

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 2: Tiptoes agrees

Tiptoes Lightly was at home. She was sitting in her acorn house hanging high in the branches of the great oak tree. She was enjoying the view. Suddenly someone knocked on her door. They knocked loudly.

“KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!” said one knock.

“KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK!” said the other.

Tiptoes opened the door. She was about to say hello when the gnomes rushed in.

“You have to help,” said Pine Cone. “Quickly—or it’ll be a disaster.”

“A huge disaster,” said Pepper Pot.

Tiptoes opened her mouth again.

“Tom is going to school,” said Pine Cone. “He has to know his ABC’s, his LMNOP’s and his QRST’s.”

“And his UVWXYZ’s,” added Pepper Pot. “If he doesn’t know how to do them properly he will spell TOM as MOT, or Pepper Pot as PREPEP TOP!”

“Or PINE CONE as NEPI NOEC,” said Pine Cone. “Even TIPTOES LIGHTLY as TOESPIT THIGLLY!”

Tiptoes’ eyes opened wide.

“That would be a terrible disaster,” said Pine Cone.

“A monstrous disaster,” said Pepper Pot.

Tiptoes opened her mouth again.

“So we’re going to teach him,” said Pine Cone. “So the school doesn’t get him mixed up!”

“Definitely,” said Pepper Pot. “That’s what we are going to do. We’re going to teach Tom his letters.”

“And we are going to do it now,” said Pine Cone. “We’re not going to waste a minute.”

“Bye,” said Pepper Pot, marching out the door.

“Bye,” said Pine Cone, following him and leaving the door wide open.

They marched off along the branch.

Tiptoes closed the door and waited. A moment later there was a knock. It was softer this time. Tiptoes opened the door. It was the gnomes.

“We forgot to ask you how we can teach Tom his letters,” said Pepper Pot.

Tiptoes opened her mouth.

“Please tell us,” said Pine Cone, dropping to his knees.

“Pretty please,” begged Pepper Pot, whipping his cap off and kneeling too.

Tiptoes opened her mouth to speak and closed it again. Then she smiled.

“Yea!” cried the gnomes, jumping up. “Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!” they sang, and did a little dance. Out they waltzed, excited and chatting.

Tiptoes sighed and closed the door. She folded her arms and waited. A moment later the door creaked open a tiny bit. Pine Cone and Pepper Pot stuck their heads into the house. They looked sheepish.

“What are we supposed to do?” they asked.