



Grammy and the Star Soup

April Eight

Kids

I wrote this story for my podcast, April Eight Songs & Stories. It is written to be told, not read, but I think you might enjoy it anyway...

Under the starry night sky, in a village just below the foothills of the mountains of way over there, where the snowflake fairies nap in drifts that rise to the knees of the giants who roam those mountain ranges, there sits a wee cottage on the corner of yesterday and tomorrow.

And what a lovely little cottage it is too. With a thatched roof and snowy eaves, gingerbread bread shutters and pretty curtains hanging in the windows. And if you peaked in those windows on this particular night, well, you know what you might see? Grammy with her knitting on her knee, sitting in her rocking chair before a bright, warm fire. And at her feet, her dear little grandchildren, snug in their pajamas.

Hmmm, now, what is that they are saying? Just a second, let me listen....

Oh, of course. They are asking for one more story, as children so often do.

“Grammy please please please! Tell us the one about the bear!” Sander was saying.

“Oh, no, don’t tell us that one! That one scares me!” said Sage.

And then their older sister Arwen laughed, “Well then, what do you want to hear, scaredy cat?”

“I am NOT a scaredy cat!,” said Sage. “I just don’t want to hear the story about the bear right now. Ah hum.”

“Are too a scaredy cat!”

“Am not!”

“Are too.”

“Am not?”

“Are...”

“Children, please. What kind of talk is this? I cannot tell you any stories at all over the sound of so much arguing. You three sound awfully grouchy. Maybe it is time for bed?”

“Uhh.... Oh no, Grammy. We weren’t arguing.” said Sage. giving her siblings her best scowl.

“We would never argue, Grammy.” said Sander and Arwen together sweetly.

And then Grammy laughed her knowing Grammy laugh.

Grammys seem to know a lot of things, don’t they?

“We are quietly listening, aren’t we, Sander?” said Arwen.

“We are. We are quietly listening.”

Grammy laughed again, for her grandchildren were so dear to her.

“Well now my darlings, I do have one story that I don’t believe I’ve ever told you before.”

“Really, Grammy? Oh, tell us that one!” said Sander. “Please!” He remembered to add. It was always a good idea to be polite when it came to Grammy. And anyone old. And anyone at all, really, he thought.

“It’s not about bears, right?” said Sage.

“No Sage, my darling, it is not about bears. Well children, let me see. It was once upon a time, a long long long long long long long time ago, on a night much like tonight. I was but a wee child then but still, it was just my father and me. And he bundled me up in my warmest coat and woolen mittens and the wonderful hat he had knit just for me, and we went out for a night walk.

It was bitter cold, aghk, I remember that too. The cold tried to sneak up my sleeves and down into my boots, like the cold always does. But I was dressed for it, and I would not let it in. I pulled my mittens up higher and my woolens down lower and button the top button of my big coat. I tucked my scarf up over my face and my hat, oh that wonderful hat, I pulled it low over my ears. The cold would not capture me that night, I made sure of it.

Now my father was a big man, and he told me to walk behind him in his snowy tracks because the snow was up to my knees. Which wasn't very high, mind you, for I wasn't very tall back then. Still his strides were wider than mine and I had to jump like a little bunny to get my boots to land in his big tracks. It was such fun. I felt just like a little bunny hopping along the path down to the pond. I can still hear the crunch of the snow beneath my feet, for it felt like magic to be out in the snow at night with my Father.

"Why would your father take you out on such a cold night, Grammy?" asked Sander.

"Oh, hmmm. Thank you for asking, dear boy. I like your question. Well, he brought me out to see the stars. For it was a clear winter evening, my darlings, on the winter solstice, the darkest, longest night of the year."

"Ohhhhhh." said the children.

"And when we got down to the pond, well, I remember it like it was yesterday. The whole pond was covered in ice of course, and it was gleaming in the moonlight. And the stars up in the sky were reflected down onto the ice, so that the whole world seemed to be lit up from above and below. It was marvelous. And so, we marveled, just my father and I and the peaceful dark night.

(Sigh)

My father put me up on his tall strong shoulders and pointed out the constellations of the stars. I can still see his gloved hand pointing up to Orion. Well, Orion is always easy to find with his three stars in a row making his belt. And the North Star of the little dipper ladling into the big dipper. Hmmm. I wonder what sort of soup they make up there in the stars, don't you?

"Oh Grammy!" said Arwen.

"What, you don't eat star soup?" asked Grammy.

"Grammy, there is no soup up there."

"How do you know that, Mr. Sander?"

"Grammy."

"Well, why would there be dippers and no soup? That would just be sad. What if you get hungry up there?"

"Grammy..."

Ah hum.

Well children, back in those days, there was no one else around where we lived. And when my father and I looked up at the night sky, we could always see the Milky Way running like a glimmering river through the darkness. Breathtaking. Someday you might see it, too, darlings, if you can get yourself far enough away from all these city lights. It is worth the trip.

But now, where was I? Yes. On my father's shoulders. Looking at stars. And the frozen pond. Yes. So there we were, children, and all of the sudden, the reflection of all those stars on the pond, well, they started to move. And we realized it wasn't star reflections at all. The whole pond was aglow and the lights were moving almost like a dance. For a moment I thought it was fireflies, but it was much too cold for that! We stood there, as silently as we could, and watched. And once i realized what was happening, I leaned down from my father's shoulders to whisper into his ears, "Fairies!"

At that my father, let out a little chuckle and said under his breath, "Well, I'll be."

For indeed, there was nothing for it, it was fairies.

The whole pond was lit up with fairies, and they were ice skating! Can you imagine? And there was no wind, so the sound we were hearing, it wasn't a breeze or the trees, it was fairy music, as though musicians were playing dancing tunes. Why, it seemed to be a party – like an ice skating ball, I'll tell you. My father nor I could ever even have imagined such a thing could happen and there we were, seeing it with our own eyes.

Of course I *had* seen fairies now and again in the deepest parts of the woods, when I was out gathering kindling or following the deer trails, but to see so many gleaming in the night, children, that was a sight to behold, my darlings, I promise you that. And then they were dancing, and then they were skating and then they were singing. "Ayyiii Ayyiiyyiiiii Ayyyyeee ayyyyiiiii"

"Grammy!"

"What? That's what it sounded like, Arwen."

"Really?"

"Indeed, dear one. Indeed. It is a sound like no other, the sound of fairies singing. But if you listen, on a midsummer night, you might hear it yourself, above the din of the cicadas and the noise of the hustle and bustle of your city streets. When fairies are celebrating, they sing."

"I think I have heard that before."

"Of course you have, dear. You just didn't know what you were listening to. Children these day... Don't get me

started.”

“Well, after a while, and even though my father and I didn’t want to go, our toes decided it for us – they were so cold my father and I just had to go on home. He carried me on his back through the quiet woods. I remember seeing bunny tracks in the snow.

“And when we got home to our little cabin, there was a thick porridge of star soup my father had put to simmer over the winter fire of the woodstove, and we ladled up big bowls full and ate them by the crackling fire in the hearth. And our toes warmed up to the sound of our laughter as we talked of all we had taken in that evening. So happy were we for the magic we had witnessed, and the steaming star soup in our bellies, and the light of the fire sparkling in our eyes. And, I recall, when my Father tucked me in that night, we sent out our gratitude to the stars and the fairies, thanking them for sharing their magic with us.

And that’s the story I have for you tonight children.”

“Oh, I liked that story, Grammy.”

“I’m so glad, Sage.”

“I’m glad too, Grammy.”

Snip Snap Snout, my tale is all told out.

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