



Ten Trees

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Magic, Romance

There was once a small village at the edge of a large forest. There were only four hundred or so people in the village, and most of them are of no importance. However, there are several villagers who ARE of some importance, and it is these villagers the story is revolving about.

The first character to mention, and the most important, is Wolfe. Aged twenty one years, he lived with his father on the other end of town. (It was custom that a man lived with his father until he married. The same went for women.)

Every day, Wolfe rose with the sun, made breakfast with his father, and then joined his father in the forest near their village, cutting down trees to send up the river to the mill.

This was the life Wolfe had always led, and he was content, living with his father (whose name was Linden), and being a lumberman but always had the uncomfortable feeling that his father wasn't as happy with this situation as Wolfe was. So when Brook, the father of the beautiful Dove was looking for a suitable spouse for his daughter, Wolfe made up his mind to compete for her hand.

Brook was a short, fat old man who slim, willowy Dove definitely did NOT inherit her looks from, circled Wolfe once the latter had made his offer.

“Sooooo,” Brook said, slowly. His teeth whistled. “You wish to marry my daughter, eh?” He continued to walk around the uncomfortable Wolfe.

“Well, then. You’ll have to prove your worth, boy. Woodwork, you said your name was?”

“Yes sir,” Wolfe said nervously. “Wolfe Woodwork.”

“So, I assume you work with wood?”

“Yes sir. I am a lumberman.”

Brook stopped circling. “I see, I see. You make a steady living for yourself, then?”

“Yes sir.” Wolfe shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

“Hmmm. Well,” huffed Brook. “I will want to see how good a lumberman you are, Woodwork! Tomorrow morning, you will cut down ten trees, all the way at the other end of the forest, and bring them to me! By yourself!”

“By myself,” stammered Wolfe. “Ten trees? Across the forest? You mean... the Magical Forest?”

The Magical Forest was infamous for its overflowing population of all sorts of horrid beasts; trolls, mischievous fairies, sharp toothed goblins, witches! Wolfe was not eager to make the long journey to the Magical Forest, brave whatever awaited him there, and return with ten trees for the father of the woman he was to marry to please his father. But he had to finish what he had begun. So the next morning, Wolfe set off before the sun had risen.

Wolfe made good timing, and had crossed the forest before the sun was at its highest. By the time noon had come, and the sun shone brightly and happily, however, Wolfe was in the Magical Forest, and here no sun could shine through the thick tops of the menacing trees all around the young man. Not one tree trunk Wolfe saw was straight; they were all curved, from top to bottom. They would be no good to a lumberman such as himself. He walked deeper into the Magical Forest, the hairs on his neck standing straight, his eyes darting left and right. So far he had seen nothing suspicious, which only made him MORE suspicious.

The young man walked for such a long time, that it seemed an eternity before he stumbled upon ten trees, standing tall and erect. "What beauties!" he marveled out loud.

"Yes," said a pure, feminine voice echoing through the forest. "We ARE beauties, aren't we?"

Before Wolfe could formulate an answer, another voice, light and airy and echoey, asked, "what are you, and what is your business here?"

"What do you mean, what am I?" asked Wolfe, finding his voice. "I'm a man, of course!" He spun around and around, but no one was in sight. "Where are you?"

"We are the Dryads of the Magical Forest," stated a third sweet, echoing female voice.

"There are ten of us!" exclaimed another voice.

There was a chorus of voices, and all at once, ten regal, tall, graceful girls with long, wild, beautiful hair, and flowing dresses appeared, each more beautiful than the last. They were kind to Wolfe, and asked him to dinner. There was lots to eat. There was tea, heaped with sweet smelling plants and herbs. There was salad, and a chowder of some kind, and jams and jellies and pudding. Wolfe ate, the girls ate, and the former found himself bombarded with questions.

"Where are you from? How did you get here? Why are you here? How long can you stay? Won't you take any more tea?"

"I'm from a village," Wolfe laughed, temporarily forgetting his quest in trying to answer the Dryad's questions.

"I walked here, early this morn. Yes, I'll take more tea, thank you very much. "

"But why did you come?" persisted one Dryad, with hair of the darkest shade of brown earth.

"Oh, I am here to do something for a man in the village..." Wolfe suddenly remembered, and his merry disposition fell. "I must get going," he said quickly, jumping to his feet. When the girls all objected, he waved them away.

"The day is nearly done, but I am not!" he said. "I have business to attend to." He then took out his hatchet and

faced the first of the ten trees. Hack! Hack! Hack! The first tree fell, as did one of the girls, who was moaning from behind him. Promptly the moaning stopped, and the girl was still.

“You have killed our sister!” wailed the nine girls left. “You imbecile, you fool! Stop! Stop before any more lives are lost!”

“What do you mean?” protested Wolfe, puzzled. “I have cut through a tree, not your sister!” And he cut down the second tree. Down went the tree, as well as a second girl.

Two trees and two dryads later, Wolfe realized what he was doing, and stopped. He bowed before the six remaining sisters and said, “I have committed murder, and did not heed your warnings. I humbly apologize. How may I ease the burden of your pain?”

Although this next part may sound quite dark, it is what happened, and I am only stating the facts, so do not object when I tell you that one after the other, the girls asked to have their tree cut down.

“For if four of our sisters have fallen, then so shall I,” said the first Dryad to make her wish.”And besides, you must need our tree for SOMETHING important.” Wolfe granted her wish, rather reluctantly.

“For if five of our sisters have fallen, then so shall I,” said the second Dryad to make her wish. And Wolfe cut down her tree.

“For if six of our sisters have fallen, then so shall I,” said the third Dryad to make her wish. And she fell to the ground.

“For if seven of our sisters have fallen, then so shall I,” said the fourth Dryad to make her wish. She too, fell.

“For if eight of our sisters have fallen, then so shall I,” said the fifth Dryad to make her wish. Wolfe chopped down the eighth tree, leaving the tenth sister.

She was smaller than her sisters, and had fine, delicate features. Her eyes were as blue as a pool of water(and as watery), and her hair as thick as the Prairie grasses, and her gown as green as the carpet of moss at her feet.

“For if nine of my sisters have fallen, then I am alone.” she said in a small voice. “But I do not want to be alone, and I do not want to die.” she looked up at him. “You killed four of my sisters, mistaking their trees as ordinary

ones. That was a mistake. An honest mistake. Then you killed five of my other sisters, because they asked it of you. You are not a bad man. In fact, when we were lunching earlier, I found you quite amiable. Perhaps instead of asking you to kill me along with my nine sisters, I will ask you to become my companion.”

So Wolfe married, just as he felt his father had wanted him to, and forgot all about Dove (who ended up marrying quite the successful merchant). Wolfe did not need to marry Dove after all; he had his wife, the tenth Dryad.

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