

Andy Shepherd

'Brimming with  
humour and heart,  
wonder and wildness'

Abi Elphinstone

# THE WOOD WHERE MAGIC GROWS



Illustrated by  
Ellie Snowdon



when we arrived that Mum had held up her phone torch to lead us through the back gate to find the key we'd been left. The tree stood right by the house, a knobbly branch slung over the back door like a protective arm, while another leafy limb stretched up towards the windows above. Mum had needed to bend to avoid the leaves as she fumbled with the lock.

'It's just a branch knocking against the window,' I said.

But Cal was not convinced.

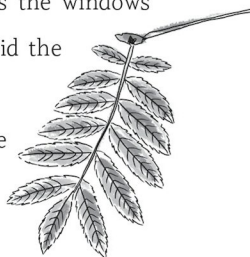
The *tap tap scratch* was getting louder. More insistent.

'It's a thing,' he said, voice quivering. 'A scary thing. A monster. And it sounds like it wants to get in.' His hand squeezed my arm even tighter. 'You won't let me get got by the monster, will you, Iggy?'

I groaned along with the bed as I unpeeled his grip, got up and crossed the room.

I pulled back the curtain with a flourish, like a magician performing a vanishing trick.

A branch was tapping and scraping at the window, its



leaves all smooshed up against the glass like they were peering in at us.

'See, it's just the tree,' I said.

Cal peered out suspiciously and when he saw there was no monster sprang out of his hiding place.

'You scared it away!' he cried delightedly. 'I knew you would!'

'There *are* no monsters,' I said. 'It's the tree that's been tapping.'

'Trees don't tap,' he said with absolute confidence.

'And monsters do?'

He nodded furiously. Then whispered, 'What if it comes back?'

I decided to open the window, hoping it would push back the branch and make some room between it and the glass, but the tree sprang in through the opening, leafy limbs tumbling past me. I hurriedly tried to lift some of the branches back out, but just as I managed to get one onto the other side of the sill another trailed through. It was like wrestling a friendly green octopus!



started snuffling, the tree started tapping again.

*Tap. Tap. Tap.*

When it got louder, I knew I had no choice but to open the window to try to push the branches away.

But the weird thing was that when I crossed the room and opened the curtains, there were no leaves or twigs pressing up against the glass at all.

In fact, the arms of the octopus tree were stretching in the other direction completely. They all pointed away from the house, down the garden.

Except for one twiggy stem that pointed straight at me, curling upwards at the end like a beckoning finger.

Cal started giggling.

And I did too as the leaves tickled my face.

‘Come and help,’ I urged as a cascade of shiny green ivy looped around my feet.

Together we finally managed to get the tree and the ivy back on the outside, and I pulled the window closed.

We fell back onto our beds, Cal still laughing as he shook leaf debris from his hair. It took ages for him to get all the giggle out and finally drop off. Then, just as he

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# The Tiger Who Came to Breakfast

I was woken in the morning by a tiger leaping across the room and landing on me.

‘Why are you still in bed, blobby-head?’ the tiger roared. ‘Let’s go exploring!’

I batted the stripy tail away from my face where it was being swished to excellent effect. Cal, who wore the tiger onesie me and Mum had bought him for his birthday pretty much permanently, added another ‘Blob blob blobby-head’ just for good measure.

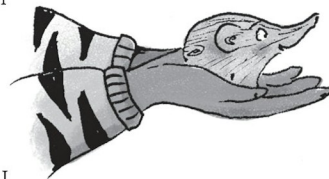
Just so you know, apart from when he’s hiding from monsters, Cal’s generally very bouncy. That was

something else I was still getting used to.

That and waking up in a completely different room of course, a room that actually looked more like a greenhouse. There were plants everywhere! They were lined up on the floor and a whole table against one wall heaved with pots, each one holding a bedraggled-looking flower.

And it wasn’t just plants, there were animals too. Well, wooden ones. There was a very upright duck standing by the door like a guard that we’d nearly tripped over when we came in and several mice peeking out from between the pots.

‘Look what I found!’ Cal declared, and held up a tiny wooden elephant nestled on his palm. ‘I’m going to call her Tiny. I think that’s her mummy over there.’ He pointed to a slightly larger elephant, which had its trunk raised in salute.



Along with the duck, mice and elephants there was

also a bushy-tailed fox with a coat of reddish wood  
and a paler grain running down its belly, and a



miniature owl nestled in an eggcup.



The cottage's owner obviously liked  
bees a lot too, because they were  
everywhere I looked. Painted on the plant  
pots, flying across a mug left on the floor,  
and there was even a really pretty  
wooden one with gold-tipped wings  
next to a watering can. It was far  
bigger than any bumblebee I'd ever



seen, with a body the size of a ping-pong ball.  
If a bee that big buzzed in my face I might  
just run a mile. I secretly hoped insects  
weren't all mutantly bigger here than in cities.

The bee wasn't looking at me though; it was staring  
up at a pair of wooden bookend squirrels who were  
turned away from each other as if they'd been squabbling,  
their tails held haughtily in the air. Neither of them was  
doing a very good job of looking after the books, as

several had tumbled to the floor.

Cal settled down on my bed with Tiny, the pocket-  
sized elephant, and chirpily presented me with a slice of  
bread. There was nothing on it, unless you counted the  
thumb prints gouged into it.

'Hurry up and eat,' he urged, bouncing up and down.

'Someone's bright-eyed and bushy-tailed at least,'  
Mum said, appearing in the doorway mid-yawn.

'I'm staaaarving,' Cal growled. 'Can we have pancakes?'  
Dad *always* makes me pancakes.'

With his back to the door, Cal winked at me, or I  
think that's what he was trying to do; he actually just  
scrunched up both his eyes. I could already tell Mum  
wasn't believing a word of it.

Then Mitchell appeared behind her, a huge grin  
across his face. He was the tallest person I'd ever met and  
he had to duck to get through all the doorways here.

'Don't know about you lot, but I slept like a log after  
arriving so late and trying to find this place,' he said.  
'Everyone sleep OK?'