

Dingo's Tree

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It was a hot day and all the animals were sitting under their trees. Dingo didn't have a tree. He tried to sit under Magpie's tree, but she chased him away. So did Emu.

'My tree's already full Dingo,' said Emu, 'and anyway you have a nice cool cave to sit in.'

But I can't see what everyone is doing if I'm sitting in my cave, thought Dingo.

Still no one wanted to share with Dingo, which made him feel very hurt, especially because he shared everything. Dingo wandered dejectedly back to his cave.

'I know,' said Dingo, 'I'll draw my own tree, and no one will have a tree like mine.'

He felt happy drawing a tree on a big rock outside his cave. It was a lovely tree with lots of branches and leaves with little raindrops on them. Dingo was so proud of his tree that he settled down beside it and fell asleep.

When Dingo woke up he saw that his tree had started to grow. It grew higher and higher, until it disappeared into the sky. It was very tall, and very straight, but there were no branches and no leaves on it. All the animals were amazed when they heard about it but when they saw Dingo's tree, they laughed. 'It's not a tree, Dingo, it's a pole!'

Well, that's not what I drew, thought Dingo.

He was very upset when animals came from everywhere to laugh at his strange tree. That night Dingo told his friend Moon about his tree.

'Will you see if you can find the top of my tree, Moon?' Dingo asked.

'I will try,' said Moon, but it was too tall, even for Moon.

So Dingo settled down with his tree, still hoping that it had a top somewhere, but liking it just the same. While Dingo still didn't have any shade, he had lots of water. The drought had come and all the waterholes were drying up except for Dingo's, which was always full. The animals asked Dingo if they could have a drink from his waterhole because they were so thirsty. Dingo welcomed everybody, happy to share, which made all the other animals feel guilty for not sharing their trees with him, and for teasing Dingo about his pole-tree. The drought stayed and the animals were becoming even more dependant on Dingo for water.

'Oh, tree,' said Dingo, 'everybody should have water, not just me.'

That night there was a big cyclone. Trees were broken and destroyed, but all the waterholes were filled to the top. As for poor Dingo, his tree had vanished completely. Dingo was very upset because he had come to love his funny tree. He searched everywhere for it, and all the animals helped, but his tree was gone.

'You can share our trees, Dingo,' they all offered. Magpie was feeling especially guilty about not sharing her tree before. Not only had Dingo shared his water with her, but Magpie had often picked up bits of Dingo's fur to put in her nest to keep it warm.

'Please sit under my tree Dingo,' Magpie insisted. 'I only live in the top branches anyway.'

But Dingo didn't want the other animals' trees, he missed his own.

That night Dingo waited outside his cave for his friend Moon.

‘Why are you upset Dingo?’ asked Moon.

‘My tree is gone. If you see it Moon, tell it to come home, I love it.’

‘Oh Dingo, your tree is home. You drew a beautiful Rain Tree that will live in the heavens, and when there is a drought, the waterholes will always be full.’

Dingo knew that Moon was right, and he felt very happy for his tree. Smiling to himself, Dingo lay down beside his rock and went to sleep.

The Raindrop

For a while Dingo lived happily in his cave but lately he’d begun to worry about the Country, something wasn’t right. Early one morning Dingo awoke to find his friend Wombat pacing up and down outside his cave.

‘Hurry up Dingo,’ urged Wombat, ‘I’ve got something important to show you.’

Wombat took Dingo to a little tree and there hanging from one of the branches was a large shiny raindrop.

‘I saw it fall from the sky last night when I was out hunting,’ said Wombat. ‘Maybe it fell from your tree.’

‘I don’t think I have a tree anymore,’ sighed Dingo. ‘We haven’t had any rain for a long time and all the waterholes are drying up, even mine.’

Just then Crow flew over to the little tree. ‘Are you looking at my raindrop?’ she asked.

‘It’s not yours!’ said Wombat.

‘I saw it fall from the sky last night,’ Crow boasted. ‘It’s in a tree. Birds live in trees, so it’s mine!’

‘Well I drew the Rain Tree,’ said Dingo ‘and if Wombat’s right then it is my raindrop.’

They soon woke everyone up with their arguing, and all the people and animals came to see what was going on. When they saw the beautiful raindrop, they were all very excited.

‘It looks like a star,’ said Emu, ‘it’s so shiny.’

‘Don’t be silly,’ said Wombat, ‘it’s not shaped like a star, it’s a raindrop, a very special raindrop.’

‘Maybe we’ll get some rain to fill our dry waterholes and rivers,’ said Emu hopefully.

But days passed and nothing happened.

Still, everyday everyone came to see the raindrop and tell Dingo how beautiful it was. Crow was starting to get very cross, because she still thought the raindrop really belonged to her. She decided to fly up high, find the cloud that dropped it and ask cloud if she could own it.

