

Marty's Great Idea! (A Tree Tale)

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Oscar the Oak and Marty the Maple Tree.



A very, **very** long time ago, there was a huge forest that stretched for miles and miles and miles in all directions. The forest was so large that even if you climbed to the top of the tallest tree on the top of the highest hill and looked everywhere around – all you would see would be more trees.



Smack dab in the middle of this great forest, and up on a hill lived a lively maple tree named Marty. Marty was only about twenty years old, which as you know, is not very old for a tree.

Standing beside Marty at the very top of the hill lived a great oak tree whose name was Oscar. Oscar was **very** old, you could even say he was ancient. His branches were gnarled and crooked and his bark was very crinkly.

But Oscar was very kind and very wise and he taught Marty many good and interesting things. And he really did know a lot, because every week animals and birds of all different kinds would come and visit, bringing all the news of the forest to Oscar.



Now Marty, well he talked a lot. He was always asking Oscar questions about everything in a never ending-stream. Oscar didn't mind and he did his best to be nice and answer all of Marty's questions but sometimes even he would grow tired and then he would fall asleep. And when Oscar fell asleep, because he was a tree, his nap might last for a whole week!

It was during one of these times, when Oscar was asleep, that Marty had a chance to do some thinking of his own. And it was then that Marty thought of an idea!

It was a GREAT idea.

But Marty was a tree and did things pretty slow too, so he thought about it for a long, long time before telling Oscar.

Finally one day when Oscar had just awakened from a nap, Marty decided to tell him about his great idea.

"You know Oscar, I've been thinking..." He paused for a long time.

"Yes Marty. What have you been thinking?" Asked Oscar.

It all came out in a rush.

"I've been thinking that this business of dropping our leaves every year is bad business. I mean, dropping perfectly good leaves and growing them back in the spring is wasteful and silly and even dirty. It messes up the forest floor and no one ever comes to clean it up. Dropping our leaves every year is bad business and do you know what? I'M NOT GOING TO DO IT ANYMORE!"



Well, Oscar didn't say anything; he just quietly chuckled to himself until his leaves began to tremble.

"Well Oscar?" Marty demanded. "Is this a great idea or not?"

"Hmm, well, oh, I don't really know." Said Oscar. "Just try it out if you want to. If it works, then others may do the same, and as you say the floor of the forest will be much cleaner." Oscar chuckled some more to himself and his leaves trembled just a little more.

Word got around the forest very quickly and many animals began to visit Marty instead of Oscar for a change.

"He won't do it." Said Freddy the fox. "Come fall, Marty will drop his leaves just like all the other trees."

"Quit being so mean." Said Bunny the rabbit. "If Marty wants to try something new, we should be nice to him."

"Oh, I don't know," said Polly the Porcupine, "Maple trees have always dropped their leaves. I'm not sure this is a good idea at all. What do you think Othello?"

"WHOOOO. Who knows?" Said Othello the owl. He winked at Polly then turned his head nearly all the way round and winked at Oscar. Oscar's leaves began to tremble again.

"Goodnight to you all," said Marty, "I'll see you when winter comes and you'll know I mean business." Marty was feeling very pleased with himself. He loved all the attention.



A grand and glorious autumn quickly passed then winter arrived and with it came the snows and wind. All the other trees dropped their brown and crackly leaves but not so with Marty. He held on very tight to his own leaves and just wouldn't let go. And his leaves also stayed bright red. The other trees looked bleak and sorrowful with all their bare branches, but Marty with all his bright red leaves was really something to look upon.

"Well what do you think of me now Oscar?" Said Marty. "I did it just like I said I would. I held onto my leaves and it worked!"

"Yes you did." Oscar said. "Good job, and you look great. But it's winter now and I could go for a nice long nap."

Dorothy the dove had stayed close to see if Marty really would do it. Finally she was satisfied and she flew all around the forest calling: "Marty's done it! He kept his leaves. What a sight! He's so bright! Come and see, come and see the bright red maple tree!"



Animals indeed came from miles around to stare at and admire Marty. His bright red leaves with the pure white snow all around really did make him quite a sight to behold.

"Well what do you think now Freddy?" Bunny said to the fox.

Freddy sniffed. "I don't know what the big deal is, I'm just as red as Marty and no one is making a fuss about me." He sniffed again and trotted off through the snowy forest.

"Well pooh on you again!" Shouted Bunny.

"I think he looks Great. Just Great! " Said Sammy the squirrel.

Marty was beside himself with joy and pride. "See how they admire me. I'm the talk of the whole forest. No one has ever seen a tree like me! Not only am I a glorious red, but I'm also so much warmer without all those bare branches. I'm the smartest tree in the forest and the most beautiful too! So what do you think of me now Oscar?"

