Tooth Fairy

I am proud to say I have earned my wings. I finally joined the ranks of tooth fairies from around the world. I suppose I should have seen this coming, seeing as I live in a house full of elementary students, but honestly, it's not something I ever put much thought into.

Another thing I never gave much thought was the immense effort it takes parents to create the illusion of a tooth fairy for their children. Let me tell you about the day I learned that lesson.

One of the youngest students in our house had a tooth hanging by a thread for easily a week. Try as I may, I could not get her to just pull the tooth out. Thinking I was being sneaky, I kept offering her apples and corn on the cob, hoping she just might accidentally lose her tooth. Somehow she always saw through my plan and refused all the hard foods.

Finally, when I had all but given up on her losing the tooth, she asked me if I would pull it out. My mind flashed back to childhood when my dad tied floss around my sister's tooth to try the old slamming-the-door trick. What a fun day that was in our house, and finally I had the chance to recreate the moment.

Ten frustrating minutes later, I decided it's actually impossible to tie a piece of floss around a slippery little tooth. It was indescribably anticlimactic when I just pulled the tooth out with a paper towel covering my hand. Nonetheless, the tooth was out, and it was time to set the stage for a visit from the tooth fairy.

I had it all planned out. I'd have her put the tooth in an envelope, so it would be nice and easy to find under her pillow. She wasn't thrilled about the idea, but I managed to persuade her that the tooth fairy did prefer to have the teeth packaged nicely.

By the time the kids were all nestled into their beds, they must have thought I was obsessed with the tooth fairy. I found myself checking in up until the last moment to make sure that envelope was secure beneath her pillow.

I let the kids get well into their sleep cycle before I crept into the room to make the switch. To my horror, the one pillow I needed access to was being cradled by a sleeping 6-year-old. I certainly didn't want to risk waking her up, so I kept myself busy for another hour and came back.

Lo and behold, she had moved in her sleep and her head was now resting normally on her pillow. I walked quietly to her bed, careful to avoid tripping over any toys. As I stood next to the bed, I had an awful realization: the bunk bed is too tall. Of course the girl who lost her tooth sleeps on the top bunk, and I can barely reach my arm up over the railing to get the tooth, let alone see my target.

For a moment I tried feeling blindly for the envelope, but it was nowhere to be found. Thinking on my feet, I decided I would have to climb on top of the desk positioned next to their bed. As I climbed up, the girl on the bottom bunk began to stir.

All I could think about were all the possible terrible outcomes. I could ruin the tooth fairy for two young girls in one fell swoop. Then of course, word would spread to the rest of the house, and I'd have five more young girls with their childhood beliefs destroyed.

On the other hand, they might just go to school the next day and tell their teacher that their resident parent was lurking in the dark, watching them while they slept. That would be a fun one to explain.

Scared as I was, I did my best to keep my cool. I waited for both girls to settle, and then I went for it. I gently lifted the pillow, swapped the tooth for a quarter and hightailed it out of there.

The next morning my student was delighted to find the quarter, and I was relieved to have successfully completed this rite of passage without traumatizing any young children.

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