Crow soared higher and higher but she couldn’t find any clouds. She was feeling very tired when she saw a bright light shining up ahead. Crow flew towards it and when she got closer, she saw that it was a beautiful big tree full of glistening raindrops.

Oh, no! Crow thought. *Maybe Wombat was right and this was Dingo’s lost tree.*

‘Are you Dingo’s Rain Tree?’ asked Crow.

‘I used to be,’ said the tree, ‘Dingo’s kind heart created me. But now I am a Tree of Tears and these are all my teardrops.’

‘Did you drop a tear in our Country, then?’ asked Crow.

‘That wasn’t a tear. I gave you my last raindrop,’ explained the tree, ‘and if you look down I’ll show you why.’

Crow looked down but could hardly believe the devastation she saw.

‘That can’t be my Country,’ Crow pleaded.

‘It is what your Country will become,’ said the Tree of Tears. ‘The mining is cutting too deep for the scars to heal. Once destroyed, mountains can’t grow again and give birth to the rivers that they send to the sea. Trees are being ripped from the earth, and without trees there can be no rain to fill the waterholes.’

‘But Tree, you have enough tears to fill the waterholes,’ said Crow.

‘My tears are too salty,’ said the Tree of Tears, sadly.

‘Then I must return to my country, and look after Little Tree,’ said Crow, ‘he may be the last tree left.’

As Crow turned to leave, she had one final question.

‘About the raindrop,’ Crow asked hopefully, ‘is it mine?’

Tree smiled, but when she spoke she was very serious. ‘It is Dingo’s, Crow. Only Dingo will know when it is time for the last raindrop to fall.’

The Tree that Walked

When Crow returned she told all the animals about what she had seen and what the Tree of Tears had told her.

‘The raindrop belongs to you Dingo,’ Crow said humbly ‘but can Little Tree and I help you look after it?’

‘Of course you can!’ replied Dingo.

So Crow made her home in Little Tree and devoted herself to looking after him. Together they looked after the raindrop. Every day Dingo came to check on his raindrop then he would hurry over to Wombat’s to give him the good news.

‘I think it’s a little bit bigger today,’ Dingo would proudly declare.

Wombat would always mumble in agreement, but sometimes he wondered whether his friend Dingo just had an over active imagination.

Meanwhile, the country was becoming drier and drier. Sometimes Crow had to fly for many miles to find enough water for herself and Little Tree. When she asked Dingo if she could use the last raindrop, Dingo would always reply, ‘I know it’s hard Crow, but it’s not time yet.’

While Little Tree had grown tall and strong under Crow’s care, Crow was ancient now. She still looked for water for Little Tree, but it was getting harder and harder to fly such a long way anymore. One day Crow flew wearily away on her search for water, but she never returned. Little Tree waited and waited but Crow was gone.

Little Tree felt very lonely without Crow, he still had the raindrop and Dingo came every day, but it wasn’t the same. Little Tree was also getting very thirsty.

‘Oh Wombat, maybe I should have let the raindrop fall and saved Crow!’ said Dingo.

‘You would have used it, if the time was right Dingo,’ Wombat reassured his friend.

‘But who will bring Little Tree water now?’ exclaimed Dingo. ‘He’s stuck in the ground and can’t travel like us to find water!’

‘Maybe we can teach him to walk,’ said Wombat,

‘Well his roots go deep, so he’s got really big feet,’ said Dingo ‘and he’s got them all the way around so he can go in any direction he likes.’

Next day, Dingo and Wombat went to see Little Tree.

‘Good morning Little Tree,’ said Dingo. ‘Wombat and I have come up with a plan to get you water.’

‘Well I hope the first part of the plan is addressing me as *Big Tree* from now on,’ he replied. ‘It was alright for Crow to call me Little Tree, because she raised me, but from you two it’s embarrassing. Look at all my leaves and branches, can’t you see I’m grown up.’

Dingo and Wombat shared their secret look, *Of course he was a big tree now but that didn’t make it his name. That was just silly.* Luckily before Dingo could say out aloud what they were both thinking Wombat announced, ‘We are going to call you Walking Tree.’

‘Because we are going to teach you to walk,’ burst in Dingo, ‘then water won’t have to come to you, you can go and find it yourself!’

Little Tree liked that idea and he liked his new name too, but he had never heard of a tree that could walk.

‘What if I fall over?’ he asked Dingo.

‘We’ll worry about that after we’ve got your feet free,’ said Wombat trying to reassure him.

‘You’ll have to dig him out Wombat,’ said Dingo. ‘I can help around the edges, but I’m not going underground.’

Time was growing short if they were to save Walking Tree so the two friends worked hard all day. Dingo dug away at the top and Wombat burrowed beneath Walking Tree’s roots. Finally he was free.

‘What do we do now?’ asked Walking Tree nervously.

Dingo and Wombat weren’t sure either.

‘Slow and steady,’ counselled Wombat, ‘it’s just one foot after the other.’

‘I’d use all four legs at once,’ said Dingo, ‘it’s much faster.’

