

## Spring Sprites

**T**ITA WAS ANGRY. Tita was very angry. The very idea of a music lesson today! On Saturday, of all things, and the Sun golden as the heart of a daisy. So Tita had skipped out and hidden in the grove by the brook.

She lay on the cool earth. The brook sang to her. The song of the brook was gurgly with joy. Tita felt quiet now, and happy. She stared at the creamy clouds and wished she could ride them.

The came the music. So faint, so sweet she thought it was a lazy bumblebee. But no, it was different. She turned her head. Then she looked hard.

The creature was tiny as a minute, all shimmery green, with yellow hair like a filmy robe. And she was playing! Playing a violin of two of the smallest blades of grass that ever were. Tita rubbed her eyes.

“Ah! so you finally can see me!” The creature’s voice was tinkly, like a cube of ice in a glass you shake.

Tita only stared harder. But she was full of wonder.

“My name is Seeba,” the elfin girl said, as though reading Tita’s thoughts.

“But—what—what, why—” Tita spoke at last, her eyes very big.

“Nobody ever sees me,” Seeba read her thoughts again, “unless she has caught the spirit of Spring.”

Tita opened her mouth for more questions. But Seeba smiled and waved her hand. “Come,” she said, “I’ll show you.”

All at once Seeba grew tall, till she was as “big as Tita. They were standing in a large forest. Monster trees were all around, and hills and a roar-

ing, rushing river so very wide the far shore was not even in sight. Tita looked around, frightened.

“No,” Seeba said. “Everything is the same. You have just been changed to my size. The trees are just grass, the hills are clumps of earth. And see the little brook?” She pointed toward the roaring, rushing river.

Seeba took her hand. They walked over the strange ground till they came to a cave. Tita kept thinking. She had so many questions. But she was so busy looking at things. A monster rock stood by the cave. It was blue and shiny.

“Remember the blue bead you lost?” Seeba asked, touching the giant rock and smiling at Tita’s expression of surprise.

Suddenly Tita screamed. A great snake went wiggling by.

Seeba spoke softly, “an angleworm. He carries away the gravel and brings rich earth instead, so the flowers will grow.”

They came to a log that crossed the tunnel. “The root of a violet,” Seeba explain. She spread silken wings that Tita had not seen. Together they flew over the roost.

Tita could no longer see. It was dark as ink. Then she was aware of a faint silvery glow. Brighter and brighter it grew. Flying birds seemed to glow with the light. “Fireflies,” said Seeba. “Our lighting system.”

Then they saw a number of queer little men, dressed in brown, with empty buckets. “Gnomes,” the elfin creature told Tita. “They collect the dew in buckets and water the roots:”



*Hob the Elf*

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*"I do love to ride on the raindrops."*

Then there came a line of dainty creatures like Seeba. Some were orange, some rose, some green. They had full buckets and were pouring the dew on some roots. "Sprites of Spring," Seeba said, like a guide on a sight-seeing bus. "They were lazy today and are late."

"Are you a Sprite of Spring?" Tita asked. She was still afraid of things. And her voice sounded so tiny when she spoke.

"Oh, yes. I went to the South all winter. We came North in a cloud train, a few weeks ago."

Suddenly she stopped. She turned pale and started to tremble. "The Queen," she said quickly. "She will punish me. If I could hide somewhere. But it's too late."

A gleam of dazzling yellow light shone against Tita's eyes, and before them stood a vision of loveliness. She was taller than Seeba, and wore a bright green gown that shone in all the colors of the rainbow. Her hair was bluish in color, but it didn't look strange. Tita thought she had never seen anyone so beautiful. But the Queen's eyes were flashing.

"You didn't come to practice," the Queen spoke, looking at Seeba. "You ran away and went outside to play. Well, for that you will stay in the cave all night and not go up to the clouds. And you'll play your violin all night."

## My Thoughts

Sometimes my thoughts are fairies gay,  
That dance around a ring;  
And sometimes they are joyous birds,  
That sing, and sing, and sing!

All day my thoughts are busy.  
They skip and jump and roam,  
But when the twilight deepens,  
I call them to come home.

And when I go to sleep each night,  
I ask the angels fair  
To hold my thoughts beneath their wings,  
And shelter them in prayer.

—Patsey Ellis

Seeba began to plead. "It will rain tonight, dear Queen," she said tearfully. "I do love to ride the raindrops, and there will be so many new Sprites coming."

One of the vast snakes came in sight. Tita forgot that it was only an angleworm. She began to run. Faster and faster she ran. And then she was out in the sunshine. Alone. She rubbed her eyes and stared about. It must be very late. The sun had almost set. Dark clouds were gathering. Tita did not wait. She ran home . . . .

That evening Tita played her violin. Her mother played the piano. Dad read his newspaper. Brother Jan was oiling a baseball glove.

Then Tita heard the music. Faint and sweet it was as fairy bells.

"The Spring Sprites," she said eagerly. Brother Jan looked up and sniffed. "Aw," he grumbled. "It's raining. Now we may not be able to play ball tomorrow."

Tita tilted her nose at him. How could a boy know? But she understood. The Spring Sprites were coming in full force. Now all the glory of spring would burst forth. The woods and fields would feel the magic. She wondered if Seeba was riding the raindrops. Or if she had to stay in the cave and practice. Tita took up her violin and began to play again. Hard. □

—B. Coursin Black