

# A HEART AS WIDE AS THE WORLD

## The Little Squirrel's Story

### Chapter 1



Once upon a time, a long time ago, in a faraway land, there was a beautiful forest. In the forest the trees grew tall and strong with their leaves every shade of green you could imagine.

In this flourishing forest lived many animals, largely in harmony and happy together.

Among the animals lived a little squirrel: she was a pretty, busy little red squirrel, not unlike the squirrels in Beatrix Potter and like all squirrels she spent her Summer squirreling away nuts for the Winter time, so she could be confident that when food was scarce she had enough saved to get through the Winter, the testing times which she was not yet sure she could survive.

Little Squirrel was very good at hoarding; she hoarded against everything; she made sure she had provision in case things went wrong (as she knew, from experience, they might) and so she had larders in many different places in the forest; SHE didn't trust anyone but herself to look after her and her family.

One day in this faraway land (which might be a little closer than you think), in the beautiful forest where the trees grew tall and strong with their leaves every shade of green you can imagine giving homes to the many animals of the forest, Little Squirrel had an awful day.

She woke up one morning thinking to herself, 'I must go and check all my larders in the forest, in my various hiding places, so I know that I am confident I can see it through the long Winter months without food'.

So the little squirrel ran off through the forest to check her various hiding places for her supplies. When she came to the first hiding place and found it empty she was upset 'What am I to do?' she asked herself.

Then she took herself to the next hiding place, but that too was empty, and then the third, and the fourth, and by now the little squirrel was beginning to realise that she had no reserves left and she was becoming more and more down hearted. When she found the 10th larder too was empty, the Little Squirrel had no more strength left and simply sat down and cried her eyes out, feeling exhausted, knowing she could not see the fruits of all her labours of the Summer. It was the worst of times.

By and by Mr. Fox came by and saw Little Squirrel. Now Mr. Fox was not of a generally kindly or understanding disposition; under normal circumstances, you understand, he might have made Little Squirrel his breakfast or his lunch, but something about Little Squirrel inspired his compassion and he asked 'What's wrong Little Squirrel?'

'I have no provisions for the hard times' said Little Squirrel, 'All my provisions have gone and I don't know what to do.'

'Ah,' said Mr. Fox, who did not quite understand the situation as his provisions came as providence provided, some some days, none other days, according to what crossed his path and this was the way he was used to living. 'Ah, Little Squirrel, perhaps you should go and see Wise Owl in the deepest and darkest part of the forest and he will be able to help you.'

'Oh' said Little Squirrel in alarm 'I can't do that – I'm scared of the deepest and the darkest part of the forest'.

'Ah, but,' said Mr. Fox, being his kindest and most understanding, for really a little squirrel could be quite delicious, 'what would happen if you didn't?'

And the Little Squirrel saw that Mr. Fox had a point (and not just the point of his teeth) and set off for the deepest and darkest part of the forest to find Wise Owl.