

“The Story of Little Raccoon and Standing Tree”

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Standing Tree heard the little raccoon crying long before she saw her. It was a sad, woeful lament, one that tugged at Standing Tree’s roots—roots buried deep beneath the earth. She was also surprised at how small Roxie was, way too small to be carrying such sadness, she thought.



“Little raccoon,” she said gently, “you’re very small yet so very sad.”

Roxie looked up at the towering tree and said, “I *am* sad for I have no mother. She was killed by the Black Wolf that lives in the next forest.”

Standing Tree’s heart went out to Roxie. Feeling the weight of her grief, the old oak said, “You are so young and so very sad because you have no mother. Now I know why you were crying.”

“I’m sorry. Was I too loud? I’ll move on if my crying bothers you.”

“No need to leave, little one,” said Standing Tree in her softest voice, “Crying is what you do when your heart is broken. Besides, I’m a tall oak who has lived through many troubles; I understand sadness and crying. So take your time. I’ll be right here if you need me.”

Roxie cried for a very long time and then fell asleep, curled up next to Standing Tree.

The next morning Roxie awoke and saw Standing Tree close by, just as she had promised.

Roxie looked up and said, "Hi. I didn't tell you my name. It's Roxie."

"Hi, I'm Standing Tree."

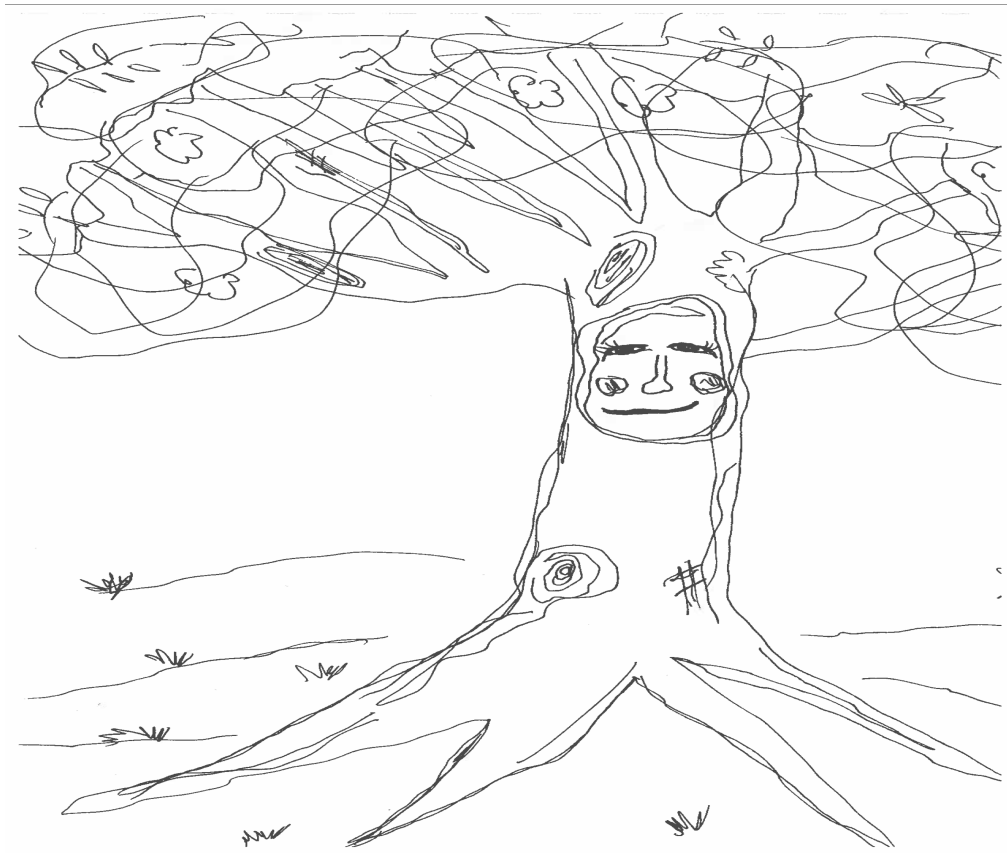
"Thanks for letting me stay. I get lonely and scared without my mother. I wish she were here."

"You miss her and wish she were here with you now, so you wouldn't feel scared and all alone."

"That's right," said Roxie. "If she were here, we'd run and climb and fish for minnows. And she would hold me and she'd tell me everything will be ok."

"Yes, that's what mothers do. I'm sorry your mother is gone. What will you do now?"

"I hope to find a new mother, someone who can do all those things my mother did. Then I won't ever feel lonely or sad or scared."



Standing Tree said nothing. She looked wistfully into Roxie's eyes and could tell the little raccoon was thinking hard.

Suddenly Roxie announced, "I think I'll ask Brown Bear to be my mother. She lives in a nice warm cave and she has plenty of sweet honey."

Standing Tree wished Roxie well and watched as she headed off to find Brown Bear.

Arriving at Brown Bear's cave, Roxie leaned in and offered her greetings. Brown Bear invited her in saying, "I know you. You're Roxie, the little raccoon who lost her mother."

"That's right," said Roxie. "May I please live here with you?"

Brown Bear was a caring creature and she quickly replied, "But of course you can live here. My cave is safe and warm and I have plenty of honey. We can be safe and warm together and you will never have to be sad again."

Roxie did feel safe and warm in Brown Bear's cave. But Brown Bear was also very protective. Each day she warned Roxie of the Black Wolf, the hungry Cougar, and the dangerous river, saying, "You never know what might happen. Stay here with me. You can be safe and you'll never feel sad or lonely or scared again."

Roxie wasn't sure where to go when she sneaked out of Brown Bear's cave the next morning. She walked on and on, lost in her sadness and longing for her mother. Soon she was near the spot where she first met Standing Tree. She smiled recalling how the towering oak had said it was ok if Roxie felt sad or cried.

"Hi, it's me, Roxie!"

"Well so it is. Hi Roxie! How is Brown Bear?"

"She's very nice and she kept me safe and fed me sweet honey, but...I don't know...I want to run and climb and fish for minnows. I think I need a different mother."

"I'm sorry things didn't work out. What will you do now?" inquired Standing Tree softly.

Roxie thought for a while and said, "I like playing by the river. I think I'll ask Busy Beaver to be my mother."

Standing Tree hoped the little raccoon would find what she was looking for in the home of Busy Beaver. She wished Roxie well and watched her march excitedly toward the river.

Busy Beaver welcomed Roxie, saying excitedly, "It would be great to have you here. The more the merrier, I always say. In fact, you can start right away helping to build our dam."

Roxie loved being outdoors and enjoyed learning how to gather twigs and branches. She took pride in helping to build the dam, which was now

quite large. Indeed, Roxie wondered if they might soon have to time to play.

She approached Busy Beaver and asked, "Is the dam big enough for us to take a holiday?"

Busy Beaver chuckled and said, "Poor girl. There's too much work to be done. We'll never have the biggest dam on the river if we spend all of our time playing."

Early the next morning, Roxie slipped out of the beaver den and headed for the spot where she'd know she'd find Standing Tree. Roxie felt drawn somehow to the foot of the comforting oak.

Standing Tree gazed sweetly at the little raccoon and slowly lowered her branches—just enough to let Roxie know that she was safe and welcome. Standing Tree remained silent and smiled. Roxie let go a heavy sigh and lay down beside her.

Neither spoke for a very long time. It was quiet and peaceful and felt right to Roxie. She had finally found her new mother.