm," said Peter taking off his coat.

"You seem to have made yourselves very much at home, next you'll be inviting yourselves to tea."

"Now that is very nice of you," Peter started to reply, when a sharp look from Elli cut him off. Now Peter did not always understand just why Elli did or said something or gave him one of her sharp looks, but he did know enough to take notice of them.

"It is very nice of you to offer ..."

"I didn't actually"

"... but I'm afraid we really can't stop this time."

"Not this time?" Selwyn was having rather a hard time following the conversation, and as for Peter, well should we say, he was trying hard to remember the words to a song he had made up about a robin and a beech tree.

"What we actually came for, was to invite you to the

winter solstice celebration next week."

"And what actually happens at one of these celebrations?"

"We all get together, and light a huge bonfire, to call in the earth spirits."

"And to keep warm," chipped in Peter.

"Then we all hold hands and sing and dance around the fire."

"And we have a huge party and eat lots and lots of goodies." Elli gave Peter a short but slightly disapproving glance.

"And then we all exchange gifts".

"I got some wonderful gifts last year, let's see ..."

"Peter! We exchange gifts to experience the joy of giving, NOT for what you get."

"Yes, and the more I enjoy the gifts I get, the more others experience the joy of giving to me."

"Thank you," interjected Selwyn, "I think that I get the basic idea."

"Will you please come then?"

"Well, young lady, I am rather busy at the moment. Nuts, you know."

"Please, please, please say that you'll come. I know that you will enjoy it."

"Well, since you asked so nicely, I would be honoured to attend."

"And we would be honoured to". And with that Elli turned and made for the door, Peter on the other hand walked closer to Selwyn, and in a very quiet voice said.

"Don't tell her I told you so, but she's actually much older than you are, much, much older." And having

gotten that important information off his chest, Peter followed Elli out of the tree.

It was the night of the solstice celebrations, Selwyn was just finishing dressing and combing his wiry grey hair, when he heard a knock on his front door. He opened the door to find, who else, but Peter standing there.

"Hello Selwyn."

"Hello Pixie, and what can I do for you tonight?"

"Oh nothing, I just came to help you carry your gifts."

"Gifts, what gifts?"

"You didn't forget did you? We all always exchange gifts during the party." Of course Selwyn had forgotten about the gifts, you see he was still trying to find more nuts to last him through the rest of the winter.

"Well," said Selwyn, "what a thing to suggest."

"I see them," said Peter.

"What?" And before Selwyn could say another word, Peter had walked up to his store of nuts and picked up two full sacks. Well poor Selwyn didn't know what to say, he couldn't very well admit that he had forgotten the gifts, but on the other hand how was he to survive the coming months? Peter solved the problem for him, taking the sacks, one over each shoulder he marched to the door.

"I'll look after them 'til you get there; it's in the great clearing. Don't be too long."

And with the contented smile of one who has just done a very good turn, he left.

"Well, well, well," sighed Selwyn, "I suppose I can only

hope and trust that some of the other animals will give me something that I can eat amongst my gifts. Anyway, at least I'll eat well tonight, and it is really time I met some of my neighbours." And with that positive thought he put on his coat and headed out.

He could see signs of the party from some ways off, the glow of the huge bonfire added a warm reddy glow to the frosty evening, but what was most noticeable was the display being put on by the fire-flies. They were dancing and playing in the night sky, forming beautiful intricate patterns and then suddenly flying off in all directions only to reform in another part of the sky with yet another wonderful, clever display.

Selwyn was quite cheerful by the time he arrived at the clearing, Elli was there, (she had been keeping a watchful eye for his coming), and she took him round and introduced him to many, many, happy smiling creatures. Of course he wouldn't remember all their names first off, but he was very good at remembering faces, and the names would fit with the faces quickly enough. There was lots to eat, and to drink, and he even learnt a few songs, (he thought he would leave the dancing to the younger folk). Then a large owl flew above and around the bonfire, calling for attention.

"That's Oswald," whispered Elli in his ear, "he usually takes charge of these things".

"Hem, hem," began Oswald, "fellow forest folk, firstly a wonderful welcome to all of you tonight, I'm so glad you could all attend. We are also extra fortunate in having a new guest and friend come to join us, Selwyn the Squirrel." Everybody turned to look at Selwyn, who, not being at all used to this sort of attention got rather hot and embarrassed.