Walking Tree knew what he had to do, but he was too scared to take that first step.

While Dingo and Wombat were trying to decide what to do next something unexpected happened. A baby crow suddenly dropped down into Little Tree’s branches.

‘I’ve been flying for so long looking for a tree to live in, but there’s hardly any trees left,’ the crow moaned. ‘Can I stay here?’

Walking Tree was very excited. ‘My mother Crow helped me grow up,’ he said, ‘so my branches are just right for crows.’

‘Why aren’t your roots in the ground?’ asked the baby crow, a little alarmed.

‘Because I’m going to look for water,’ he said. Using his great strength and all his courage, Walking Tree lifted up his roots and took his first step.

Baby crow called out in delight, ‘I’ll come with you! I’ve heard that there is a river winding behind the mountain, you might find water there.’

‘We’re coming too,’ called Dingo hurrying Wombat along, ‘I’ve still got to look after my raindrop. It’s getting bigger all the time, isn’t it Wombat.’

This time when Wombat agreed he really meant it. Perhaps Dingo had been right all along. Raindrop was now very large indeed and there seemed to be all sorts of colours and reflections in it, including him and Dingo! It was like looking into another beautiful world. Walking Tree and his friends set out towards the mountain and as he walked across the land, more and more birds took shelter in his branches.

Even Emu came running up. ‘I’m so hot, can I walk in the shade of your branches?’ she asked.

‘Of course,’ said Walking Tree, ‘everyone is welcome.’

Walking Tree got very tired carrying such a heavy load with all the birds and animals, so when he reached the base of the mountain, he settled down to sleep for the night. In the morning Walking Tree was amazed to see all the different animals snuggled up with him; there

were kangaroos, goannas, possums and resting closest to him were Dingo and Wombat.

We all need water, Walking Tree thought, *and it's my job to find it*.

So Walking Tree woke them all up and together they began the slow climb up the mountain. After a long and tiring day, Walking Tree and the animals finally reached the top, but when they looked down they were shocked to see that the other side of the mountain had been completely cut away. It was only half a mountain now. Down below, men could be seen carting away great loads of rocks and earth in huge machines. The once-strong river was no longer flowing there was only thick mud at the bottom of the ravine. Walking Tree groaned in despair. Perhaps if they could find a way across to the next mountain, there might be water there. Walking Tree didn't know what to do. He didn't think he had enough strength left to carry everyone.

'I know!' said baby Crow. 'There are so many birds in your branches now, that if we all flap our wings together we will be able to fly everyone across to the next mountain.'

'We'll have to try it,' said Walking Tree.

As the animals clung to Walking Tree's roots and branches, the birds spread their wings and everyone felt very excited as they began to rise slowly upwards, off the mountain. But then, the birds began to panic as they realised the weight of the tree and all the animals was too heavy for them. No matter how hard they beat their wings, Walking Tree and his precious cargo drifted slowly down towards the muddy ravine.

It's time to use the last raindrop, thought Dingo.

As the mud was gripping Walking Tree's roots and pulling them deeper into the clinging morass, Dingo called gently to his raindrop. It heard his voice and tumbled down from Walking Tree's highest branch. The raindrop they had guarded so carefully on their long journey whizzed past Dingo and splashed in the mud. As it broke, it formed a shining blue waterhole around Walking Tree. Then a beautiful rainbow arose from the waterhole and arched high above his branches.

‘We’re saved!’ cried Walking Tree.

‘No,’ said Dingo sadly. ‘There is only enough water for you Walking Tree. You’re needed here, you are the last Tree and this is your special living water that will keep you until the end of time. You will need every last drop if you are to survive.’

‘But Dingo what will happen to you and Wombat and all my friends?’

Dingo sighed. ‘We animals can no longer survive in this world, so we must go into the rainbow and live there instead.’

‘Will you ever come back?’ asked Walking Tree desperately.

‘One day,’ said Dingo, ‘when the Tree of Tears has finished crying and this world of men has ended.’

‘I’m going to be so lonely!’ cried Walking Tree.

‘I will stay with you,’ said baby crow nestling herself lovingly into Walking Tree’s branches. ‘Every tree needs a crow and I’m sure there will be just enough water for me too.’

‘And you’ll have Moon as well,’ said Dingo, ‘she’ll be rising soon. And we will be here with you in spirit in the rainbow.’

As the animals entered the rainbow, Wombat recognised the beautiful world he had seen inside Dingo’s raindrop.

‘Oh Dingo, to think that this all started from your drawing,’ said Wombat.

‘I hope there will be rocks for me to draw on here,’ said Dingo.

‘I’m sure there will be,’ said Wombat smiling, ‘just make sure you don’t draw any men.’

The Last Tree

The last tree stood proud on the empty plain
Battered by winds, dust and rain
The last man kneeled and held on tight
They sobbed and dreamed through the nuclear night
When the sun rose, as all suns must
The sobbing man had turned to dust.