



The Little Gnome Who Got Caught

By Amal Samuel

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Most people think that the leaves on the trees change colour when the seasons change or that flowers blossom only in spring time. That's what Marsha thought until she found out the real truth one day...

The leaves don't change colours by themselves, they have special help. Gnomes are the ones responsible for making nature happen.

There are different types of gnomes with different jobs.

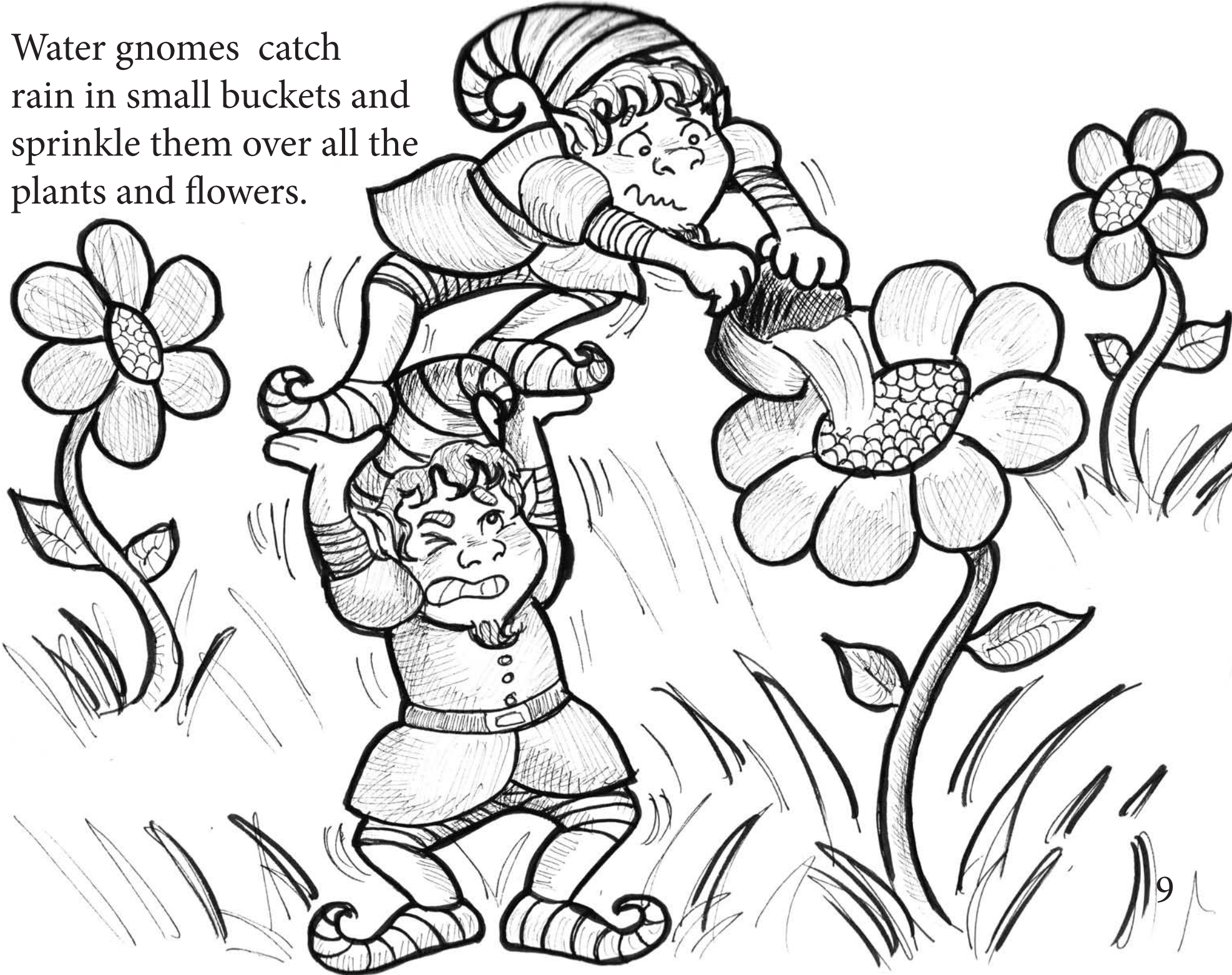


The tree gnomes take care of the trees; they paint the leaves so they change colour throughout the year.

Garden gnomes take care of the grass and flowers. They paint each petal and plant each blade of grass.



