



# Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

## Why the Wymps Cried

*Evelyn Sharp*

The wymps and the fairies have never been able to agree. Nobody quite knows why, though the Fairy Queen, who is the wisest person in the whole world, was once heard to say that jealousy had something to do with it. The fairies say, however, that they would never dream of being jealous of people who live at the back of the sun and do not know manners; while the wymps say it would be absurd to be jealous of any one who lives at the front of the sun and cannot take a joke. All the same, the Fairy Queen is always right, so somebody must certainly be jealous of somebody; and it is well known that if the wymps and the fairies are invited to the same party, it is sure to end in a quarrel. It is really a wonder that the Fairy Queen has not lost patience with the wymps long ago; but people say that she has more affection for her naughty little subjects at the back of the sun than any one would imagine; and the Fairy Queen is so wonderful that it is quite possible to believe this.

Once, matters became so serious that there would have been a real war, if the Queen had not called an assembly of her subjects on the spot—which happened to be on the roof of a blacksmith's forge—and asked them what the fuss was all about.

"Please, your Majesty," said one fairy, half crying, "the wymps shut me up at the back of the sun for fifteen days, and they gave me nothing to eat, your Majesty; they said that if I couldn't take a joke I couldn't take anything. And I should never wish to take one of their jokes, please your Majesty."

"Do not trouble about that," said the Fairy Queen, gravely. "For my part, I shall never expect you to take a joke from any one. Now, Capricious, what have they done to you?" she added, as another fairy with a round dimpled face came forward in a great hurry.

"Please, your Majesty," began Capricious, trying to make a very cheerful voice sound extremely doleful, "I found a wimp in the nursery, after the children had gone to bed; and he was quite upset because the Wymp King had made a joke and no one could see it; and he asked me to go behind the sun with him, so that I might help him to see the joke that the King had made. But when I got there, your Majesty, I said it was much too dark to see anything and I was not at all surprised that no one could see the King's jokes; and the King was so angry that he ordered me to be poked through the sun again; and here I am, please your

Majesty."

Her Majesty smiled approvingly.

"You have made a joke worth two of the Wymp King's," she said; "and I shall appoint you as a reward to go to Wympland with a message from me. Do not trouble to thank me," she added, as the round dimpled face of Capricious grew a little crestfallen, "for there is no time. The sun is just going to rise, and the moment it is above the horizon you must go straight through it once more and tell the King that I invite him to breakfast in Fairyland. And now I must be off, for I have a smile to paint on the face of every child in the world before it wakes."

So the Fairy Queen flew away to paint a million or two of the most beautiful smiles in the world; and the other fairies popped down through the roof and did all the blacksmith's work for him and dropped a nice dream on his pillow just to show they had been there; and Capricious sat on the edge of the chimney-pot, until the sun came above the horizon and it was time for her to take the Queen's message to Wympland.

The Wymp King knew better than to refuse the Queen's invitation to breakfast; so he yawned three hundred and fifty-four times, rubbed his eyes to keep them open—for it is a well-known thing that the Wymp King is nearly always asleep—and started off in the direction of Fairyland. The Queen was as pleased to see him as if he had never been naughty at all; but, of course, she was far too much of a Queen to let him guess that he was really there to be scolded. So she made him sit next to her at breakfast, and gave him a cup of stinging-nettle tea to keep him awake, and allowed him to make as many jokes as he pleased. The Wymp King, in consequence, was extremely happy; and when the meal was over and the Queen began to look stern, he had to think very hard indeed before he remembered that he was nothing but a naughty little wymp after all.

"This state of things cannot go on," said the Fairy Queen. "What is the use of my being a Queen if I am not to be obeyed?"

"Your Majesty's chief use is to look like a Queen and to forgive your disobedient subjects," said the Wymp King, who had taken so much stinging-nettle tea that he was almost bristling with jokes.

"Ah," sighed the Fairy Queen, looking sideways at the Wymp King, "it is not at all easy to rule a country like mine."

"It is very fortunate for the country to be ruled by a Queen like you," said the Wymp King, who had not been so wide awake for a thousand years.