"Welcome Selwyn, from all of us." And with that all the forest folk gave a big cheer. "And this being your first solstice with us, we would be most honoured if you would exchange gifts first." This had caught Selwyn rather on the hop, so to speak.

"Well, yes, thank you Oswald, I'm afraid that I have only brought some nuts and a few acorns, I do hope that they are acceptable."

"Of course they will be," Elli smiled up at him, "it's the giving that counts, not what is given." And out of the crowd came Peter, carrying Selwyn's winter store. One by one the animals filed past Selwyn, each receiving his or her nut as if it were some precious jewel, which in its own way, to Selwyn it was. 'Thank you,' they said, 'thank you very much'. And Selwyn, for the first time in his life really felt the pleasure of giving, the joy of sharing yourself with others. No longer was he concerned with thoughts of what he was to receive in return, or of food or other small matters, here and now HE was the spirit of plenty, the provider of happiness and pleasure, the bringer of joy.

'This', he thought to himself, 'is the happiest moment of my life, and it is by giving to others, how very strange.' And he smiled again, to himself.

Soon, too soon, it was all over, and his sacks were empty. He turned smiling to all his new found friends.

"Thank you, thank you all. Thank you for caring enough to invite me into your lives ..."

"Wait a minute," it was Peter that cut him off, "you haven't got your presents yet. You're supposed to say

thank you after you get your presents."

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All the younger animals agreed and started to chant, 'Selwyn's presents, Selwyn's presents.' Elli shook her beautiful head and gave out a little sigh, 'that Peter he has still so much to learn', she thought to herself and went to fetch her present for Selwyn.

The wood folk gathered round Selwyn, 'this way, this way', they gently pushed him towards an area at the back of the clearing. It was quite dark to begin with, but then a large group of fire-flies joined the party and lighted the way. Soon a large table came into sight, and was full of stuff, Selwyn approached the table, his eyes growing wider and wider. For the table was full of FOOD, all different types of food, pies and cakes and spreads and loaves, but everything, (according to his sensitive nose), was made out of nuts and acorns. 'So that's why I couldn't find my nuts, these friends, who I had never met must have been collecting them for months, to make me this wonderful surprise.' A large tear welled up in each of the old squirrel's eyes.

"Thank you," was all he could say, and all his new friends gave him a big hug.

The Unhappy Dragon Pt I

It was a bright autumn morning and Peter the Pixie was just finishing his breakfast of grilled newts, brown toast and dandelion tea. Peter stood up, gathered together his breakfast dishes, and humming a little song to himself, went into kitchen to wash up. Just as he was rinsing his knife and fork he heard a soft tap, tap, tap on his front door.

"Come in", shouted Peter from the kitchen. The door opened, and in came a beautiful little fairy.

"Hello Elli", said Peter emerging from the kitchen "is there something wrong?" For Elli was not her usual cheerful self.

"It's the Fire-Dragon, Peter, I think that there's something very wrong with him".

"What do you mean?" asked Peter.

"Well", said Elli, thinking hard to explain, "he's, he's, he's not being very nice". Now, to anyone that didn't know the Fire-Dragon, someone 'not being very nice', wouldn't be any cause for concern, but for the noble Fire-Dragon, this was very strange behaviour indeed. Peter stood and thought for a while, and, as thinking wasn't what he did best, the strain was starting to show.

"I know", he finally said, "why don't we have a nice pot of tea, and you can tell me all about it?" - And so they did.

It seemed that the Fire-Dragon was acting very odd, being rude and unhelpful, and, as Elli had said, 'not being very nice at all'.

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"I know what to do", the tea had helped Peter to think clearly, "we'll go and find Timothy, he'll know what to do".

Timothy, the earthy old toad, was happily sleeping in a pile of fallen leaves; the cool autumn sunshine was just the perfect temperature for the grizzly amphibian.

"Hello Timothy", called Peter.

Timothy opened one eye.

"Mornin' Peter", answered Timothy, closing the eye.

"Could you please help us, Timothy?"

"Oh, 'ello Elli", said Timothy, finally rousing himself, "what's the problem?"

And so they told him.

"Trouble is, no one knows too much about fire dragons, them bein' from abroad, but let's go and see if we can do owt to 'elp".

The first sign that there was something wrong was the discovery of a large notice, some ways off from the Fire-Dragon's cave. The notice said, "Please to be informed that this is the private property of the Fire-Dragon, trespassers will be consumed, enter at your own risk, or better, not at all!"

