



My Daddy is building a tent

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1.

The sun barely rose, the morning breeze barely stretched, when my dad asked me if I wanted to go with him. I sat on his lap, cuddled up for a little while, rubbed the sleep out of my eyes and stroked his arm. It felt as if grass grew on it. I liked to play walk on it with my fingers and imagine that I'm walking on a field.

“Where are you going?” I asked him.

“To build a tent.”

2.

We went together to the field. I chased butterflies, caught grasshoppers, picked flowers. He sat down, looked around, listened, hummed. Then the sun went down and we went home.

3.

The sun rose again, the morning breeze stretched again, and my dad asked me again if I wanted to go with him. I sat on his lap, cuddled up for a little while.

“Your arm is like the field”, I said.

“You touch it like the breeze”, he smiled.

We went together to the field. He sat down. I asked him where the tent would be. He asked me where would I put it.

“There, where that beautiful tree is growing”, I answered.

“It won't be good. Look, that is the only tree on the field. The eagles are keeping an eye on the field from its top. If you put up the tent too close, you'll scare them away.”

4.

“Then over there, where the small lake shimmers at the bottom of the hill.”

“It won't be good. That lake is a mirror. The sky is looking at its reflection in there. If you put up the tent too close, the sky will be embarrassed and will cover itself with clouds.”

“Where would you put it?”

“On top of the hill, where the wind can play with it as it pleases.”

Then the sun went down, and we went home.

5.

The sun rose, the morning breeze stretched, and we went out to the field. My daddy sat down. As he sat there thinking, planning, he drew in the air with his finger, like a wind evoking wizard. I asked him what the tent would be like. He asked, how would I build it.

“Spacious”, I replied.

“How spacious?”

“So that the whole family would fit in.”

“Wouldn’t you be scared in a big tent during the night?”

“Only if I was alone and the wind would play with the tent.”

6.

“Can you see those far away mountains over there?”, my daddy pointed at the zigzag mountain range, hugging the field. “Its peaks are stroking the sky, like you stroke my arm. Their cavity is spacious, big enough to put the whole field in, folded. Let’s make our tent like the mountain peaks!” I sat on his lap, cuddled up for a little while then the sun went down, and we went home.

7.

The sun rose, the morning breeze stretched, and we went out to the forest. We brought an axe with us. My daddy pointed at a slender, reedy trunk. He’d asked me what I thought of it.

“It’s tall and straight.”

“Can the wind move it?” he asked.

“Yes, yet it still doesn’t come down.”

“Does it have a spacious foliage?”

“There is space for the whole family in it”, I replied.

“Then we’ll chop this down to make the pillar for our tent.”

I raised the small axe when my daddy warned me:

“Look, next to this trunk there is this young, 2-year-old sapling. Be careful not to break it! If we chop the old trunk down, then the little sapling will get enough light and can stretch to the sky to grow into a tall, slender tree.”

8.

I nodded and we got started. I made small chops with my small axe, my father made bigger ones. When the trunk went down, we sat down and had a rest. Then we cut its branches off and dragged it up the hill. The wind ran after us, pushed us from behind. It was already evening when we finished. We looked at the stars for a little while then we went home.

9.

The sun rose but the wind brought some rain, so we stayed at home. What my daddy had drawn in the air earlier, now he sketched it on paper. He drew a tent that was once both a leafy tree and a cloud stroking a mountain peak. I drew butterflies, grasshoppers, and flowers.

My mum brought some canvas, my granny brought her tailor scissors. My daddy sat down on the floor, cut out long stripes from the canvas, pursing his lips. Like he was whistling in the wind. Mum

sewed the stripes together. In the evening, I wrapped myself in the canvas, like in a soft nest, cuddled up for a little while then fell asleep.

10.

The next morning, we rose before the sun. We packed the big canvas in one sack, and some ropes, straps, poles and screws in another one. We dragged the sacks out to the field. Meanwhile the wind had woken up, stretched, and pushed us from behind, all the way to the top of the hill, where the tent pillar was waiting.

I lied down next to the canvas, stroking the shaggy back of the hill, just like I used to stroke my daddy's arm. While I was cuddling up there, my daddy dug a hole, put the tent pillar in the hole and tethered it with ropes. It stood solidly, like the trees in the forest, the wind couldn't topple it down, however hard it tried to.

Then my daddy took the poles and hammered them in the ground around the pillar, in a big, beautiful circle. When he was ready, he laid out the big canvas sewn from the stripes.

11.

It looked like my mum's twirly skirt. My daddy waved, as if he was drawing in the air and summoned the wind. The wind picked up the canvas, blew it up like a big sail, but didn't blow it away. While the wind held it up, my daddy tied the canvas. First, he tied it to the top of the pillar so it can stroke the sky, then he tied it to the poles so it can stroke the grass. The canvas stretched out beautifully, and I drummed on it so the far away mountains can hear that the tent is finally ready.

12.

The sun went down, and we didn't go home. We cuddled up in the tent. We'd laid down a blanket and lied down.

"What do you think of the tent", asked my daddy.

"Just right", I said, satisfied.

"Tomorrow morning, when the sun rises, the whole family will come. We'll see if there is space for all of us. But for tonight, it is only for you and me. We can fill it with beautiful dreams."

I closed my eyes. Beneath me the blanket, above me the canvas. The hill beneath the blanket, the sky above the canvas. In here, dreams stroke my eyes, out there the wind stroke the tent, as if murmuring words. I asked the wind, what tales is it telling. The wind asked me what do I want to hear about.

13.

"About my daddy, about him building a tent."

"Where should he build the tent?" whispered the wind.

"On top of the hill, so we can see the far away mountains."

"How do you want the tent to be?"

"Spacious, so the whole family can fit in."

"What do you want the tent made of? Wood and canvas?"

"I'd rather it is made of the hill, the lake, the forest, so it can stay there solidly, forever, like the far away mountains. Let it be made of tales."