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The Tooth Fairy

One of Simon's teeth had been wobbly for a while and he had a habit of jiggling it with his fingers; then one day it came out altogether. This worried him a bit, so he went to ask his mother if it was a serious problem. "No, darling, it's perfectly normal," said Paula his mum, "That happens to children's first teeth. They are pushed up by the ones growing underneath."

"And will they fall out too?" asked Simon.

"No," she replied. "Once the second ones have fully grown you have those for the rest of your life, so they must be looked after and cleaned properly because there won't be any more."

Simon gazed at the tooth in the palm of his hand. "What should I do with it now?"

"Ah," said Paula, "Something quite special. When you go to bed tonight you must put it under your pillow, and in the morning it will have gone and there'll be money in its place."

The boy's eyes opened wide in wonder. "Is that some kind of magic?"

"Most certainly," declared his mum. "While you are asleep the tooth fairy will come..." She smiled at the look of amazement on her son's face. "...And she will take your tooth in exchange for some money."

Simon regarded the tooth again then frowned. "Why does the tooth fairy want my tooth?"

"I have no idea, darling," she said and went back to peeling potatoes. "Now, I suggest you put it on your bedside cabinet so that you don't lose it."

Later that day Simon's dad returned from work and Paula was telling him about it. When she mentioned the tooth fairy, Mark was annoyed. "We both know there's no such thing as a tooth fairy. You're just filling the boy's head with nonsense."

"Young children need a bit of magic in their lives," she said, "And it's our job to make it seem like there is. I bet your parents did the tooth fairy thing when you were young; and I doubt you worked it out that one of them had put the money under your pillow. And even if you did," she continued, "I don't imagine you gave it back."

Mark could see he was losing the argument. "Well, maybe I didn't; but I was only a kid then," he finished.

"So, you'll do it then?" queried his wife.

"Do what?"

"Put the money under Simon's pillow, of course."

Her husband grunted his disapproval. "I suppose so." He pondered for a moment before adding: "But I still think it's a load of rubbish, all this magic stuff."

That same evening, once Simon was tucked up in bed his mother gave him a kiss and wished him goodnight; then she glanced at the bedside cabinet. The tooth was still there so she reminded her son: "Don't forget to put the tooth under your pillow."

After Mark had said goodnight to Simon he was switching on the television when Paula came in. "Had he put the tooth under his pillow?" she asked.

Her husband shrugged. "I guess so. It wasn't on the bedside cabinet. I'm still not happy about playing the tooth fairy; but I *will* do it," he added quickly before she started to complain. "I'll just wait, though – give him time to get to sleep."

Far away in Fairyland a watcher was keeping an eye on the wall map. A red light blinked on. "We've got another one," said Basil. He scanned the overall map which was flashing with many lights, most of them blue while some were green. The different colours meant different things. Green were children's teeth that the tooth fairies had picked up, having already swapped them for money. Those lights would go out when these fairies were safely home. The blue lights indicated teeth that the tooth fairies were on the way to collect and do the swap. The red light, however, was a tooth that had only just been put under a pillow; and this was Simon's tooth. Basil looked down the list of fairies and noticed there was only one who didn't have a job yet. "Better give Deidre a hoi," he said to his co-watcher.

Matty shook her head. "No good, Baz. Deidre called in sick. I don't know what we can do now. There aren't any more fairies."

Just then a goblin entered. "I've finished the service on Skipper and I'm off home," he said, turning to leave.

Basil had an idea. "Hang on a minute, Keith," he called to the back of the goblin. "We may have another job for you." Keith hesitated and Basil noticed a leer on his face, so he added hopefully: "You *will* get paid overtime."

Matty twigged what Basil was meaning and said to the goblin: "How do you fancy a bit of moonlighting? We need a temporary replacement for Deidre. There's a tooth to pick up."

"But Deidre's a fairy," protested Keith. "I'm just a goblin and I don't know anything about tooth-fairy stuff. Anyway," he put in, "I haven't got wings. How can I get to wherever the tooth is if I can't fly?"

"You could use Skipper," suggested Basil.

"What, a dragonfly?!!"

"Why not?" said Matty. "You know how to fly one, don't you?"

"Well, yes, but..." Keith went quiet for a few moments. Clearly he wasn't keen on doing this job and was trying to find a way out of it. Then he thought of something: "Always assuming I get to the house in one piece you're forgetting that, as a goblin and not a fairy, I can't magic myself into this child's bedroom. How am I supposed to do that, climb a drainpipe?"

Basil rose from his chair and was smiling as he walked to a rack on the wall. "You can use this," he said, unhooking a wand and presenting it to Keith. "It won't work quite the same way it does for Deidre, but it will be good enough to get you into the house without a problem..."

