



Slip-Around's Wishing Wand



ONCE upon a time there was a great magician called Wise-one. He was a good magician as well as a great one, and was always trying to find spells that would make people happy and good. But this was very difficult. He had made a spell to make people happy-but not good as well. And he had found a spell that would make them good -but not happy too. It wasn't any use being one without the other.

Now one day he found a marvellous way of mixing these two spells together but he hadn't got just one thing he needed.

"If only I had a daisy that had opened by moonlight, I believe I could just do it!" said Wise-one, as he stirred round a great silvery mixture in his magic bowl. "But whoever heard of a moonlight daisy? I never did!"

Now just at that moment, who should peep into his window but Slip-Around the brownie. When he heard what Wise-one was saying, his eyes shone.

"Wise-one, I can get a daisy that has opened in the moonlight," he said.

"What!" cried Wise-one, in delight. "You can! Well, there's a full moon to-night-pick it for me and bring it here."

"What will you give me if I do?" asked Slip-Around.

"Oh, anything you like!" said Wise-one.

"Well, will you give me your wishing-wand?" asked Slip-Around, at once.

"How do you know anything about my wishing-wand?" said Wise-one.

"Oh, I slip around and hear things, you know," said the brownie, grinning.

"You hear too much," grumbled Wise-one. "Well, as I said you could have anything, you can have that but only if you bring me the daisy!"

Slip-Around ran off. He meant to play a trick on the magician! He didn't know where any daisies were that opened in the moonlight-but he knew how to make a daisy stay open!

He picked a fine wide-open daisy, with petals that were pink-tipped underneath. He got his glue-pot and set it on the fire. When the glue was ready he took the daisy in his left hand and a very fine paint-brush in his right.

Then, very daintily and carefully Slip-Around glued the petals together so that they could not shut. He put the daisy into water when it was finished and looked at it proudly. Ah! That would trick Wise-one all right! He would get the wishing-wand from him and then what a fine time he would have!

When night came the daisy tried to shut its petals but it could not, no matter how it tried, for the glue held them stiffly out together. So, instead of curling them gently over its round yellow head, the daisy had to stay wide open.

Slip-Around looked at it and grinned. He waited till the moon was up, and then went to Wise-one's cottage with the wide-open daisy. The magician cried out in surprise and took the daisy eagerly. He put it into water.

"Good!" he said. "I'll use that to-morrow it's just what I want for my spell."

"Can I have the wishing-wand, please?" said Slip-Around slyly. He didn't mean to go away without that!

Wise-one unlocked a cupboard and took out a shining silvery wand with a golden sun on the end of it. He gave it to Slip-Around.

"Use it wisely," he said, "or you will be sorry!"

Slip-Around didn't even say thank-you! He snatched the wand, and ran off at once. He had got a wishing-wand! Fancy that! A real wishing-wand that would grant any wish he wanted!

He danced into his moonlit village, shouting and singing, "Oh, I've got a wishing-wand, a wishing-wand, a wishing-wand!"

People woke up. They came to their windows and looked out.



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"Be quiet, please!" called Higgle, the chief man of the village. "What do you mean by coming shouting like this in the middle of the night!"

"Pooh to you!" shouted Slip-Around rudely. "Do you see my wishing-wand? I got it from Wise-one!" Nobody believed him. But all the same they leaned out of their windows and listened. Higgle got very cross.

"Go home!" he shouted to Slip-Around. "Be quiet or I'll have you punished in the morning!"

"Oh no, you won't!" cried Slip-Around boastfully. "I can wish you away to the moon if I want to! I know what I will do I'll wish for an elephant to come and trample on the flowers in your silly front garden! Elephant! Come!"

Then, to every one's immense astonishment an elephant appeared round the corner of the street in the moonlight and began to walk over Higgle's lovely flowers. How angry he was!

Soon the folk of the village were all out in the street, in dressing-gowns and coats. They watched the elephant.

"That is very wrong of you," said Dame Toddle to Slip-Around.

"Don't interfere with me!" said the brownie grandly. "How would you like a giraffe to ride on, Dame Toddle? Ha ha! Good idea! Giraffe, come and give Dame Toddle a ride!"

At once a giraffe appeared and put the astonished old woman on its back. Then very solemnly it took her trotting up and down the street. She clung to its neck in fright. Slip-Around laughed and laughed.

"This is fun!" he said, looking round at everybody. "Ha ha-you didn't think I really had a wishing-wand, did you! Now where's Nibby-he scolded me the other day. Oh, there you are, Nibby! Would you like a bear to play with?"

"No, thank you," said Nibby at once.

"Well, you can have one," said Slip-Around. "Bear, come and play with Nibby!"

