

You are never alone.





LITTLE OAKLEY

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Summary:

Little Oakley learns about the circle of life as he grows strong under Papa Oak's care, transitioning him from being cared for to being the caregiver.

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Illustrated by Samantha Campbell

For Chandler
Whose inspiration and encouragement
made Little Oakley possible.
I cherish so many precious memories.

~ C. M.



To Mimi
Who taught me the love of art and is
my steadfast reminder that we have an
amazing Creator.

~ S. C.

Table of Contents

Part One: Oakley grows up.....p. 4

Part Two: Oakley's life lessons.....p. 16

Part Three: Oakley learns to give.....p. 27



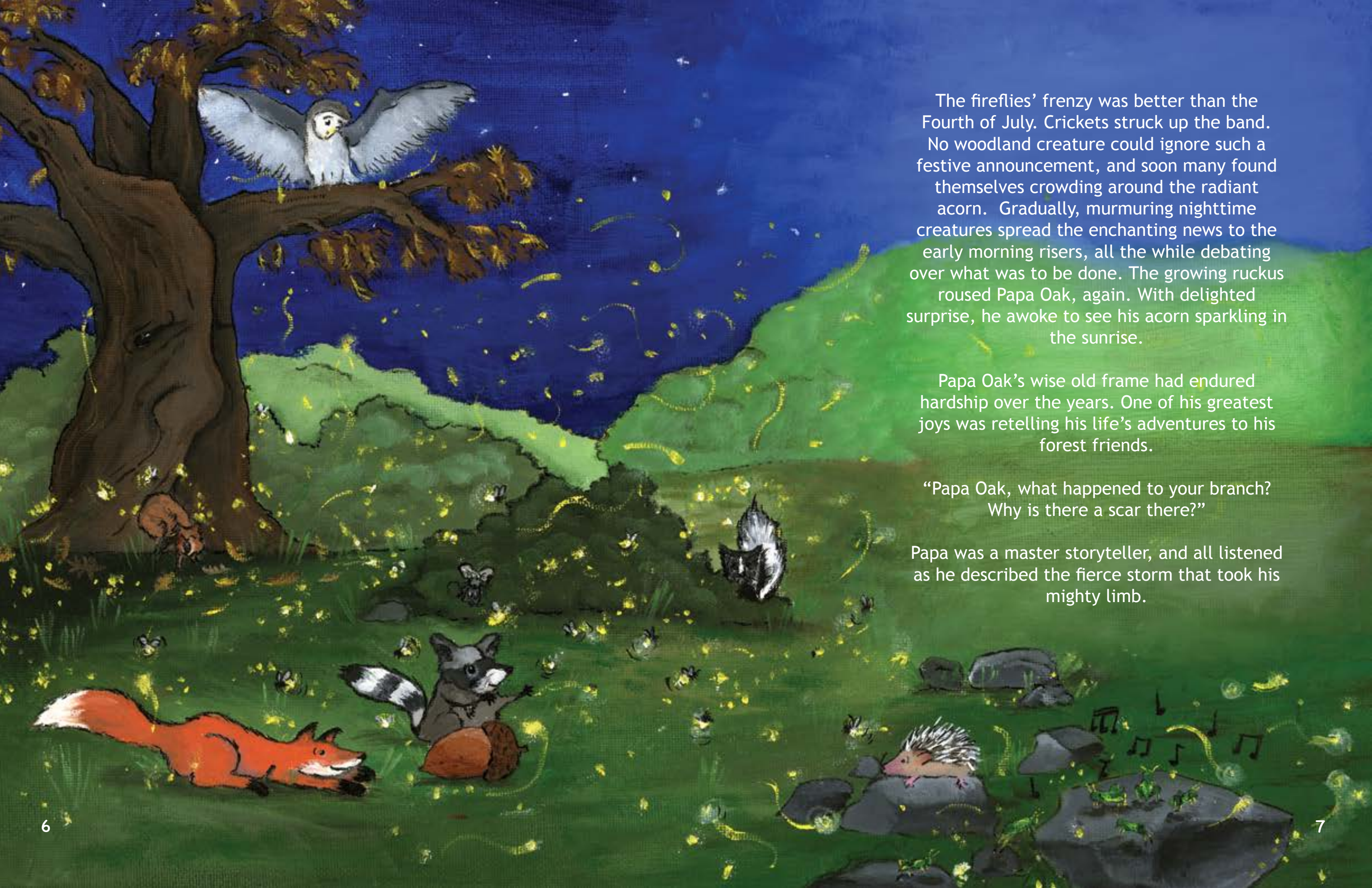


Part One

Wind whistled through the shadows as branches swayed and leaves fluttered to the ground. In a final gust, Wise Old Puff rattled the limbs of a lonesome oak. Startled from his peaceful slumber, Papa Oak stretched to rub his droopy eyelids. Movement caught his attention.

Tumbling downward, a final acorn landed with a whoosh on the moist earth. Papa Oak sighed and shed a solitary tear of longing.

It was also a tear of promise, a tear of joy, a tear of hope. A pearl of this kind of love can be positively powerful. Some might even believe magical. With divine purpose, the droplet descended directly upon the now illuminated acorn. As moonbeams gently lulled Papa Oak back to dreamland, quite the celebration was stirring among his nocturnal friends.

