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Enid Blyton™

THE MAGIC FARAWAY TREE

Illustrated by Jan McCafferty

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1. Rick comes to stay

Once upon a time there were three children, Joe, Beth and Frannie. They lived with their mother and father in a little cottage deep in the country. They had to help their parents both in the house and in the garden, as there was lots to do.

Now, one day their mother had a letter. She didn't very often have letters, so the children wondered what it was about.

'Listen!' she said. 'This is something quite exciting for you. Your cousin Rick is coming to stay with us!'

'Ooh!' said all the children, pleased. Rick was about the same age as Joe. He was a happy boy, rather naughty, and it would be such fun to have him.

'He can sleep with me in my little bedroom!' said Joe. 'Oh, Mother, what fun! When is he coming?'

'Tomorrow,' said Mother. 'You can put up a little bed for him, and you must make room for Rick's things in your cupboard. He is going to stay quite a long time, because his mother is ill and can't look after him.'

The three children flew upstairs to get Joe's room ready for Rick as well.

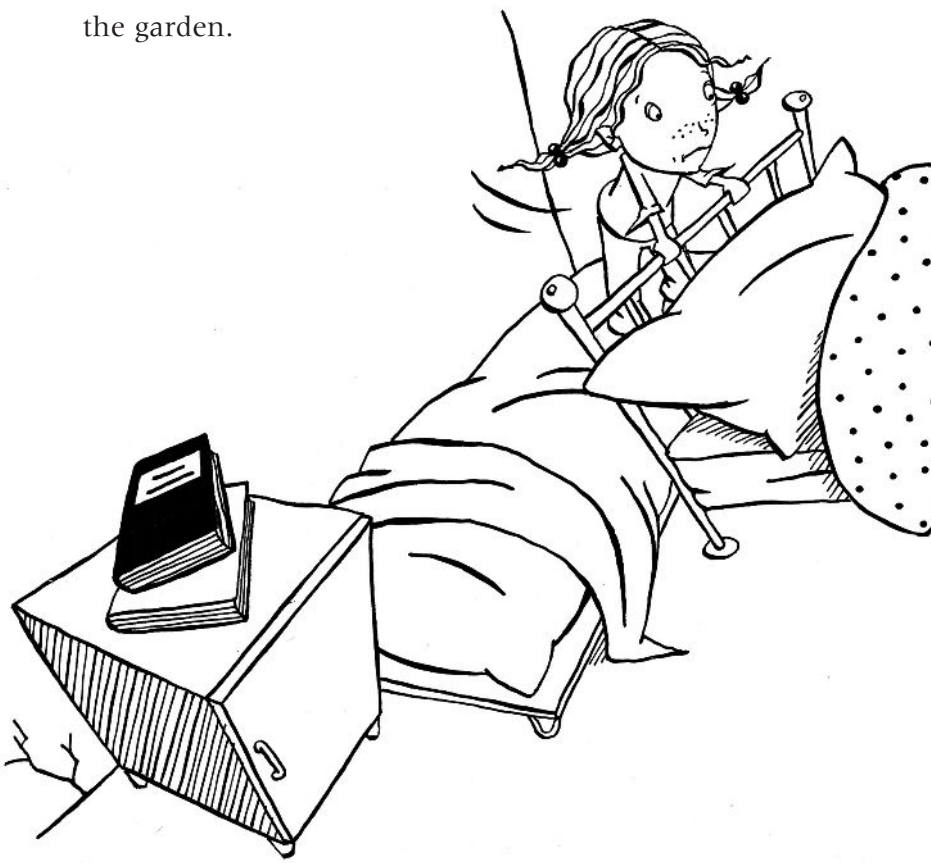
'Hey! What will Rick say when we tell him about the

Enchanted Wood and the Faraway Tree?' cried Joe.

'And what will he say when we show him our friends there – Silky, and old Moon-Face, and the dear old deaf Saucepan Man, and everyone!' said Beth.

'He *will* get a surprise!' said Frannie.

