

TALES OF A SMALL TOWN

The Dwarves of the Giant Tree

There was a garden in a small town and people used to gather there in the evenings. There were too many park amusements for kids in the garden: roundabouts and swings and distorting mirrors and what not. Grown-ups enjoyed walking in the alleys.

There was a giant tree at the place where all the alleys of the garden gathered. The tree was inhabited by little dwarves who were as light as feathers. They used to put their hands under their heads and lie on the broad leaves every single day, watching the birds while they were soaring in the air.

In the evening the dwarves would ring a silver bell and the kids would gaily run from the park amusements to the tree.

They'd stand under the tree and stare at its lowest branch.

Then one of the dwarves would come out on the branch, they did it in turns, smile to the kids and think how to introduce his story. All the dwarves could walk upside down, sing, dance and jump from a branch to another...

But the most important thing was that the dwarves knew a great many interesting stories.

And the kids used to listen to the dwarves till midnight.

None of the mothers worried about their children – the mothers knew where the kids were.

Each kid stood under the tree with his breath bated and a smile played on his face.

Then they went home where they smiled even when they were asleep...

Then the summer would be over.

The leaves would turn yellow and as soon as the first autumn wind blew, all the leaves would tear off the tree and rise into the air together with the dwarves who watched the birds just to master flying...

And dwarves would stand on the hovering leaves with their hands stretched out and fly hither and thither.

Each flight was so wonderful...

You could see the hovering dwarves everywhere in the town...

And the grown-ups watched the dwarves together with the kids...

At sunset, they'd fly to the tree, make a few circles around it and one by one easily leapt down onto the branches. As for the leaves, they slowly fell down and made a carpet on the ground.

Then the dwarves would sadly smile to the townspeople from the branches of the tree: they'd have no chance to fly the whole year round on...

The townspeople would look at the dwarves and tears would well up in their eyes.

The dwarves would wave a farewell and the townspeople would go away.

Everyone picked up a single leaf, put it in his bosom as a keepsake to remind him of the day. Then the kids didn't come to the crying dwarves who cried because they wouldn't be able to fly for a year. They didn't want anyone to see their tears...

Then the townspeople would make winter preparations. The little girls sewed and knit warm clothes for the dwarves and the boys helped them in sewing and knitting...

Then the winter would set in. The kids would feel pity for the dwarves and would tell them:

"Get down from the tree and we'll take you home!"

But the dwarves didn't want to leave their tree. So, now the kids had to amuse them and they ran under the tree, had snowball fights and rolled in the snow.

Then the winter would be gone. The dwarves would cheer up with the first leaves of the spring.

They looked after the leaves and the leaves grew broader and broader...

When the leaves became broad enough the dwarves would lay down on them and watch the birds...

It was their way of life.

It was late autumn when a strange thing happened in the town. The leaves were ready to fall down but the wind seemed not to be going to rise.

The sad dwarves sat on the leaves and looked into the sky.

The townspeople were puzzled. Everyone sat at home, resting his head on his palms, and thought what could be done. Finally, the kids found the way out. They visited everyone in the town and gathered the townspeople under the giant tree.

Then a girl, who had a blue ribbon on her head, began to count:

“One, two, three...”

And the townspeople blew at the tree all together.

And the leaves began to sail in the air.

And the dwarves easily hovered to the sky.

The kids were blowing. The grown-up aunties and uncles puffed their cheeks amusingly and blew and blew with great enthusiasm and brightened up because they felt they were still kids...

And the dwarves hovered so gracefully.

To tell the truth, they enjoyed the breath-made flying more than the ordinary flights provoked by the wind...

The kids were glad that the good idea had occurred to them and they shouted to the dwarves:

“Don’t worry! We’ll come tomorrow and help you to fly!”

Not to stop blowing, the grownups simply nodded their agreement and twinkled their eyes.

The dwarves were so glad that they shoot upwards...