"I can see what you mean about his not being very nice", said Peter.

"'Ello, is there anyone in?" No answer. "It's us".

"Go away, you're not welcome here".

"But it's your friends, Peter and Timothy and Elli, please Fire-Dragon, do invite us in".

"Go away, you are trespassing, you have no right to be here".

"Put kettle on anyway, because we're here now".

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"GO AWAY!"

"He does sound very angry, hadn't we better do as he says, after all, this is his home, and I'd hate anyone to force their way into my house".

"Not unless they'd just baked a fresh pie", replied Elli.

"And", added Timothy, "this part of the forest belongs to all of us, just 'cus 'e's in a bad temper don't mean 'e can take over 'alf the forest".

"And", continued Peter, thinking that maybe he sounded a bit selfish, "and because we are his friends, and maybe he needs some help". And with that good thought, they entered the lair of the Fire-Dragon.

"Well, what do you want?"

"Hello Fire-Dragon, we've come to see you".

"So now you've seen me, good afternoon. And just what are you gorking at?" Peter was staring closely at the Fire-Dragon's body.

"What's happened to your beautiful scales?" For indeed the Dragon's honey golden scales had lost all their lustre and had turned to a muddy brown colour, quite ugly and drab.

"I said good afternoon, are you all deaf as well as stupid?"

"Now that is in'ereesting, what do you think Elli, some kind of flu maybe, of a form of tree bark infection?"

"It is very rude to ignore a person, and totally unforgivable to talk about them as if they don't exist". The Fire-Dragon was getting very angry by now.

"I really don't know, Timothy, I can heal most things, but the legends of the Fire-Dragons are so old...» she sadly

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shook her head.

"Will you please pay me some attention!"

"We are paying you attention, don't you 'ave any idea what's wrong with you?"

"There is nothing wrong with me that being left alone won't cure".

"Do you really believe that?" asked Elli gently.

The Fire-Dragon became silent for quite a long while, then he wearily shook his beautiful head. "No, I don't". And two huge tears welled up from his great golden eyes. The others didn't know quite what to say.

"But a cup of tea, can't do any harm", and in walked Peter with a tray, "I couldn't think of anything to do that could help, so I made some tea".

"Well that was a bloody good idea".

"Thank you Timothy", said Peter, felling quite chuffed with himself, "I thought rosehip might be nice for a change".

And so it was.

They all sat quietly for a while and drank the tea. The Fire-Dragon was the first to speak.

"I keep getting so irritable, everyone seems to be picking on me, I am constantly having to keep extending my property to stop people trespassing on my own space".

"Does that make any sense?" asked Peter, screwing up his face in an effort to understand the Fire-Dragon's logic.

"T' the Fire-Dragon it does, and that's good enough for now".

"Oh", said Peter, and settled down to enjoy his tea again.

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"And now I have become so ugly, no body likes me anymore". Elli stopped sipping her tea, and just looked at him over the rim of her teacup. The Fire-Dragon considered her silent reply.

"Well, maybe that part isn't totally accurate".

"Who is it that doesn't like you anymore?" Again the Fire-Dragon considered the fairy's reply.

"Me, I don't like me anymore. I'm ugly and selfish and nasty and mean and I'm not even truthful anymore. These things are not acceptable in a Fire-Dragon".

"So why don't you change them?"

"Easier said than done, Peter". Suddenly Elli looked up.

"Not for you, you are a Fire-Dragon. Fire-Dragons are magical, you can change yourself, in fact you must".

"I'm sorry, I don't quite follow you".

"We all live to a natural cycle, whatever we are, Pixies, Toads, Fairies, Butterflies, Snakes, even Dragons. Every so often the outer form that we have taken on, as to who we are, becomes old and starts to die. The new inner us needs to take on a different, new shape, bigger, better, more beautiful.

It's not people that are restricting you, suffocating, trespassing, it is your old shape, the old you".

"I don't understand", said Peter, scratching his head.

"I'll explain later, go on Elli, you're doin' fine".

"Fire-Dragon, now is the time of change, your old form is dying, if you don't let go, you will die with it".

"How do I let go?"

"Give up everything that you have, your space, possessions, even yourself".

"What will I then have?"

"The openness to receive what is to come, the freedom for the new you to form".

"Will you, my friends, stay with me?"

