

[opening theme music and strapline]

Nanny Bea: Why hello to you and welcome to my cottage. I've just brewed a lovely cuppa and await my neighbour Jules who will be bringing us a story any...

[knock sfx]

Nanny Bea: minute now.

Nanny Bea: We've got company! What a pleasant surprise. Hello?

Jules: Hello Nanny Bea, it's your neighbour Jules with a story.

Nanny Bea: What a coincidence I was just telling our listening friends about your arrival.

Jules: Well I never come empty handed. Today I've brought a story of Forest who's in a forest, and is looking for some hope. Are you ready for a story?

Nanny Bea: Oh, yes please

Jules: Okay then, Talking Trees, adapted for radio

It was a perky Spring morning with birds tweeting each other and bees buzzing around. Forest was trying not to notice as he was supposed to be listening to Mr. Douglas's Science lesson, who just asked, 'So what are we going to do?' the entire class replied, 'Take in Carbon Dioxide!' except for Forest who just managed to grab the final 'ide' but he said it with conviction. Mr Douglas appreciated conviction.

There was more to the class of course but Forest didn't mind, he'd heard it all before from his mother when she talked about his father, the eco warrior. 'He went on a hunger strike and petitioned the government, you know!' And he did know, mother was continually telling her son about his father who was chopped down in the deforestation of 1982. Now that may seem like forever ago to you and me but to trees, it was like yesterday.

Forest and his family are proud members of the *Sequoiadendron giganteum* family. The name gives it away, they are the most massive trees on planet Earth and the oldest living organisms, anywhere. Wisdom comes with years, why Forest's Great, Great Uncle General Sherman figures he's 2,500 years old, or thereabouts, it gets a bit confusing once you've lived over a thousand. They've fought off blazing fires and pests from all quarters, humans included. And that's another topic mother is continually telling her son about.

'Why it was only a few days ago that I heard from a bobcat, or was it a bear, so hard to tell the difference from this height, either way it was furry and it moved around. They said that the logging trucks were coming our way.' 'Now Mama,' Forest replied, 'you know the human smalltineus will take care of us, they need us to breathe clean air and they value the homes we give to wildlife.'

Mother would have none of it, it's hard to convince her after father was taken. 'I understand my dear,' said General Sherman, 'it's easy to lose faith in humans but look how they've protected me, and I'm no spring chestnut.'

Mother calmed herself, for now. A good thing too as Forest needed to focus on his homework, 'Now how did that go, I pull in carbon dioxide,' 'And water,' mother shouted. 'I pull in water and carbon dioxide through my leaves, powered by the...hmmm, what am I powered by?' Forest said loudly in hopes his mother would pitch in again, she did not. 'Where do I get my power, my energy? I don't have a plug, I don't have a fuel tank, and lucky trees don't need mouths to talk 'cause I don't have one of those either.' Forest was stumped and although that is the usual physical situation for a tree, they're always busy. Trees are full of activity, they are forever growing and giving. Why what they throw away is the very thing humans need to breathe, oxygen. And that is the reason Forest is convinced that humans will protect them and plant them. All that convincing did not help with Forest's homework, maybe General Sherman would.

Forest sought his assistance at once, 'Excuse me Mr General Sherman? Sir?'

'Plain 'ole Sherman is just fine with me lad. Now how can I help you?'

'Well it's about my homework. You see just when I should've been listening to Mr Douglas, I was listening to the birds and the bees.'

'Oh and what a lovely distraction they are. Even at my age I enjoy the tweeting and the buzzing. Well the buzzing is more like tinnitus to me but the birds, I definitely hear the birds and at this height, with my head above low floating clouds, I can take in the morning chorus and bask in the sun. Life is good.'

'Thank you Mr, Mighty, General Sherman sir, sir, thank you!' Forest said and he turned back to his homework.

'I thought he wanted my help, I guess after over 2000 years of living, I just ooze wisdom without even knowing it,' said the General as he got back to his sun basking.