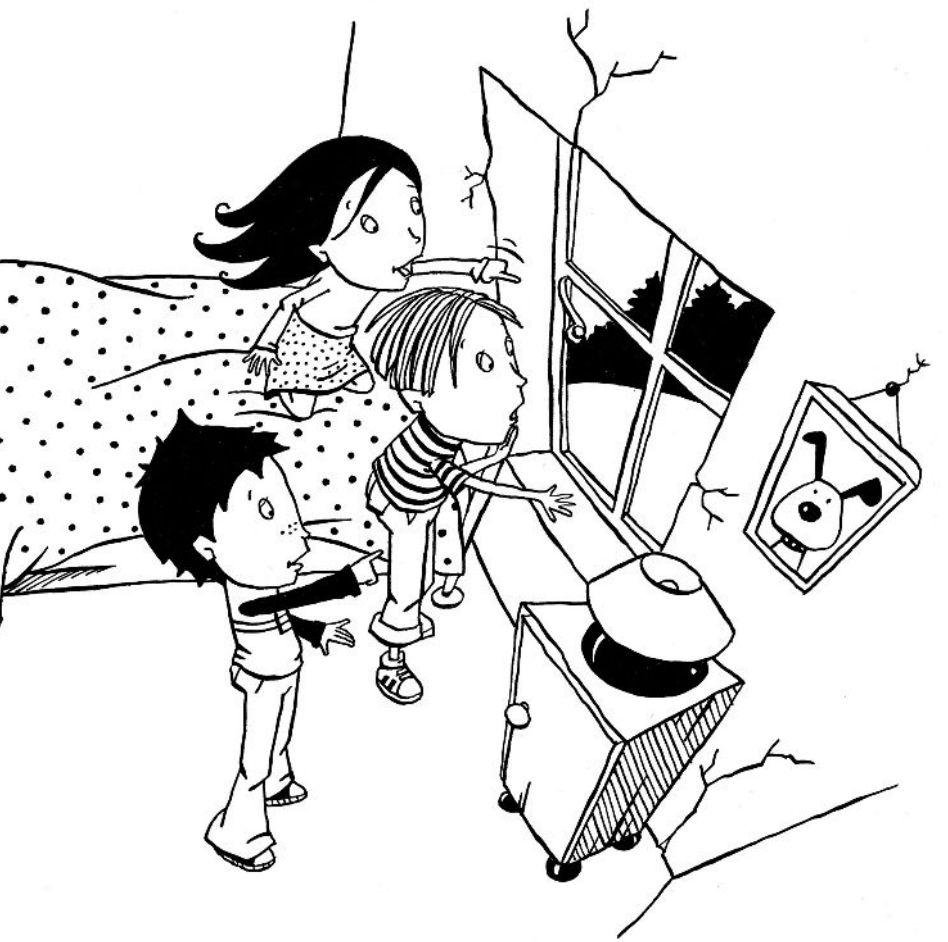
They got everything ready for their cousin. They put up a little camp-bed for him, and found some blankets. They made room in Joe's cupboard and bedside cabinet for Rick's clothes. Then they looked out of the window. It looked on to a dark, thick wood, whose trees waved in the wind, not far from the bottom of the garden.



'The Enchanted Wood!' said Beth softly. 'What marvellous adventures we have had there. Maybe Rick will have some, too.'

Rick arrived the next day. He had travelled in the delivery van from the village shop, with a small bag of clothes. He jumped down and hugged the children's mother.

'Hello, Aunt Polly!' he said. 'It's good of you to have me.



Hello, Joe! I say, aren't Beth and Frannie big now? It's lovely to be with you all again.'

The children took him up to his room. They helped him to unpack his bag and put his things neatly away in the cupboard and the bedside cabinet. They showed him the bed he was to sleep on.

'I expect I shall find it rather dull here after living in the city,' said Rick, putting his washing things on top of the bedside cabinet. 'It seems so quiet. I shall miss the noise of buses and cars.'

'You won't find it dull!' said Joe. 'My word, Rick, we've had more adventures since we've been here than we ever had when we lived in town.'

'What sort of adventures?' asked Rick in surprise. 'It seems such a quiet place that I shouldn't have thought there was even a small adventure to be found!'

The children took Rick to the window. 'Look, Rick,' said Joe. 'Do you see that thick, dark wood over there, backing on to the lane at the bottom of our garden?'

'Yes,' said Rick. 'It seems quite ordinary to me, except that the leaves of the trees seem a darker green than usual.'

'Well, listen, Rick – that's the *Enchanted Wood*!' said Beth.

Rick's eyes opened wide. He stared at the wood. 'You're making fun of me!' he said at last.

'No, we're not,' said Frannie. 'We mean what we say. Its name is the Enchanted Wood – and it *is* enchanted.

And oh, Rick, in the middle of it is the most wonderful tree in the world!'

'What sort of tree?' asked Rick, feeling quite excited.

'It's a really enormous tree,' said Joe. 'Its top goes right up to the clouds – and oh, Rick, at the top of it is always some strange land. You can go there by climbing up the top branch of the Faraway Tree, going up a little ladder through a hole in the big cloud that always lies on the top of the tree – and there you are in some strange land!'

'I don't think I believe you,' said Rick. 'You're making it all up.'

