

SILVER BIRCH STORY

LONG LONG AGO, before your time, before my time, before your Great Grandmothers time, the land in the North of the world was covered with ice. It was a time of darkness. No trees grew. No songbirds flew. Just the cold wind howling in that endless winter.

But then Father Sun awoke from his long sleep. He shone with all his might and ice and north winds began slowly to shrink from his gaze, and little by little the Earth could breathe and stretch again. Winds from the south blew seeds north which found soft beds in the warming soils. Earth began greening and growing towards the light and amongst the soft moss nestled seeds of a tree that even during the coldest and longest of winters survived. Her name was Silver Birch.

There she stood with ice and snow around her feet, her slim white trunk bending with the wind, until one day things changed, for with the greening and the growing and the warming and the flowing came animals and birds moving slowly north. And following them were humans – Hunters. Gatherers. Birch gave them wood for their fires which kept them warm





and safe on the darkest of nights. Wolves and Lynx prowled through her woods finding shelter, whilst Reindeer searched in the deep snow for mossy food and Brown Bear snuggled in his cave to sleep and dream the winter away.

Time passed. The hunting wolves, the Bear and Lynx followed the ice and snow north, as did the Reindeer. But the Silver Birch remained. Spring suddenly awoke and as the ice melted, birds and rivers chattered and sang. Oh she had waited so long for this. She felt the sap rising from her roots and right up to the tips of her soft branches and there she stood watching as rainbows leapt across the sky. And this Lady of the Woods wanted to dance for the joy of it but her roots held her

to the ground ...until one day beneath her branches sat a girl spinning wool. Round and round went the whorl made from the finest birch. The Lady of the Woods had seen the girl many times running through the woods searching for her sheep, tripping and dancing as she went. Oh if only she could dance like that.

The girl leaned her back against the trunk and her spindle fell to the ground and Silver Birch gently touched the girl's cheeks with her soft branches. The girl awoke and gazed up. Oh how she loved this beautiful tree.

"Stay awhile and dance for me for I cannot for I am a tree," whispered the gentle Birch, and the girl heard the sadness in that silvery voice and leaping up, took hold of the branches and began to dance. Round and round she whirled and the tree held fast to her hands and wouldn't let her stop. Finally the girl cried, "Please Birch Tree My feet are sore. Please let me rest. I can dance no more!" and the Birch swept her up and cradled her in her branches for a moment then softly lowered her to the mossy bed below.

"Thank you," she murmured to the girl, "And for the gift of your dance you will be rewarded." The girl looked down and saw that her wool had been spun and her pocket was full of birch leaves!

A strange gift she thought as she ran through the woods. But the Lady of the Woods smiled as the girl stopped and held the shimmering leaves of pure silver up to the sun's light.

And the Silver Birch just reached out her arms and swirled and birlled with the gentle breeze. Just watch her – she still does!