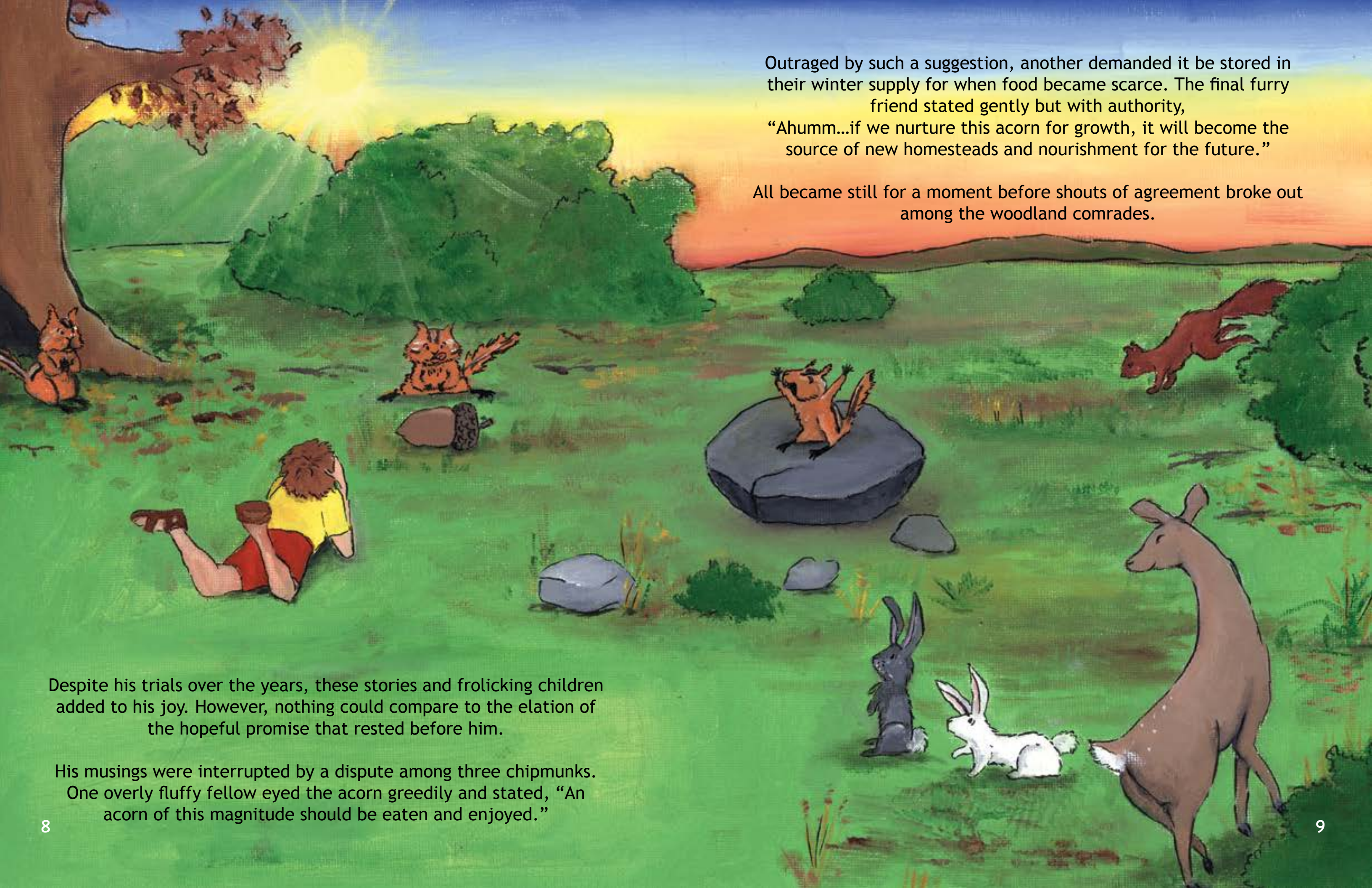


The fireflies' frenzy was better than the Fourth of July. Crickets struck up the band. No woodland creature could ignore such a festive announcement, and soon many found themselves crowding around the radiant acorn. Gradually, murmuring nighttime creatures spread the enchanting news to the early morning risers, all the while debating over what was to be done. The growing ruckus roused Papa Oak, again. With delighted surprise, he awoke to see his acorn sparkling in the sunrise.

Papa Oak's wise old frame had endured hardship over the years. One of his greatest joys was retelling his life's adventures to his forest friends.

"Papa Oak, what happened to your branch? Why is there a scar there?"

Papa was a master storyteller, and all listened as he described the fierce storm that took his mighty limb.



Outraged by such a suggestion, another demanded it be stored in their winter supply for when food became scarce. The final furry friend stated gently but with authority, “Ahumm...if we nurture this acorn for growth, it will become the source of new homesteads and nourishment for the future.”

All became still for a moment before shouts of agreement broke out among the woodland comrades.

Despite his trials over the years, these stories and frolicking children added to his joy. However, nothing could compare to the elation of the hopeful promise that rested before him.

His musings were interrupted by a dispute among three chipmunks. One overly fluffy fellow eyed the acorn greedily and stated, “An acorn of this magnitude should be eaten and enjoyed.”



It was settled. The golden acorn would be guarded until it grew to provide shelter and provision for the benefit of all the forest families gathered there.

Each woodland beast worked diligently to prepare the perfect place for the acorn. Papa Oak watched them curiously and was pleased with the love and affection they poured over every decision. The animals were delighted with their efforts.



That first night, when the sun bowed its head in the west, the creatures were thrilled when they heard Papa Oak singing...

Grow Little Oakley, grow and be strong.
Reach down your roots both deep and long.
I'll be here waiting at the start of each day.
To help you grow up and show you the way.