"Do you think so? Then Wympland shall have a Queen for a change, and you shall stay here instead and take a holiday," said her Majesty, promptly. The Wymp King saw that he was outwitted, but he would not have been a wymp if he

had lost his temper about it; so he chuckled good-humouredly, and pretended not to see that he had really been cheated of his kingdom and was nothing but a prisoner in Fairyland. However, the Fairy Queen gave him very little time even to keep his temper, for she turned him into a tortoise and sent him to sleep under a flower-pot in the garden; and then she called for Capricious to come and help her to choose a Queen for Wympland. Capricious put her round, dimpled face on one side, and thought deeply for thirteen seconds and a half.

"There is Molly, the shoemaker's daughter," said Capricious, when she had finished thinking. "She is seven years old, and she is almost as fond of sleeping as his Wymplish Majesty. She would make an excellent Queen for Wympland."

"I remember Molly," said the Fairy Queen, thoughtfully. "She has ruled the shoemaker and the shoemaker's wife and the shoemaker's customers for seven years and a half; doubtless, she will have no difficulty in ruling Wympland. So let no time be lost, Capricious, and see that Molly wakes up from her morning sleep and finds herself on the Wympl King's throne. She will look after the wymps for a time, and I shall have some peace. Besides," added the Fairy Queen with her wise smile, "if the wymps can only be made to cry for once in their lives, we shall probably have no more difficulty with them."

Capricious, who was just an ordinary little fairy and never thought about anything much except singing and dancing, was quite unable to understand the Queen's last remark.

"Shall I tell Molly what she is to do when she gets there, please your Majesty?" she asked in rather a puzzled tone.

"Do?" said the Queen. "The rulers of Wympland never have to do anything. If Molly will only keep her subjects amused, that is all they will expect from her."

That was how it was settled, and that was how Molly woke up from her morning sleep and found herself on the Wympl King's throne, with four little wymps standing in a row just in front of her. Molly stared at the throne on which she was sitting, stared around at the dimly lighted Land of the Wymps, and stared at the four little wymps who stood and laughed at her.

"Who are you?" she asked, opening her eyes as wide as she could. "Are you live dolls, or fairies, or just other children for me to play with?"

The four wymps laughed more than ever when she said this, and began to sing a funny little song all together, just to explain who they were. This was the song:—

"We are Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer,  
There 's nothing to fright you and nothing to fear!  
Four little wymps at the back of the sun,  
Brimful of wympery, rubbish, and fun!

"You 'll find we are wymphish; but then, we 're not bores,  
Though we own to a weakness for wiping off scores.  
Ah! Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer  
Are never far off when mischief is near!

"Of Kings we 've had many, but never a Queen;  
So bewyming a monarch we 've surely not seen;  
And—Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer  
Though we are, yet we know how to welcome you here!

"You 'll surely bewymp all the wymps you come near  
Besides Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer;  
By the time you have gone and your wymping is done,  
The world will have changed at the back of the sun."

"Are you really wymps?" exclaimed Molly, when the four little fellows had finished explaining who they were; for, like every properly educated child, Molly knew quite well that the wymps lived at the back of the sun, although she had never been there before.

"To be sure we are," answered Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer. "And you are our new Queen."

"Am I?" said Molly. "Oh, what fun!"

"Of course it's fun," said Skilful. "Everything is fun up here."

"Except the King's jokes," said Wilful.

"And the Fairy Queen's commands," said Captious.

"And the interference of the fairies," said Queer.

"How do the fairies interfere?" asked Molly.

"They come without being invited," said Skilful.

"They don't play fair," said Wilful.

"They always expect to win," said Captious.

"They cry for nothing at all," said Queer.

"I cry sometimes," observed Molly.

"When?" asked all four, in a tone of alarm.

"When I'm hungry," said Molly, "or tired; or sometimes, when I tumble down; or when I feel cross."

"You should never cry," said Skilful, in a superior tone. "It takes up so much time, and when you've done crying you've got exactly the same thing to cry about as

before. If you are hungry, don't cry but get something to eat."

"And if you're tired, don't cry but go to sleep. Nothing could be simpler," said Wilful.

"And if you tumble down, don't cry but pick yourself up again," said Captious. "If you know how to tumble down properly, it is the best fun in the world. We spend most of our time up here in learning new ways of tumbling down."

"And if you are cross," added Queer; and then he stopped and looked doubtfully at the other three. "What is she to do if she feels cross?" he asked them. They shook their heads in reply.

"Nobody is ever cross in Wympland," they explained to Molly. "People who know how to make jokes, really good jokes, soon learn how to take them as well, and then there is nothing left to be cross about. You don't feel cross now, do you?"

Molly assured them that she did not feel in the least cross, and their faces brightened again.

