



The Edelholz Fable

Written by
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Give the Gift of Love
From the Hardwood Forests of Pennsylvania

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Dedication

**This Story is dedicated to my parents Fred W. Cornell and
Ruth S. Cornell. I love them dearly.**

Jason and Julie stepped closer to the flowing stream as they walked deeper into the forest. They both knew that soon the forest would open to reveal a scenic pond surrounded by ancient shade trees. Jason always enjoyed coming to this pond because in the past he had learned many things about nature while standing at the waters edge.

Just as Jason and Julie came into view of the pond, they heard voices coming from the far side. Julie grabbed Jason's hand and asked, "Who's there?"

"I don't know," Jason replied. Jason shouted across the pond, "Who's there?"

Some branches shook and a voice answered, "I am the white oak tree, the greatest tree of the forest."

Julie said, "Jason, that tree is talking."

Jason again shouted across the pond, "Trees can't talk."

The white oak replied, "Today is a special day. All the trees of this forest have gathered at this pond to finally decide, who is the most important tree of the forest?"

A white pine standing close to Jason and Julie said "Hey, ask old rough bark why he thinks he's so important."

Julie asked the white oak, "Why do you think you're the most important tree of the forest?"

The white oak replied, "I am the white oak tree, the greatest tree of the forest. For I have carried the weight of the world on my shoulders. I've been used in the building of many bridges and structures that require great strength. My wood is used to make more hardwood flooring than all these other trees combined. The animals of the forest gather my acorns and store them for food in the winter. I am the white oak, the greatest tree of the forest."

The black cherry tree said to the white oak, "I've never seen an acorn pie. I am the black cherry, the most important tree of the forest. Not only am I used to make fine furniture and cabinets, but my fruit is food for the birds of the sky, and moms use me in the making of delicious pies and pastries."

Julie said, "My mom makes great cherry pies. The cherry tree is an important tree."

The white ash had heard enough. He spoke up and said, "Now just a minute. Let's talk about what is really important. If it weren't for me, there would have never been the sport of baseball. All baseball bats are made from me. I am the white ash, the most important tree of the forest."

Jason said, "I love to play baseball."

The sugar maple then declared, "Not only do I provide you with a fun sport, I also give you maple syrup for your pancakes every morning. If it weren't for me, you couldn't go bowling on Friday nights. Builders use me in the making of all bowling alleys. I am the sugar maple, the most important tree of the forest."

Julie said, "My mom would really be upset if there wasn't a bowling league."

It was then the turn for the sassafras to state its reason for being the most important tree of the forest. "Not only does my wood have a beautiful grain for the use in furniture and molding, but my roots are used extensively in the making of tea. I am the sassafras, the most important tree of the forest."

Jason said, "After a long day of ice skating in the winter, it's great to come home to a hot cup of sassafras tea."

The bigtooth aspen then stepped forward and said, "No one uses me in the making of pies, syrup, pastries, tea, or even furniture. But I will tell you what I am used primarily for. You use me to make paper, from the newspapers you read, to the paper towels you dry your hands on; from the cardboard box you ship things in to the wrapping paper you give Christmas gifts in. I am the bigtooth aspen, the most important tree in the forest."

Julie said, "Wow! That is an important tree."

The white birch then asked, "What is more important than your health? You use me to make tongue depressors and toothpicks. How could a doctor check your throat or how could you clean your teeth after you eat if it weren't for me? I am the white birch, the most important tree of the forest."

Jason said, "I have to have a toothpick after I eat corn on the cob."

The white pine was eager to say, "Let's talk about who has been the most important tree over the centuries. Many of the tall ships that sailed the seven seas used trees like me for the high masts to catch the wind. I have carried the freight of the world from continent to continent. Did you know that Christopher Columbus loaded his ship with pine logs for his return trip to Spain after discovering America? I am the white pine, the most important tree of the forest."

Julie said, "I didn't know that."

The black locust said, "I've been important for a long time too. For centuries, I was the preferred tree for the making of fence posts. When used outside, I can endure the elements better than any other tree here. I've been used for the making of large corrals to contain virtually all kinds of livestock. I am the black locust, the most important tree of the forest."

Jason said, "Yeah, he's right. My dad always told me that locust trees make the best fence posts."

The black walnut then said, "All you trees are silly. I am the black walnut, the most important tree of the forest. Everyone knows that my wood makes the finest furniture. My rich grain can bring warmth to any room. The tastiest cakes and cookies contain walnuts grown on my branches."

Julie said, "My grandmother makes the best walnut brownies."

Next, all the trees started talking simultaneously, stating their case for being the most important tree. Neither Jason nor Julie could understand any of them above all the noise. Then all the trees noticed an owl perched on a hollow tree. One tree asked, "Mr. Owl, wisest creature of the forest, which of us is the most important tree of the forest?"

The old owl said, "Whooooooooo am I to answer this question? The most important tree to me is the one in which I live, and it has been dead for twenty years. I cannot answer this question, but there are people here whose lives are surrounded by all of you trees. The best ones to decide who is the most important tree of the forest are Jason and Julie."

All the trees turned to Jason and Julie. Each tree listened intently in hopes that their name would be chosen as the most important tree of the forest.

Jason said, "If it weren't for the white oak, there would be no hardwood floors in our house."

Julie said, "If it weren't for the cherry tree, there wouldn't be a beautiful corner cupboard in our dining room or mom's delicious pies. If it weren't for the white ash and the hard maple, we couldn't play baseball or go bowling."

Jason said, "If it weren't for the bigtooth aspen, we wouldn't have paper to write on, and I really like my mom's hot sassafras tea. Every fall we go around the neighborhood and collect the walnuts that have fallen to the ground. Then mom makes the best walnut brownies. I really like that." Jason continued, "How could a doctor check your throat if he didn't have a tongue depressor from a white birch? And if it weren't for the white pine, how could the huge sailing ships have moved all the freight during the past centuries?"

Julie said, "For years my grandfather built his fences to contain his dairy herd with black locust posts. I don't know what he would have done without them."

Jason and Julie looked at each other and said, "All the trees of the forest are important." They learned a very valuable lesson: the forest is important in our lives, and each tree is important in making up the forest.

They turned to the trees to tell them their decision, but the trees were still. The trees no longer moved or talked. The trees had also learned the answer and now were content in being what they are, beautiful trees around a pond in the forest.

Jason and Julie turned to head home. They had walked several steps when they heard a soft "Thank You." Jason and Julie looked back at the trees, but the forest was still.