



Forest Legends

Gnomes

By Tea Orsi



Gnomes

Here they are! Just the creatures you were waiting for: small, chubby, good-natured, friendly things who wear pointy hats and often have a well-groomed white beard. Yes, we're talking about gnomes!



Did you know that they can see the future and find mother lodes and other treasures hidden deep in the earth? They also are well versed in the magical properties of herbs and diseases (they really are multi-talented little handymen).



Gnomes can also talk to animals, and they work hard to protect mother nature's wonders. Our grandma knew many of them in her day.



She even got see to their tiny homes, which often have secret entrances in tree trunks. Now, let's go see if we can find them, too!



In addition to their famous pointy red hat, gnomes wear tunics in place of a brown leather belt with a large buckle. On their feet, they wear comfortable boots.



The women and girls wear pretty embroidered blouses and long skirts. Their favourite hairstyle? A nice pair of braids, one on the right and one on the left.

It's hard to believe, but gnomes are seven times stronger than humans. Tiny but sturdy, it's best not to make them mad!



The Legend of the Gentle Miller

This story shows that gnomes, although they generally hide from humans, are always ready to help them when they're in need. These little guys truly do have big hearts. Really, really big!



Once upon a time, there was a miller who worked day and night. One morning while at the mill, he heard a little voice calling for help.



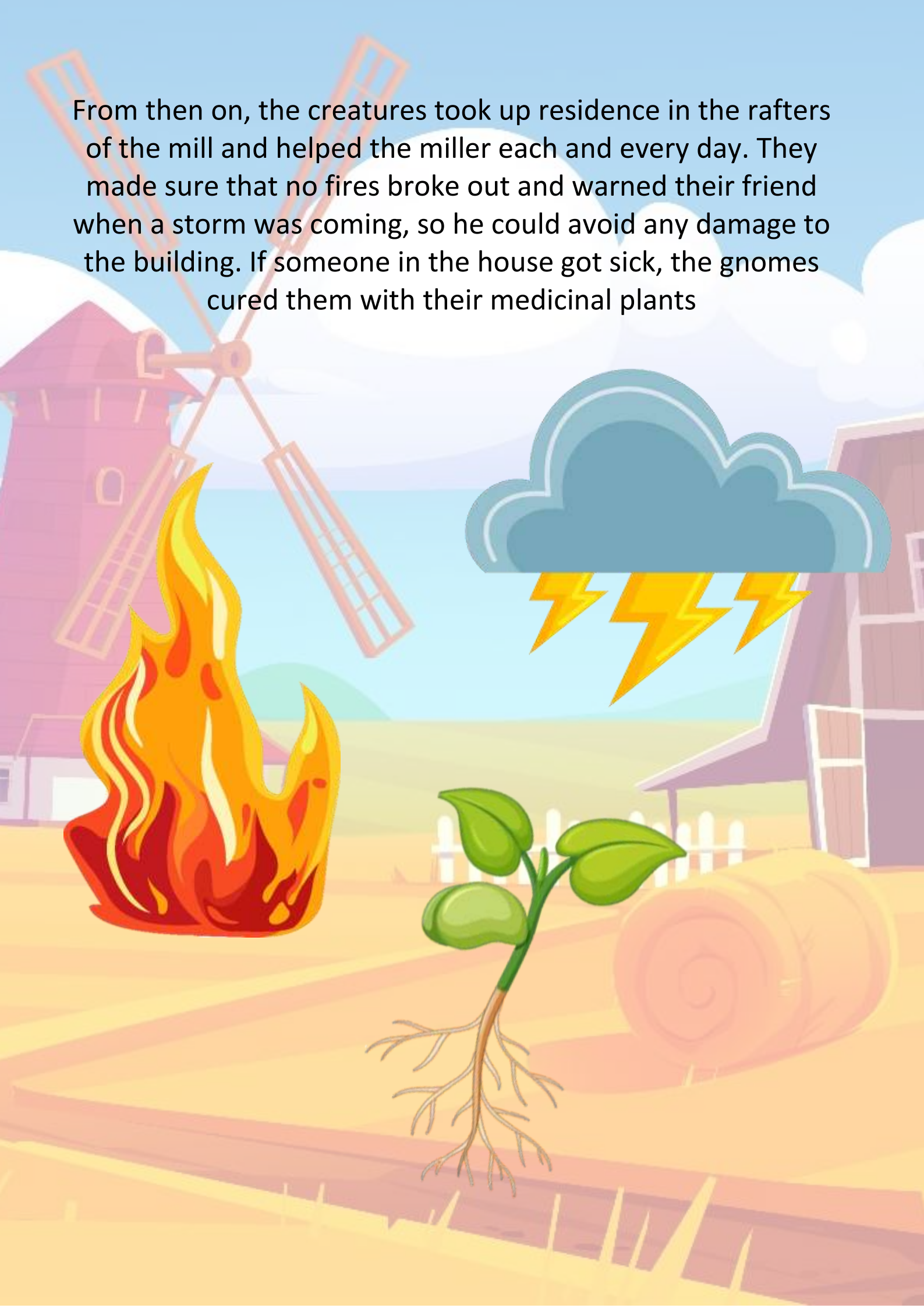
The man rushed in the direction of the little voice. There he found a small female gnome about to be crushed by the millstone. He acted quickly and managed to save the tiny creature, but she escaped so fast that the miller thought he had imagined her! But not long thereafter, the creature returned to the miller, followed by lots of other gnomes.



