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Lower Grades

Rufus Robin's Day in Court

Birds arguing over who can nest where receive a most practical solution from wise Judge Hoot. . . .

by Rose Kacherian Rybak

Characters

OZZIE OAK TREE

RUFUS ROBIN

OWEN ORIOLE

JUDGE HOOT, *an owl*

SQUEAKY SQUIRREL

DAFFODIL DARCY

DAFFODIL DAKOTA

DAFFODIL DANA

THREE BUMBLEBEE BUDDIES

TATE TULIP

TOBY TULIP

TEGAN TULIP

THREE FIREFLIES

BAILEY BUTTERFLY

WHITNEY WORM

TIME: *Springtime.*

SETTING: *A garden. Shrubs and bushes dot the stage. Up left is a table or podium with shrubbery in front.*

AT RISE: *OZZIE OAK TREE is up center, arms outstretched and decorated as branches. RUFUS ROBIN is pulling at one arm, while OWEN ORIOLE tugs at the other. SQUEAKY SQUIRREL, DAFFODILS, TULIPS, BAILEY BUTTERFLY, and FIREFLIES stand around the stage.*

RUFUS: This is my private tree!

OWEN: It's my private tree!

RUFUS: I flew here first!

OWEN: My nest belongs here!

TATE TULIP: Owen Oriole! Rufus Robin! You have to stop this fighting. Poor Ozzie Oak Tree won't have a single leaf left if you don't stop shaking

him apart! (*RUFUS and OWEN stop tugging.*)

OZZIE OAK TREE (*Sadly*): And after I worked so hard all winter trying to grow this beautiful suit of greenery.

RUFUS: I'm sorry, Ozzie, but I have to protect my rights as a bird. I flew all the way up from the South to make my spring and summer home in your branches, and this bird (*Pointing at OWEN*) thinks he has his own ideas.

OWEN: Listen, my fine feathered friend, I don't *think* I have ideas. I *know* I have! With all the string and rags I've collected all week, I'm preparing the finest nest you ever saw in your life.

RUFUS: Not in this tree, you're not! (*RUFUS and OWEN start tugging at OZZIE again.*)

TOBY TULIP: Thank goodness Judge Hoot is on his way to settle this case once and for all. Then maybe peace will return to our friendly garden.

TEGAN TULIP: Yes, Judge Hoot is the wisest owl in all the world, and he will know how to handle this! (*JUDGE HOOT, in judicial robes and carrying large book and gavel, gravely takes his place behind the podium while everyone stands in respectful silence.*)

JUDGE HOOT (*Rapping podium with gavel*): Hear ye, hear ye! The Supreme Court is now in session. The first case on the docket is Rufus Robin versus Oliver Oriole. Will the complainant and the defendant please step forward? (*RUFUS and OWEN step before JUDGE.*) Let us proceed. Oliver Oriole, state your case first.

OWEN: It's like this, your Honor. One day I looked at the calendar and, lo

and behold, it was spring. So I packed up all my belongings and headed north to find a nice place to settle down. It wasn't easy finding a suitable location, you know. Finally I saw Ozzie Oak Tree with his branches outstretched, just waiting for me.

JUDGE: Is his story correct, Ozzie?

OZZIE: Yes, it is, your Honor.

OWEN (*Continuing*): He seemed like a perfect tree to raise my family in. Lovely neighborhood, close to water and food . . .

RUFUS: I object, your Honor. Make him stick to the facts. Ask him why he tried to take over my homesite!

JUDGE: Objection overruled. Rufus, you'll have your say in a few minutes. Continue with your story, Owen.

OWEN: As I was saying, Judge, no sooner did I rest my weary feathers on Ozzie's branches, when suddenly Rufus Robin attacked me from out of nowhere, screaming at the top of his voice that he was going to dispossess me.

JUDGE: Rufus, how do you respond?

RUFUS: Judge Hoot, my case is quite simple. I reached Ozzie Oak Tree before Owen Oriole even glanced at his calendar down south. Why, everyone knows the robin is the first sign of spring!

OWEN (*Scornfully*): Who believes in signs?

JUDGE: No more outbursts, either one of you! We shall have to try to prove which one of you arrived at Ozzie Oak Tree first this spring. I shall ask all you garden dwellers to testify. Do you all promise to tell the truth, the whole

truth, and nothing but the truth?

ALL: We do, your Honor.

JUDGE: For the first witness, I call Daffodil Darcy and her sisters. (*DAFFODILS step forward.*) You girls were the first ones out the day Rufus Robin and Owen Oriole tried to take residence. What did you see?

DAFFODIL DARCY: The ground was very hard that day, Judge Hoot.

JUDGE: What does that have to do with seeing who landed in Ozzie Oak Tree first?

DAFFODIL DAKOTA: Judge, have you ever tried to force your petals through frost-hardened earth, just to see the light of spring?

DAFFODIL DANA: Our petals were chattering so loudly that Gary Groundhog said we disturbed his sleep.

JUDGE: Are you trying to say you didn't notice Rufus Robin and Owen Oriole because you were too cold?

DANA: Yes, your Honor. It's not easy being an early spring flower, you know.

JUDGE (*Coughing*): Ha-rumph. No, I suppose it isn't. However, this isn't solving our problem. I must find someone who knows what goes on at all times in the garden—a real busybody. (*BUMBLEBEES buzz in.*)

BUMBLEBEES: Did someone call us?

RUFUS: The Bumblebee Buddies!

BUMBLEBEES: If you want busybodies, that's us! (*BUMBLEBEES group together, arms around each other's*

shoulders, and sing in rounds to the tune of "Row, Row, Row Your Boat.")

Buzz, buzz, buzz around,
Busy as a bee,
Busily, busily, busily, busily
On our honey spree.

OWEN: Very impressive. Now tell Judge Hoot that you saw me first this spring.

RUFUS: I object, your Honor. Owen's trying to buzz words out of sweet, innocent insects.

SQUEAKY SQUIRREL: Oh, brother, that's the first time I ever heard anyone refer to bumblebees as sweet and innocent!

BAILEY BUTTERFLY: Maybe Rufus thinks he can get more with honey than with vinegar.

SQUEAKY: Personally, I'd say Judge Hoot looks as sour as vinegar himself right now.

JUDGE: I'm warning you creatures again. I want absolute silence. Do you Bumblebee Buddies have any important facts to add to this case?

1ST BUMBLEBEE: We wouldn't want to give the impression that we had slowed down on our job, but we did notice something in Ozzie's branches.

2ND BUMBLEBEE: This was during our honey break, you understand.

JUDGE: We understand.

3RD BUMBLEBEE: We worked overtime that night to make up for that delay, you understand.

JUDGE (*Impatiently*): We understand! Now what did you see?