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Scary Fairy in Wicked Wood

Illustrated by Caroline Thaw

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Scary Fairy Comes to Wicked Wood

One cloudy Saturday something strange was seen flying towards Wicked Wood. Something really strange.

“An asteroid!” gasped Squirrel as she looked at the sky “And it’s heading straight for us!”

She ran directly to Owl’s place. “Asteroid!” she kept shouting.

“Really?” asked Bear, who happened to be sipping tea with Owl.

“Asteroid!” Squirrel frantically waved her little paw towards the sky.

Owl looked up, alarmed. “What could it be?”

“Certainly not a bird,” muttered Bear, staring at the funny object in the sky. “Nor a frog nor a mouse. Nor a mole for that matter.”

“Strange,” Owl agreed.

“I’m telling you – it’s an asteroid!” shrieked Squirrel.

“And asteroids have stupid habits. They smash you to s-m-i-t-h-e-r-e-e-n-s!”

Terrified out of her wits, Squirrel ran off.

“It looks like a pear,” volunteered Bear. “A pear carrying a hedgehog.”

“But,” Owl objected, “are pears really so colourful, and hedgehogs so much...?”

“Like teapots?” Bear helped out.

As the object came nearer, they both agreed it was a balloon, a small, patched-up balloon with a teapot instead of a basket.

The balloon began to descend. As the teapot touched the ground, the South Wind dragged it across the roots sticking out of the soil. It sounded like this: BOOOMF. BOOOMF. BAAAMF! Inside the teapot someone started to curse: “Ouch, that hurts! Stop that, South Wind! HRRRAAAAGH. You’re wicked!” And then: SQUEEAAL. PLINK PLONK.



The balloon soon got tangled in a
bramble and the teapot finally came
to rest. The lid opened with a clatter
and out climbed a little creature.

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Frowning. Quite mad. In a
summer dress and with a little
cap from which grew forklike horns.

“I’ll remember that,” the little creature shook her fist at
the wind, which was making the tree tops seesaw this
way and that. “You’re lucky it was me in the teapot and
not my grandmother. I bet you wouldn’t dare toss *her*
about like that. She’d grab you by the tail and untie all
your knots!”

The little one straightened her dress, checked her antlers,
and thought of her grandmother with her china cups.



“That’s exactly what she did to the North Wind, if you want to know. And only because it blew a little bit of tobacco from her pipe. Did you hear that? Just a little bit of tobacco!”

“It’s one of those scary fairies,” Owl said to Bear under the pine tree. “I don’t remember why exactly, but they seem to be at odds with the winds.”

The little creature pulled a bundle of colourful things from the teapot and rummaged among them until she found a gold coin. Then she looked for the nearest fern and began to dig a hole beneath it.

“What’s she doing?” asked Bear.

“Burying a gold coin,” explained Owl. “Scary fairies keep moving their gold coins around the wood.”

“Shall we go and say hello?” Bear suggested.

“She won’t stay,” Owl screeched and flew into the sky.

“They can’t bear to be without their aunts, cousins, sisters and grandmas for very long.”

Bear shrugged and trundled off.

Scary Fairy continued to shout and threaten and spit on the ground. Then she noticed a hole midway up the trunk of a beech tree.

“That’ll be my home,” she said, delighted. With the heavy bundle on her back she climbed the trunk. Then she hung the bundle on the nearest branch and clambered in the hole.

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“Not enough room,” she informed the hazelnuts as she chucked them out one by one. Satisfied, she reached for her bundle. Just then the South wind blew from behind the tree and threw her things to the ground. The bundle burst open and her possessions were strewn all over the place. Her lucky blue button landed under an oak tree and her little mirrors came to rest under a pine tree.

“Wiiiiind!” shrieked Scary Fairy. She was hopping mad. She cracked her knuckles and gritted her teeth, howling and screaming the whole time.

Hedgehog came shuffling along. “Who’s making that dreadful racket?” he muttered in annoyance.

“Hey!” he shouted as he spotted the teapot. “Anyone in there?”