"Perhaps, if you will tell us when you begin to feel cross we shall be able to do something for you," they said; "but, whatever you do, you must not cry in Wympland. It is only the fairies who do that, and they don't know any better. As long as the sun has had a country at the back of it, no wymp has ever been known to cry. Now, let us go and find somebody to tease!"

"I thought Queens could always do as they like," objected Molly, as they took her two hands and made her jump down from the throne without finding out whether she wished to come or not.

"Oh, no," said Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer. "You make a great mistake. The King always does as he is told in Wympland. So come along with us and see us tease somebody."

"I don't want to tease anybody," said Molly, decidedly. "I am going to be a real Queen. Real Queens do just as they like; it is only Kings who do as they are told. If you are not going to let me have my own way I might just as well have stopped at home, instead of coming all this way on purpose to be your Queen!"

The four little wymps looked very perplexed. "May she do as she likes?" they asked one another, and shook their four little heads doubtfully.

"She might order us about," said Skilful.

"Or laugh at us," said Wilful.

"Or expect us to obey her," said Captious.

But Queer turned three somersaults in the air, just to show that he did not care a

bit if they did not agree with him; and then he bowed to Molly almost as gracefully as a fairy might have done at the front of the sun.

"She is a real Queen," he said; "and real Queens must be obeyed."

And when Molly declared that she should probably cry if they did not immediately allow her to have her own way, the other three wymps were obliged to follow Queer's example.

"You are a real Queen, and you may do as you like," they said in a resigned tone; and Molly clapped her hands with delight.

"Then please fetch me some plum-cake, and a large ice, and lots of barley sugar; I am so hungry," she said. Immediately, everything she asked for was lying before her on the King's throne, and they all sat down and enjoyed such a dinner as only a wymp or a real Queen would know how to appreciate. When they had finished, Molly said she should like to see the rest of Wympland, for nobody at the front of the sun had ever been able to tell her anything about it; so they led her all over it, which did not take them longer than the rest of the afternoon, for the world at the back of the sun is smaller than some people think, and that is a very good thing, for after all it is better to live on the right side of the sun if one is not a wymp.

"It is a very flat country," said the little Queen, as she trotted along with two wymps on each side of her.

"It has to be flat," explained Skilful. "If it were tilted ever so little we should roll into the sun and out at the other side, don't you see; and no true wymp ever wants to do that."

"It is rather dark, too," continued the little Queen.

"Of course," said Wilful, proudly. "It is always the same here. Now, when you get to the front of the sun you never know whether it is going to be light or dark. There are no surprises of that sort at the back of the sun."

"And where," asked Molly, "is the royal palace?"

"Wherever you like," answered Captious in an obliging tone. "Would you like it here, or will you have it a little nearer the sun? Of course it is warmer, near the sun, but you will find it much noisier because the stars are so fond of chattering."

"I should like it here, please," said Molly, who did not want to wait another minute for her palace. Hardly were her words spoken than a perfectly charming little palace appeared in front of her, just large enough for such a very small Queen to feel happy in. It was all made of rainbows and starshine and dewdrops; every thing that is bright and sweet-looking had helped to make her palace, and

from the very middle of it rose a tall, silvery bell-tower, from which peals of laughter were ringing merrily.

"Oh, oh! how beautiful!" exclaimed Molly. "But how is it that my palace is so bright while Wympland is so dull?"

"Ah," said Queer, softly; "we wished for the palace, you see, and the things we wish for are never dull."

"It is a dream-palace," added Wilful; "and dreams are never dull either."

"I hope it will not go away as my dreams do when I wake up in the morning," said Molly.

"Oh, no," they assured her. "It cannot disappear until we wish it to go away again; and that we shall never do as long as it induces you to stay with us."

"Do you always wish for what you want?" asked Molly.

"Dear me, yes," said Captious. "What is the use of having a lot of things lying about that you don't want? There is only just enough room in Wympland for the things we do want, so we wish for them as we want them, and that is much more convenient. You should try it."

"Everything you see here," added Skilful, "has been wished for, some time or another. Neither Wympland, nor the wymps, nor our bewympling little Queen would be here at all if somebody had not wished for them."

"And if we were all to wish hard at the same moment," said Wilful, "not one of us would be left standing here, nor would there be any country at all at the back of the sun."

"But we shall never wish that, now that we have a real Queen of our own," said Queer.

