

The Wattle Fairies

Adapted from a story in the Victorian School Reader

Once upon a time in Australia there lived beautiful fairies with golden curls. They lived at the bottom of huge tree ferns in a rainforest. They came out only at night when the moon was shining and they danced in the moonlight. They danced and danced and danced. But one night a dark cloud came over the moon. The little fairies with the golden curls could not see their way home. They decided to climb one of the very tall trees. Perhaps they could see their path if looked down from the top of a tree. When they reached the top of the tree they ran along the branches. Just at that moment they heard a big booming voice from below.

“Who is in my tree?”

The little golden fairies trembled in fear. They all looked down. There at the base of the tree stood a fearsome bunyip. The bunyip repeated his question in his big booming voice.

“Who is in my tree?”

The little fairies called out in their tiny voices. “We are sorry Mr Bunyip. We didn’t know it was your tree. We are just trying to find our way home.”

“I don’t want your excuses,” said the bunyip. “This is my tree and you should not be here!”

“Sorry, Mr Bunyip.”

“Sorry is not good enough.” The bunyip stamped his foot in anger. “Fine,” he said. “If you like my tree so much you can stay here...FOREVER!”

The little fairies shook with fear and when they tried to move they found they were stuck to the tree. They couldn’t get away. That bunyip must have had some magic powers.

The little golden fairies pleaded with the bunyip. “Please let us go, Mr Bunyip. We promise we will never climb your tree ever again.”

“No!”

“Please, Mr Bunyip.”

“No!”

“Please, Mr Bunyip.”

“No!”

This went on for some time until finally the bunyip stamped his foot and grunted. “All right,” he said. “I’ll give you a fair chance. If you can answer my question I’ll let you go. And what’s more, I’ll give you three chances to answer. Can’t say fairer than that now can I?”

“Yes. Mr Bunyip. That’s fair. You are very kind indeed. What is the question we must answer?”

“It’s very simple. What is it that is on the other side of the tree, looking up at you?”

The little golden fairies bent their heads and looked down but it was too dark and they were too high up to be able to see the ground below.

“Well?” said the bunyip.

“Well,” said one golden fairy. “Is it a wombat?”

The bunyip looked up at the little fairy and stamped his foot.

“Wrong! You have two guesses left.”

Another golden fairy tried to answer the question. “Is it a lyrebird?”

The bunyip looked up at the little fairy and stamped his foot. “Wrong! You have one guess left. If you do not answer my question you will stay in this tree forever!”

The little golden fairies could not think what it might be.

“Well?” said the bunyip.

One brave little fairy called out an answer. “Is it a skink?”

The bunyip looked up at the little fairy and stamped his foot. “Wrong! You will stay in this tree forever!” The bunyip stomped off into the bush.

The little golden fairies were very sad but they had no choice. They had to stay in the tree. They stayed there all night.

In the morning when the sun came up they all bent their little golden heads to look down at the bottom of the tree to see what it was that was looking up at them. To their surprise they saw their own little faces looking back up at them because on that side of the tree was a beautiful clear creek and their faces were reflected in the water. The little fairies with the golden curls were very happy. It was the first time they had seen their own faces and they quite liked it. After that they decided they liked being high up in the tree. And that is where they are today; still up in the wattle tree clinging to the branches because they are the wattle fairies and when the wind blows they still dance in the moonlight high up in the branches.

And if you go out to the bush or even into the park and look at a wattle tree you'll see the little golden wattle fairies still there, still looking down at the ground below with their mops of yellow hair and you might even see them dance if it is a windy day.