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Birds of the Merry Forest

By LILIAN LEVERIDGE

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CHAPTER XII.

Up in the Cedar Tree.

"I WONDER if Jack Crow has finished building his new house yet," said Boy Blue as he and Dimple sat resting under a cedar tree by the Winding River.

"Oh, he must surely have finished by now," said Dimple. "He's so big and strong, and he began early. I hope he'll have time to talk to us soon, for I'm anxious to hear more about that far-away island, aren't you?"

"Yes, and the Boy Teacher," added Boy Blue. "Caw, caw, caw," laughed a well-known voice overhead, and Jack Crow's black wings swooped slowly down to the tip of a baby hemlock, where he perched and laughed some more.

"You two Bluebirds are the blindest I ever came across," he said, "for all you've got an extra pair of eyes between you."

"O Jack!" cried Boy Blue joyfully. "I do believe your nest is somewhere near. Where is it?"

Without waiting for an answer the twins ran out to a little open space and looked eagerly up into the tree tops. Yes, sure enough, there was something that looked like a big bundle of sticks, away up in the branches of the tree under which they had been sitting.

Boy Blue had the field glass focussed on it in a minute. "Yes siree!" he cried. "It's a nest all right, but I can't see it very well because of the branches. You look now, Dimple."

Dimple held the glass in her eager hands and looked steadily. "O Boy Blue!" she cried. "What do you think I see? There's another crow in that nest. I can just see its head."

"Who is it that's in with you, Jack?" Boy Blue asked. "Who is it! Why, Mrs. Jack, of course. Who else do you suppose?"

"Oh!" said Boy Blue. "I didn't know there was a Mrs. Jack." "Neither did I," said Dimple.

"You didn't!" exclaimed Jack loudly. "Well, you're bright! Did you suppose I was building a house all by myself and for myself? Thought me an old bachelor, did you? Not for me—not by a long shot! Caw, caw, caw!"

"Well, I'm glad you're not an old bachelor, Jack," laughed Boy Blue. "So am I," said Dimple. "I'm glad there's a Mrs. Jack; it's so much more interesting."

Just here there was a call from the nest in the tree-top, which Jack obeyed instantly. Mrs. Jack tried to speak low, but her voice was meant for calling over hills and valleys, and the children heard her say very distinctly: "Tell them to come up and visit me and see our nest, and what's in it."

Jack delivered the message, but they received the gracious invitation rather gravely. "If we only had wings," sighed Dimple, "there's nothing we'd like better; but how in the world can we get up there?"

Jack laughed scornfully. "I wish

the Boy Teacher over on my island was here. He'd soon show you." "I 'spect he'd climb, wouldn't he?" asked Boy Blue quickly.

"Course he would, and be lively about it, too. There wasn't much he would stick at. He was the lad for me, I'll tell you! He was the lad for me!" "I guess he must have been bigger and stronger than we are," suggested Dimple.

"He didn't wait till he was big," cried Jack. "He could climb like a squirrel before he was half as old as you. But then, he never was afraid of anything."

"I'm not afraid, either," declared Boy Blue, "and I'm going up."

"O Boy Blue!" cried Dimple in alarm, "don't you ever try it. You've never learned to climb, and you'd be sure to fall. This tree leans right over the river, and if you fell in, how would I ever get you out?"

"Don't you worry, Dimple," returned Boy Blue. "I'm not going to fall. There's branches all the way up this tree just like stairs. Of course I've got to learn to climb some day, and now is a good time to begin."

"That's the way to talk!" encouraged Jack with an approving flap of his wings. "Take your time; don't be in a hurry, and you'll get there all right."

Dimple stood at the foot of the cedar tree and anxiously watched her brother pull himself up from limb to limb. As soon as he had reached a point above her head she began to climb too. She was afraid to do it—dreadfully afraid—but she felt that she must be near her brother so as to catch him if he slipped.

Boy Blue didn't know she was following him, or he would have tried to coax her to go back; for he had only enough courage for one, and not a mite to spare. Jack gave her an approving wink whenever he caught her eye, but was wise enough not to give her away.

"I've heard the Boy Teacher say," Jack remarked to Boy Blue, "that when you are up on a high place you should always look up, never down, and then you won't get dizzy. Of course, we birds never get dizzy, don't even know what it means; but if the advice is any good to you, you're welcome to make use of it."

"I will," said the boy. "It's perfectly good advice, I know." Up and up and up went the two brave little climbers.

"Can you see me, Dimple?" called Boy Blue at the top of his voice.

Dimple was near enough to have heard a whisper, and it seemed to her so funny to be shouted to, that though she had been trying to be as quiet as a mouse she suddenly laughed right out.

Boy Blue looked down at her in surprise. "Dimple!" he cried. "You up here, too! Well, if that doesn't beat the monkeys!"

"I was scared at first," she confessed, "but I'm not a bit now. We must be nearly up to the nest, aren't we?"

"Yes, I can almost reach it with my hand. But do be careful, Dimple. I never thought of you coming. Climbing is a boy's job."

"Well, it's a girl's job too this time. You needn't think you're ever going to leave me far behind, Boy Blue. Now let's get farther up; then we can rest and talk."

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