Then, for the first time, Molly noticed that this strange little country at the back of the sun had no people in it; for, ever since she had waked up on the King's throne, she had seen no one except Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer.

"Where are all the other wymps?" she cried.

"Ah," they said, mysteriously; "most people don't know it, but the wymps go through the sun every morning and spend the day in making fun for the people on the other side. That is how the people down in the world are taught to laugh instead of to cry. There would be no laughter at all at the front of the sun if it were not for the wymps."

"How strange!" said Molly. "I always thought it was wrong to make fun of people."

"So it is," said Queer; "nobody but a bad wymp would do such a thing. A true wymp makes fun for people, and that is a very different thing."

"A very different thing," echoed the other three. "We only make fun of people who have never learnt how to laugh, and very difficult it is to make them into fun at all. It's very poor fun when it is made, too,—most of it," they added, sighing.

Molly was just going to ask them how they managed to make people into fun at all, when a number of sounds like pistol-shots suddenly came from the direction of the sun, and the four wymps grew wildly excited and seized her by the hands and began to race over the ground with her as fast as they could.

"The wymps have come home!" they gasped breathlessly. "If we make all the haste we can, we shall be there in time to see them arrive."

It seemed to Molly that to run after her subjects was a curious thing for a real Queen to do. However, she was far too much out of breath to say anything, and the next moment they had reached the back of the sun; and there were dozens of little wymps, all tumbling through it, one on the top of the other, until they made a large heap of themselves at the feet of their new little Queen.

"They are bidding you welcome," whispered Queer, as the heap remained motionless at Molly's feet; and, except for the fact that a good many shouts of laughter were coming from it, no one would have thought it was made of wymps at all.

"Oh, please get up," implored their little Queen. "It is very nice of you to be so glad to see me, but I am sure it must be very uncomfortable to lie about on the floor like that."

Immediately, the heap dissolved itself into wymps again; and they crowded round Molly, tumbling up against her so clumsily and chattering and laughing so noisily, that she thought it was quite time to remind them that she was a real Queen.

"Do you think you could make a little less noise?" she begged them. "I don't like noise at all. If you will only try to speak one at a time, I may be able to answer everybody."

The wymps were so amazed to hear that she did not like noise that they became silent for a whole minute in order to think about it. "You see," said Queer, apologetically, "we have never had a Queen before, so we are not quite sure what she does like. Kings always like plenty of noise; at least, it does not seem to wake them up, and that is the great thing."

"Yes, that is it!" cried all the little wymps together. "We have never had a Queen before, so we don't quite know how to treat her."

"Supposing," continued Queer, "that you were to tell us the kind of things that a real Queen would like us to do?"

"Yes, yes!" shouted all the other wymps, gleefully. "Tell us what a real Queen would like us to do!"

So Molly clambered up on the King's throne, and tried to look as much like a Queen as a very little girl, in a very short frock and a very pink pinafore, knows how to look; and the wymps stood in front of her, closely packed together; and she began to tell them some of the things that a real Queen would like them to do.

"First of all," said Molly, "a real Queen does n't like her toes trodden on, and her pinafore crumpled, and her hair pulled. She does n't like being screamed at, either; and she never allows herself to be ordered about by any one. She likes to order other people about instead, and she likes the other people to be very pleased when she orders them about, and not to go slowly and look disagreeable and grumble. She likes a new frock every Sunday, and a birthday every month; and she always drinks milk for supper. It is supper time now," added the little Queen, beginning to yawn.

All the wymps at once hurled themselves helter-skelter through the sun again, in search of milk for their new Queen's supper. But Queer ran faster than any of them, and he took the very milk that Molly's own mother had just milked into the pail for herself; and the strangest thing of all was that, although the pail became empty before her eyes and she had to go without any supper, Molly's mother was quite happy after that and did not worry any more about her little girl who had so strangely disappeared in the morning. That shows what the wymps can do when they forget to be wymphish. And Molly drank her milk and went to sleep in her dream-palace, and was the happiest little Queen on either side of the sun; and the wymps—well, it is impossible to describe what the wymps felt like.

Molly was Queen of Wympland for a great many days, and there had never reigned such peace at the back of the sun, nor in the whole world of Fairyland either. It was so remarkable that the Fairy Queen sent for Capricious, one day, and asked her why nobody had anything to grumble about. Any one might have thought from the Fairy Queen's tone that she was not particularly pleased at so much contentment, but of course that could not possibly be the case.