Water gnomes catch rain in small buckets and sprinkle them over all the plants and flowers.



But how do gnomes get these jobs, one might ask? Well, the Gnome Network takes in their resumes and signs up each gnome for a job they are best at. It is headed by the Three Elder Gnomes, Borgie, Floyd and Nester.

Once a gnome is assigned a job, they are given a magical hat that carries their tools and makes them invisible. If a gnome is ever seen by a human - a most unfortunate event - they will have to answer to **Borgie, Floyd and Nester!**

One day, Pepper, the tree leaf painter, fell ill. He was sneezed upon by a caterpillar and developed a most itchy rash from head to toe. Borgie, Floyd and Nester assigned Alfie to take his place.



Alfie was brimming with pride as he stood in front of the Three Elder Gnomes. This was his very first job and he did not want to disappoint them! As he was handed his magical hat, Nester told him that he should remember something very important:

“Don’t get seen! Don’t get seen!
Humans are cruel and horribly mean!
And if that should ever come to be,
You’ll have to answer to us Three!”

Alfie stood back and gulped as he thought,

“Oh, please! Oh, please! Don’t let me get seen.
I don’t want to know what that will mean!”

He put on his hat and hurried away as fast as he could.



On his way to his branch, Alfie passed by Phyllis, the neighbourhood spider.

“Good daaay Alfie!” Phyllis drawled.

“I see that we have a new gnoome on duty!”

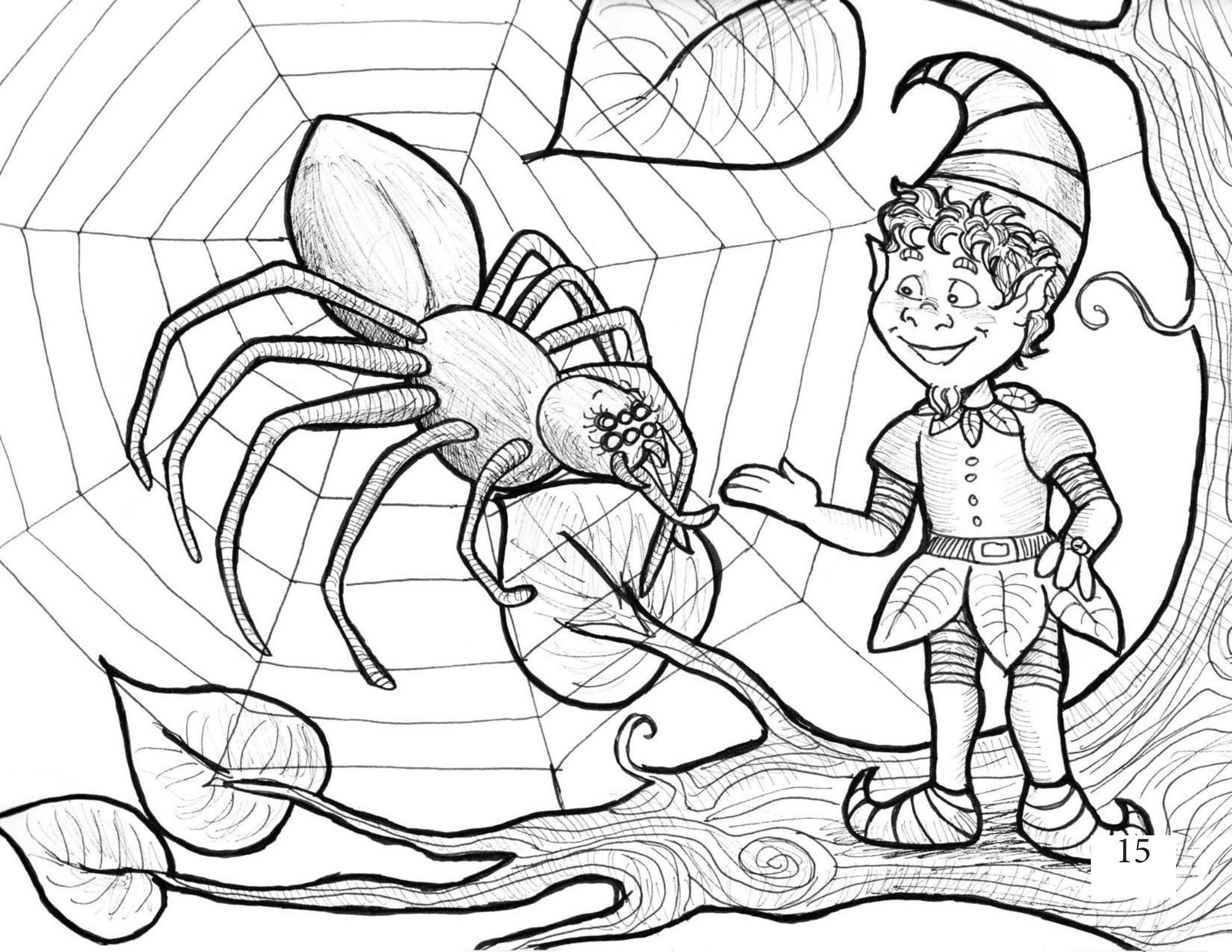
“Yup!” Alfie beamed.