The townspeople took pleasure in watching their flight and blew at them more and more enthusiastically. Then they got tired but they didn’t show it, just went on blowing in turns...

But there was a man who got bored with blowing. He pretended to have an urgent business at home and went away.

On his way home the man thought:

“Well, it’s interesting that our blows can make these dwarves fly. Why are they so light? I must find out what they’re made of and what keeps them alive...”

That evening the dwarves sat down on the branches of the tree together with their leaves and the kids shouted:

“See you tomorrow!”

The tired but cheerful townspeople broke up...

In the darkness of the night, the man who’d pretended to have an urgent business, stole up to the tree, climbed it and seized the first dwarf whom he managed to see there. He wanted to put the dwarf into his pocket and take him away.

But as soon as the man touched him, the dwarf disappeared.

The man gaped in astonishment, let the branch out of his hand and fell flat on the ground.

His back was aching but he was so afraid of being caught there that he still managed to run away...

The next day, the townspeople couldn’t find the dwarves on the tree.

There were leaves on the ground under the tree and the tiny stains left by the tears of the dwarves could be seen on each one.

Everyone saddened, especially kids. Even the toughest boys were crying...

But the dwarves hadn’t disappeared. The birds had taken them to the woods.

And lived the dwarves on a large tree in the midwood, worrying about the kids.
And the birds flew throughout the town, hovering above the kids and sometimes even touching them with their wings.
Every autumn, when the leaf fall begins, the birds flutter at the windows at night and wake up the kid who worries about the dwarves the most.
Then they lead the kid to the dwarves' tree.
The happy dwarves show the kid this and that. They jump and romp for the kid, sing and dance and turn somersaults, telling him different amazing stories.
The happy child watches the dwarves and smiles.
It's the kid's smile, what keeps the dwarves alive, but the dwarves themselves are unaware of the fact...
Then the kid blows at the dwarves, sending them to the sky. The breath of a single child is enough to let them fly...
And the birds hover over the town to choose the kid who worries about the dwarves and who'll never reveal their whereabouts. Otherwise someone will touch them again and then maybe the flying dwarves will disappear forever.
Unfortunately, now there are very few people in the town, who wholeheartedly believe in the existence of the flying dwarves.
The giant tree still stands at the end of the town.
In autumn, people burn its leaves together with the leaves of the ordinary trees.
But sometimes townspeople find the dotted leaves of that tree in their books and smile.
They look down at the leaves and cannot understand what's up with them.
They just smile and tears roll down their cheeks.

Loving the Rain

Once upon a time there was a man who lived in a small town and loved the rain very much. He always knew when it was going to rain and used to go out with his arms outstretched to meet the rain there. When kids saw the man waiting for the rain, they went out and looked at the sky together with him. And the man used to get wet there.
And the kids used to frisk about.
“We can understand why the children are jumping about. No one can make them responsible for anything, but you aren't a kid any more”, - were the words the man often had to hear.

And the brief answer was always the same:

“The water from the sky makes the rain”.

And loved this man the rain very much: there was no business that he couldn't change for standing in the rain.

When the forefeeling of rain came to him in his sleep he could fling out of the house even in the middle of the night...

One day, when he was standing with his outstretched arms in the rain, he felt a tip on his palm.

He looked down and saw a seed. It was blue and transparent.

“What a wonder!”, - though the man who'd never seen such a strange seed but he knew for sure what he'd do with it.

When the rain stopped the man sowed the seed into a pot and took it out to the balcony.

And a flower burst out of the pot.

The flower was the same height as a kid. Its downcast leaves were flat and long.

And the flower had its own place on the handrail of the balcony.

In the rain it used to open its downcast leaves and glared blue on the balcony.

Raindrops always turned into transparent motley seeds on the petals of the flower and fell down from the handrail.

Then the kids would gather the seeds in the street...

They'd take the seeds home and sow them into their pots...