"Of course we will", they all chorused together. And with that, the Fire-Dragon set himself down on the floor, closed his eyes and

RELEASED EVERYTHING.

The air became very still, they could each hear their own hearts beating. It became cooler and cooler, their breathing became quieter, it was very, very still. The cave darkened, they could hardly see each other, the Fire-Dragon was just a dark shape on the floor.

And then something very strange started to happen, they heard something drop, like a piece of hard slate onto the solid floor and a narrow, bright, golden beam of light burst from his shape, another slate and another beam, then another, and another, and another. More and more, quicker and quicker the slates dropped and the beams broke forth from the body of the dragon, and the cave grew warmer and brighter, and the beams joined and melded and bathed the room in the most beautiful golden light.

And then, before them, resplendent in his brilliant coat of exquisite sunlight stood the Fire-Dragon.

"Happy Birthday Fire-Dragon".

The Unhappy Dragon Pt 2

It was late in the afternoon when the transformation occurred. The Fire-Dragon who had become dull and unfriendly, released himself from his fear of loss and change, and so became the beautiful radiant creature standing before his three friends.

"Happy Birthday Fire-Dragon," they chorused.

"Pardon?"

"We said, 'Happy Birthday', y' silly old dragon."

"But I don't know that it's my Birthday."

"You do now," said Elli, smiling.

"Oh, ... well ..., um, well, thank you. Yes, thank you all very much indeed."

"Is it really your birthday?" asked Peter, who said some very silly things, sometimes.

"Well, it seems to be the common consensus of opinion." Peter looked to Timothy.

"Yes, it is very much our opinion, that this what 'as 'appened, 'as been because 'e is starting to mature, in short, it's 'is Birthday.

"Right," said Peter, decidedly, "in that case, we must have a party."

"Well ...," said the Fire-Dragon, thinking about Peter's suggestion.

"Oh yes, you must have a party," Elli's eyes twinkled.

"Yes." "Yes." "Yes." And from out of shadows there suddenly appeared dozens of little Fire-Flies. "A party, a party," they all chorused together.

"Where did you all come from?" asked Peter.

"We were hiding from the Fire-Dragon's bad mood," answered one of the Fire-Flies.

"Aye, a party would be a good idea, now when should we 'ave it?"

"Why today of course," said Peter. "Today is his birthday, and that is when you have birthday parties."

"It's a bit late in the day to arrange a party, for one thing what about food?"

"Food isn't the problem, Timothy, I always make a point of having a good store of food in, one never knows when one might want to entertain."

"Well done, Fire-Dragon," cheered Peter.

"But," continued the Fire-Dragon, "the real problem is that there are only us and the Fire-Flies, and Birthday Parties always have lots of people." The others all looked just a little sad. "Then again," he turned to the three, "you are my very best friends, and," he smiled brightly, "I would be very honoured if you would all care to attend my Birthday Party this afternoon."

"Of course we will, thank you very much Fire-Dragon."

"No!" said Peter, so suddenly the others all turned round and stared. "The Fire-Dragon's right, a Birthday Party should have lots of people, that's part of the fun."

"Come now Peter, be reasonable."

"I am being reasonable, Timothy."

"But you can't insist that the party should be today, and then also insist that there be lots o' people as well."

"Why not?"

"Well for a start, it's getting late, who's going to tell

every one?"

"And there is another problem."

"What's that, Fire-Dragon?"

"Who would want to come to my party, after I've been so beastly to everyone?"

"Everybody." It was Elli that spoke.

"We'll come, we'll come," chorused the Fire-Flies, who loved any excuse to sing and dance and shower their golden glow dust.

"I fail to fellow your reasoning."

"Well," she answered, "firstly there is the fact that everybody really likes you, even if you have been very grouchy lately. And secondly it would be a very good way to say you're sorry for being grouchy."

"And thirdly, everybody loves a party," chimed in Peter "They're both right y' know, it would be a good idea.

Only 'ow do we get to tell 'em?"

"I know," Peter was full of ideas this afternoon,

"Horace."

Now Horace the Humming Bird was the forest gossip, if anybody wanted to find out anything about anything, Horace was the person to ask, he was also very good at spreading news. Before anyone could speak the Fire-Flies streaked out of the cave, in search of Horace.

"Oh no."

"What is wrong Elli?"

"Presents, how are we going to find you presents? It always takes me so very long to find just the right thing

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for a person, and we haven't got you anything."