Scary Fairy scampered up to Hedgehog the moment she saw him.

“I haven’t combed my hair yet today,” she said. She grabbed Hedgehog and pricked her hair with him.

Hedgehog was silent at first, but then he got mad.

“Some manners would do you no harm, girl!” he shouted at her. “I’m a hedgehog, not a brush for your matted hair.”

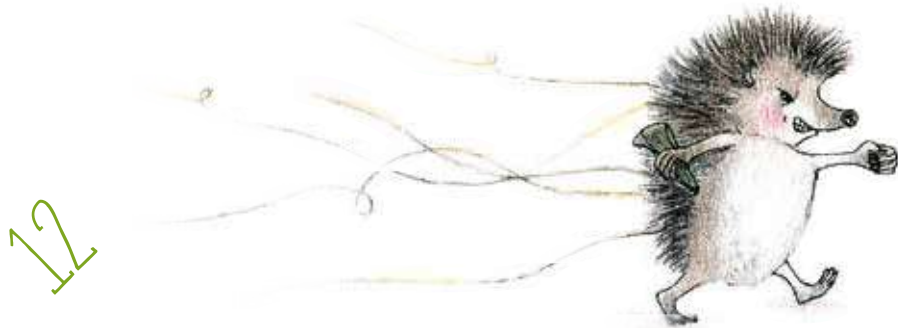
Scary Fairy did not reply. She collected her little mirrors and admired her new prickly hairdo.

“Neither would please and thank you,” Hedgehog ranted on, “but I suppose your Mum never taught you that.”



“My grandmother,” said the little one, “has seventeen hedgehogs in her drawer for combing her hair. One for each day of the month. They’re all terribly impolite. Probably because she feeds them prunes. Which are known to cause impoliteness.”

Hedgehog tried to figure out if each month really did have seventeen days.



“Luckily, I don’t like prunes at all,” continued the little creature. “I’d like to comb my hair with you every evening, so come to my tree hole when it gets dark. And please don’t be late!”

Hedgehog was speechless. To treat a grown-up hedgehog like that! He couldn’t decide whether to prick the little one or report her behaviour to Owl. Furious, he stormed off.

Scary Fairy tramped off deeper into the wood, leaving her possessions lying around on the ground. Serves them right, she thought. The wood was silent and beautiful. She came across some excellent puddles. She decided she would come back and check them out in the moonlight.

Happy that the teapot had landed in such an unusual forest, she returned to the beech tree. She collected some twigs and made them into a flight of stairs leading up to her hole. She planted some pumpkins and decorative toadstools. She hung a swing in front of the hole. Then she dragged an armchair out of the teapot, which she had managed to steal from her grandmother. Exhausted, she sank into it. She reached for a pencil, intending to write in her diary, “Dear diary, I’ve found a new home. Here they have disagreeable hedgehogs and first-rate puddles.”

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But the diary wasn't there! She searched inside and outside the hole. Nothing. Once again she started to shriek, howl, crack her knuckles and grind her teeth.

Owl came flying through the treetops.

“Why is there so much noise?” she asked.

“Someone stole my diary,” yelled Scary Fairy.

“Not in a thousand years,” said Salamander, who was hiding under a leaf.

“Completely impossible,” added Earthworm, who happened to be crawling past.

“There are no thieves in Wicked Wood,” explained Bear, who came sauntering from behind the pine tree.

“It’s been stolen,” insisted Scary Fairy. “I’ve searched every square inch of the ground. Nothing! I’ve looked under every pine cone. Nothing! So?”

Owl thought awhile.

“A little earlier, Hedgehog came to report you,” she said. “He claimed that you have no manners.”

“Hedgehogs are soooo stupid,” replied Scary Fairy. “All I did was comb my hair with him, and he kicked up such a fuss.”

“Did you ask his permission?” Owl inquired.

“Did I what?” shouted Scary Fairy.

Owl sighed. There will be trouble with this one, she thought.

Bear suggested they knock on Hedgehog's door, and they all agreed.