'I am powered by the sun!' Forest said with conviction, surely Mr Douglas would give him extra points for conviction. Maybe with a bit more of that he could convince his mother that humans do care. He said to her straight away, 'Mother, I am sure with all my bark that humankind will be kind. I will shout a reminder to each one that comes our way. Protect us, plant more of us and together we can save the world!'

Mother got all choked up. 'You sound just like your father,' she said. 'And I almost believe you. But did you know that humans ask the questions, *If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?* They think if no one is nearby then your voice cannot be heard. They don't listen to the wind that carries our message or the sun that beams our plea. I'm sorry to say, I 've lost all hope.'

Forest was devastated, not because his mother didn't agree with him, but because it is such a sad state to be in, one without any hope. He turned his thoughts away from the tweeting birds and the buzzing bees, away from his homework and getting energy from the sun. Forest had a mission, a mission to restore his mother's hope.

Now before the internet, he would've just called out to a friend, to call out to a friend, to call out to yet another friend, but now all he had to do was go online. One problem, trees don't have internet, oh, or keyboards, oh, or fingers for that matter. Back to the way before the internet, Forest called out to a friend, to call out to a friend to call out to yet another friend. Eventually one came back with a way to find hope. Once a year, and usually on a Tuesday, a team came to their neck of the woods. They'd take samples and check for any changes in the environment. And record all their findings on the smallest keyboards with the weakest internet signal, but it was a signal. They did only come once a year but that time was near.

Forest just needed one member of the team to hear him, he wasn't going to fall, but sway instead and sing with his leaves for a sign of hope, a message for his mother so she could hear about all humans are doing to protect the trees.

Just a few days later, on a Tuesday it just so happens, a team of five showed up to inspect their woodland. The perfect chance thought Forest. The first team member stood right beside Forest, he was small as humans are, dressed head to toe in camouflage so seeing him was a tricky business, only when his boots the size of his head crackled fallen limbs on the woodland floor, did Forest notice him.

At once Forest started singing with his leaves, 'Tell me you'll watch over me, tell me you understand, plant more trees and protect me to save the skies and the land together.'

It was a lovely song, but the human in camouflage didn't seem to notice. Forest didn't give up though. Later the second member of the team stood right beside Forest, she was not as camouflaged as the other one, only a camouflage hat but still he thought, 'How do they expect me to see them!' that thought did not deter him, he sang his song again, "Tell me you'll watch over me, tell me you understand, plant more trees and protect ones like me to save the skies, the people and the land.'

She didn't seem to notice either. Neither did the third one or the fourth one or even the fifth as a matter of fact. Forest not only failed in getting a message of hope for his mother, he started losing the hope he had inside himself. That was until a half human arrived, they were holding the hand of the fourth member of the team, who said something about staying in the car, they'd be going home soon. It was hard to make out from so high up in the sky. The half sized human stood beside Forest. His hope was draining fast and he didn't think another song would change that. Just then, the half sized human looked up at him and really saw him, 'My you're as tall as the sky,' she said, 'And you look like you have so much to tell me.' That draining hope was plugged and overflowing so Forest sang once again, 'Tell me you'll watch over me, tell me you understand, plant more trees and protect me let's save the skies and the land, together'.

The half human didn't use her internet, she didn't tell him all about what humans are doing to save the trees and save the world, she just hugged Forest and made him a heartfelt promise, 'I will protect you and plant more of you, everywhere I go.'

Forest wasn't sure if she fully understood his song but he believed her. As it just takes one little promise, to grow into a forest of promises.

The End

Nanny Bea: Oh, thank you Jules. You know I made a promise myself once, to protect and plant trees for my squirrel children and my Aunt Robin.

Jules: You literally have a family tree!

Nanny Bea: A family Forest!

Jules: Of course you do. I can't wait to chat with you again next week when I return for more Tales and Tea.

Thomas: Go to NannyBea.com

Jules: Go there to find out about all our episodes. You can like and follow us on iTunes or Spotify and get in touch if you'd like to be on the show.

[Be on the Show jingle]

Mr Announcer: This has been a Toad in the Hole production for NannyBea.com.