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"Oh, but there you are wrong." The others looked to the dragon, not understanding.

"You have brought with you the greatest gifts that any one could ever ask for, friendship, love and understanding."

"And," said Peter, disappearing into the Fire-Dragon's kitchen, "I make the best pot of tea in the whole forest." And so they had a refreshing cup of mint tea before starting to prepare for the party.

Everything was going smoothly until they noticed that the air had become quite cold and damp, and then they heard it. A peal of thunder CRASHED through the air, the friends could feel, hear and smell the heavy flood of rain as it poured down from the heavens. They ran to the cave mouth to be confronted by a torrent of icy rain.

The Fire-Dragon sighed, "Well, I suppose that is that, no-one is going to want to come out in this weather, even if they wanted to." He turned and walked back into the cave. As the others moved to follow him, Elli stopped, she had noticed something coming through the rain. A number of golden specks and a larger figure were flying towards the cave. It was Horace and the Fire-Flies, and they were very wet.

It was some minutes before they were warm and dry enough to speak, the Fire-Dragon had breathed life into the huge fire-pit in the centre of the cave, and Elli had made a large bowl of steaming honey and rosehips.

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"They're coming, they're coming," chanted the Fire-Flies.

"We-saw-every-one-we-could-think-to-ask," continued Horace, in his high speed hum, "and-they-all-said-that-they-would-love-to-come."

"But what about the rain, how could anyone hope to see their way up here, in this atrocious weather?"

"I'm afraid you're right there, it's bloody rotten weather, can 'ardly see your 'and in front o' your face."

"Yes," sighed Elli, "even if they do want to come, how could they find their way?"

Suddenly the Fire-Flies started to dance, and laugh and sing.

"We know, we know, we know how to help them get here." And with that, they flew out of the room. With hardly a second to catch their combined breaths, the others ran to the mouth of the cave.

"Look, up there," shouted Elli, pointing up into the sky. A cloud of the hundred or so Fire-Flies that lived in and around the Fire-Dragon's cave were circling high up in the air. Then the cloud started to take on a definite shape, a circle? No, there were points on it, it was a star, a five pointed star. And by some magical means known only to the Fire-Flies themselves, they began to concentrate their energies, and from each of the five points, a perfect beam of brilliant gold shone out, left, right, up to heavens, and down to the earth.

"How beautiful," breathed Elli. The others just watched in amazement.

And then they started to see them, minute specks of light at first, then joining and growing and coming nearer and nearer.

In every direction they came, growing, glowing, shimmering clouds of gold, towards the radiating star.

And as they merged with the radiance it too grew in size and light. And still they came, in their hundreds, every Fire-Fly that had come and shared and had been illuminated by the Fire-Dragon's burning energy, returned to love and honour their benefactor.

And as the sky brightened still further, they started to see shadowy figures moving about in the forest, slowly through the mud and the rain they were coming.

Guided by the golden star, and driven for their love of their friend

Peter and Elvis

It was a warm, bright early autumn morning when Peter decided to go for a walk in the forest. He was in a rather quiet mood, enjoying the stillness of the season, the birds were not up yet and the woods were very still.

"Ouch!" Peter turned quickly, something had hit him on the cheek, and it hurt. It hadn't fallen from a tree because it had hit the underneath of his cheek. A small green pine cone rolled along the path.

"Who's there?" called Peter, quite angrily. There was no answer, only a rustling in the undergrowth. Peter followed the sound, first with his eyes, then with his body.

In the autumn, when the ferns are starting to die off, they become very brittle and make loud crunching sounds when you walk on them. It was quite easy for Peter to follow the sounds of his attacker.

Every so often he would catch sight of something bright red, and then something pale green, it was not very big, but it moved quite fast.

Finally, after chasing for quite some time Peter heard a yell, and a thump. The creature must have tripped over a hidden root and fallen down. Peter raced over to where the small figure lay.

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It wasn't easy to fully make out quite what his assailant looked like, as it lay sprawled out on the ground, it had fallen into a pile of dead leaves, which covered most of its body.

What Peter could make out though was the sound it was making - it was sobbing.

"Well," said Peter, rather loudly. The shock of hearing Peter's voice made the little elf, for that is what he was, roll himself up into a ball and start to cry.

"Don't hit me, don't hit me," pleaded the little man.

"Well you hit me first," replied Peter.

"You're bigger than me."

"Yes I am, and that means I can hit you much harder than you can hit me."