"What is it?" yelled Hedgehog angrily, as he opened his door.

"Have you seen Scary Fairy's diary?" Owl asked.

"Seen it, taken it, read it," snapped Hedgehog.

"What?!" Scary Fairy exploded, jumping up and down.

"You've read my diary? Without my permission?"

"And I had to *beg* you to comb your hair with me, I suppose!" Hedgehog snapped.

Owl suggested that he return the diary.

"All my secrets are in there," said Scary Fairy outraged.

"I understand why you're upset," Bear tried to console her.

Scary Fairy stormed off. Hedgehog whispered to Dormouse: "I had to read it to see if she was dangerous."

"And?" Dormouse was all ears.

"You wouldn't believe it", Hedgehog replied, "but her grandmother can knock a pear off a tree just by spitting at it."





Scary Fairy and the Magic Sand



On that cloudy Saturday night all the animals were sleeping soundly in their holes and dens. Only Salamander was feeling unhappy, because he and Snail had quarrelled. Then the clouds were blown away by a sudden wind and moonlight shone into the wood among the giant oak trees. Scary Fairy woke up, climbed out of bed, put on a pair of neat little boots and went off to jump in puddles.

She stumbled across a particularly good puddle. “Wow!” she said to herself. She jumped in, splashed about and continued her muddy dance until early morning. Only at dawn, when the first light coloured the Sunday sky, did she set off back to her tree hole. Next to a deep pool halfway home she noticed a sign:

MAGIC SAND! KEEP AWAY!!

Scary Fairy immediately climbed into the pool. The sand was black and wet and it smelled of Colorado beetles. Scary Fairy stuffed a fistful of it into her purse. Then she went home.

*

Hedgehog, Dormouse and Squirrel had been waiting for her in front of her tree hole since early morning. Hedgehog had not forgotten the insult of being mistaken for a common hairbrush. He had dragged Dormouse with him in the hope that together they could persuade Scary Fairy to apologise. Squirrel was there for a different reason: the hole in which Scary

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Fairy had set up home was in fact hers. It's true that she didn't actually live there, but so what.

"You can't just take somewhere over like that," Squirrel kept muttering, ready for a fight if necessary. "You can't move into someone's property without paying rent."

"That's right," said Hedgehog. Dormouse merely yawned.

"Fine," agreed Scary Fairy. She opened her purse and sprinkled a pinch of black sand into Squirrel's paw. "Toss this over your hazelnuts and they will multiply."

Squirrel, satisfied, clenched her fist and hopped off home.

"And what about me?" Hedgehog stretched out his paw, thinking she might offer him something to magically multiply his pear. "There is no such thing as free hairdressing, you know."

Scary Fairy gave some black sand to him as well. Without checking or even smelling it, Hedgehog darted home.

"Me too," begged Dormouse. He was thinking of rubbing the magic dust into his fur so that it would grow thicker.

"You?" said Scary Fairy. "I don't owe you anything."

“Yes you do,” insisted Dormouse. “Just imagine how early I had to get up. And while we waited for you I had to put up with Hedgehog, who wouldn’t stop farting because pears give him wind!”



“Alight,” agreed Scary Fairy. She gave him some sand and shut herself up in her hole.



20 The following morning Bear, quite out of breath, knocked on Owl’s door. “Godmother, help, Dormouse has gone mad!” Dormouse at that moment came rushing out from behind a tree. He was waving a dry twig as if it was a gun. He was digging holes in the ground and setting traps in the belief that he was a hunter.

“Completely nuts,” Owl agreed with Bear as they watched Dormouse attack a fox.

The fox escaped unhurt but only because Bear intervened.

“We’ll have to put him away,” Owl said.



But no sooner had they stuffed Dormouse into a disused hole in the ground than a new racket began in Wicked Wood.

“Squirrel!” Bear pointed out.

“Oh my, oh my!” Squirrel yelled. “The end is nigh! My hazelnuts have gone mad. They want to swallow me up!”



