

The Water from Stone Mountain Creek

Once upon a time there was a small creek that ran down the side of a mountain in western North Carolina. The mountain was called Stone Mountain. The creek was called Stone Mountain Creek.

Back in those days, Stone Mountain Creek ran through a small community of nine families. These families lived in small, well built homes nestled in the lower ridges of Stone Mountain, in the woods. In the community there were forests and streams, hills and valleys, cows, horses, goats, chickens, ducks, a trout pond, four large gardens, fruit trees, nut trees, berry bushes, and flowers everywhere. The nine families built their homes within easy walking distance of each other, but some of the homes were built in special places that were hard to find, and if you didn't know where one of the homes was, you might not find it in a days walk.

Along with the nine families that lived in this community, there was one man who lived alone. He lived in a home built in a special place that was hard to find. His name was Charlie. His home was hidden in a grove of pine trees in one of the lower ridges of Stone Mountain.

Charlie liked to work in the garden, and he liked to feed the animals and split wood for the wood burning stoves, but most of all he liked to play with the children. During the warm seasons, he would go to the children's playhouse and give the children maps

he had made. The maps showed where something special was, and the children always followed the maps to see what was there. Then Charlie would help the children write about what they saw in the Community Journal, which was kept in the children's playhouse. Everyone in the community wrote in the Community Journal about things they saw or did or thought during the year; then, during the winter, Charlie would go from home to home and read from the Community Journal.

The children's playhouse was near Stone Mountain Creek. If you were standing outside the children's playhouse, you could just barely hear the water bubbling and trickling over the rocks near the sitting tree. The sitting tree was really two trees with a connecting trunk that blocked the path like a thick fence rail. You could climb over it or crawl under it. The roots of one of the two trees was on the bank of Stone Mountain Creek, and the water had carried away some of the earth under the tree, and made a dark hiding place. Charlie once wrote in the Community Journal that if a person drank the water of Stone Mountain Creek, they would be able to see the spirits of the woods. He said that he drank the water once and saw some fairies and elves that flew through the air and disappeared into the dark hiding place under the sitting tree.

One summer day, four of the children in the community walked down the path to the sitting tree, and found Charlie on the other

side of Stone Mountain Creek, sitting on the ground. He was drawing something in a sketch book. The oldest of the children, a girl named Alani, asked Charlie what he was doing.

Charlie said, "I have a dream that someday a woman will come to this place, and we will fall in love. Someday I will make a painting of this place on Stone Mountain Creek, and she will be in the painting. So I am practicing drawing so I can make the painting when she comes."

The children sat on the trunk of the sitting tree for a while and watched Charlie. Then they walked back to the children's playhouse.

All the other children in the community were in the children's playhouse. They all sat around in the playhouse and talked about what Charlie had said. The children all loved Charlie, and wanted his dream to come true. But how could they help?

One day, Alani's younger sister Crystal was standing by herself at the edge of Stone Mountain Creek near the sitting tree, watching and listening as the water bubbled and trickled over the rocks. Crystal had remembered what Charlie wrote in the Community Journal about drinking the water from Stone Mountain Creek. She thought that if she drank the water, she would be able to see the spirits of the woods, and she would ask the spirits of the woods if they could find a woman for Charlie.

Crystal cupped her hands and dipped them into the creek. Then she brought the water to her mouth and drank it. Soon she thought

she heard a voice. The voice was warm and comforting. The voice said, "I am the spirit of love for Charlie. You cannot see me now. It is not yet time. But I will be with you and with the other children when you want me." That was all Crystal heard. The voice was gentle and soft and it sounded like a woman's voice. Crystal ran to tell the other children.

Soon all the children went to Stone Mountain Creek and drank the water. The other children did not hear the voice that Crystal heard, but they believed that the spirit of love for Charlie was real, and when they wanted the spirit to be with them, the spirit was there.