It seemed the watchers had the better of him and Keith reluctantly trudged out to the dragonfly bay. Climbing onto Skipper's long tail, he touched the dragonfly's head with the wand as he had been instructed. This was to give Skipper directions of where to go. Then, with a flurry and flutter of wings they were off and flying.

Meanwhile in Simon's house his parents were sitting in bed reading. Mark closed his book and leaned across to switch off the bedside light. "What are you doing?" asked Paula. "You still haven't put the money under Simon's pillow yet. He's bound to be asleep by now." Her husband sighed dismally and grumbled his way out of bed. Sliding into his slippers he picked up the coin on the bedside cabinet. "Twenty cents?" exclaimed Paula. "That's a bit mean."

Mark leered down at the coin. "I'll switch it for fifty cents if that will make you happy; but let's not forget Paula, it's just a token..." He noticed his wife's expression darken and said: "Okay, I'll go to a dollar, but that'll have to do." On his way out he was mumbling quietly to himself: "Tooth fairies and magic – it's stupid." Scuffing along the landing he came to his son's bedroom door and listened. There was no sound so he gently opened the door and poked his head into the room. The light from the hallway was enough to see that Simon was huddled up in bed and wasn't moving. Taking a deep, reluctant breath, Mark started making his way to the bed when he dropped the dollar coin.

Just minutes before this, Keith had landed in Simon's garden; well, actually it was the dragonfly Skipper who had landed. Keith climbed off and approached the front of the house. "Now," he said, "Let's see if Deirdre's wand works for me." Pointing the star on the end of the wand at the house, he waited. At first nothing happened; then after a few seconds the wand began to move all by itself. Eventually coming to rest, it was pointing at an upstairs window. Keith whispered to himself: "No light on, not like the other window; so that must be the little boy's room." Walking forward to stand beneath the darkened window, he prepared to try the bit of magic Basil told him about. Holding the wand high in the air he waved it around in a circle: one... two... three times. Keith felt a strange tingling right through his body. The next instant he was no longer in the garden but was standing in Simon's bedroom; except he wasn't quite because when he looked down he couldn't see himself – he was invisible! What did he do now, wave the wand again? He tried it and immediately became visible again.

By then, Mark had found the dollar coin and was rising from behind Simon's bed. Movement on the far side of the room caught his attention. It was Keith re-appearing before his very eyes. Mark gasped. It took him a few moments to gather his senses. When he did he was almost lost for words: 'Who... what... where did you come from?'

"Fairyland," replied Keith quite casually.

"Don't be ridiculous," sneered Mark. "You're a burglar aren't you?" Skirting the bed he rushed at Keith with the intention of grabbing hold of his arm. Keith saw him coming and twirled the wand again. Mark stuttered to a halt. The intruder had gone! "What's happening here?" he hissed to himself. "Am I going mad?"

Keith re-appeared, but while he was invisible he had moved further away from Mark. "Not mad, my friend," said Keith. "My guess is you've never seen magic before." He noticed a deep troubled frown spread over the man's face. "And there's no need for you to worry. I'm just here take your little boy's tooth and leave money in its place."

"But..." Mark started, staring first down to the dollar coin in his hand then back to Keith. "Surely you're not going to tell me that you're the tooth fairy?"

Keith chuckled. "Do I look like a fairy? I'm a goblin. You can call me Keith; and this is a one-off job. I'm only standing in for Deidre the real tooth fairy because she's sick."

Mark shook his head. "No, no, this can't be right. There's no such thing as a tooth fairy."

"Better not let Deidre hear you say that," said Keith. "Now, time's a-wasting. If you'll just let me do the tooth swap bit I'll be on my way..."

Some considerable time later once he'd composed himself Mark returned to bed, making sure not to let Paula see the dollar coin he still had. "What took you so long?" she asked, and with a snigger added: "Chatting to the tooth fairy were you?"

"You are oh so wrong," he snorted. "Keith's a goblin." He could see she hadn't a clue what he was talking about and said: "It's a long story. I'll give you the run down later."

Next morning Mark and Paula were awakened by Simon bursting into their bedroom. "Hey guys look," he blurted out excitedly. "The tooth fairy came and left me this."

Paula frowned at what her son was waving around. "Is that a ten dollar note?"

"You betcha," said Simon. "Cool, eh?" Then he rushed out.

Paula fixed Mark with a puzzled look. "I thought you were only going to give him a dollar. Why did you change your mind?"

"I didn't, and it wasn't me who put the ten dollars under Simon's pillow – it was Keith."

Now his wife was totally confused. "Last night when you said Keith was a goblin I thought you were making fun of me."

Mark grinned. "Would I do that?" He leaned back on his pillow for a moment before announcing. "I'd better explain; but..." he paused for effect, "...I very much doubt you'll believe a word of it."