

The Tree Who Couldn't Fly by Janet Selby

There was once a tree that lived beside a river. This tree was full of wonder at the birds when they passed through his branches and rested there each year.

"How far they have flown!" exclaimed the tree. "They fly so beautifully. And the fish in the river! They flash past so fast and swim so sleek. I wish I could be so clever."

The tree decided to try. First he tried to fly. So he asked the wind to give breath to his branches.

The wind warned, "Are you sure you want to fly? I've seen many things in my travels, but never a tree who could fly."

"Yes, yes please, I want to try." said the tree.

So the wind began and blew a lovely breeze through his leaves.

"Stronger, stronger!" cried the tree. "I want to fly like the birds!"

"Alright." said the wind. And the wind blew stronger.

"More, more!" pleaded the tree.

Then . . . CRACK. . . CRUNCH! . . . The tree was wrenched apart and broken off, and thrust far and high into the sky!

"I'm flying! I'm flying!" howled the tree. "Thank you wind, for helping me."

But when the wind abated and went on its way the tree began to fall towards the earth.

"I'm not flying, I'm falling! I can't fly like the birds at all!"

And the tree continued to fall, fall, fall, until . . . PLOMP! It landed in the river.

"Ah, now I'm swimming," said the tree, "like the fish." But the tree just continued downstream, floating with the current of the river.

Soon, he was snagged by some rocks hidden beneath the swirling waters. Branches snapped off here and there. He was starting to splinter.

"Oh no!" screamed the tree. "I can't swim! I can't swim! Help me, wind. Help me out of here!"

And the wind, now a gentle breeze returned, bringing with it a bird, who had seen all that had happened.

"Why do you want to fly and swim?" asked the bird. "We need you as you were before. You gave us shelter and shade, and the fish need you too. You gave them insects from your leaves for food."

The wind was listening. And because he loved to hear the rustle of the leaves, the songs of the birds and the silver sparkles of the fish, it decided to help.

It grew stronger and stronger until, summoning all its power, struck a mighty blow to the surface of the water, all the while making bigger and bigger waves. Then it reached down underneath the tree and lifted out its remnants to carry him back to his awaiting roots.

"Oh, thank you wind!" cried the tree, much weakened by his exploits.

Replaced and replenished, he sighed with relief. "Now I know where I belong."

With this realisation, the tree grew a little straighter and a little stronger with each passing year.