

The Pixie's Bag



ROBIN HURRIED ACROSS a lonely field clutching his fiddle case. As he pushed his way through gusts of cold wind, he pictured the steaming bowl of soup his mother would set before him when he finally reached their cottage. It would be a thin soup, with no second helping, but any meal was a treat.

When Robin came to a gigantic oak, a pixie seated on a nearby log sprang up. "I wish I owned a fiddle, Robin," he said.

"I'm sorry, Pixie, but I can't give you mine," said Robin. "It's the one thing I prize. I walk all the way to town to play my fiddle in front of the inn, and people drop coins into my cap."

"Folks can't have much to spare in these lean times," said the pixie.

"That's true," said Robin. "Still, the bit of money I bring home helps Mother to buy bread and stretch our soup."

"This would help her a lot more," said the fairy man, plucking a gold

ARRRRAGGGLLEE!



WHAT'S IN
THAT BAG???



piece out of his pocket. "I'm willing to risk it in a game of wits with you. If you lose the contest, your fiddle belongs to me. But if you win, you'll get my gold coin."

Robin stared wide-eyed at the gleaming gold. "Please tell me about your game," he said.

From the folds of his cloak the pixie pulled a green patchwork bag. "Inside this bag are nine stone animals," he said. "I'll line them up on the log here. You'll take a good look while I count to ten. After that, you'll turn away. Next I'll remove two things from the log and hide

them in the bag. When you look again, you must name one thing inside my bag to win. Do you want to try?"

I'm almost sure I'll be able to name one of the missing beasts, thought Robin. "Yes, I'll play," he said.

He firmly shook the pixie's hand to seal their bargain. Then the pixie arranged the animals in the center of the log and started to count. Barely blinking, Robin stared at the parade of creatures, intent on fixing them in his mind in sets of three. Boar, bear, and rat, he thought. Squirrel, mouse, and cat. Hare, fox, and stag.

"Ten," said the pixie. Robin turned his back, and soon the pixie said, "I'm ready."

Robin whirled around and studied the log. "But Pixie," he said, "all nine animals are still there."

"What of that?" asked the pixie with a sly smile. "I never told you I'd grab two of the animals. I said I'd take two things off of the log and hide them in my bag."



"You tricked me!" cried Robin.

The pixie eyed Robin's fiddle. "You should have been more careful!"

Frantically, Robin ran his gaze over the log's small world. On its



SPIDER IS FRANTICALLY WITH WILD OR HURRIED ACTIVITY TRYING TO FIND OUT WHAT'S IN SAM'S BAG!



AND SAM IS FRANTICALLY TRYING TO KEEP THE BAG AWAY FROM SPIDER.



SO IT'S JUST ANOTHER MONTH IN THE MAGAZINE.



near end sprouted a group of fat toadstools. Its far side was cushioned in moss and strung with spiders' webs.

I can't recall what was on the log

in the first place, Robin thought, so how can I say what's not on it now? But if there's the tiniest clue here to help me, I'll find it.

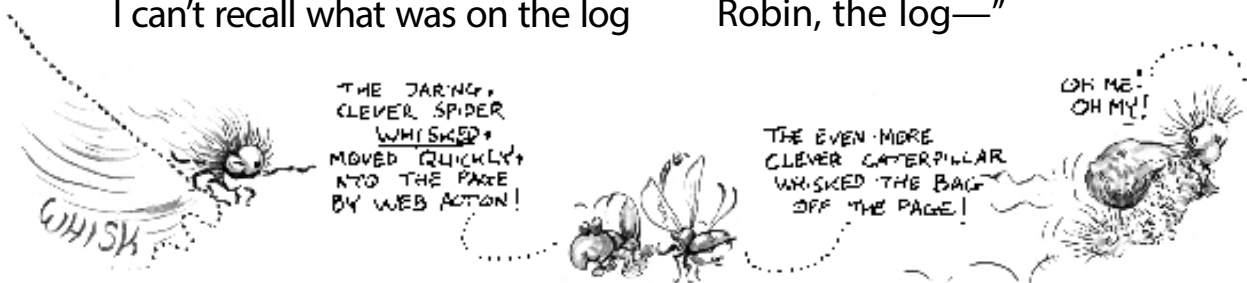
Biting his lip, he peered at the toadstools, hoping to spot a freshly snapped stem. They seemed to be untouched, as did the smooth moss and the perfect silken lines of the spiders' webs. Looking up, Robin saw the oak's longest branch hanging directly overhead. Both leaves and acorns are likely to have fallen onto the log, he thought. Which shall I choose—a leaf or an acorn?

Just then, the wind ripped several leaves from the branch and spun them across the field. An acorn fell and landed on the log's thick moss. The wind has whisked my answer to me, thought Robin.

"Make your decision," snapped the pixie. "Name one thing inside my bag."

"Air," said Robin.

"Air?" The pixie frowned. "But Robin, the log—"





“The log and everything on it have nothing to do with our bargain,” said Robin. “I agreed to win your game by naming one thing inside your bag. That bag’s sealed with a drawstring, but it’s not smashed flat. Can you say there’s no air in your bag?”

“Well . . . no,” grumbled the pixie. “You tricked me!”

“You should have been more careful,” said Robin, grinning.

Suddenly, the pixie laughed. “Master Robin, although I like my own tricks best, I admire cleverness in others, too.” With gentle fingers he lifted two spiders from his bag and set them back upon their webs. Then he scooped up his carved animals, tossed the gold coin to Robin, and slipped behind the oak.

Robin placed the precious gold piece inside his fiddle case and strode off whistling his favorite tune. By the time he drew close to his cottage, the wind—the wonderful wind!—was at his back. 🕸



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