

From – The Tales of Tiptoes Lightly

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Edited extract from Chapter 21 – the illustrations are not included

The Tale of Crystal Fire

Once, a long time ago, there was only one fire in the world. It was hidden inside a mountain underneath the sea. It was guarded by a fire spirit called Fire Flame, and he never left its side. The fire sat in a crystal bowl and burned forever. It fed Fire Flame and kept him warm. Its light let him see all things under the earth, and all things upon the earth, and he was happy.

One day, after many, many years, Fire Flame looked around the world and saw a marsh nymph playing in the moonlight.

“Oh, how beautiful she looks,” thought Fire Flame. “I would like to visit her.”

From that day on Fire Flame was no longer happy. He loved the only flame in the world and he loved the marsh nymph, and never was he at peace. His heart was torn and he grew sad, and as he grew sad the only fire in the world grew smaller and smaller in its crystal bowl. Fire Flame realized the fire was dying and that he could no longer care for it properly. So he took it up onto the earth and placed it on the ground.

Then he went to the marsh nymph and they were happy together and had many children. Even to this day you can see marsh-fire children glowing and flickering in swampy places.

But what happened to the crystal bowl and its flame of fire?

Creatures from all over the world came to see this strange sight – for they had never seen such a thing as fire. Some were afraid of it and ran away. Some touched it and were hurt. They never touched it again. And some, like the moths, thought it so beautiful they flew into it, but the fire burned them up. And so it went for all the animals – none of them could live with the fire.

One day, two human beings came along. They were young – a man and a woman. They sat by the fire for a long time and looked at it. Then they took it away. Now, all over the world, men have fire and know how to use it.

Human beings, however, were not interested in the crystal bowl and lost it. But Karnak, King of the Gnomes, found it and learned its secrets. Now the gnomes know how to grow crystals and make them in every shape and color.

And if you look carefully inside crystals you'll see flames glittering and glistening. That's because they remember the fire that once burned in the crystal bowl, long, long, ago.