

## The trees in the mist

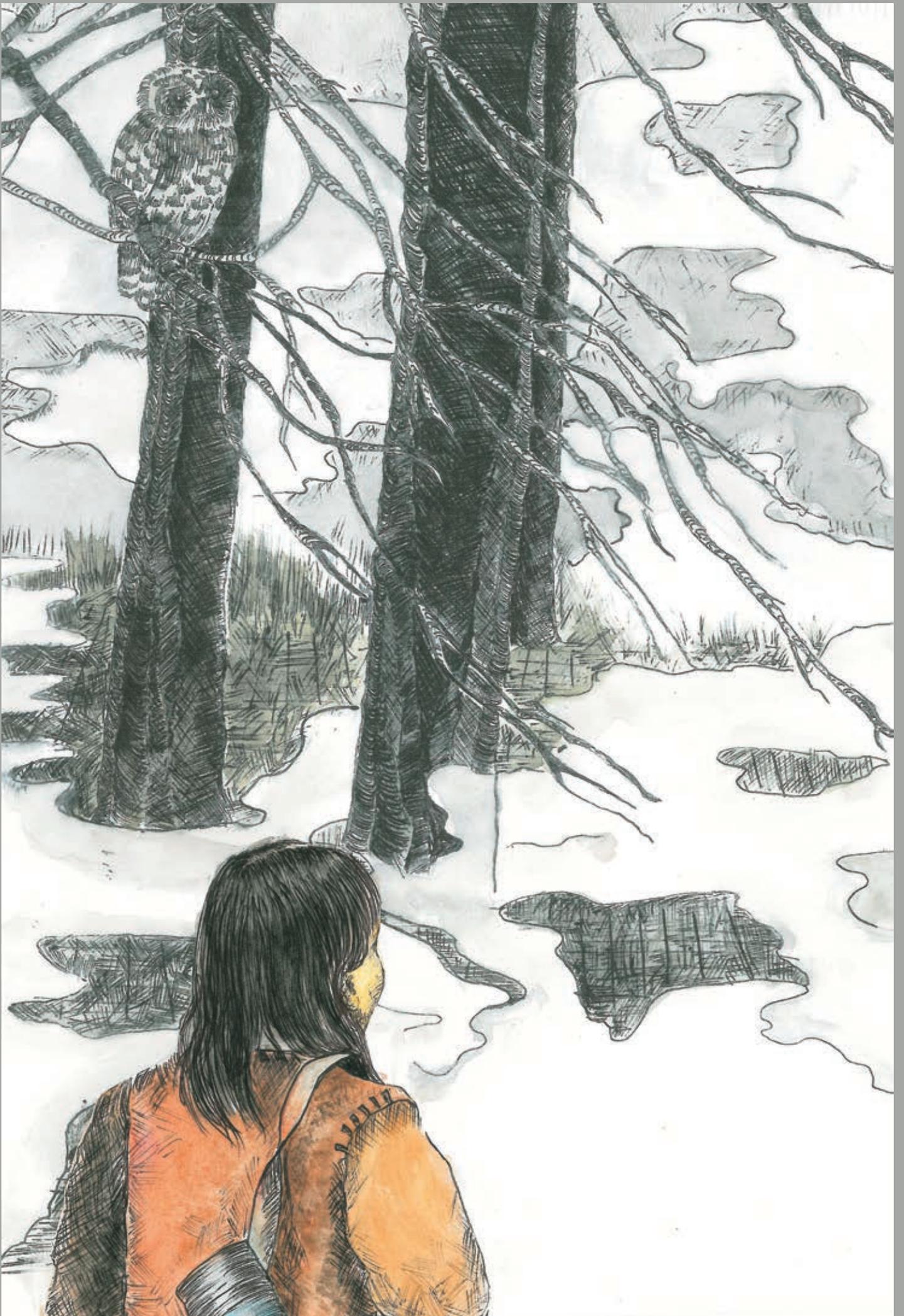
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*Theme: Dealing with feeling down, sad and depressed*

*Appropriate age group: 10 years and older*







# The trees in the mist

Once upon a time in the rainforest of Africa the wind carried two tiny seeds right to the edge of the forest. The two tiny seeds took root and grew into two trees that stood tall and strong. They grew next to one another and spent many happy hours chatting and watching the forest creatures. Little birds came to build their nests and animals, snakes and insects found shelter in their leafy branches. In the heat of the day animals played and rested in the shade under the two trees.