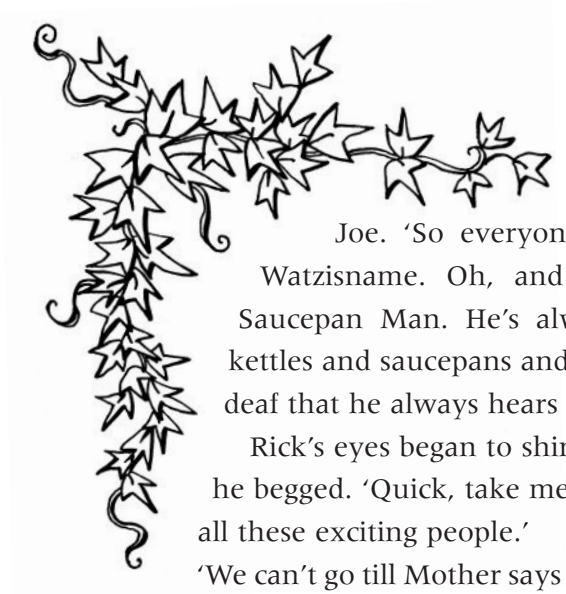
'Rick! We'll take you there and show you what we mean,' said Beth. 'It's all quite true. We've had such exciting adventures at the top of the Faraway Tree. We've been to the Rocking Land, and the Birthday Land.'

'And the Land of Take-What-You-Want and the Land of the Snowman,' said Frannie. 'You just can't imagine how exciting it all is.'

'And, Rick, all kinds of odd folk live in the trunk of the Faraway Tree,' said Joe. 'We've lots of good friends there. We'll take you to them one day. There's a dear little fairy called Silky, because she has such a mop of silky golden hair.'

'And there's funny old Mister Watzisname,' said Frannie.

'What's his real name?' asked Rick in surprise.



'Nobody knows, not even himself,' said Joe. 'So everyone calls him Mister Watzisname. Oh, and there is the Old Saucepan Man. He's always covered with kettles and saucepans and things, and he's so deaf that he always hears everything wrong.'

Rick's eyes began to shine. 'Take me there,' he begged. 'Quick, take me! I can't wait to see all these exciting people.'

'We can't go till Mother says she doesn't need us in the house,' said Beth. 'But we *will* take you – of course we will.'

'And, Rick, there's a slippery-slip, a slide that goes right down the inside of the tree from the top to the bottom,' said Frannie. 'It belongs to Moon-Face. He lends people cushions to slide down on.'

'I do want to go down that slide,' said Rick, getting terribly impatient. 'Why do you tell me all these things if you can't take me to see them now? I'll never be able to sleep tonight! Goodness! My head feels in a whirl already to think of the Faraway Tree and Moon-Face and Silky and the slippery-slip.'

'Rick, we'll take you as soon as we can,' promised Joe. 'There's no hurry. The Faraway Tree is always there. We never, never know what land is going to be at the top. We have to be very careful sometimes

because there might be a dangerous land – one that we couldn't get away from!'

A voice came from downstairs. 'Children! Are you going to stay up there all day? I suppose you don't want anything to eat? What a pity – because I have made some new bread and put out some honey!'

Four children raced down the stairs. New bread and honey! Goodness, they weren't going to miss those. Good old Mother – she was always thinking of some nice little treat for them.

'Joe, Father wants you to dig up some potatoes for him later,' said Mother. 'Rick can help you. And, Beth and Frannie, I need your help, because I have to take some mended clothes to Mrs Harris, and she lives such a long way away.'

The children had been hoping to take Rick to the Enchanted Wood. They looked disappointed. But they said nothing, because they knew that in a family everyone had to help when they could.

Mother saw their disappointed faces and smiled. 'I suppose you want to take Rick to see those peculiar friends of yours,' she said. 'Well now, listen – if you are good children today, and do the jobs you have to do, I'll give you a whole day off tomorrow! Then you may take your lunch and dinner and go to visit any friends you like. How would you like that?'

'Oh, Mother, thank you!' cried the children in delight.

‘A whole day!’ said Beth. ‘Why, Rick, we can show you everything!’

‘And maybe let you peep into whatever land is at the top of the Faraway Tree,’ whispered Frannie. ‘Oh, what fun!’

So they did their work well that afternoon and looked forward to the next day. Rick dug hard, and Joe was pleased with him. It was going to be fun to have a cousin with them, able to work and play and enjoy everything, too!

When they went to bed that night they left the doors of their rooms open so that they might call to one another.

‘Sleep well, Rick!’ called Beth. ‘I hope it’s fine tomorrow! What fun we’ll have!’

‘Goodnight, Beth!’ called back Rick. ‘I can’t tell you how I’m longing for tomorrow. I know I shan’t be able to sleep tonight!’

But he did – and so did all the others. When Mother came up at ten o’clock she peeped in at the children, and not one was awake.

Joe woke first next day. He sat up and looked out of the window. The sun streamed in, warm and bright. Joe’s heart jumped for joy. He leaned over to Rick’s bed and shook him.

‘Wake up!’ he said. ‘It’s tomorrow now – and we’re going to the Enchanted Wood!’