She was right. An army of hopping hazelnuts was chasing Squirrel. Owl, like Bear, had no idea what was happening. But clearly Squirrel had to be helped.

“The traps!” remembered Owl.

And so Squirrel was saved from her own hazelnuts by the traps set earlier by Dormouse. Every single one of them was soon caught. Squirrel, clearly shaken, couldn't stop whimpering.

No sooner had Owl and Bear calmed her down than the racket resumed. This time it was Hedgehog. He was wailing in his hole and refused to come out.

“Don’t be a wimp,” Bear coaxed him.
“Come on out.”

But Hedgehog refused. Finally he relented a little and opened the window. Bear and Owl recoiled in shock.

All Hedgehog’s needles had turned into daisies.



22 “Never again,” he lamented, “will I be able to bring home a pear. I’ll die of hunger if I don’t die of shame first.”

How queer, Owl thought as Hedgehog continued:

“It’s Scary Fairy’s fault. She gave me magic dust and said that my pear would multiply if I sprinkled some over it. And that’s what I did. Then I stuck the pear on my needles and rushed home. And now this!”

“Magic dust?” it suddenly dawned on Owl. “Was it black?”

“It was,” Hedgehog nodded.

“Did it stink? Was it wet?”

“Both,” Hedgehog confirmed.

“Did Dormouse and Squirrel get some too?”

Hedgehog nodded.

“Magic sand,” Owl and Bear said together. “Hedgehog, come along” Owl beckoned.

“In this state?” objected Hedgehog. “Never!”

“But why,” Owl asked angrily, “did you even want more pears? Are you not happy with one?”

Hedgehog fell silent and followed them.



Owl knocked on Scary Fairy’s window. She had to knock twice before the little creature sleepily opened the door.

“Listen,” Owl began. “What you did to Dormouse, Squirrel and Hedgehog is simply unacceptable. You’ll have to learn some manners.”

“No thank you,” Scary Fairy yawned, “I much prefer mulberry jelly.”

“In our forest we help each other,” Bear explained.

“That’s your business,” said Scary Fairy. “If you don’t have any mulberry jelly for me I’ll just go back to bed.” She closed the window and locked the door.

“Well, what did I say?” muttered Hedgehog. “No manners to speak of.”

“Wait for me here,” said Owl, as she noticed Scary Fairy’s little boots hanging on the nearest branch, and flew off.

It wasn’t long before she was back. In her beak she carried some wet black sand. She dropped some into each of the boots.

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Bear sighed. “I’m not sure this is the right way, godmother.”

“I’m sick and tired of having to ask and beg all the time,” replied Owl.



Later that evening, as the moonlight broke through the tops of the old oak trees, a horrible yelling could be heard in Wicked Wood.

It was Scary Fairy. She wanted to jump barefoot in the moonlit puddles but couldn’t take off her boots. No



matter what she did, they just wouldn't come off. From behind a thick oak tree Bear appeared. He was followed by Owl, Hedgehog, Squirrel and others.

“Help me,” begged Scary Fairy.

Bear shrugged. “But you wanted to be left alone.”

“True, but you said that in your wood you help each other,” replied Scary Fairy.

Owl and Bear looked at each other. Dormouse, glad to be a dormouse again, nodded. Squirrel, who didn't want

anyone to go through the ordeal she had gone through, did likewise. Only Hedgehog, half covered in needles and half still in daisies, kept staring at the ground.

“It’s only magic sand,” explained Owl. “The spell will break in a few hours.”

“I know it’s annoying,” added Bear, “but until then your boots won’t come off.”

Scary Fairy looked unhappily at the beautiful muddy puddle and slowly tramped back to her tree hole.

Bear sighed.

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Hedgehog leaned towards Dormouse and whispered: “You know, in that diary of hers I read that she’s here because she was banished by her grandmother.”

“That’s not very nice!” Dormouse yawned.

Hedgehog looked at him sharply. “Dear dormouse, perhaps you should ask yourself *why* her grandmother banished her. And how we’re going to get rid of her!”

With an offended expression on his snout he pitter-pattered home.