

Doveling

Mitzie, that's the cat, just said to me that I should tell you another story.

"Meeeeeeow."

That's her now, can you hear her?

"Meeow, meee, meeow."

"Yes, of course I'm going to tell them the story we made up."

"MEEOW MEOW!"

"I'm sorry, that *you* made up, I only helped a little bit . . . is that better?" (She's a very hard cat to please.)

Once upon a time when everyone, but really everyone, knew how to fly, and could still play on the water in the very same way you play on the sand, there was a very old and wise bird. (Mitzie said she herself doesn't remember him very well, but she was surely born at the time, she's a very old cat you know.)

This wise bird had feathers like silk. If you don't know what silk is just think of the nicest and softest and most beautiful cloth you ever saw in your *whole* life, *that* was probably silk. And this bird also had a beak that was like ebony. If you don't know what ebony is think of the black piano keys, *they* are made of ebony. And this bird had eyes that sparkled like diamonds. Now I'm sure you know what a diamond is.

(Actually Mitzie is a very unusual cat. Most cats won't tell you a story about *birds* unless it's about them as a dinner recipe . . . excuse me, Mitzie is telling me something . . . She just told me the feathers tickle her nose when she tries to eat a bird, and then she sneezes for hours and hours, that's why she'd rather talk about them than eat them.)

Now this beautiful old wise bird called together a council of birds . . . a council is when all the birds must get together to decide something important. In this case they had to decide what to do about all the birds living on this island. You see there wasn't any room for them anymore because they had become so many, and the old wise bird said they could go to the islands nearby, but there was a beautiful mysterious island far far away and only a bird that was brave and intelligent could go and live there because it was dangerous, and a young bird might be captured, or even get frightened on

that island. And besides these birds had never had to do anything dangerous before, they only knew how to eat fruit and seeds and berries.

There was a tiny little bird, a very pretty bird. In fact she would have looked like you if she had been a little girl, and her name was Dovelina. Dovelina said she wanted to try this island. The others laughed, and said she was too small. They had all tried to go (so they said) but it was really too far away and dangerous for them.

The wise old bird however said that it was alright for her to try. *But* she had to be very careful, there was a giant fisherman, who would take his tiny net, it was the size of a walnut, and he would throw it in the water. There the net would become huge and invisible and it captured thousands of fish. When it was full it became bright red, and the giant would see it and he knew that it was time to go and pick it up. With one hand he would take the net home and dump all the fish out and eat them.

So Dovelina flew for days and days until she came to the magic island, and she then landed in the sand and waited. When she saw the fisherman she flew to where the net was and waited again. A short time later she was captured with the fish.

Finally the fisherman came, laughing a terrible sort of laugh, and picked up the net with all the fish and little Dovelina in it. Dovelina just patiently waited. The terrible giant brought the net home and dumped out the fish, and the net became the size of a walnut, so just then Dovelina flew out of the giant's hand and grabbed the net with its beak and started flying away. The giant chased after trying to get her, but she flew faster and faster until he got lost and could never return to the island.

Dovelina flew back to the wise old bird and told him how she had gotten rid of the terrible giant, and she said now we can go and live there.

Not yet said the wise old bird, there is also a giant trapper there, who shoots a magic arrow into the air, the arrow becomes thousands of tiny arrows that kill all the rabbits on the island, and then he eats them.

Dovelina said "*I'll go and rid the island of that terrible giant.*" and the other birds laughed because they thought she was too small, and they had been too afraid of that giant to go. But the old wise bird said it was all right for her to try.

So Dovelina flew for days and days until she came to the magic island and then she landed in the field and waited. Then she saw the trapper and flew to where he shot the arrow and she dropped the magic net she had taken from the giant fisherman, just as the arrow had become a thousand arrows.

And the net captured all the arrows and then became the size of a walnut. She grabbed the net with the arrows inside her beak and started flying away. The giant chased after her trying to get her, but she flew faster and faster until he got lost and could never return to the island.

Doveling flew back to the wise old bird and told him how she had gotten rid of the terrible giant, and she said now we can go and live there.

“Not yet,” said the wise old bird, “there is also a giant woodsman that cuts down all the trees, where the monkeys live, with a magic axe made of glass, and then he captures all the monkeys and sells them at the market.”

Doveling said she would go and rid the island of this terrible giant, and all the others still laughed, thinking that she would never be able to do it. The wise old bird however said it was all right for her to try.

So Doveling flew for days and days until she came to the magic island, and she landed in the forest and waited. And she saw the giant woodsman with the magic axe made of glass in all different colors.

She went up to the giant and said: “I have an arrow that is far better than your axe, will you trade me your axe for it?”

The giant thought to himself, “I will pretend to trade the axe for the arrow and then I will capture the little bird and steal the arrow from her.” Then he said out loud: “Yes I want to trade my axe for your arrow. Come down and I will trade with you.”

But Doveling said “No, you must send me the axe first.”

So the giant got angry and said to the axe, “Go axe and capture the little bird and bring me back the arrow.”

