

The Water Drop

by Friedrich Wilhelm Carove



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There was once a child who lived in a little hut, and in the hut there was nothing but a little bed and a looking glass - but as soon as the first sunbeam glided softly through the casement and kissed his sweet eyelids, and the finch and the linnnet waked him merrily with their morning songs, he arose and went out into the green meadow.

And he begged flour of the primrose, and sugar of the violet, and butter of the buttercup. He shook dewdrops from the cowslip into the cup of the harebell, spread out a large lime leaf, set his breakfast upon it, and feasted daintily. And he invited a humming bee and a gay butterfly to partake of his feast, but his favorite guest was a blue dragonfly.

The bee murmured a good deal about his riches, and the butterfly told his adventures. Such talk delighted the child, and his breakfast was the sweeter to him, and the sunshine on leaf and flower seemed more bright and cheering.

But when the bee had flown off to beg from flower to flower, and the butterfly had fluttered away to his play fellows, the dragonfly still remained, poised on a blade of grass. Her slender and burnished body, more brightly and deeply blue than the deep blue sky, glistened in the sunbeam. Her net like wings laughed at the flowers because they could not fly, but must stand still and abide the wind and rain.

The dragonfly sipped a little of the child's clear dewdrops and blue violet honey, and then whispered her winged words. Such stories as the dragonfly did tell! And as the child sat motionless with his blue eyes shut, and his head rested on his hands, she thought he had fallen asleep - so she poised her double wings and flew into the rustling wood.

But the child had only sunk into a dream of delight and was wishing he were a sunbeam or a moonbeam - and he would have been glad to hear more and more, and forever.

But at last as all was still, he opened his eyes and looked around for his dear guest, but she was flown far away. He could not bear to sit there any longer alone, and he rose and went to the gurgling brook. It gushed and rolled so merrily, and tumbled so wildly along as it hurried to throw itself head-over-heels into the river, just as if the great massy rock out of which it sprang were close behind it, and could only be escaped by a breakneck leap.

Then the child began to talk to the little waves and asked them whence they came. They would not stay to give him an answer, but danced away one over another - till at last, that the sweet child might not be grieved, a water-drop stopped behind a piece of rock.

"A long time ago," said the water-drop, "I lived with my countless sisters in the great Ocean, in peace and unity. We had all sorts of pastimes. Sometimes we mounted up high into the air, and peeped at the stars. Then we sank plump down deep below, and

looked how the coral builders work till they are tired, that they may reach the light of day at last.

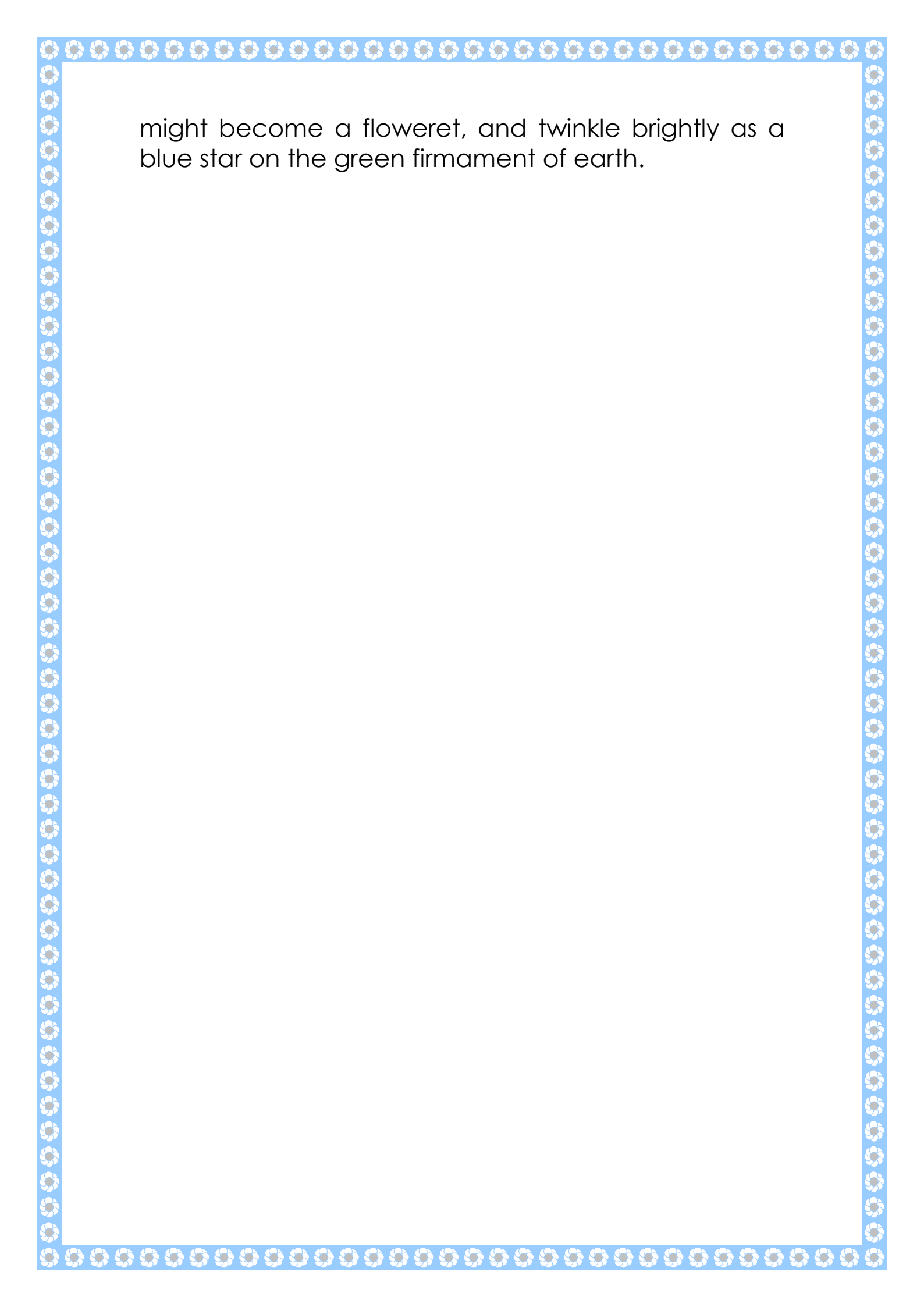
"But I was conceited, and thought myself much better than my sisters. And so, one day, when the sun rose out of the sea, I clung fast to one of his hot beams and thought how I should reach the stars and become one of them.

"But I had not ascended far when the sunbeam shook me off, and, in spite of all I could say or do, let me fall into a dark cloud. And soon a flash of fire darted through the cloud, and now I thought I must surely die - but the cloud laid itself down softly upon the top of a mountain, and so I escaped.

"Now I thought I should remain hidden, when, all on a sudden, I slipped over a round pebble, fell from one stone to another, down into the depths of the mountain. At last it was pitch dark and I could neither see nor hear anything.

"Then I found, indeed, that 'pride goeth before a fall,' for, though I had already laid aside all my unhappy pride in the cloud, my punishment was to remain for some time in the heart of the mountain. After undergoing many purifications from the hidden virtues of metals and minerals, I was at length permitted to come up once more into the free and cheerful air, and to gush from this rock and journey with this happy stream. Now will I run back to my sisters in the Ocean, and there wait patiently till I am called to something better."

So said the water-drop to the child, but scarcely had she finished her story, when the root of a For-Get-Me-Not caught the drop and sucked her in, that she



might become a floweret, and twinkle brightly as a blue star on the green firmament of earth.