

PROMPT #1: The garden is being infested by a particularly troublesome family of gnomes.

The Garden Shed

by **Samantha Keyser**

Every morning, I wake up to my cat, Felix sitting at my bedside, meowing for me to get up. However, on this morning, I didn't hear my usual alarm. Instead, Felix was sitting in the window behind the curtain looking out into the back garden. I could see his tail moving swiftly from side to side at the bottom of the curtain. I got up to join him at the window.

He briefly looked up before his eyes darted back out to the garden.

"What are you looking at?" I said.

I stared out but didn't see anything.

"C'mon" I said as I picked him up and gave him a little kiss on the head.

I set him down and headed to the kitchen to let him out.

I watched through the large kitchen window as he sniffed and rubbed up against branches and flowers as he made his way to the back of the garden.

In the back of the garden, I noticed the shed door was open, which is unusual, because I rarely if ever go in there.

I went to check it out.

As I walked toward the shed, I saw scattered in the garden small scraps of wood, broken pieces of pots, stacks of small rocks and gravel in the flower beds, herbs and vegetables pulled up, and tangled pieces of twine and string scattered on the lawn.

Confused, I stood there for a second. I briefly glanced over to see Felix sitting under a small tree with something in his mouth.

“Drop it!” I commanded as I walked closer to him.

He sprinted toward the rose bushes to hide out. I knelt down and crawled over to him. Once I got close enough, I grabbed him. Prying his mouth open, he reluctantly dropped it.

I pushed him away as I looked down at this motionless, unusual animal. I thought Felix had caught a mouse, but this wasn't a mouse I had ever seen before. As I reached down to pick it up for a closer look, there was a large crash and things shattering. I stood up to see a shelf had been knocked over shattering pots all over the stone patio.

I looked back down to the small unknown creature, but it was gone. I searched for several minutes, but it had vanished.

I looked back at Felix perched on the patio table.

“Did you do this?” I said as I picked him up.

I opened the back door and gently set him down.

I walked back to lock the shed door, but to my surprise, the door was already locked and the pieces of wood and debris in the garden were gone.

#

After doing some housework, I decided it was probably time for me to clean up the patio and try to salvage some of the plants.

I walked over to the patio with a broom and dust pan only to find that the patio furniture was half its size in height. I sat down at the table, and my knees towered over the top. The chair was so small that a petite toddler would have been too big for it.

As I sat in my, now, miniscule chair, I wondered if it was possible for a rogue beaver to have somehow made its way into the garden.

Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw Felix pounce on something and dart toward the shed. It took me second, but I was finally able to stand up and chase after him. I saw him shimmy through a small gap in the door.

I grabbed the handle and pulled as hard as I could. I took one step into the shed and fell into a small pit.

I was a little shaken from the fall but otherwise okay.

“Felix, come here” I called.

He walked over and gazed down out me.

“Felix, go get help” I told him.

He let out a yawn and laid down. His two little front paws hanging over the edge.

“See, Felix, this is why people like dogs”

I looked around the pit for some way to get out when I saw a glimmer of light coming from a small crack in the wall. I knelt down and peered inside.

I saw little wooden houses, roads paved in stones, porcelain tiled roofs, and pane glass windows. Then, out of nowhere, a small creature popped through the crack and poked me in the eye.

“Arghh” I screamed as I fell back.

I heard a tiny voice scream, “That’s what you get for snooping around”.

“Ahhhh, I wasn’t snooping. I fell through the giant hole in the floor” I cried.

Since I, now, only had one good eye, it was hard to see what I was looking at, but as my vision began to clear, I could see it was a small and very angry gnome looking back at me.

He climbed up onto my knee and pointed his cane in my face, “You’re here to destroy my home. You and your cat”.

“Felix, maybe, but I’m not! I didn’t even know this was down here. You’re the one who has broken my things and cut a giant hole in my shed” I argued.

“We would have replaced the items we used eventually, but we needed the wood and pots to build our home. Honestly, didn’t think you would notice” he said with a shrug as he jumped to the floor.

“I noticed a bit. My patio table could be used at a Wind and the Willows tea party” I said.

I glanced over to the crack and saw four other gnomes peering out at me.

“That’s my family” he said as he motioned them to come closer, “This is my wife, Zita, our daughters, Miki and Jubie, our son Nocktonick, and I’m Eminbit”.

“Well, it’s very nice to meet everyone. I’m Anika and that’s Felix” I said pointing to the top of the hole.

“And, I’m sorry he continues to try and eat you. I’ll have to put a bell on him or something”.

“You just look so delicious, Nocktonick. He can’t resist” I said with a smile.

Eminbit poked me in the leg with his sharp cane.

“Arghh, that hurts”

Eminbit looked up at me with a little laugh, “I know that’s why I do it”.

I was ready to get out of this hole already, so I said, “How about we make a deal? I’ll leave you alone and try my best to keep Felix from eating one of you if you stop destroying my things”.

Eminbit thought on it for a second and agreed but on one condition.

“You will have to provide us with the building supplies that we need. You can leave them at the shed door” he said.

As I put out my hand out for him to shake, I said, “And fix the floor”.

He nodded his head and shook my pinky finger to seal the agreement.

Within no time, the five gnomes had made a tall, thin ladder.

“What’s this made of? My roof” I joked.

Eminbit poked me again and told me to go.

Felix was still laying there when I came over the top. Disappointed I hadn’t brought him a little gnome treat.

I looked down to wave goodbye to the gnome family, but they were gone.

“Well, Felix, you were absolutely no help” I said picking him up and carrying him out of the shed and locking the door behind me.

#

Now, each week, I head out to the shed with Felix ringing behind me to leave little building packages outside the door. I never see the gnomes, but every once in a while, when walking through the garden, I’ll feel a sharp poke in the ankle and soft laugh.