

## BOK THE OAKMAN

**In the park stands a fine ancient oak tree. It has stood there for as long as can be remembered, growing older, changing with the seasons. On one side of the oak tree is a burn scar and people tell different stories of how this happened; some say once there was a forest fire and only this oak survived. Others say it was caught by the sun or a firework landed in it.**

No one really knows the real story for it did not happen in this world, that is, apart from the tree himself, for he is Bok the Oakman.

Many years ago, Bok the Oakman was a fine well grown oak tree. As the sun rose one morning in the growing light the oak could see the tiny shape of a red squirrel on the ground under his canopy. After a while the squirrel moved, slowly, but painfully. It came to the trunk and began to climb. Finding a perch on one of the branches it began to tell Bok why he was there. He had come from another dimension; from a place where the oak trees were at war.

They were the guardians of a wonderful gem. The gem of all gems, it was the source of magic and wonder. But there were evil creatures who wanted the gem for their bad deeds. They attacked the oaks with spears of fire and poison arrows to try to take the gem.

The oaks spoke of a great hero who would come and lead the fight, but the great hero was not a tree of their world. The trees had called on the wisdom of the Taranis, spirit of thunder, to help them find the hero.

Taranis is guardian of all oaks, for all time and his magic sent the squirrel to search out the great hero. "So if I'm here then that means you are the hero tree," he said to Bok, "will you come back with me and lead the oaks in their fight?"

"I would if I could but I don't see how I can. I am rooted here. I don't know how to move," said Bok.

"If you agree to come the Taranis will make it possible," replied the squirrel.

Bok knew he must help. As soon as he agreed, a great door appeared in front of him. As it opened he could see Taranis, his face ringed by a beard that made him look like a mighty lion, in his hands he held a mighty staff in the shape of a thunderbolt and a golden wheel that looked like it had been plucked from the sun. Taranis beckoned to Bok, holding out a mighty thunderbolt staff.

Bok stepped forward to accept the staff; to his amazement he was no longer rooted in the ground, he could move as he chose.

Suddenly he found he was stood at the head of a great army of oak trees. A hoard of savage creatures were attacking them with spears of fire. Some of the oaks had already fallen, others still stood burning in pain.

Before he could lift the mighty staff, a fire spear hit him and he felt the heat rising as he raised the staff and with a great cry ordered the attacking creatures to leave the oaks in peace. Then he slammed down the thunderbolt staff into the ground, making the earth shudder and roar like ten thousand drums beating through the ground. His new-found power flowed from the mighty staff, strong enough to banish them to the prison of the spirits where they could never again harm these oaks or any other peaceable creatures.

The gem was safe with oaks, who were battered and injured from the battle. Taranis came among them. He laid his healing hands on those who were suffering and wept for those whose spirits had left them.

Bok caught his breath and once he was healed, leaving just the burn scar, Taranis again opened the great door and Bok returned to his own world. Now only he knows and even if he lives a thousand years he will silently carry the scar made by the spear of fire as he led the army of the walking oaks.

*Based upon the ideas of the children of Flax Hill Junior Academy.*

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