Oscar didn't say anything. He seemed to be asleep except that his branches were trembling ever so slightly.

But that didn't matter to Marty; he was still feeling very pleased with himself. But... Marty failed to notice that some strange thing was starting to happen. His very topmost branches were starting to become just a little bit numb.



Marty continued to hold on to his leaves all that long, long winter. But after awhile it wasn't so much fun. Most of the animals and birds had already seen him so very few came to visit anymore. After all, if you've seen one maple tree with all his leaves still on—well you've seen them all. It just wasn't news anymore. And something else was wrong too: The numbness that had started way up high was much worse. By now it had spread all the way down to his lower branches.

"Oh I don't think this is good." Thought Marty. "I wish Oscar was awake.

Oscar! Oscar! Wake up! I need to talk with you."

But Oscar was deep asleep and didn't wake up.

"Oh bummer!" said Marty. "He's been asleep for almost four months. He's never slept this long before."

Finally, slowly, the new spring did start to come and all the other trees started budding again. And as you know, those nice little buds would soon become the new leaves of the tree.



But the same was not true for poor Marty, because he was still all red. And with all those old leaves in the way, the new buds couldn't come out. And to make matters worse, the numbness had spread all the way down to his trunk.

Marty grimaced and groaned trying to make all the old leaves fall off but he just couldn't do it. He was numb all over and couldn't feel his branches and leaves to make them fall. Only a few red leaves drifted down.

"Oh me, oh my," whispered Marty, "I've made a terrible mistake. I'm all stuffed up and I just can't get rid of all these stupid old red leaves."

And Marty felt very sad, because he didn't know what to do. And then he got scared. Was he going to die?

"HEEELLLPPP! HELP ME OSCAR. I WAS SILLY AND GOOFY.
HELP ME PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE!"



Oscar, who had been quiet since almost the beginning was not quite as asleep as Marty believed. You see when Oscar began to bud he also began to wake up, but being a tree he usually woke up very slowly.

But now he woke up completely and very fast. His young, most favorite friend was in trouble!

"AAAAAAOOOOOOOHHH. AAAAAOOOOOOOHHH." Oscar let out a low rumbling call that made his limbs creak and shudder and groan. The call echoed through the whole forest and it was very loud.

In forest "talk" it, said: "Calling all squirrels! Calling all squirrels. Marty is in trouble. Come and help. Come and help! Come and help."

Squirrels by the dozens, no by the hundreds, came from miles away and flocked around Marty, all their tails twitching in excitement.

"What's going on? What's happening? What's up?" They all asked at once.

"Marty's old red leaves are in the way and his new buds can't come out. He needs your help!" Oscar said.

The squirrels all murmured to each other, wondering what they should do.

" Well, what are you waiting for? PLUCK THOSE OLD LEAVES OFF!"



Well, you should have seen those squirrels go! They skittered and scampered, they chirruped and chattered, around and around, and up and down, and up and down, they went pulling out leaves along the way as they made a merry game of it all.

Even old Oscar reached down a craggy branch and plucked off a couple of leaves.

It didn't take long and in less than an hour, all of Marty's branches were as bare, as bare could be.

Marty felt much better right away. He thanked each and every squirrel that had helped, and thanked old Oscar many, many times.

"I thank you all too," said Oscar to the squirrels, "but Marty is very tired and needs a rest. You can come and visit him soon. Now shoo and thank you all again."

Marty went right to sleep. In a week the new buds started to come out, though Marty was still asleep. In a month the new buds were doing very well indeed, and it was about this time, that Marty woke up again.



Marty felt very ashamed. "Oh Oscar. I was so crummy."

"Why do you say that Marty?" Oscar asked.

"My idea was dumb and dangerous and there I was bragging all along about what a smart and beautiful tree I was."

"Well," said Oscar, "bragging is never a good thing to do. It may make others feel bad. But thinking up new ideas – well that is a good thing. You've just learned that not all ideas work out the way we plan them to. You just keep on thinking up new ideas, and someday one of them will turn out to be great. Just don't brag about it okay?"

"I won't!" Said Marty. He was feeling much better. "Say Oscar did you ever think of an idea that didn't work out."

"Oh, sure. When I was younger than you are, well I decided that I would grow much better on that tall hill over there. I tried to walk over there like the animals do. I didn't get very far of course because after all, I am a tree."

"Boy that idea didn't work out." Said Marty and he started to giggle.

"Nope." Said Oscar, and he started to chuckle. Marty and Oscar both burst out laughing and they giggled and guffawed until all their branches and leaves shook and shook and shook.

And the moral of the story is:
MOTHER NATURE KNOWS BEST.