

From: The Treasure Cave

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14

How Kradak changed the Trees

After supper the family sat by the fire. The living room had two large windows looking out to sea, a worn wooden floor with old rugs scattered about, and paintings the family and children had made hung on the walls. The best spot on cool autumn evenings was around the fireplace. Stuffed armchairs sat on either side and a sofa covered with blankets and cushions was in the middle. The fireplace was large and open, with a wooden mantelpiece. Beside it sat the box for firewood.

"Where's Tiptoes?" asked Farmer John. He was sitting on the sofa.

"I don't know," said June Berry. "I haven't seen her for hours."

"Here I am," said Tiptoes from the mantelpiece. She often turned up when people talked about her. She flitted down and sat on the armchair next to June Berry.

"Are you ready for the tale to continue?" she asked. "Tom wanted to know about the fire fairies that dance in the flames."

Tom nodded and June Berry tucked her legs underneath her and propped her head on her hand. She was tired from all the fresh air and exercise.

"Once," began Tiptoes, "the world was full of giant trees."

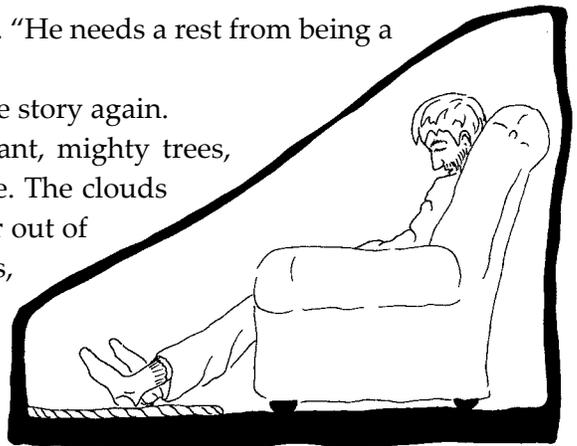
That was as far as she got when Farmer John's head fell forward. He'd fallen asleep again.

"That's funny," laughed Tom. "He falls asleep in a flash. Perhaps it's the only way he can hear your story."

"Maybe, but he's had a busy day too," said Tiptoes. "He needs a rest from being a farmer. This is the only holiday he gets in the year."

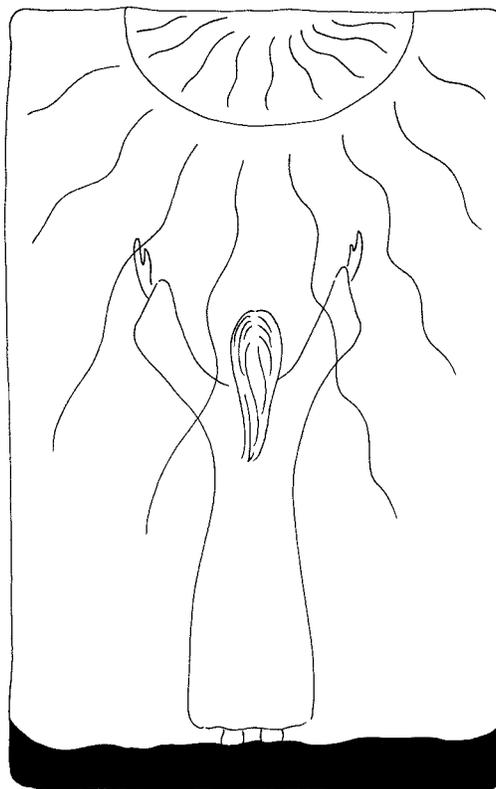
Tom put a blanket on his dad and Tiptoes began the story again.

"Once, the world was full of trees. They were giant, mighty trees, for they were the children of Kalor and Vallor and Vive. The clouds sent down rain upon them and the trees drew the water out of the ground and gave it back to the clouds. In those days, clouds and trees were brother and sister, even as they are today.



And in those days, Asherah the Earth Mother, still walked upon the earth. She was young and beautiful and loved the trees. Often and often she turned to the sun and thanked Kalor and Vallor and Sister Vive for their gift:

*“O shining Ones,
O you, who cloth the radiant sun,
Who give us trees from wellsprings springing,
I give you thanks
For gifts of joy and beauty giving!”*



But under the ground Kradak was jealous. He wanted Asherah to love only him and his creation. He made the rocks and boulders and the heavy weight that binds the earth together. Finally his jealousy turned to rage. He rumbled under the earth and shook the ground. He ground the rocks, and rocked the lands, and the lands sent dust into the air. Then the clouds filled with the dust and turned black or brown or rusty red. The clouds rained: black rain, brown rain, rusty rain, and the rains showered down upon the earth and trees. The mighty trees took the black water, the brown water, and earth-red water into their trunks. They lifted it into their mighty limbs, and into their branches and twigs. All the trees turned black or brown or earthy red. And they shrank; the mighty trees shrank under the heavy weight they carried.

Kradak was happy. He danced about and shook the earth and sent volcanoes bursting into the sky. But Asherah was not pleased.

“Kradak,” she cried in a terrible voice. “Stop! Cease! No more!” and she stamped her foot on the ground.

Instantly Kradak felt her foot upon his head. It drove him deep into the rocks and boulders. He groaned and shook. He gnashed his teeth. He tore his hair and roared.

"Kradak!" cried Asherah again. "Be still!" and she pounded the earth with her foot once more.

Kradak shuddered under her blow and fell silent. Even today he keeps quiet and does not make much fuss—though now and then he coughs from a tickle in his throat, and that's when we have earthquakes. And if he has a cold and blows his nose, then a volcano explodes and sprouts smoke and ash."

Tiptoes stopped telling the story and looked at the clock on the mantle. It was getting late.

Suddenly Farmer John's head jerked up. He looked around wildly and leaped from the couch.

"I felt an earthquake," he cried. "The whole house shook!"

"No, dad," laughed Tom. "You were dreaming the story again."

"I was?" said Farmer John, sitting down.

Tom and June nodded. They were grinning. Their dad sat for a while, trying to wake up.

"Goodness—look at the time," he said. "You guys have to brush your teeth and get to bed."

Tom was halfway to the bathroom when he stopped, threw up his hands, and cried: "And Tiptoes still hasn't told us about the fire fairies."

