

## THE STORY OF WOODY BARKER (SCOTS PINE)

**Once, in the times when dinosaurs roamed the land, glittering clouds filled the dull, grey, dreary sky. Meteors hurtling toward the earth lit up the whole heavens. For days meteors showered down battering all life from the earth.**

The Guardian, a spirit of the rising ground, whose task it was to survey the earth and create a great calm, lived among this chaos, sheltering wherever he could among the carboniferous forest, under the vast oceans and in the shifting desert sands.

After one meteor shower, where the whole earth had shook, the forest had burnt and the oceans boiled, the shifting sands had turned to glass. The Guardian explored the devastation and he wondered at his own survival. He settled his whole being into the land and waited, sleeping his time through the earth's struggles to settle into a place where plants could grow and humans might live.

Long ages after the meteors stopped falling a glimmering substance rained down. The life-giving dust seeped into the lifeless earth, sparking life in the first spring.

The Guardian awoke and saw how everywhere the dust fell, life was generated. The earth began to flourish with myriads of new life forms that had never existed before.

He fashioned a bag and collected in it all the dust he could. Loving the earth and everything alive on it he could now fully become the Guardian. The trees were his special love and his special friends.

After further long ages, when the rains had formed and watered the land, the Guardian let his being come to rest in the Scots Pine Tree; he became the spirit of the tree. The friends he made called him Woody Barker. Woody Barker loved being the Scots Pine. He loved the rain refreshing him. He loved the feeling of birds in his branches and the music of their song. He loved the wind blowing through his branches and the sounds the different strengths of wind made. His branches were like an Aeolian harp so that the wind sang through him.

The wise owl made its home in the Scots Pine. When on his travels, the owl found the magic binoculars and, realising their power, he brought them to the Pine. He knew the Guardian would use them well, for the good of all. Now the Guardian could see to the four corners of the earth and when he saw life threatened anywhere in the world he would try to prevent the harm happening.

When he saw a man walking through the forest with a chainsaw marking trees that he intended to chop down for Christmas, Woody warned the humans that trees produce oxygen and they need to be protected all over the world.

But the longer he lived, the more wanton destruction he saw of natural places and the living creatures which made their homes there.

The destruction of the rain forest for profit, the polluting of the seas with plastics and chemicals, the selfishness of humans as they used resources and created waste without one thought for the planet, with its delicate climates and fragile environments.

The Guardian saw the hole in the ozone layer grow bigger and bigger, as the ice caps grew smaller and smaller. He saw a few humans trying to put these things right but there was never enough time or money. It seemed like it was not important that nuclear weapons and forever waging war was more important than saving the planet.

He understood the damage being done to the world by the many changes happening and he saw the earth trying to fight back, with violent storms, tsunamis, volcano eruptions - all warnings from the earth that things must change.

But still the humans ignore the warnings, they clear up the wreckage and then carry on as if nothing had happened, as if it were not their fault.

The Guardian tells Woody to warn the other trees and to tell the birds who migrate to spread the word of what is to become of the earth unless something is done.



The illustration depicts a vibrant autumn forest. At the top, there are stylized trees with yellow and orange foliage. Below them, several leaves are shown falling through the air. Two colorful birds, one blue and one red, are flying. The background is a solid green color, representing the forest floor. In the bottom left corner, a girl with brown hair, wearing a blue sweater and black pants, is holding a book and looking up at a bird. In the bottom right corner, there are two red mushrooms with white spots.

The crows which echo through the autumn and winter are the cold comfort that haunts the air and sends shivers down the bones of those who care.

For like the times when the meteor showers came and the earth was unsettled, when the forest burned and the oceans boiled and the shifting sands turned to glass, the Guardian feels powerless to help, so he returns to his dormancy, becomes again the spirit of the rising ground and sleeps.

His dreams are rocked with torment and doubt until he finds his deepest sleep, he knows that when the humans have done their worst and either become extinct or changed their ways, that the earth will have time to regenerate again and he remembers the bag of dust that he has hidden in the deepest cave and how that dust brought back life after the meteor shower.

But he will not use it until all have learnt the lessons and realised humans are custodians of the earth, they do not own it and have no right to cause it harm so that the regenerated planet will be a living not a dying one.

***Based upon the ideas of the Tamworth Guides.***

***Written by Mal Dewhirst and Christine Genders.***