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How the Fairies Borrowed the Moon

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I don't suppose that everybody knows why it is that sometimes when you look up at the sky at night, you see only a part of the moon. Perhaps nobody would ever have known if the Goblins had not spied on the Fairies' festival one night and found out and told it. The Fairies had, for a long time, held festivals in the spring, summer, and fall, but they had never had a winter festival. Although one would have thought that the white snow would have made an especially pretty setting for one of their dances.

But one night, at a gathering of the Fairies, it was proposed to hold a winter festival. After it had been talked over a little, every Fairy there was enthusiastically planning what to do. Finally, one of the Fairies said, "I think it would be nicest to have the festival on the lake, and then we will have the smooth ice to dance on."

"And," said another Fairy, "we can build a fire over on the side of the lake so that we can warm ourselves if we get cold."

"And," said another, "those who do not wish to dance can skate by tying their wands on the bottom of their shoes."

The Gnomes said they would look after the polishing of the ice by going to Jack Frost and getting him to help them. They planned to ask North Wind to blow and send some clean white snow. Every Fairy was to have her dress trimmed with fur, and each was to wear a little bonnet made of swan's down and tied with a red ribbon. Altogether, the festival was planned to be one of the most elaborate the Fairies had ever given.



But just as the meeting was breaking up, one of the Fairies said, "What are we going to do for light? In the summer, we have always had the fireflies to help us, but now they are all fast asleep and we cannot wake them up. And, anyway, their lights are all out at this time of the year."

"Why, we have the moon," said one of the Fairies.

"Yes," said another, "but while the moon is bright enough for us on ordinary nights, we certainly need more light than she will give for so great a festival as we are going to have."

"That's so," said the first Fairy, "but I do not see how we can get anything brighter."

"The moon would be all right if only it was nearer so that its light would shine better," said another Fairy. After thinking a minute, she said, "I wonder if we could not borrow the moon?"

"Borrow the moon?" cried half a dozen Fairies in chorus. "Why, what would people think?"

"Well," said the Fairy, "if we couldn't borrow the whole of it, perhaps we could borrow a piece of it. Then if we left the rest of it to shine in the sky, perhaps the people wouldn't notice it."

"That's not such a bad idea," said the Queen of the Fairies, "and I will appoint a committee to try and arrange it."

So she named three of the Fairies to act as a committee to borrow the moon. The day before the festival was to take place, the three Fairies all got astride of a broomstick which a witch loaned them. They sailed away up into the sky, and when the man in the moon saw them coming toward him, he was very much surprised. He was more surprised when he heard the curious request that they had to make.



"Will I lend you the moon?" he said. "Why, what a strange thing to ask me! What do you think all the people down on the earth would say if they found out that I had done such an unheard-of thing? They might even make me move out of the moon and go somewhere else, and I have lived here so long that I would never be happy anywhere else."

"But," said the Fairies, "if we do not have some light, our festival will be a failure. This is the first winter festival we have ever had, and Jack Frost has been just splendid in helping us. We think you might help too. If you won't loan us the whole of the moon, couldn't you loan a part of it? We will be sure to bring it back just as good as it was when we took it."

"How big a piece would you want?" asked the man.

"Just as big as you can spare," said the Fairies.

"Well," he said, after thinking a minute, "you have come a long way, and I would like to help you. I certainly want your festival to be a success. So I am going to let you take a piece off the edge. But to be sure that you return it, I am going to make one of your Fairies stay here all the time the piece is gone. When it is returned, the Fairy can go home."



So the Fairies drew lots as to which one should stay, and the man took a big saw and sawed off a piece of the moon right near the edge where the people would be least likely to notice it was gone. The two Fairies took it with them on the broomstick back to the earth. And such a festival as the first winter festival was! Everybody voted it the best they had ever had, and all agreed that the piece of the moon which they borrowed gave the finest light.

After the festival was over, the two Fairies took it back to the sky and returned with their sister who had stayed there while they were away. The man in the moon was so pleased with the visit of the Fairies that he told them they could borrow a part of the moon any time they liked. So when you look up in the sky and see only a part of the moon there, why, perhaps the Fairies are holding another festival and have borrowed another piece of the moon.



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