



# Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

## The Tell-Tale Goblin

*Abbie Phillips Walker*

Once upon a time, there was a little fairy who loved to wander along the river. But since the Fairy Queen did not want her subjects to come too close to the water, the little fairy always had to sneak away secretly. Every time they held a feast, this Little Fairy would fly out the door as soon as the dancing began and wander along the river to see the ripple of the water as it flowed over the pebbles and stones.

One night, a Goblin who always watched the fairies, sat under a bush and saw the Little Fairy. "What is she doing here all alone?" he said to himself. "She must have run away from her sisters, and I'm pretty sure the Queen doesn't know where she is. I will watch her, and if she misbehaves, I will tell the Queen. Maybe she will give me a new red jacket if I tell her."

So this little Goblin began to watch carefully, and soon he saw a mist rising from the river. Then it seemed like foam, and then it became all silvery in the moonlight. And suddenly, as he watched, the Goblin saw a handsome young man rise from the river and stretch his arms out to the Little Fairy who stood on the shore.

"Aha!" said the Goblin. "She certainly has a lover. Well, I will tell the Queen, and I think these midnight meetings will be stopped, and I now know for sure that I will get a new red jacket if I tell her."

At that moment, the River Boy called the Fairy, and the Goblin looked to see what was happening and forgot about the red jacket. "Come, my love," called the Young Man, "take the willow path and you will be safe from the water." The Little Fairy flew to the willow tree beside the river and teetered lightly on a slender branch that hung with its point in the water. When she reached the end of the branch, the Young Man was there to take her in his arms. He carried her to the middle of the river, where there was a small island, and the watching Goblin saw them sit on the soft green grass in the moonlight, but he could not hear what they said.

"I will run and tell the Queen, and then they will catch her," said the Goblin to himself. He forgot that his red jacket was clearly visible in the moonlight. He jumped up and ran along the riverbank to the palace. "Oh Oh!" cried the Little Fairy, frightened, when she saw the Goblin. "What will become of me? There is a

Goblin, and I am sure he has seen me and will tell the Queen. Oh dear! Oh dear! I will be banished."

The River Boy, who was a real River God, reached for a horn of white shells that hung on a coral chain on his shoulder and blew a shrill note, and the Goblin fell face down. "Get up!" cried the River God. "And tell me where you are going?"

"Oh, Your Majesty," said the sly little Goblin, "I was about to go to the Fairy Queen and tell her that one of her fairies was being taken away, but of course, I won't do that now. I see who she is with. I thought it was old Neptune himself and that he might turn her into a mermaid." The River God knew that the bad little man was telling him an unfair story, but something had to be done, so he pretended to believe the Goblin and said, "Well, now that you know the Fairy is safe, what can I do for you so that you will keep our secret?"

"Give me a silver hat," said the Kobold quickly. "Very well. Come here tomorrow night at midnight, and you will be able to put the hat on your head if you haven't told the Fairy Queen what you've seen," said the River God. The Kobold promised, and he ran back to his house in the rocks, while the River God took the Fairy back to the willow tree. "Come without your wand tomorrow, my dearest," he said. "We shouldn't wait, now that the Kobold has seen us, because he is not to be trusted once he has received the silver hat."

The next night, the Kobold was waiting by the river when the Little Fairy arrived. "Where is your wand?" he asked, for he immediately saw that she didn't have it with her. Before she could answer, there was a splash in the middle of the river, and out of the mist and foam the River God lifted his head and called to the Fairy. At the same time, he held out a silver hat to the Kobold.

The Little Fairy went along the same path to her lover, but she took the silver hat from his hand and threw it to the Kobold before flying into the outstretched arms of her lover. "Now tell him where your wand is," said the River God. "I left it in the palace," she said, blushing, and she hung her head. "What! Are you not going back to the Queen?" asked the Kobold in surprise. "Do you want to become a river ghost?"



"You've guessed it," said the River God. "Tonight we're getting married at the bottom of the river. Farewell, you little informer Kobold. I hope your silver hat fits that little head of yours." The Kobold watched the Fairy and her lover slowly disappear from sight, and then he ran as fast as he could to the palace to tell the Queen what he had seen. "I'm getting a new red jacket too," he said to himself. "I didn't promise not to tell tonight."

