
Flame

~ Sacha Etzel

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Not so far away and not so long ago, there was a dry desert land where Brother Wind blew gently upon the land and upon all Mother Earth's creatures. This desert land had many tall, fragrant eucalyptus trees and small little bushes covering it. Many creatures called this desert home.

The birds lived high in the trees and watched over the land and its creatures. They flew from tree to tree. Coyote could often be seen looking for small creatures to eat. Wild bushy-tailed bunnies hopped on two feet, eating anything green they could find. And deer could sometimes be seen eating leaves from the bushes and trees. Even though there was hardly any water, this was good land and the animals were happy living here.

One day, a spark of flame leaped out of Father Sun and landed on a bush. The bush began to burn.

Brother Wind blew and blew and blew and Flame grew bigger and taller and hotter. Flame jumped to a nearby bush, and then to another, and each time Flame jumped, it grew bigger and hotter. It wasn't long before Flame was as tall as the eucalyptus trees!

Oh, my! The animals did not know what to do; they did not understand that Flame wanted to give new life to that land. They called on Sister Rain to shed her tears. But Sister Rain could not come. They asked Brother Wind to stop blowing on Flame, but Brother Wind understood the ways of that land, and kept on blowing.

"What shall we do?" asked the animals.

Flame grew so big and so very hot that the animals grew very afraid. They could no longer live in their burrows or dens or branches; Flame was burning them all. There was only one thing the animals could do, and that was to leave their homes and find shelter somewhere else. And so the bunnies, coyotes, deer, and birds all ran as fast as they could, for they could feel Flame's heat coming ever closer.

Full of fear, they ran and they ran. They could not stop, though they were so very tired, until they had left Flame far behind. At last they came to the beach where Mother Earth was rolling her waves against the shore. There they rested, knowing that wise Mother Earth held everything in her bosom and that Father Sun spread his warm light upon the land. Here they were safe at last.

After they had rested they realized that they no longer had homes to live in. "My nest has surely fallen from the branch and been burned," said the bird. "My hole is certainly full of ash and smoke," said the bunny.

"My den is destroyed," said the coyote.

And the deer, who spoke very rarely, knew that her soft, grassy bed had been turned to cinders.

All the animals were sad and bewildered because they had lost their homes. Flame was destroying everything!

Wise Mother Earth embraced them and Father Sun encircled them with his warm light. The animals huddled together and listened to Mother Earth rolling her waves against the shore. They took deep breaths and were very quiet and still together.

Back in the desert land, Flame saw that almost everything was gone—the trees, the bushes, all the animals' homes, and even the earth were black. Flame knew that for there to be new life, all the old had to be taken away. Flame looked all around and saw that its work was done. A new land had been created. Flame leaped into Mother Earth's big bountiful ocean as she rolled her waves over Flame, holding Flame close to her heart.

Sister Rain sent rain to cool the burnt earth at last. Soon the animals could return to this new land. Already grasses were growing, stronger and greener than before. The shrubs grew back, bushier and fuller than they had ever been, and the trees sent out new branches and new saplings. The land had been made new!

Bunny burrowed down into the cool earth and coyote dug a new den. The birds once again built nests in the branches of the trees and bushes, and deer once again lay in her grassy bed. Brother Wind gently blew Mother Earth's soft ocean breeze upon all the creatures who were happily home again under Father Sun's warm sky. ♦

Sacha Etzel came to Waldorf education in 1989 after living in Mexico, the Polynesian islands, and Europe. She completed her Waldorf teacher training in 2000, while leading a Waldorf-inspired home program on a farm and also raising her beloved children. She volunteers for underserved communities, teaches mixed-aged kindergarten, family-child classes, student teachers, mentors and administrates—and loves writing!