"Please, your Majesty," said Capricious, who had been waiting anxiously to be asked this very question for quite a long time, "it is because the wymps are so

much occupied in looking after their new Queen that they have no time to play tricks on us."

"Ah," said her Majesty, smiling wisely, "does she seem happy at the back of the sun?"

"Everybody is happy at the back of the sun, please your Majesty," said Capricious. "They play games all day long to amuse their new Queen, and they never quarrel except for the right to do things for her little Majesty. If she stays there much longer it will soon be impossible to distinguish a wymph from a fairy!"

"It is time she went home again," said the Fairy Queen, smiling wisely for the second time. "How do the shoemaker and his wife get on without her?"

"Their house is so quiet that the shoemaker has never made better shoes," answered Capricious. "The shoemaker's wife, though, can do nothing but sit out in the sunshine and wait, for she cannot bear the silence indoors. Even wympcraft cannot make her forget everything, your Majesty."

"Molly must certainly go home again," said the Fairy Queen; "and she must go to-morrow morning."

Capricious sighed dismally.

"Must she really go, your Majesty?" she ventured to say; "and will the wymps be free again to plague us with their tiresome wymphish jokes?"

The Fairy Queen smiled wisely for the third time.

"Wait until to-morrow morning," she said. "You may have as good a joke against the wymps as they have ever had against you."

That night, Molly had a dream straight from Fairyland which reminded her that, although she had a whole palace of her own and quantities of little subjects to do her bidding, she was really the daughter of the shoemaker on the other side of the sun. So, when Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer came to play with her in the morning, she told them she could not be their Queen any longer, as it was time for her to go back to the front of the sun. The four little fellows looked more dismal than a wymph had ever been known to look before, and so did all the wymps in Wympland as soon as they heard that their bewympling Queen was going away from them.

"Can we do nothing to make you stop with us?" they asked her. "Have we been too rough with you, after all? You must forgive us if we have, for we are not accustomed to Queens, at the back of the sun. If we try to be less noisy, will you not stay with us a little longer?"

"Dear little wymps," cried Molly; "you never tread on my toes now, nor crumple

my pinafore, nor pull my hair. I do not want to go away from you, but it is time for me to go back to the other side of the sun. Will you please show me how to get there, dear little wymps?"

When they saw that she was quite determined to go, they led her very sadly to the back of the sun; and nobody made a single joke on the way, and there was not a smile to be seen in the whole of that sad little procession. There had never been so little laughter and so much dolefulness in the Land of the Wymps.

"How am I to get through that?" asked Molly, rubbing the tears out of her eyes and looking up at the back of the big round sun; "and shall I tumble all the way down when I get to the other side?"

"It is quite easy," explained Skilful. "You have only to shut your eyes and jump through it, and the sunbeams will catch you on the other side; and you can slide down the one that shines into the shoemaker's garden, where your mother sits watching for you."

Then Molly rubbed her eyes again, for there were still a great many tears in them, and the more she rubbed them away the faster they came again, until she was really afraid the wymps would see that she was crying; and that would never do, for she felt quite sure that a real Queen should never cry. So she kissed her hand to her sad little subjects and promised to come back again some day; and then she shut her eyes tight and jumped through the big round sun and slid down the sunbeam that shone into the shoemaker's garden. And as she sped down the shining, slippery sunbeam, she could hear Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer in the distance, singing their funny little song about her:—

"You have surely bewymped all the wymps you came near,  
Besides Skilful and Wilful and Captious and Queer!  
And now that you 've gone and your wymping is done,  
The world has grown sad at the back of the sun."

Molly never knew what happened when they finished singing; but the fairies knew, because they were hiding all round the edge of the sun at the time. And it was the most remarkable thing that had ever happened in Wympland.

The wymps say that Queer began it; and this is extremely likely, for Queer was always a little different from the other wymps. Anyhow, they very soon followed his example; and so it was that all the wymps at the back of the sun sat down on the ground and cried, because their bewymping little Queen was no longer with them. And all the fairies who were hiding popped up their heads and peered over the edge of the sun and stared in amazement at what was going on in Wympland.

So the Fairy Queen was right, as she always is, and the wymps were made to cry

for once in their lives; and the fairies have as good a joke against the wymps as the wymps ever had against the fairies. Perhaps that is why the wymps play so few tricks on the fairies, now; but the Fairy Queen only smiles when people say that, so she probably knows better.

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