

The Ceilidh Tree

Story Synopsis

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In a clearing in a wood we meet Shaunie, the woods person. It is the shortest day of the year and we are waiting for the sun to go down. While we wait, Shaunie introduces us to some of her woodland friends, tells us stories and sings songs.

First we are introduced to Robin who has a beautiful song. The children are introduced to Robin and Shaunie tells us that Robin brought her to The Ceilidh Tree the very first time she came to the woods.

Next we meet Badger who is frustrated that he can't see all the things that birds can see. He decides to climb The Ceilidh tree to get a better look around. He reaches the top and meets Robin. He explains why he has climbed the tree and Robin tells him that birds have very good eyesight. That's why they can see horizons as wide as your dreams. Badgers don't have good eyesight.

Badger has a look around and sees absolutely nothing. After calling for his Mummy, he attempts to leave and gets stuck. Robin goes off to find help.

Meanwhile, Owl returns to her tree and discovers Badger. She is not best pleased and decides to tell Badger that he has climbed 1000 feet. Badger is scared of heights and even more frightened of the Day Time Monsters that owl sings of. Owl goes off in a huff to find some where else to sleep.

Robin meets Shaunie in the woods and gets her to follow him back to the Ceilidh Tree. There she discovers Badger and helps him down. She knows that Owl has been teasing badger about the 1000 feet and the daytime monsters. Badger says he wants to see the things that bird's see and Shaunie shows him a postcard from her Auntie Jane which shows hills, lochs and rivers. Badger is so overwhelmed he drops off to sleep.

Shaunie thanks Robin and decides to make a slug and worm pudding as a treat. She discovers her friend Hedgehog in the pudding bowl and then tells the story about the day Hedgehog got lost. Hedgehog goes hunting for slugs and finds a trail of them. She gobbles them up and then realizes that she is lost. Looking for help, she falls down a rabbit hole and lands on the side of a very busy road. A boy spots her and after tussling with his mum manages to get close enough to pick her up. Unfortunately he doesn't realize that hedgehogs are prickly and lobs the hedgehog up into the sky.

The hedgehog is caught in a plastic bag held by Mr McWhirter who is out in his garden inspecting his flowers. Mr McWhirter is chuffed to have found a

hedgehog because they eat slugs and slugs eat flowers and goes off to get some string to tie him up. A wind catches hold of the plastic bag and lifts the hedgehog up into the sky. A bird encourages him to jump because he is going too high. He does and lands on a fluffy white cloud. The cloud is a rain cloud and starts to rain. As it moves towards the hills the cloud gets lower until eventually hedgehog decides to jump into a tree and bounces off the branches into the bowl. That was where Shaunie first met her.

Shaunie continues to make the slug and worm pudding. She gathers up some “entertaining” worms, retrieves the slugs and then looks for some earth. The ground is hard with frost and she has no spade. Then she hears the sound of a rabbit digging and goes off in search of the rabbit with the children’s help. Calling on the rabbit she gets covered in earth as the rabbit kicks the earth out of his burrow. Rabbit appears and is very grumpy. He is miserable because it is winter and cold and dark. Shaunie explains that this is the shortest day of the year and from now on the days will get longer and warmer and the night’s shorter and soon it will be summer again. Rabbit cheers up at this thought and they start to dance together. Rabbit shows Shaunie the rabbit bounce before spinning uncontrollably until he feels sick. Shaunie comforts him.

Just at that moment, the sun goes down and slowly the stars and moon appear before the spectacle of the Aurora Borealis appears behind the Ceilidh Tree. Shaunie and her friends watch this natural spectacular with the children. When it finishes, the animals and Shaunie say goodbye to the children and promise to return next year to the Ceilidh Tree on the shortest day.