

It was about two o'clock in the morning when Kats awoke, feeling a nagging pain in her mouth. A few moments passed before she was fully awake and realised that it wasn't just a nagging pain, it was

"Ouch!"

She sat up, rubbing her jaw. Almost immediately, the pain died down. Tired as she was, Kats lay down again, sighing. This wobbly tooth was giving a lot of trouble. She wished it would just be done with it and fall out. She drifted back to sleep.

Scarcely had she done so than the throbbing pain started again.

"Ouch!!" This time she sat up quickly, clutching her lower jaw. She put on the light.

"Oh, sorry!" said a voice just behind her on the pillow.

Startled, Kats turned around. There, sitting on the pillow, in a smart pink suit and with a little silver rucksack on its back, was a small figure. About four centimetres high. It was a tiny woman. She curtseyed and said, "Sorry, dear, hope I didn't wake you?"

"Yes you did," said Kats, annoyed. "Were you making my mouth hurt?"

The tiny figure looked embarrassed. "Oh dear, I've done it again. I really am dreadfully sorry, my dear. Oh, I knew I shouldn't have done this!" She stamped her feet and blew into a tiny handkerchief. "And now I've gone and woken you up. Such a pretty girl, too..."

"Oh, don't worry," said Kats hastily, "My tooth has been a bit sore anyway, so I don't think it was your fault." She patted the tiny woman gently on her forearm.

The little woman sniffed. "Oh you're a very kind girl. Your mother must think the world of you! No, it was entirely my fault. I told Margaret I didn't like this idea! I told her, but she said I was to go ahead and do it anyway. And now I've gone and pulled a little hard on the string. I didn't think it would have hurt you!"

Kats looked closely. The woman had concealed a coil of string behind her back; when she saw Kats looking, she brought it out to the front. "Yes, I was trying to pull your wobbly tooth out. Oh, oh, oh..." The little woman sat down suddenly and buried her face in her hands, sobbing uncontrollably.

"There, there..." comforted Kats, offering the tiny figure a paper hankie.

"Oh, I shouldn't bother you with all this, kind child," went on the woman, "But it's hard times for us tooth-fairies. You wouldn't believe how difficult it is to get any work done some nights with all this dental education and clever toothpastery."

"You're a tooth-fairy!" gasped Kats in surprise.

The tooth-fairy stopped sobbing all of a sudden and, with tears still trickling down her cheek, burst out giggling. "Oh bless her! What did you think I was - Santa Claus? The Easter Bunny? No, I'm a tooth-fairy. A difficult job in these hard times. You wouldn't believe how hard it is getting rid of all those silver coins. Well, my manager, that's Margaret, she says to me that I should go out and look for wobbly teeth. 'That Kats has got one, I think', she says to me. Well, I didn't think it was right when she told me, and I can go back and tell her it's not right now."

With that, the Tooth Fairy blew her nose and stood up, straightening her suit. "Sorry to have disturbed you, my dear. I hope you can get back to sleep quickly!"

"No, don't go just yet!" urged Kats. "Stay and talk to me. I'm sure my tooth could come out tonight if you need it." She was feeling sorry for this poor little lady.

"Oh, no! I couldn't possibly ask you to... No, the very idea... You're a very nice girl even to consider it."

And with that the Tooth Fairy sat down again with a bump on the pillow and burst once more into floods of tears.

Kats did not know what to do. She sat and stroked the fairy gently. "Look," she said finally, "I would really like you to take my tooth. It's been such a wobbly one for so long, you would be doing me a favour by taking it away. Please?"

The fairy looked up. "Do you really mean it?"

Kats nodded.

"You're very kind. I wouldn't even consider it, but TF Enterprises gives me a monthly target to meet, and I'm way behind this month, and I don't want to get the sack!"

"Come on, then," said Kats. "let's have this one out and then you can go and see my friend Jess. She's got a wobbly tooth as well."

The fairy smiled happily, and uncoiled her little piece of string. "I promise I won't hurt you. I'm rather good at this. Now, open wide!"

Somewhat frightened, Kats did just that. With a deft flick of her wrist, the fairy lassooed the wobbly tooth and tugged. There was a sharp moment of pain, a

*Zzz-Ping!*

and the tooth flew out.

"Ah-ouch!" exclaimed Kats.

"Oops! Did that hurt?" asked the tooth fairy, worried.

Kats shook her head and smiled gappily.

"What a great help you've been. Now, do you get 50p? A pound?" The fairy tucked the tooth into her rucsac.

"Oh, 20p will do," said Kats moderately. "After all, I don't want you to get into trouble with TF Enterprises..."