Soon they all were able to talk to the spirit, and the spirit was as kind and playful and beautiful as their imaginations made it. The spirit would run through the woods with them as they followed the maps that Charlie had made. The spirit would play games with them, and go pick flowers with them, and lay quietly with them while they all took naps. Whenever they felt lonely, they imagined the spirit holding them and saying, "I love you," and then they felt better. The spirit also helped them keep their playhouse clean and neat, and helped the children teach each other how to knit, how to build things, and how to be helpful in the garden, or with the animals. All the older people in the community noticed the happiness among the children, and smiled. Charlie, in particular, was fascinated by the new happiness the children seemed to have, and was curious to know what had gotten into them. But he didn't ask the children

about it. "It is good for the children to have secrets," thought Charlie.

The children would not have told him anyway, even if he had asked them. They thought it was good for children to have secrets too.

Soon Charlie began to feel something kind and playful and beautiful that he had never felt before. He began to take his painting easel, his paints, and his canvas and brushes down to the sitting tree at Stone Mountain Creek, and he began making a painting. He painted the water and the rocks and the trees and the leaves and the shadows from the sunshine in the sky, and he painted twenty five little fairies and elves dancing in the air to the music of the water bubbling and trickling over the rocks. But he still could not paint a woman into the picture, for he did not know what she looked like. The children did not know either. It was not yet time.

Finally, the end of the summer came near, and the children all gathered in the playhouse one morning and decided to ask the spirit of love for Charlie if they could see her now. The children wanted Charlie's dream to come true. The children wanted a love for Charlie that they and Charlie and everyone else in the community could see. They all walked down the path to the sitting tree and drank some water from Stone Mountain Creek. Then Crystal's younger brother Kagin asked the spirit of love for Charlie if they could see her now. The voice of

love for Charlie spoke gently and softly, and said, "Now you are ready and Charlie is ready, but I do not know if there is a woman ready to live here and let me be in her. I will ask the spirits of the woods to go and look around the whole world, and see if there is a woman who is ready." That was all the children heard. They did not know how the spirits of the woods would go and look around the whole world, but they decided that when a woman finally came to the community, and Charlie and her fell in love, they would ask her how the spirits of the woods found her. After the children decided that, all they could do was wait.

On September 18, three days before the end of the summer, a beautiful woman walked up the gravel road that led into the small community near Stone Mountain. No one saw her. The dogs in the community didn't even bark. She walked into the small community and walked down the path to the edge of Stone Mountain Creek near the sitting tree, just as if she knew where she was going. She bent down at the edge of the creek and, cupping her hands, she gave herself a drink of water. Then she stood up. She heard a voice. The voice was one of the spirits of the woods. The voice said, "A spirit of love is here, waiting for you. Will you let the spirit of love be in you, and let the spirit take its natural course?" The woman standing there near Stone Mountain Creek was kind and playful, as well as beautiful. She looked around her. Then she looked up into the sky. Then she said, "Yes, let the spirit of love be in me."

Soon Charlie came to the sitting tree at Stone Mountain Creek with his painting easel, his paints, and his canvas and brushes. A beautiful woman was standing in Stone Mountain Creek, right next to the tree with the roots that made the dark hiding place, but Charlie did not see her. Charlie set up his painting easel, put the canvas on the easel, and began to paint.

Then Charlie became thirsty. He knelt down to the edge of Stone Mountain Creek and, cupping his hands, he gave himself a drink of water. Then he stood up. He saw a beautiful woman standing in the middle of the creek. Charlie and the woman stood looking at each other for a long time. Then Charlie said, "I have made a painting of this place. It is like a dream, but it is not finished. If you would stay and let me paint you into the picture, the painting would be complete."

And the woman said, "Let us let Nature take its course."

Then Charlie and the woman kissed each other in the quiet of that late summer afternoon, a quiet that was only broken by the water of Stone Mountain Creek bubbling and trickling over the rocks; and all the children, though they were not there, knew what had happened, because the spirits of the woods told them.

Later, Kagin's younger brother Benjamin walked down to the edge of Stone Mountain Creek near the sitting tree and knelt down, and cupping his hands, he gave himself a drink of water. The children had

asked the woman how the spirits of the woods had brought her there to Stone Mountain Creek, but she said she did not really know how she came to be there. So Benjamin had decided to ask the spirits of the woods himself how they found the beautiful woman that now lived with Charlie, and how they brought her to Stone Mountain Creek.

But the spirits of the woods were silent. Because the spirits of the woods thought it was good for spirits of the woods to have secrets too.