

Chapter 2

Moving to the woods was at first rocky and difficult for Jackson. He hated leaving his mother behind, but was reminded by his father that he would see her often.

However, there were *soooo* many distractions once he was out in the clean air and sunlight. He saw whimsical bugs float atop flower petals, watched rabbits dash quickly through the thick meadow, heard birds cry for affection, and baby deer run for protection.

He made friends quite fast with the other children that went to his school, all of them also living in the woods, each of them inviting him to go fishing, or to catch frogs, or to build forts with fallen tree limbs. Jackson fell in love with living in the woods. It was the perfect life for an imaginative little boy.

That little wood framed house became creative and wonderful to him. The sun always shined, and there were windows in every room, but who needed them when you could go outside???

He would run with his friends through the spurs, then pluck them off his pant legs as they sat by the creek; would lay on their backs and watch the clouds and give them stories, rather than say what they looked like. “That cloud’s name is,” said Jackson one day, “brave Indian chief defending his fortress....”

“Oh, yeah? Well, that cloud,” replied his friend, “is a princess escaping the wrath of an evil queen.”

His mind was allowed to soar, his explorations were allowed to blossom, and his new friends made him feel welcome.

Jackson and his Dad had not brought a television with them, nor a radio, or anything like that into the woods. When they were together in the evening they would read books, tell stories, or make things. Dad started knitting Jackson a whole new army of animals, a new squadron of vicious and exotic creatures to keep him and his teddy bear company.

First there was a fierce tiger that Jackson simply called, “The fanged warrior that fights off evil enemies,” not realizing that sometimes tigers are simply for cuddling. However, not long after, he soon lost him.

“I think he was stolen,” Jackson protested.

Then Dad knit him an elephant that Jackson soon named, “the largest beast of the jungle so large it can take down a tree with one stomp,” not realizing that elephants would rather be studious, and educated, and read a lot. There then came a rabbit made with all sorts of different colors.

Jackson asked why the rabbit looked like that and Dad replied, “He’s wearing war paint.” Jackson didn’t realize that Dad had run out of yarn for the proper color of a rabbit, so he used yarn left over from other things. Finally, Dad knit Jackson a very noble lion, “that can roar so loud the flowers in the field curl away in terror!”

Life in the woods was beautiful, simple and pure as Dad had always wanted; adventurous and fun, as Jackson had always hoped for.

However, don’t think for a moment that Jackson didn’t agonize over the fact that his parents were now separated, living different lives, and perhaps that is what made Jackson sick.

With all the shiny things that can distract you from your feelings, you can forget being heartbroken. And sometimes being heartbroken can cause just as much illness as a sneeze.

It wasn't but a few months after being out in the woods that Jackson became very ill, so ill he was forced into bed and slept an awful lot. At first you might think this was a lot of fun. After all, who doesn't like the idea of staying home from school, of getting to stay in bed and read comic books, of getting to play with your toys all day?

But, soon it became apparent that Jackson wasn't interested in those things. He longed to be at school with his friends, to be out in the forest building tree houses and digging imaginary canals, and most of all, having fun.

Being in bed was boring, but it didn't matter so much, for his illness got so bad so fast that he simply was too weak to do anything other than sleep. Jackson was hardly aware of what was going on around him. He had kept his teddy bear close the whole time, never let him out of sight, never stopped cuddling him....

He didn't realize the little bear's stuffing was coming out the seams, had started to split open, that one of his eyes had started to come undone, that one of his ears looked like it had been nibbled away....until one day Jackson woke groggily to find his teddy bear was gone.

He moaned softly from the bed for his father. "I think someone stole my teddy bear..."

"No, son. No one stole your teddy bear."

"Then where is he?"

"He's.....he's in the living room getting all patched up."

“Is he ok?”

“He’ll be just fine. Now, go back to bed and get some sleep.”

“But, I don’t know if I can sleep without him with me.”

“He’ll be back in no time.”