"There are lots of other elves in the forest, and if you hit me, they will all come and beat you up."

This last idea made Peter stop and think, which wasn't something that he often did. The thought of a large angry pack of elves beating him up didn't much appeal to Peter, so he tried to go back to his usual friendly self.

Unfortunately, the question he asked, and the way it came over, were not as friendly as he would have hoped.

"Why did you throw that pine cone at me?"

"Because you are a pixie."

"Is that the only reason?" Peter was trying hard to understand just why his being a pixie meant that an elf

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that he had never met before would want to throw a pine cone at him.

"You are a very stupid pixie, don't you know anything?" Peter didn't much like the tone of this conversation, and was just about to reply with a long list of some of things that he knew, when the offensive elf continued.

"All pixies hate elves, and all elves hate pixies."
"I'm not surprised, people throwing things at each other, and for no good reason. Yes, on this one thing we agree, I do not like you."

And as this seemed like a very good time to end the conversation, (and as Peter hadn't had his breakfast yet), he turned his back on the elf, and went home.

That afternoon Elli, Peter's fairy friend came round for tea. She had hardly stepped through the door when Peter started to grumble about his unhappy meeting with the elf.

" and," he concluded after telling her the whole story, before even offering her a cup of tea, "he quite spoiled my whole morning."

"It looks to me like you're both likely to spoil this afternoon too, you asked me over for tea, and there's no tea, nor sandwiches, nor cakes."

"Oh no," panicked Peter, and in he ran into the kitchen and put the kettle on. He of course had made cake and

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sandwiches, but being so upset, he had just forgotten to put them out.

"Can I offer you a little advice?", asked Elli, after she had had a cup of tea and a small lettuce sandwich. Somehow Peter knew that he was about to be told off for something.

"Yes I know I should have set the table and put the kettle on before you arrived, but I was still quite angry about this morning."

"It was this morning; I was going to talk about."

"Oh, okay then."

"Why didn't you try to make friends with the elf?"

"But I did try, it was his fault, he didn't want to."

Elli didn't reply, well not in words that is, she just looked at him over the rim of her tea cup. It is very hard to argue with someone when their argument is but a look.

Peter started to go red, first he felt very angry and hurt that his friend not only didn't agree with him about how unreasonable the elf's behaviour had been, but was also criticising him for his own behaviour.

The anger didn't last though, for it wasn't part of Peter's nature to stay angry for very long, and Elli was usually proved right in the end. (After all, she was much, much older than he).

He then started to feel embarrassed about acting so

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badly, this was strange, because he still didn't really know what he would have been expected to do, only that he hadn't done it.

Suddenly Elli smiled, "I'm sure that you'll meet him again, and that you can become friends." And as usual she wasn't wrong.

Several days later Peter was once more walking through the woods when he heard the sounds of arguing near by, being a rather nosy little chap, Peter went to investigate.

The main argument was between two squirrels, Steven, a small grey, and Sandy, a large brown. Added to their quarrel were several other greys and browns, and a very angry little red and green chap.

".... haven't you been listening to a word I've been saying? The situation, Steven, is simply this. We brown squirrels always collect our acorns here."

"It's not fair, it's just not fair, these are the best acorn trees in the forest."

"And," joined in the little man, "it's also my home, so will you please all go away, and have your arguments somewhere else." He was looking quite angry, and Peter noticed him then bend down and pick up a small, hard pine cone. The fact that all the squirrels were totally ignoring him didn't help his temper.

"Anyway," continued Sandy, "any fool can see that these trees are much too far away for you to carry the acorns back to your burrows, you're much too small."

Peter had been thinking whether or not he should say something, and if so, what. As luck would have it, as he moved round to have a closer look, he stood on a dead twig; the sound attracted the attention of some of the rabbits, and the elf.

"Hello," said Peter, it wasn't much, but he had to say something.

"What are you doing here?" enquired the angry elf.

"Hello elf, so this is where you live," and then to the rabbits, "what's the argument about, I don't understand."

Peter was always happy to admit when he didn't understand something, (which was quite often), because people were usually very happy to explain to him.

"It is all very simple," Sandy began, "these acorn trees have always been for the large brown squirrels, the acorns in the small grove are nearer the small grey's burrows, and that's the way it is."

"So what's the problem?"

"There was that storm last month," continued Steve, "and it damaged some of the trees, and now there aren't enough acorns to go round."