So the axe flew and whizzed towards Doveling and she had to fly as fast as she could and managed only just in time. But the axe kept following her faster and faster. Doveling tried to fly straight up, but the terrible axe was right behind her. She flew in loops and still the axe kept coming closer and closer. And now poor Doveling was afraid. She had to think fast and just as the axe was about to get her, she had an idea. She threw the arrow and the arrow became a thousand arrows that would come and go, and the axe got all confused, and didn't know which ones to chase. The axe would start chasing one arrow when suddenly it would disappear, and as soon as the axe started chasing another one, that one too would disappear and the first one would re-appear, until the axe couldn't stand it any more and just stood still.

Just then Doveling grabbed the axe with its beak and started flying away. The giant chased after her but she flew faster and faster until he got lost and could never return to the island.

Doveling flew back to the wise old bird and said she had gotten rid of the terrible giant. So the wise old bird called a council together, and he told the other birds that Doveling had done what noother bird had been able to do, so now the island was free of giants and she could go and live there, but she had to bring another bird with her.

“How will I know who to bring?” asked Doveling.

“You will bring the bird that loves you the best.” answered the wise old bird.

Of course now that the island had no giants all the birds wanted to live there and they all said she should bring them. So poor Doveling was all confused and couldn't tell who to choose.

“The bird that knows what to do with the magic net, the magic arrow and the magic axe is the bird that loves you the best.” said the wise old bird.

So each bird gave his or her suggestion. One said to burn them, another said to bury them in the ground, still another said to cut them to pieces, or to throw them away, or get rid of them, or even throw them into the sea. But Doveling didn't like any of these answers, until finally one little shy bird, the only one that hadn't laughed when Doveling said she would try and get rid of the giants, came up and said he knew what to do, but he was too shy to explain, so he asked if he could show it.

The wise old bird said “Of course.”

And the little shy bird flew highup in the air, and when the little bird could hardly be seen, the little bird dropped the net and as the net fell it became the wind. Then the little bird dropped the arrow which became thousands of tiny arrows and then they all became raindrops. At last the little shy bird dropped the glass axe which broke into a thousand pieces of colored glass and it became the petals on the flowers.

So everyone knew that the little shy bird reallyloved Doveling and the wise old bird said they could go to the island and live there.

So Doveling and the little bird flew for several days. When they arrived, the fish, the rabbits and monkeys were waiting for them. The fish gave her a crown made of water, the rabbits gave her a throne made of flowers and the monkeys gave her a cape made of clouds. They all asked her to be their queen because she had saved their lives, and she did, and ruled ever so wisely and happily for many many years. And perhaps she is ruling still.

It is nearly time to fall asleep now, and Mitzie the cat said just to dream about Doveling, and she also said not to ever worry in your dreams, but

just call the little bird and then the wind will become a hug and hold you,
the raindrops will become kisses to comfort you and the flowers will become
whispers that sing you soft lullabies.

Elfin

Even though it was the middle of a sunny day it was so dark in the forest that you could hardly see any colors. Because the woods were so full of trees, and they were so large, and there were so many that almost no sunlight could get through them. Just a small ray of light every once in a while. And that's just what happened then. A beautiful ray of light illuminated a small red shape that scurried out in front of me.

I said a magic phrase that a fairy had taught me a long time ago. She had learned it from a magic bird, who had learned it from a old deer with enormous antlers who had learned it from a good little dragon that could fly when time began.

But I can't repeat the magic phrase for two reasons. The first is that if I say it out loud all kind of terrible things may happen: sugar becomes salt, toys would become too big to play with and other such dreadful things. The second reason is that I forgot it.

As soon as I finished pronouncing it, the red shape stood quite still, and then I could see it was a little man, no bigger than your fingernail, with a tiny pointed cap and a large white beard. He was very surprised that anyone should know the magic phrase (I still remembered it then) and that's why he gave me a fairy story. I have kept this story for a long time, waiting for someone special to give the story to. I think *you* are someone special, so I took the story out from where I kept it, the little stained glass story box. I cleaned it up a bit (it was very dusty) and put a pink and blue ribbon on it.

You may ask "How can anyone put a ribbon on a story?" It's not hard, you just have to make sure it's not just *any* old ribbon, but a special story ribbon, and then it goes on quite well. After I put the ribbon on it, I wrote your name on the story and now I can give it to you as a special birthday present. If it's not your birthday you may listen to the story, or do anything you want with it, like sit on it, play with it or you can even lose it under your bed, or in the swimming pool or in the clouds when you are looking at cloud shapes trying to guess what pictures they make.

And here is the story:

Elfin was a very young elf. Elfs are very young anyway. In fact that's why they can talk to babies and tiny animals like squirrels or rabbits. Elfin could even talk to fleas, sunbeams and to most flowers. Elfin couldn't talk to flowers when they were bad.

Oh yes, a flower *can also* be very bad and naughty when it wants. Why I knew a violet once that used to play all kinds of tricks on the poor daisies

near her. For example once the violet started shaking back and forth how nice the wind was who came and stroked *her* petals, and the poor daisies thought that it really was the wind who was ignoring them, but it was only the violet swaying and moving so that it would look like the wind was moving her.

Elfin could also see at night in the dark. Elfin lived under a mushroom. A beautiful red and white mushroom with a little door and beautiful little furniture that had made it.