

The Great Cedar Tree

Adapted by Tonya Decker from "The Great Kapok Tree" by Lynne Cherry
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Narrator:

Two men walked into the forest. Moments before, the forest had been alive with the sounds of animal voices. Now all was quiet as the forest creatures watched the two men, wondering why they had come. The larger man stopped and pointed to a cedar tree. Then he left. The smaller man took the axe he had carried and struck the trunk of the tree. Whack! Whack! Whack! The sounds of the blows rang through the forest. The wood of the cedar tree was hard. Chop! Chop! Chop!

The man wiped off the sweat that ran down his face and neck. Whack! Chop! Whack! Chop! Soon the man grew tired. He sat down to rest at the foot of the great Cedar Tree. Before he knew it, the heat and hum of the forest had lulled him to sleep.

An eagle was roosting high up in the Cedar Tree. She glided down around the tree and came to land on a lower branch.

Eagle:

"Sqltmi, this tree is a tree of miracles. It is my watching spot. When I perch high in its branches I can see forever. Generations of my ancestors have used this tree as a place to hunt from. Please do not chop it down."

Narrator:

A small group of squirrels scampered down from the branches of the Cedar Tree. They chattered to the sleeping man.

Squirrels:

"Sqltmi, we have seen the ways of man. You chop down one tree and then you come back for another and another. The roots of these great trees wither and die, and there will be nothing left to hold the earth in place. When the snow and the rains come, the soil will be washed away and the forest will die."

Narrator:

A bee buzzed in the sleeping man's ear.

Bees:

"Sqltmi, my hive is in this cedar tree, and I fly from tree to tree and flower to flower collecting pollen. In this way I pollinate the trees and flowers throughout the forest. You see, all living things depend on one another."

Narrator:

A frog crept out from a large piece of loose bark and hopped over to the man. He croaked in his frog voice.

Frog:

“Sqltmi, I use this great tree to find my dinner. I love to eat the beetles and bugs that crawl and live in the cedar tree. If you cut it down, what will I eat?”

Narrator:

A chickadee, a flicker, and a nuthatch flew down from the cedar tree.

Birds:

“Sqltmi, you must not cut down this tree. We have flown over many forests and we have seen what happens once you begin to chop down the trees. Many people settle upon the land. They set fires to clear the brush and soon the forest disappears. Where once there was life, only ruins remain.”

Narrator:

Two Downy woodpeckers popped their heads out of their new home. In stuttering voices the woodpeckers spoke in the man’s ear.

Woodpeckers:

“Sqltmi, a ruined forest means ruined lives...many ruined lives. You will leave many of us homeless and without food if you chop down this great Cedar Tree.”

Narrator:

Rabbit hopped out of a burrow at the bottom of the Cedar Tree and jumped up to the man’s shoulder. In a small rabbit voice, he whispered,

Rabbit:

“Sqltmi, don’t you know what we all need to live? Air! Without the trees to make our air rich and pure, what will then happen? If you cut down the trees in the forest you will destroy that which gives us all life – the very air we breathe!”

Narrator:

Mountain Lion was hunting under the cover of the trees when he happened upon the man. He saw the man’s ax and the two deep wounds upon the tree. He circled around the man and padded quietly over to the sleeping man. Growling in his ear he said,

Mountain Lion:

“Sqltmi, how much is beauty worth? What price would you put on this majesty surrounding you? If you destroy the forest, on what would you feast your eyes?”

Narrator:

Deer, Elk, and Moose were watching close by. Silently they stepped towards the man. Deer was the first to speak.

Deer:

“Sqltmi, you are chopping down this tree with no thought for the future.”

Elk continued:

“Surely you know that what happens tomorrow depends on what you do today.”

Moose finished:

“The big man tells you to chop down a beautiful tree. He does not think of his own children, who tomorrow must live in a world without trees.”

Narrator:

A young boy walked up to the Cedar Tree. He was gathering cedar bark and roots for his yaya to make baskets. When he saw the sleeping man and the axe, he knelt over him and whispered in his ear,

Boy:

“Sqltmi, please look upon this tree with new eyes.”

Narrator:

The man began to stir and the boy and the animals moved back into the woods. The wind was moving through the trees making a muffled song and moving the clouds. The sun came streaming through the branches of the Cedar Tree and the bright light woke the man from his slumber. The forest scent brought back memories of his boyhood when he had spent much time in the woods with his family. He remembered the love his sile had for the forest. These memories seemed to have come back to him from a dream. Was it his family that had spoken to him from another world? He stood and picked up his ax and looked at the Cedar Tree....and turned and walked away.