Up came a big brown bear and tried to make poor Nibby play with it. Nibby didn't like it at all. When the bear pushed him in play, he fell right over.

"Now just stop this nonsense," said Mister Skinny, stepping up to Slip-Around firmly. "If you don't, I shall go to Wise-one to-morrow and tell him the bad things you have done with the wishing-wand."

"Ho ho! by that time I shall have wished Wise-one away to the end of the world!" said Slip-Around.

"You won't find him in his cottage! No-he'll

be gone. And I shall wish myself riches and power and the biggest castle in the land. And I've a good mind to make you come and scrub all the floors, Mister Skinny!"

"Hrrrrumph!" said the elephant, and walked into the next-door garden to tramp on the flowers there. It was Mister Skinny's. He gave a yell of rage.

"Mister Skinny, I don't like yells in my ear," said Slip-Around. "You yell like a donkey braying. I'll give you donkey's ears! There! How funny you look!"

Mister Skinny put his hands to his head. Yes he now had donkey's ears growing there. He turned pale with fright. Every one began to look afraid. It seemed to be quite true that Slip-Around had a real wishing-wand. What a dangerous thing for a brownie like him to have!

The little folk tried to slip away unseen, back to their houses. But Slip-Around was enjoying himself too much to let them go.

"Stop!" he said. "If you don't stay where you are, I'll give you all donkey's ears-yes, and donkey's tails too!"

Every one stopped at once. Slip-Around caught sight of Mister Pineapple the greengrocer. "Ha!" said the brownie, "wasn't it you that gave me a slap the other day?"

"Yes," said Mister Pineapple bravely. "I caught you taking one of my apples, and you deserved to be slapped."

"Well, I wish that every now and again a nice ripe tomato shall fall on your head and burst," said Slip-Around. And immediately from the air a large ripe tomato fell on to the top of Mister Pineapple's head and burst with a loud, squishy sound. Mister Pineapple wiped the tomato-juice out

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of his eyes. Almost at once another tomato fell on him. He looked up in horror, and moved away but a third tomato fell from the sky and got him neatly on the top of his head.

Slip-Around began to laugh. He laughed and he laughed. He looked at the great elephant, and laughed. He looked at poor Dame Toddle still riding on the giraffe, and laughed. He looked at Nibby trying to get away from the big playful brown bear, and laughed. He laughed at Skinny's donkey-ears. In fact, he laughed so much and so loudly that he didn't hear some one coming quickly down the street. He didn't see some one creep up behind him and snatch at the wishing-wand!

"Oooh!" said Slip-Around, startled. "Give me back my wand-or I'll wish you at the bottom of the village pond!"

Then he began to tremble for who was standing there, frowning and angry, but Wise-one, the great magician himself!

"You wicked brownie!" said Wise-one sternly. "You gave me a daisy whose petals were glued open so that it couldn't shut-not a real moonlight daisy. I have spoilt my wonderful spell. You have no right to the wishing-wand. I shall take it back with me."

"Oh, why didn't I wish you to the end of the world when I had the chance!" wailed Slip-Around.

"Why didn't I wish for riches and power-and a castle-instead of playing about with elephants and giraffes and things!"

"Great magician!" cried Mister Skinny, kneeling down before Wise-one. "Don't go yet. Look what Slip-Around has wished for! Take these things away from us!"

Wise-one looked around in astonishment and saw the bear and the elephant and the giraffe, and the donkey's ears on poor Skinny's head, and the ripe tomatoes that kept falling, squish, on to Mister Pineapple.

"I'll remove them from you," he said to the listening people, "but I'll give them to Slip-Around. He will perhaps enjoy them!"

He waved the wand and wished. The elephant at once went to Slip-Around's garden and trampled his best lettuces. The giraffe let Dame Toddle get off and went into Slip-Around's house, where he chewed the lampshade that hung over the ceiling light. The bear romped over to the frightened brownie and knocked him down with a playful push.

The donkey's ears flew from Mister Skinny to Slip-Around and lo and behold! the ripe tomatoes began to drop down on the surprised brownie, one after the other, till he was quite covered in tomato-juice!

"You've got what you wished for other people," said Wise-one with a laugh. "Good-night, every one. Go back to bed."

They all went home and got into bed, wondering at the night's strange happenings. They were soon asleep all except Slip-Around. He had the elephant, the giraffe, and the nuisance of a bear in his cottage with him and it was terribly crowded! His donkey-ears twitched, and he had to wipe tomato off his head every minute. How unhappy he was!

Poor Slip-Around! He had to sleep under an umbrella at last, and the giraffe ate up the tomatoes that fell down plop! The elephant snored like a thunderstorm, and the bear nibbled the brownie's toes for a joke. It was all most unpleasant. And somehow I think that Slip-Around won't try to cheat any one again! What do you think?