And soon there were flowers on each balcony of the town.

The rain made the flowers unfurl and the flowers made the sky clear up.

All the flowers were different: red, green, particolored... Some of them were fringed, others were dotted...

There were thousands of flowers and each had a beautiful staining...

And they all smelt sweet...

And it often rained in the town.

The kids used to gather the transparent seeds and sowed them, turning the small town into a huge bouquet.

And the happy man used to stand in the street in the rain.

Then an idea occurred to the girls who lived in the same town:

They'd take their pots out in the rain and walk along the streets smiling to each other. They'd hug the flower-pots and the flowers would be the first umbrellas ever.

And walked the girls in the rain with their flower-shaped umbrellas and the patter of the rain amused them so much...

Then grannies and little girls followed their example: everyone who could carry a pot walked in the rain with flowers...

The rain in the small town was a truly magnificent spectacle.

And the birds were especially fascinated by the beauty of the town: they could see it from above. They soared in the sky and the view of the streets made their hearts overflow with joy.

People say that the beauty of the town turned many birds into singing ones then.

But the most important thing about the flowers was that their fragrance made the townspeople more kind.

No one would hurt the feelings of others there. Even the girls would never be sulky with one another and argue whose doll was prettier, and the boys never quarreled when they played football.

Everyone felt gratitude for the man who loved the rain...

One day, when he was standing in the street and looking at the sky, the man heard a song. He looked down and saw beautiful girls who were dancing around. Flower-shaped umbrellas and birds seemed to be whirling together with them.

The man was pleased by their dancing and singing but he was also a bit confused to be in the center of the round dance.

And he went on looking into the sky...

From that time the girls always revolved around the man in the rain.

Once, when he was all alone, the man took pride in the fact that it was him who brought the flowers and the umbrellas to the town.

And he experienced the feeling again and again, removing his eyes from the sky and looking at the dancing girls.

Each time when the rain stopped he recorded the number of dancing girls in a special log.

And he didn't love the rain as much as he did earlier. He spent more time in thinking about his log.

Once he woke up at sunrise and felt that it was going to rain. He sat up in his bed and looked out of the window. He sat there for a while and then lay down again. The man closed his eyes and thought:

"Who will ever come out and dance in the rain?! Everyone must be asleep!"

Then he yawned and fell asleep again.

Suddenly the man woke up. He seemed to be troubled.

The man looked toward the balcony. It was raining. The blue flower had spread its leaves like wings and was rising into the sky...

"What have I done!" exclaimed the man and jumped to his feet.

All of a sudden all the windows opened in the town...

And the sleepy townspeople saw the blue flower hovering in the rain.

The man himself ran after the flower, dressed in his underclothes, yelling and crying miserably...

Finally, the blue umbrella crossed the sky above the town and faded from the view together with the man.

And the townspeople turned to their flowers and found out that they'd also disappeared...

It still often rains in the small town.

And the girls and the boys of the townspeople still jump in the rain, which comes from the sky.

People can make umbrellas themselves but the beauty of these umbrellas cannot be compared with the beauty of the flower-shaped ones. And the townspeople hurt each other's feelings because their ordinary umbrellas never smell sweet.

In the small town no one is able to forget the flowers.

Sometimes, when it rains, the girls sadden and it seems to them that they've flowers in their hands instead of their umbrellas. So, they carry the umbrellas so tenderly that one might think a single touch is enough to make them vanish together with their umbrellas.

The men remember the mistake of the man who loved the rain and as soon as it begins to rain most of them are eager to go out. They feign that they have an urgent business and slip away.

They walk in the streets, trying to look serious, and avert their eyes from each other, as if they were unaware of what each of them has at his heart.

But no blue and transparent seeds fall down from the sky...

And the men walk in the rain...and get soaked to the skin.

And their sleep is often troubled.

Some of them wake up and go out in the middle of the night to find the blue umbrella.

They look for it everywhere but never find.