



## The Parable of the Lowly Brown Caterpillar

Once upon a time, in a great big forest, at the bottom of a very tall tree, there crawled along in the soft, dirty, dark earth a caterpillar who was brown and fat and squishy. His name was Bumpadoo.

The odd thing about Bumpadoo was that he didn't know he was a caterpillar. He thought he was a worm. That is why he crawled at the bottom of the very tall tree instead of climbing up into the tree and into the branches and out onto the stems into the bright sunlight to feast on the banquet of abundant green leaves.

Bumpadoo had not always lived in the dirt. A long time ago, he had followed his true nature into the tree and out onto the leaves, and as he dined there in the bright sunshine, he grew bigger and fatter and happier, as should happen from eating lots and lots of good green nourishment. But a wind came along, rustled through the tree branches and shook the leaves mightily. Bumpadoo thought he was going to fall. Bumpadoo thought he was going to die. And so he scurried off of the leaves and over the branches and down the bark of the tree to the safety of the quiet, still and dirty earth.

In the earth, he met other creatures who crawled where he liked to crawl. They identified themselves as worms, and since Bumpadoo liked the



quietness and stillness of the dirty earth, he began to think that he, too, was a worm. Over time, he forgot how yummy the abundant green leaves had been. He forgot how beautiful the forest could look when viewed from very high up in the very tall tree. And he forgot that there was more to life than crawling around in the dirty earth like the worms.

One dreary rainy day, in the quiet muddy earth, Bumpadoo suddenly heard some-

thing bounce with a little plop. He poked his head out of the ground to see what had happened and came face to face with a big worm that looked just like him — brown and fat and squishy.

"Who are you?" asked Bumpadoo.

"Oh my! Who am I?" exclaimed the stranger. "I was munching on my dinner," she said, "hanging on as best I could to the slippery wet leaf, and a wind came along and it shook me and I fell, and here I am, but where am I?"

"You are with me!" said Bumpadoo.

"But I do not know your name. Would you please tell me what it is? I am a worm called Bumpadoo."

"Oh my apologies, I briefly forgot my manners," said the stranger. "It's nice to meet you. My name is Faddawolladee. I'm a caterpillar, and I must climb back up into that tree to the place where I live." She looked up, up, up the side of her very tall tree.

Bumpadoo laughed. "A caterpillar, you say? But you look like me. You must be a worm, just like me."

Faddawolladee turned her gaze to Bumpadoo. She eyed him carefully. "Yes we do look very much alike. That means you are not a worm. That means you are a caterpillar."

Bumpadoo shook the head of his fat and squishy brown body and said, "You and I cannot possibly be caterpillars. Caterpillars are glorious creatures that live in the trees instead of the earth, and they build cocoons in the leaves and become gorgeous butterflies. You are just a worm like me. Come, follow me, and I will show you where to find some dirt that is really delightful to wiggle through."

Faddawolladee replied, "Oh no, my friend! I am indeed a caterpillar. In fact, I was about to start building my cocoon when along came this rain storm and its wind, and I failed to hang on tight enough, so I fell."

Her attitude astounded Bumpadoo. "How arrogant for you to claim to be a caterpillar!" he said. "You are telling me that you're better than I am, and yet we are alike."

Faddawolladee sighed. "You are not a worm, my friend. You are a caterpillar like me. You could be feasting on the banquet of abundant green leaves that are high up in the very tall tree. I'm going to start the long climb up there now. Why don't you join me?"

"How can you say I am not a worm?" insisted Bumpadoo. "Can't you see that I live and crawl and eat in the soft, dirty earth? And you certainly are no better than I. You have no right to claim that you are a caterpillar

or by that claim to imply that someday you will become a gorgeous butterfly!"

Faddawolladee stared silently at Bumpadoo for a minute. Then she turned around and started to head for the tree.

"It's a very long climb back up to the leaves," she said, "but it's a climb I must take. I can't force you to come with me. I can't make you believe that I am indeed a caterpillar and that you are too. I can tell you that up in the tree, a very long journey from here, there is an abundance of delicious green leaves in the bright sunshine, but I can't make you understand how delightful they are to feast upon. It's worth all the hardship of getting up there. I invite you to come along — but the choice is yours."

Bumpadoo looked high, high, high up into the roof of the forest. "Aren't you afraid of falling again when the wind returns?" he asked. "A worm who thinks he can live there and eat there and not fall off is living in an illusion."

Faddawolladee attached her front feet to the base of the tree.

"The fall is not what we should fear," she said. "Staying in the dirt after the fall shows what should make us tremble with motivation to do what we have to do to become the butterflies we were created to be."

And with one last look at Bumpadoo, she said, "You cannot see the real me, nor can you know the real you, unless you give this tree a good try."