But life was not always easy for the two tall trees on the edge of the forest. When the fierce winds and the storms came, they battered the two trees with terrible force. When lightning crashed from the skies the two trees were at risk. But despite the dangers, the trees grew stronger and stood proudly on the edge of the forest.

Over time, very slowly, a mist began to develop around the two trees. For a while the mist was thin and wispy and they hardly noticed it. But the mist grew so thick and heavy that they could no longer see one another, even though they stood close together. When they tried to talk they could no longer hear each other because the thick mist absorbed the sound.

At first, the two trees didn't worry about the mist – they expected to wake up and find the mist had disappeared and the sun shining again. But the mist stayed day after day, week after week – thick, wet, heavy mist, all around them. The life-giving sun could no longer shine on the trees so they were no longer able to grow. They began to lose their leaves, their bare branches began to droop and the one tree lost some of its bark. The birds and the little animals moved away. They couldn't bring up their babies in the cold thick wet mist – it wasn't healthy at all.

The two trees began to feel very lonely and a heavy sadness came over them. They longed for the days of sunshine and laughter but those happy days seemed so long ago. The mist remained for one month, then two, and the trees began to give up hope. Before, they felt heavy with sadness; now, they felt empty, empty, empty. The world around them seemed empty of life and hope and they felt there was nothing they could do to change it.

One night a traveller came walking by, almost invisible in the heavy mist. This traveller was on an important mission for his master. He had to deliver a message to a faraway country – a message that would bring great happiness to the people. But as the traveller walked by, he noticed the two trees looking miserable in the mist and he was troubled by the sight. He decided to rest a while, sat under the trees, and began to talk to them.

These are the words that the traveller shared with the trees. "There was a time in my life when I, too, felt an emptiness and sadness so overwhelming that I thought I would never survive it. So I understand some of what you are going through. You are facing a challenge that will take much of your strength and courage to overcome. Remember that you have known good times in your life. I truly believe that you will again find happiness and laughter in your life. I must leave you now to continue with my journey but before I go I would like to give each of you a name, if you will allow me to." He turned to the one tree and said, "For you, my friend, you who stand so tall and strong, the name 'Precious One' seems fitting." Then he turned to the other tree and said, "And for you, my friend, the name 'Brave One' seems right." As the traveller disappeared into the mist, he said, "Precious One and Brave One, I promise to visit you again on my return journey."

The traveller went on his way, leaving the trees with questions to ponder. "Who is this

traveller in the night who spoke as someone who understands the mist? Is he telling the truth? Why did he give us special names?" They tried to forget about the traveller and his words but they could not help thinking: "The traveller has brought us something important – something that will help us to see clearly again".

Slowly, the two trees began to understand how the mist had changed their lives. They talked and talked:

"The mist was so damp and so dark that we both felt alone – we forgot we were standing right next to each other."

"How could we forget that we've always been together from when we were tiny seeds!"

"Yes, we forgot that our lives have a purpose. The wind carried the seeds from our parent trees to the exact spot where we needed to be – this place on the edge of the forest."

"The mist stole something very important from us – it stole our belief in ourselves, our pride and our dignity as the two tall trees on the edge of the African rainforest."

Then the two trees talked about the traveller's message of hope. The one tree said to the other, "Brave One, the traveller came to us with a message. Remember that he found shelter under us before he went on with his journey. Even when we felt lost in the mist, empty, with nothing to give, we gave him shelter. We are two tall trees providing shelter on the edge of the forest. We dare to grow where few trees grow!"

The other tree said, "Precious One, I don't fully understand about the mist but I do know this: We have to trust that one day we will see the Sun again and feel its warmth. When that day comes, we will take courage from it and grow strong again. We have to trust that we will learn how to deal with the mist. We have to learn to see through the mist. We have to learn that even if we feel cold and lonely and hopeless, we are still strong trees, standing proud and tall. That in itself is a miracle".

**? Possible discussion points:**

*How does it feel to be lost in a mist?*

*Discuss some of the practical things children can do when they are feeling down.*