"Oh," remarked Peter, and that was all he said, mainly

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because he couldn't think of anything else to say.

"And," suddenly broke in the angry elf, "they are arguing right next to my house."

"Oh yes," Peter suddenly remembered something, "my name's Peter, how-do-you-do Mr. Elf?"

"Not very well, pixie," immediately responded the elf.

"Well, that's not a very nice way to talk to Peter." It was Sandy that spoke.

"Yes, that was very, very rude," agreed Steve.

"I can be rude to a pixie, if I want to."

"Why don't you like pixie's?" asked Peter, more puzzled than hurt.

"Because they're big, and they hurt us little folk."

"But I'm the same as you, maybe a bit bigger, but my friend Elli says that elves and pixies are cousins, she says that we're relatives, and relatives shouldn't fight."

"That is quite correct," agreed Sandy, "relatives should look after and help each other." It was at that point he stopped and turned round towards Steve.

"Just as we browns are close relatives to you greys." He suddenly looked very embarrassed.

"Yes we are," quietly agreed Steve, "I'm sorry Sandy, just because our favourite acorn trees were spoilt, that's no reason to take from yours. There are many other acorn trees in the forest."

"But these are the best ones," the bigger squirrel was thinking as he was talking, "the one problem that we have is that the sweetest acorns are at the very edges of the branches, and we're much too heavy to get them

down without breaking the branches, and hurting the trees."

"We could get them down for you."

"And we could share out the acorns, and help carry some home for you." Sandy then turned to Peter, "thank you Peter, thank you very, very much."

It seemed that people were often thanking him for reasons that he wasn't very sure of, but if he had helped that made him happy anyway.

"I'm very happy to have been of assistance," he politely answered.

"And I suppose I should also thank you for stopping this argument outside my house." The elf stopped for a second or two, and then he broke into a big smile, and held out his hand.

"How-do-you-do cousin Peter? My name's Elvis."

Images

It was a day like many other days when Peter arrived at Elli's house. The sun was shining, the birds were singing and a white powdery frosting was noticeable on Elli's small upturned nose.

"Hello Peter."

"Hello Elli, what are you baking?"

"Apple and blackberry," she replied returning into the kitchen to put the kettle on and continue with making her pies.

"What are you doing this morning?" Peter stopped to think for a moment; for although this wasn't a complicated question, it was one he hadn't a ready answer for.

"Oh, I know, I'd thought I'd come round and see you." Elli shook her head to herself and continued with the pies.

Pretty soon the tea was ready and the pies were in the oven. The two friends were sat in Elli's pretty sitting room drinking a refreshing cup of elderberry tea.

"... yes, it really is lovely day." Elli finished saying, agreeing with Peter.

"What are you going to do after you've finished making the pies?"

"Well I do have some cleaning and tidying up to do. Did you have something in mind?"

"I just thought, since it is such a wonderful day, maybe we could go for a walk and have a picnic."

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"Peter, that is a most charming idea, and we can have a fresh slice of pie to take with us."

And with that they fell into discussion about the details of the picnic. Peter was to go home, via Timothy's hole, and see if Timothy would like to come with. Then he would make some sandwiches and meet up with Elli at noon, and from there they would set off for a nice walk and a picnic.

"Hello Timothy", called out Peter. He was standing by the battered, rotten log that marked the entrance to Timothy's hole.

"Oh, 'oo's that? Wait a minute." And from out his hole the grisly, old toad appeared.

"Oh, 'ello Peter, it's you is it."

Timothy didn't seem very awake somehow, he kept stopping and looking around as if he'd lost or forgotten something, and then quiet suddenly would start talking again.

"Good morning Peter and how are you today?"

"I'm very well, thank you Timothy. Are you alright?"

"What? Me? Oh yes, well actually, umm maybe.... no."

"What's wrong?" Peter was starting to feel quite concerned, he knew that Timothy was very old, but whether this was something that usually happened to old toads, or if it was something else, he had no idea.

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"Wrong? What do you mean, 'what's wrong'? Oh yes, I see. Well, it's a 'flu I think, yes, yes it's the 'flu."

Although Peter didn't know much about 'flus, what he did know was that they were curable, and he also knew someone who would know all about how to cure them.

"Elli and I are going on picnic this afternoon, would you like to come with us? And maybe Elli can find something to help cure your 'flu."