“I’m going to paint the leaves a beautiful bright green, and hope not to be seen!”

“Good luck, dear! I hope you won’t be seen by a human.

It’s not a preeetty picture if you do! Well, ta-ta then!”

Phyllis scurried up her web leaving poor Alfie even more worried than before. Alfie put aside his worries as he set up his paints and dipped his brush into a lovely shade of green and began to work.



Close by, a little girl named Marsha was having a tea party with her dolls in her backyard. Grover, the neighbours' dog, was running all over the place, trying to catch squirrels.

“Oh Grover, you silly dog! Quit chasing those squirrels and come have tea with us!” Marsha said.

Grover ignored her and happily continued chasing the squirrels as they zig-zagged through the yard.

“Oh well, more for us. Pass the sugar?” Marsha asked her doll mates as she poured delicious make believe tea into the teacups.



A little while later, Marsha decided to play fetch with Grover, a game the hyper dog could not resist.

Marsha picked up a twig and flung it high into the air. Grover jumped up and down trying to figure out where it went.

Suddenly, a small cry was heard,

“Owie! Owie! Oooh my head!
Am I alive or am I dead?”

Alfie had fallen to the ground from the twig that had knocked him down. His paints and brushes were scattered all around. But worst of all, his hat had fallen off!



Alfie was about to put his hat back on quickly but was startled to see two brown eyes staring at him.

“Who are you, little fellow?” Marsha asked.
She had never encountered a gnome before.
Alfie leaped in fright!

“Agh! Agh! I have been SEEN!
This has got to be a very BAD dream!”

Alfie was running around in circles, not knowing what to do.

“I’m not going to hurt you! I want to be your friend.”
Marsha said to the panic-stricken gnome.

“No! No! Humans are cruel and horribly mean!”
Alfie darted away from Marsha trying to find a place to hide.



Grover saw something small running around the tree and thought it was the squirrel he had tried to catch earlier. He galloped towards it and snatched the little creature in his teeth. What Grover didn't realize was that he hadn't caught a squirrel, he had caught Alfie, a gnome!

Bobbing up and down in Grover's teeth, Alfie was sure he was a goner.

“Yup, it's over; my life will end soon.

At least I won't have to face the Three Elder Goons.”

As Grover trotted away to his owner's yard happy with his catch, Marsha ran after him and snatched Alfie away from his mouth.

“Grover! You bad dog! You never catch a gnome!”

Marsha scolded.



Marsha brought Alfie back to the tree in her yard, and gently placed him on his branch so he could continue painting the leaves.

“I really don’t know what to say,
you truly saved my life today!
I guess not all humans are cruel and mean,
but I still have to pay for getting seen.
Thank you for your help, but I have to insist,
you must never tell other humans that gnomes do exist!”

Alfie said to Marsha.

“Don’t worry,” Marsha smiled.
“Your secret is safe with me.”



With that, Alfie mustered up his courage and marched back to see the Elder Gnomes and confessed to Borgie, Floyd and Nester that he had been seen. They were not happy.

“How can a gnome be so careless and shoddy?
As punishment, you will clean all of the potties!”

Borgie, Floyd and Nester declared.

“I accept your punishment but I must say this;
not all humans should be completely dismissed.
There is good and bad in the world from day to day,
to assume someone is evil is the wrong thing to say.”

Alfie boldly told the three astonished Elder Gnomes.

No gnome had ever spoken to them like this before!

“I guess what we said was very rude;
our notion of humans was misconstrued.” they finally said.



The Three Elder Gnomes decided to lift the punishment and let Alfie keep his job. Alfie couldn't believe it!

He had learned a valuable lesson that day: not everyone is what they seem to be at first glance!

The End

