

The Alphabet:

How Pine Cone and Pepper Pot

(with the help of Tiptoes Lightly and Farmer John)

learned Tom Nutcracker and June Berry their letters.

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Chapter 1: Pine Cone and Pepper Pot decide to help

It happened when Tom was six. That's when it happened. Tom Nutcracker was about to go to school and learn his ABC's and Pine Cone and Pepper Pot decided to help.

"Tom is going to go to school," said Pine Cone. "That's next month."

"That's right," said Pepper Pot. "He's going to learn his ABC's and XYZ's."

"And his LMNOP's too," said Pine Cone. "But without getting them mixed up. That would be terrible."

"Definitely terrible," agreed Pepper Pot, nodding his head so that the tip of his pointy hat danced about. "Then he'd spell TOM as MOT, or JUNE BERRY as NUJE REBRY."

"Or PINE CONE as NEPI NOEC," said Pine Cone, frowning.

"Or PEPPER POT as PREPEP TOP," said Pepper Pot, looking worried.

"I think we have to help," said Pine Cone. "Otherwise it'll be a disaster."

"A huge disaster," agreed Pepper Pot.

"Quick, do something," said Pine Cone.

"You do something," said Pepper Pot. "It's your problem too."

"I don't know what to do," said Pine Cone, pulling on his beard.

"Me neither," said Pepper Pot, twirling the end of his beard round and round.

"I know," said Pine Cone, suddenly brightening. "We'll teach Tom his letters BEFORE he goes to school. That way the school won't get him mixed up."

"That's a good idea," said Pepper Pot. "But how will we teach him?"

The gnomes tugged at their long beards and scratched their heads. They twirled their thumbs and shuffled their red boots. Suddenly they stopped. Their pointy caps shot up, the tips sparkling brightly. They grinned at each other.

"We'll ask Tiptoes!" they cried, and off they ran.