

Benbrok, a quaint little town nestled in Zone 18, was a place where life moved at a slow, steady pace, and the people were content with their simple lives. Most residents worked small jobs to make ends meet, and though the town was often forgotten by the rest of the world, its quiet charm held a sense of peace.

On the hills overlooking Benbrok, an old man lived with his mischievous grandson, who seemed to have a different kind of energy altogether.

Liam, ten years old and full of spirit, was known for causing more trouble than any child should. While the town cherished its quiet life, Liam had a knack for stirring things up—especially with his light fingers. Though he had become something of a notorious figure among the townsfolk, they tolerated him, mostly out of respect for his grandfather, Billy. But today, Liam's luck was about to run out.

"Don't these people ever get tired?" Liam muttered under his breath, glancing over his shoulder as he dashed through the narrow streets. An angry mob

was chasing him, and this time, they weren't going to let him off with a warning.

As Liam's heart raced, a mischievous grin tugged at his lips. "I have to lose them fast... Ah, perfect!" He spotted a familiar alleyway that led to a dead end, though only \*he\* knew the hidden way out.

With a burst of speed, Liam bolted down the alley, the mob hot on his heels. He reached the wall at the end and, with the agility only a boy like him could muster, scrambled up the building to the roof. Below, the townspeople came to a halt, frustrated by the dead end they hadn't expected.

Liam peered down at them, his grin widening. "Sorry, everyone! Looks like we'll have to try again another day!"

One red-faced man shook his fist. "Next time we catch you, we'll throw you into the Dark Forest!"

For a brief moment, Liam's grin faltered. The Dark Forest? He had always thought it was just a local myth, something used to scare kids like him. "Dark Forest? Yeah, right," he scoffed to himself, trying to push the unease from his mind.

As the mob gave up and dispersed, Officer Eugene, who had been quietly observing, turned to a concerned woman. "Officer, shouldn't we do something about that boy?"

Eugene, his arms crossed, simply smiled. "No need. His grandfather will take care of it. He always does."

Meanwhile, Liam slowed to a walk as he approached the path leading up the hills toward home. He couldn't help but chuckle to himself. "Dark Forest... sure. That's gotta be the most ridiculous threat ever." Yet, as the words left his mouth, something in the woods stirred.

A strange, low growl echoed through the trees. Liam stopped dead in his tracks, his heart pounding. "What was that?"

Before he could react, a massive figure emerged from the shadows—a creature unlike anything Liam had ever seen. A towering demon wolf, its dark fur blending into the shadows, stood before him. Its glowing eyes burned with malice, and its body rippled with power. The creature was easily twenty feet tall, its sharp fangs gleaming in the dim light.

Liam took a shaky step back, his bravado fading. "What the hell is that thing?"

The wolf growled again, louder this time, its intent clear. Liam was in its territory, and it didn't seem to like uninvited guests.

\*Why isn't it attacking?\* Liam wondered, his mind racing. Then, with a boldness he didn't quite feel, he called out, "Hey, Wolfy! Who do you think is in more trouble here—me or you?"

The wolf's eyes widened for a second as if surprised by the boy's audacity. But its growl deepened, signaling that playtime was over.

Without thinking, Liam placed a hand on the beast's massive snout. "Relax, big guy. I'm just trying to figure out what's going on here."

The wolf snapped its jaws in frustration, and Liam finally realized how close he was to being lunch. "Right... okay, I'll just be going then!" he stammered, backing away slowly before turning and sprinting down the path.

The demon wolf let out a terrifying roar and bounded after him, its speed far outmatching Liam's.

\*I'm too slow. I won't make it!\* Liam's mind raced as he spotted a towering tree up ahead. \*That's my only chance.\*

Using all his strength, he scrambled up the tree, finding a branch high enough to give him some distance. Panting, he glanced down at the wolf. "That was close... I should be safe up here."

But as soon as Liam caught his breath, the tree trembled beneath him. "Wait... what's it doing?"

Before Liam could react, the demon wolf sank its powerful jaws into the tree and flung it—and Liam—into the air.

Liam soared through the sky, his eyes wide with a strange mix of terror and awe. \*I'm... flying?\*

For a brief moment, everything seemed peaceful. He could see the whole town below, and even his house in the distance. \*Wow, it looks so much nicer from up here...\*

Then reality hit. "Wait! I'm falling! AAHHH!"

As he plummeted toward the wolf's waiting jaws, he caught sight of the creature's enormous, razor-sharp teeth. \*I'm done for...\*

Just as the wolf's mouth closed in, a flash of light cut through the air. With one swift motion, the demon wolf's head was severed from its body. The force of the blow knocked Liam sideways, and he landed hard on the ground, the wind knocked out of him.

For a moment, everything was silent. Then, Liam groaned. "Ouch... Yep, that hurt."

The wolf's body dissolved into thin air, leaving behind only a gleaming metal object where the beast had fallen. Liam, still dazed, looked up to see his grandfather, Billy, approaching.

"Well, well, Liam," Billy said with a smile. "Seems you have a real talent for not dying, even when you probably should."

Liam grinned sheepishly. "Only because you always show up just in time, Grandpa."

Billy chuckled, patting his grandson on the shoulder. "So, tell me, what did you take from the townspeople this time?"

Liam hesitated, then sighed. "Some food... and a few cream puffs."

"Ah, cream puffs," Billy said with a knowing smile. "Well, I suppose I'll have to go pay for those later. But for now, you've earned something special."

Liam's eyes lit up. "Really? What?"

Billy knelt beside the shining metal left behind by the demon wolf. "Congratulations, Liam. You're going to get a sword."

Liam's jaw dropped. "A sword? You mean... a real one?"

Billy nodded, picking up the strange metal. "This isn't just any demon metal. It's stronger than anything I've seen before. And I think it's meant for you."

Liam's excitement bubbled over. "Alright! This is going to be amazing!"

Billy stood, ruffling his grandson's hair. "Let's head home. You've had enough excitement for one day."

Liam couldn't stop smiling as they made their way back. He didn't know what the future held, but something told him it was going to be a lot more interesting from here on out.