

Grumpkin the Elf & The Beech Tree



There was once a small forest elf who lived in a little home in a dense patch of pine trees. The elf's name was Grumpkin and the other animals in the forest didn't really like his company because he was so grumpy all the time. Even though it felt mean, they would sometimes purposefully avoid him if they saw him coming because he never really had anything nice to say.

Grumpkin had to travel each day from his home in the pine trees to the nearby stream to collect water. There was a well worn path that he walked and he rarely ever saw anyone else on these walks (mostly because the animals would hide). One day Grumpkin was walking down the path after collecting some water, holding an acorn cap as his bucket and lost in thought when he suddenly felt his foot catch on something causing him to fall flat on his face! A surge of anger went through him as he looked up to see who had done this to him! He saw it was a root of the beech tree next to him that was sticking up out of the ground. The beech tree had smooth grey bark and bright green oval shaped leaves.

He angrily said to the beech tree, "Why would you do such a thing to me?! That was all your fault! You're a terrible tree!"

Grumpkin then huffed off back to his home where he could be alone. The next day Grumpkin went on the path to collect water again. As he approached the beech tree that had tripped him yesterday, he saw that it looked like it was drooping a little and its leaves were duller today than they were yesterday. As Grumpkin made his way past the tree, one of its drooping branches hooked onto his hat, tearing it straight from his head!

Anger shot through Grumpkin's body again and he turned to the tree and shouted, "How dare you take my hat! That was all your fault! You're a terrible tree!"

Grumpkin the Elf & The Beech Tree



He jumped up and snagged his hat from the branch and stomped off down the path.

The next day, Grumpkin took the trail once more to go collect some water and as he walked down the path he almost didn't recognize the beech tree any longer. Its green leaves were gone and its bark was brown and black in places – it looked like it was rotting off. As he crept past the tree, a piece of the bark peeled away from the trunk and toppled down straight onto Grumpkin's head!

“Arrgghh!!!!” Grumpkin shouted. “That's enough! You've hurt my head now and it's all your fault! You're a terrible terrible **terrible** tree!!”

He stomped off even harder than he'd ever stomped off before to go to the stream to get his water. While he was at the stream he heard a loud, “CRACK!! CRASH!!! BANG!!!!” And then complete silence....

When he walked back up the path towards his home the beech tree was no longer standing. It had toppled over and was lying on its side next to the path. Its leaves were gone, its bark was patchy and peeling, and now Grumpkin could see that the entire inside of the tree was completely mushy and rotted. He started to wonder how this had happened so quickly when the tree had been lush and alive only just a few days ago....?

As Grumpkin was peering into the rotted tree trunk thinking about it, another elf named Little Foot appeared and asked, “What happened?”

Grumpkin replied, “I don't know, but I'm glad it's gone. It was a terrible tree! It tripped me with its roots, stole my hat, and hit me over the head with its bark!”

Little Foot asked, “That sounds odd for a tree to do since they usually just stand around and mind their own business. What were you doing when you tripped over the root?”

Grumpkin thought for a moment and said, “Well, I was lost in thought and wasn't paying attention. I didn't even know the tree or its root were there! Then I yelled at it because I was angry”

“Hmm..” said Little Foot, “and what happened when it took your hat?”

Grumpkin the Elf & The Beech Tree



Grumpkin again thought and said, “Well, it looked like it was sagging and its branches were drooping lower than the day before. I didn't think to duck under them... Then I yelled at it because I was angry...”

“And what about when it hit you on the head with the bark?” asked Little Foot.

By this point Grumpkin was starting to wonder if perhaps his words had been effecting the tree. Each day after he yelled angrily at it, it started to look worse and worse. That final day when the bark hit his head, the tree had looked really unhealthy. And he realized that maybe all those things that had happened to him hadn't been ALL the tree's fault... maybe he could have done things differently... and if he had, what might have happened to the tree?

Question for the group:

- If you were Grumpkin, what would you do differently? And what do you think might have happened to the tree?
- Have you ever felt like Grumpkin or the tree? How did you deal with it? Any advice for others?

The End