

The Mistake

Ryan's withered hand felt as cold as an ice cube. His pants were ripped, and his vision was blurry. He didn't know how long he had been stranded in this forest, but he knew he wouldn't be home any time soon. Ryan's determination kept him on track to find the special tree and sell it for billions.

Rumours about the wood were not soothing. Legends say that if you disturb the spirits, they will remove your skin, crunch up all your bones and turn you into a spirit of the majestic tree, motionless and alone for eternity.

But so much money could buy piles of happiness.

Darkness crept into the sky. Ryan was forced to set up his tent and he dozed off. While sleeping, Ryan had an unexpected visitor.

A raccoon found its way inside the tent. Ryan awoke and when he saw this creature his eyeballs almost popped out. The raccoon's paws seemed almost like human hands and feet. Since Ryan didn't have any breakfast, he half considered drawing out his knife... Ryan felt guilty at even having such a thought. But he hadn't eaten in days. The raccoon vanished, and a large juicy green apple remained in her place.

As Ryan finished eating, a bright flame shaped like a giant teardrop blinded him. Ryan felt an urge to touch it but then it drifted deeper into the forest. Ryan followed. The flame stopped in front of an enormous tree. Its trunk rose beyond the clouds.

Ryan had finally found the spirit tree.

Overjoyed, Ryan charged and threw his axe deep into the trunk. With an explosive crack, a piece of sparkling wood fell. As he escaped with the wood over his shoulder, the angry spirits swirled and swooped around him. A magical voice whispered into Ryan's ear. "Return our precious wood, or you will regret coming here."

Ryan couldn't just surrender so much money. He threw the spirit off and ran for hours away from the forest and back to his hometown.

When people heard Ryan's story, they made enormous offers. Bit by bit he sold the wood until nothing was left. He bought half the city and its mansions with his billions. He was the richest in the land.

But every night he had nightmares of everyone forgetting about him. During the day he would have painful cramps that stopped him from walking and horrible headaches that blinded him. Word had spread about the wood and people started to make jewellery out of it. However, rumours swirled of these jewellery wearers getting sick and falling into comas for months.

Ryan's feet felt heavy. The hill by his house was steep and he was exhausted. He could see the horizon above the edge of the cliff. He looked down at the forest that had given him so much trouble. The strong breeze brushed against his face, and it was so cold that Ryan almost froze. All alone, he thought to himself, "what have I done?"