In a quiet hamlet nestled beside a shadowy forest, a mischievous youth named Tom delighted in weaving tales of peril. One sunless afternoon, he perched on a mossy log and bellowed, “Dragon! A fire-breathing beast approaches!” The villagers, tending their orchards, paused their pruning shears. Old Man Harris, the cobbler, led the charge, his wooden cane clattering like a drumbeat. When they reached Tom, he dissolved into mocking guffaws, declaring, “No scales or smoke here—just your gullible hearts!” The villagers, their faces flushed with ire, retreated, muttering oaths to ignore his “theatrics.”

Hours later, as twilight painted the trees crimson, Tom’s voice echoed again: “Dragon! Its claws are tearing the earth!” This time, only a handful of wary souls emerged, led by young Elara, the blacksmith’s daughter. They found Tom rolling on the ground, tears of laughter mingling with the mud. “Fool’s errand,” Elara spat, as the group dispersed, their trust severed like frayed rope.

When the forest truly roared—this time with the growl of a feral boar—Tom’s screams were lost in the rustling leaves. He pleaded, “Monster! Help! The forest’s teeth are upon me!” But the villagers, now deaf to his cries, tended their hearths. Dawn found only scattered fragments of Tom’s cloak, his final lesson etched in silence.