One of them said, 'you saved my wife, and for that we are forever grateful. If you let us dwell in your mill, we promise you won't regret it.'



From then on, the creatures took up residence in the rafters of the mill and helped the miller each and every day. They made sure that no fires broke out and warned their friend when a storm was coming, so he could avoid any damage to the building. If someone in the house got sick, the gnomes cured them with their medicinal plants



Eventually some neighbours grew envious of the carefree life the miller's family led. Living in one of those houses was Lisa, a sweet, patient little girl who knew everything about woodland creatures and loved to model clay.



Aware that the well-being of the miller's family was the work of the gnomes, the little girl wished more than anything else to have one for herself. But she also knew that gnomes stayed far, far away from gossipy people (like her parents). So, unable to do anything else, Lisa sculpted a life-sized gnome out of clay and baked it in her potter's skin. Then, she painted it and positioned it in her garden.



The mill gnomes ran to see the statue, moved that anyone would make something in their honour. From then on, they brought Lisa a gift every month as a token of their friendship. Thus began the tradition of keeping a gnome statue in gardens everywhere, waiting for good luck.



Elves

And here we are. We've come to the last (but certainly not least) woodland creatures on our journal. Some people confuse elves with gnomes and leprechauns, but really, they're quite different. And watch out! They can get quite upset when people can't tell them apart. These tiny, graceful creatures have many talents: they can turn invisible, levitate in mid-air and leap very far.



They are very small and very agile, and they get excited and angry quite easily. The ancient name for elves is “alfr”, which in Norse mythology indicates the elements: earth, wind, air and fire. Maybe that’s why they’re stubborn and a tad temperamental. What do think?



Elves wear scarlet or green outfits and a cute hat made from the corolla of a flower, decorated with tiny jingling bells.

In addition to the woodland elves, who inhabit the world's oldest forests, there are elves of darkness and elves of light.

These creatures speak a very difficult language called Elvish. Learning it is practically impossible; there are a thousand different versions!



The Legend of the Elf Gardener

To conclude our series of legends, we're going to tell you the story of a very special elf. He had an incredible green thumb and was really creative, which got him a job in the king's court, or rather, in his garden.



In the large park of the Royal Palace of Madrid, there once lived a mischievous little elf of who was accustomed to hiding among the trees and bushes. He was so well camouflaged that no one ever saw him. Well, no one except couples who were truly in love. The elf took care of the plants in the royal garden, just like a real professional gardener.



One day, while out on a walk, the king noticed that the beautiful flowers in the park were moving from one place to another. He was so surprised that he thought his gardeners were playing a joke on him (what pranksters!).



But then it happened again in the days that followed. One of the gardeners eventually revealed the truth to the king: it was all the work of an elf. That's right, the little creature liked to play among the flowers in the garden and change their shapes and colours. The king was so impressed that he appointed him the "Roya Gardener", even though he never got to see him!





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