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The Tooth Fairy

Diane Webster

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Abstract

I suspect she wears a necklace of baby teeth

Keywords

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He jumped up and paced around the table. Again the earth tremored violently; the windows shattered; within a moment his orderly cottage was in shambles. "Where is that angel anyway?" he cried out loud, sticking his head out the door to look.

The wind from the east briskly slapped his face. "He never should have been picked for the job," muttered the miller, "I told them so. He doesn't know the first thing about last judgments. Never could curb himself, and if he doesn't stop puffing his wind, the world will turn backwards from east to west."

The pipe dropped from his lips; the thought nailed him to the ground. "So that's it," he cried aloud, his rusty voice thrown back at him on the east wind, "the fool thinks to trick me and turn the world as he pleases."

Zechariah hurried to the wheel, unlocked the gears, but on reflection relocked them. "Where is that angel?" he shouted upwards, "he should have been here hours ago. Fifteen minutes more I'll give him and if he doesn't show by then, why, oh, I'll fix that fool of an eastern miller."

Eighteen minutes passed. Twenty. A half hour. The wind blew gustily from the east. "That settles it," he cried.

"Ettlesit, ettlesit," echoed the wind hurrying over the river and off the western corner of the world.

Hastily Zechariah engaged the gears, kicking the wheel to encourage the stalled river beneath it. The reluctant river splattered a few drops but refused to flow. Unused to disobedience, Zechariah glowered at the river and struck at it with the wheel. The river recoiled, gathered its strength and with a lunge attacked. Zechariah gripped the wheel as the wave burst over him.

As it receded, he seized the moment to spin the wheel against the river, making the old wheel grumble in complaint. A pettish little wind puffed off of his wheel and was dashed aside by the gusty wind from the east. Zechariah leaned against the wheel with all his might, for he who had turned worlds, older and far unwieldier than this, would be damned if he could not discipline a river and control a wind. But each western wind, once so powerful, had now to yield to the east.

"Play games with me, will he?" growled the miller into the wind. Again he heaved his weight onto the wheel, the sweat coursing down his cheeks. The west wind spluttered. It coughed, and striking back at the east, knocked aside for a moment the errant wind. The eastern wind rallied; but the western, regaining its old confidence, advanced. The eastern wind pommelled its brother. The western retaliated. About each other they danced, one striking, then the other, until like two boxers in a clinch they locked fast.

During the battle of the winds, the earth swayed

east and west, then stopped. The miller sweated. Like millgears his muscles were locked, his eyes popped with the effort. He who had governed worlds and their winds would not make this day an exception. The laws might be tampered with, but Zechariah the miller would hold his own.

At that instant the earth again convulsed, sending tremors from the historic center to all the four corners. Suddenly the darkness was broken by a light shooting up from the earth's center. The light like the sun at midnight bore within it the man crowned with thorns whose crucifixion had been pictured in the river three days before. A mighty force threw apart the winds.

The wheel lurched back, knocking Zechariah to the ground. As the miller lay unconscious beside his mill the earth for a long time conducted itself without him. When at last he awoke a light west wind was touching his cheek and he felt the earth moving in its usual slow way beneath him.

"What was all the commotion about then?" grumbled the miller, rubbing his sore head, "They shouldn't tamper with the signs." He stood up and with an admonishing glance put the world and the heavens in order. "I thought it was a little too soon," he muttered, but attempting to recover his usual humor, shrugged and reviewed the damage done the mill.

When all was tidied and in the river he saw human beings again squabbling in the streets and market places, he smiled. The dead had gone home, the four winds returned to their place. I guess I showed him, thought the miller, as he set the wheel for a gentle wind.

Zechariah swept the broken plaster from his house, put new glass in the windows and laid the trumpet carefully back in the loft. Then he settled comfortably into his chair and lit a pipe.

"Running out of tobacco," he muttered, "can't have too many days like that." But though the miller pretended to resume his habits, something had happened. No cloud obstructed the blue of the sky as the earth turned steadily from west to east. Yet Zechariah looking at the sun through his finely polished window wondered at the irregularity and felt uneasy in the new daylight. ●

THE TOOTH FAIRY

by Diane Webster

I suspect she wears
a necklace of baby teeth
and a wisdom tooth ring
to formal fairy balls,
but on her nightly cruises
a simple brooch will do.
She eyes the pretty treasures
with a hand-carved jeweler's glass,
and like a lucky seven
she rolls teeth into her bag.
She flips a silver quarter
as fair and legal tender
and flies her cache away
on fairy wings of crepe.