

From: *The Treasure Cave*

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The first Trees

After supper Tom Nutcracker and June Berry cleared the table while their dad made the beds. They sang as they washed the dishes:

*"This is the way we wash the dishes:
Fill the tub and add some fishes,
Let them swish their scaly tails
And clean the cups as big as whales!"*

And they sang some more as they put the plates and cutlery away.

*"Store the plates upon the floor,
Throw the bowls into the drawer,
Stack the knives upon the shelves
And let the cups go hang themselves!"*



When they were finished they went to the living room and found Tiptoes sitting close to the fire.

"Can we finish the story?" asked Tom.

"Let's wait for your dad," said Tiptoes.

So they sat and watched the flames flickering over the logs and the smoke rising up the chimney. After a while Farmer John came in and drew the curtains.

"You're quiet," he said.

"We're waiting for you," said Tom. "Tiptoes is going to finish her story."

"Oh, I see," said Farmer John, settling down on the sofa.

He looked around for Tiptoes.

"She just flew up next to me," said June Berry, patting the armchair.

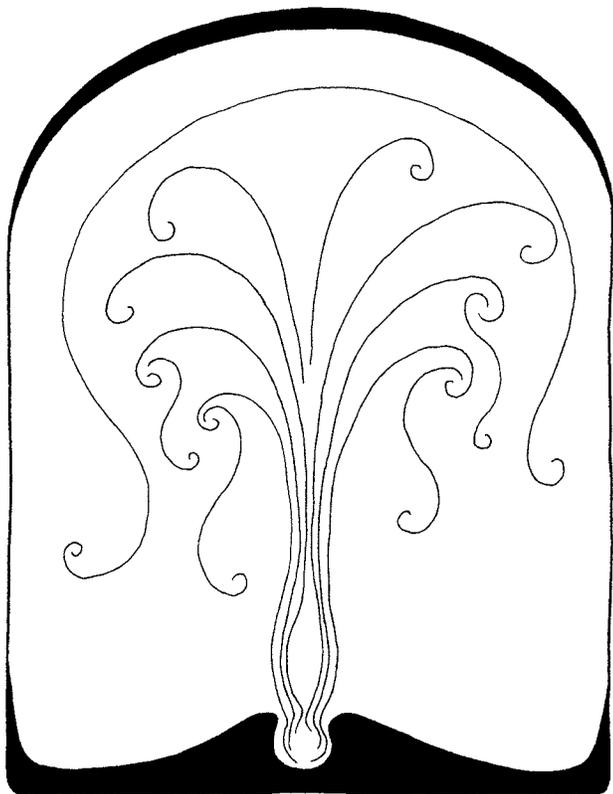
Farmer John nodded, but still didn't see her. Tiptoes smoothed her blue dress and continued the tale of the fire fairies—but as soon as she began Farmer John's head nodded forward and he fell fast asleep.

"All over the earth," said Tiptoos, "the seeds of Sister Vive sprouted and grew. These were the first plants. Some were tiny, some were tall, and some were so small they were hardly there at all!"

"Just like today," said Tom.

"Yes, except they didn't look like plants do today," said Tiptoos. "Oh, no, not at all! They had only three things: warmth from Brother Kalor, light from Brother Vallor and life from Sister Vive. If you saw one today you'd hardly see it at all—maybe just a delicate light hovering over the ground. The trees were especially wonderful. They were like living fountains that sprang from the earth. They were flowing, glowing, shining fountains of light."

"That sounds beautiful," said June Berry.



"They were," said Tiptoos. "But if one of those trees was here today you could walk right through it. You'd be walking along, tum-dee-tum, minding your own business, when all of a sudden you'd be warm. 'Why am I so warm?' you'd say, and take off your jacket and scarf. Then you'd see shimmering light all around you. It'd be rising out of the earth and springing high into the air. And if you were sick and feeling bad you'd instantly be better and full of life. Way back then whole forests of these wonderful trees grew on the earth, and Kalor and Vallor were pleased.

'That's much better,' said Kalor.

'Much, much better,' agreed Vallor. 'Now the earth doesn't look like a bald goose egg any more,' and the two brothers patted each other on the back and said what a great job they had done.

Their younger Sister Vive was happy too. She gazed down and knew that her seeds would change the earth—and that the earth would change her seeds."

Tiptoos stopped speaking and looked at Farmer John. Suddenly his head jerked up and his eyes opened. He looked around the room with bleary eyes.

"I had such a strange dream," he said. "I saw trees of light, but the light was flowing and growing like fountains of water."

"You dreamed the story," laughed Tom and June.

"I did?" said Farmer John, rubbing his eyes.

Tom and June nodded yes.

Farmer John yawned and looked at his watch.

"Nooooo!" cried Tom, throwing himself onto his dad's lap and covering his watch. "Don't send us to bed. Tiptoos hasn't finished the story. She still hasn't told us about the fire fairies."

"But look how late it is," said Farmer John. "We've had a long day and it's way past bedtime. Tiptoos will have to finish her tale some other night."