The Kobold was so determined to tell the Queen what he knew that he completely forgot his new silver hat until he reached the valley where the Fairies were dancing. Then he threw away his old hat and put the silver hat on his head so hard that he screamed in pain. For a moment he saw stars, and the cold silver felt very different from his soft, warm hat with a brim that he had thrown aside.

The little Fairies, who saw the Kobold hopping around in the moonlight, called to the Queen: "Oh, look, dear Queen. Drive away the Kobold, he's acting very strange and it could mean trouble." The Queen, who knew that Kobolds were not friendly to her Fairies, held up her wand and sent a beam of light straight into the Kobold's eye. "Leave our palace," she said, "or something will happen to you that you won't like."

"Oh, wait, wait and hear what I have to tell!" cried the Kobold. "I know a secret you must hear."

"Oh, don't listen to him, dear Queen!" said all the little Fairies. "It's wrong to tell secrets. Go away, we won't listen." But the Kobold wouldn't leave. He wanted to get a new red jacket, and he was sure that the Queen would give it to him in exchange for the secret he could tell her. "If you give me a new red jacket, I will tell you something about one of your Fairies that you'll want to know," said the Kobold.

"Oh, what a funny head he has!" exclaimed a Fairy when the Goblin lifted the silver hat, which was so uncomfortable. All the Fairies began to laugh, and again he put the silver hat on his head to hide his strange, pointy head, and again the hat made him see stars and jump with pain.

"Oh, he's just crazy, you all know that," said the Queen. "I'm not crazy. Listen and I'll tell you the secret, and then you'll know that I'm very smart," said the Goblin. "But first, I need to know if you will give me the red jacket. I won't tell you the secret if you don't."

The Goblin didn't think for a moment that the Queen of the Fairies would refuse to pay to hear a secret, so when the Queen told him he was a bad, crazy guy and had to go, he was quite surprised. "You'll regret it," he said as he walked away. But then he decided to tell it anyway because what was the point of knowing a secret if you didn't surprise others by showing how much you know.

He ran back, but the Fairies and their Queen plugged their ears and ran away so they couldn't hear. However, the Goblin had to tell it, and he ran until he was close enough to shout, "She's married to a River God, and she left her wand in the pit. They gave me this silver hat not to tell."

When the Queen and the Fairies heard this, they stopped running, and the Goblin thought they wanted to hear more, so he went to them and said he would

help them search for the wand if they came to the pit. The Queen put her finger to her lips to warn the Fairies not to speak. Then they went back to the pit, following the Goblin, who hopped and jumped ahead of them. "Here it is," he said, stooping to pick up the golden wand.

"Stop," cried the Queen. "Don't touch it. I'll pick it up, and now that you've told us the secret, you will get your reward." The Goblin jumped around in delight because he was sure the Queen would touch him with the wand, and he would immediately have a new red jacket. "You will wear the silver hat for the rest of your life," she said, and before the Goblin could spring away, the Queen tapped him on the head, and instead of the Goblin with the silver hat, there stood a silver thistle, all spiky and glittering among the leaves and bushes.

"Your sister has left us, and we must forget her," said the Queen as the Fairies followed her home. "Let her be forgotten by all of you. Her wand will be kept for a worthier sister."

The Little Fairy never regretted marrying her River God, for she lived happily ever after. Sometimes, when they came up from the river bottom to sit in the moonlight, she would say to the River God, "What do you think happened to the Goblin? Do you think he ever told the Queen?"

"Of course he did," answered the River God. "He ran as fast as he could to the Queen, but the silver hat was so uncomfortable for him to wear that I'm sure he threw it away long before that. So he earned nothing by being a spy."

"Maybe his conscience spoke to him, and he regretted it," said the Little Fairy.

The little fairy was right. The kobold regretted when it was too late, and the silver thistle swayed in the wind. He tried to tell the wind that he was sorry for telling stories. But even the wind did not want to listen to the prickly thistle, so he had to bloom unloved and alone for the rest of his life.



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