"That is a crackin' good idea, yes, yes, yes,," and he continued to mumble to himself as Peter waved him goodbye, and returned to his own little house.

It was just after noon when Peter and Timothy arrived back at Elli's pretty, rose covered house.

"Timothy's got the 'flu," burst out Peter, just as soon as they were through the front door.

"Well," replied Elli, "we'll have to do something about that, won't we?" in her semi-serious nurse like voice.

"Do you know 'ow t' cure toad 'flu?"

"Fairies know all about healing, don't they Elli?"

"Fairies know a lot about many things," replied Elli, a little mysteriously. "Do you feel well enough to come on the picnic?"

"What?" Timothy had drifted off again.

"ARE ... YOU ... WELL ... ENOUGH TO ... GO ... ON ... THE ... PICNIC?"

"I am neither stupid nor deaf, thank you Peter. Of course

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I'm well enough to go on the picnic."

"Good, I can collect some herbs on the way, and brew you up a tincture, when we stop for tea." And with that decided, they set off for the picnic.

It was a beautiful afternoon, and apart from having to remind Timothy that walking involved moving his feet from time to time, (as he sometimes just stopped because he forgot what he was doing), it was quite perfect.

On occasion Elli would disappear off to find a certain herb or flower for Timothy's 'flu remedy, it was wonderful to have such a clever and caring friend as the pretty, little fairy.

They had decided to picnic by the side of the great gorge, a magnificent canyon, carved out by thousands of years of rivers passing through it.

"Look at me," shouted Peter, as he balanced by the very edge of the drop.

"Peter come away from there, right now!"

'Just 'cus she's older than me, doesn't make her my mother', was Peter's first thought, but than again it was quite a steep fall if he should slip. So he shrugged his shoulders and walked back towards his friends.

"Peter, could you fetch some twigs for a fire, while I go and get some water, please."

"Okay," and off he went. Elli took a jug out of her bag

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and went for the water. They both forgot about Timothy until...

"Oh 'elp!!!"

Peter was the first to arrive.

"Elli, quick, Timothy's fallen over the cliff." Timothy must have forgotten about being close to the edge of the gorge, and just walked over. He was now clinging onto a small shrub, several feet below Peter and Elli.

"What shall we do, Elli?" The fairy stopped and thought for awhile.

"Your trousers, take off your trousers."

"But they're the special ones you made me." (Elli had made Peter a very special pair of trousers, made from leaves that had been super strengthened by a secret process.)

"Hurry up Peter". He reluctantly took his trousers off. Elli tied the ends of the legs together and passed them down to Timothy.

"Here Timothy, grab onto these."

"What?" said Timothy, who had gone funny again.

"Timothy, grab onto my trousers."

"But I'm too heavy for you to pull up".

"Please Timothy, grab hold of them."

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"No, I'd just pull you both down as well."

"Timothy, do as you're told!"

Now Elli did shout at Peter once in a while, but Peter had never heard her speak to Timothy like this.

"Okay then." And with that he let go of the bush with one of his hands, and hooked it through the trousers. "Okay Peter, let's pull him up." Peter was a little confused, he knew that he wasn't strong enough to pull up Timothy, but Elli seemed so sure of herself that he didn't feel he could argue.

'Okay then Peter,' he said to himself, 'it's all up to you now.' And with that he started to pull.

And as he started to pull, Elli slipped behind Peter and grabbed him round the waist, she then unfurled her wings and started to slowly, but firmly flex them.

He could feel the air being gripped and forced below these fine but powerful silken petals.

Over his shoulder he could just see that her fine smooth jaw was set in clear determination, tiny delicate muscles tensed and flexed, and Timothy started to feel himself being dragged up, back to the edge of the cliff.

Peter and Elli pulled, further and further away from the edge they backed. Elli's wings kept their steady, slow rhythmic beat.

Peter could feel the magical power radiating from the little being behind.

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And somewhere, even when he was concentrating so hard on pulling his old friend to safety, he had time to turn his head and catch a fleeting glance and to be amazed that the gentle, little, caring, creative female that he thought he knew could be so very, very strong.

And then it was over, Timothy was safe and once more Elli was being the nursing healer.

Nothing more was said about the rescue. Timothy, although he was fully recovered several days later, didn't remember, and Elli didn't mention it, but as for Peter, the sight of Elli, dragging Timothy up, almost by herself, is an image he will always remember.

That and Elli with flour on her nose on a baking day.