

Twinkling Feet's Hallowe'en

One Hallowe'en a band of merry pixies were dancing round and round a bright green ring in the meadow. In the center stood the Little Fiddler, playing his gayest music, and keeping time with his head and one tiny foot. The faster he played, the merrier the little creatures danced. What sport it was to twirl and twist in time with the fairy music, which the jolly little elf brought out from his tiny instrument. No wonder the pixies laughed until their sides ached. And so, indeed, did their little musician. Sometimes he was obliged to stop playing for a few seconds in order to catch his breath.

Now there was one pixie named Twinkling Feet who was the best dancer in the ring, and he could cut such queer little capers that his companions fairly shrieked with laughter when they looked at him. Suddenly he thought what sport it would be to play a trick on all the little dancers. Very slyly he tripped his partner, and the two fell down in the grass, dragging with them one pixie after another until all in the circle were sprawling on the ground. There they lay for several seconds, a wriggling mass of green coats and red caps. It was some time before they could pick themselves up. Many of them laughed heartily at the mishap, but a few were so badly bruised that they were obliged to slip away and bathe their shins in the evening dew.

"Who tripped first in the ring?"

"Who made us fall on our stumjackets?"

"Who spoiled our Hallowe'en dance?" asked one little pixie after another.

"Twinkling Feet and I fell first," said the best dancer's partner. "I don't know what made us tangle our feet, do you?" he asked, laughing and turning to his companion.

But Twinkling Feet's little brown face was so drawn and sober that his partner asked quickly, "Why, what *is* the matter with you?"

"I don't know," said the little elf.

"Why, *do look* at him," cried another pixie.

"Does anything hurt you?" asked several little creatures together.

"I feel very queer," said Twinkling Feet.

"Have you what mortals call 'pain?'" asked his partner.

"I don't know what that is, but I feel very, very queer. Please ask the Little Fiddler if he knows what is the matter with me."

The group of pixies that had gathered around Twinkling Feet moved away in order to let the elfin musician come close to the queer-looking pixie. The little Fiddler gazed steadily at him, shook his white head, and said slowly, "A frightful thing has happened. Twinkling Feet has lost his laugh!"

“Lost his laugh!” shrieked all the other little elfs.

“He has lost his laugh!” repeated the Fiddler Pixie.

“Lost my laugh,” moaned Twinkling Feet. “Oh, please tell me what to do.”

“There is nothing to do but go and search for it. You can not dance in a pixie ring without your laugh, and mark what I say, you must find it before midnight.”

“But what if I *can't* find it?” cried the frightened elf.

“Then you’ll be a pixie *without a laugh*—that is all,” declared the Little Fiddler.

At these awful words every pixie’s face grew sober. They looked at each other very solemnly and said, “A pixie without a laugh! How terrible!”

Then one after another they cried out. “Search for it, Twinkling Feet. Perhaps you’ll find it before midnight. Start now. Think how sad it will be if you are never able to dance in the ring again.”

“Where shall I go, Fiddler Pixie?” asked Twinkling Feet.

“Well, you might ask Jack-o’-Lantern,” said the musician. “He’s been flitting about in the meadow all the evening. See, there he goes over by the brook.”

Away ran the little pixie as fast as his legs could carry him. It was no easy matter to come close enough to Jack-o’-Lantern to make him hear. Twinkling Feet was almost ready to give up the chase when the little man stopped, poked his head out of his lantern, and called, “Do you wish to speak to me?”

“Don’t you know me?” cried the pixie. “I’m Twinkling Feet.”

“Why, what has happened to you?” asked Jack. “You’re the queerest looking chap I ever saw.”

“I’ve lost my laugh. Please tell me, Jack-o’-Lantern, have you seen it?”

“Lost your laugh!” repeated the lantern man, looking very serious. “No wonder I didn’t know you. I’m very sorry to say I’ve seen nothing of your laugh.”

“Do you know anyone who could help me, Jack?” asked Twinkling Feet. “Oh do help me find it.”

“Well, let me see. You might ask Jolly Little Witch. Her eyes are very sharp. She’s in the ragweed meadow, looking for a good riding stalk. As soon as she finds one I’m going to light her to the village where she will make plenty of merriment at the children’s party. It’s Hallowe’en, you know. Come, jump into my lantern, and I’ll take you to her.”

Twinkling Feet hopped into the little lantern, and away they went to the ragweed field. When they drew near the Jolly Little Witch called out, “I’ve found a good ragweed stalk, Jack, but I’ve lost my goggles. Come, perhaps you can help me find them. I can’t go to the village without my goggles.

Why, who is that in the lantern with you?"

"A pixie who wants to ask you something," said Jack-o'-Lantern, opening the door to let Twinkling Feet out. Then the lantern man hurried away to search for the witch's goggles.

"Please, Jolly Little Witch, I've lost my laugh," said Twinkling Feet.

"Lost your laugh! and on Hallowe'en! Well, no wonder I didn't know you. You're the queerest looking pixie I ever saw. Tell me how you happened to lose your laugh?"

But Twinkling Feet did not answer her question. He said meekly, "Have you seen it?"

"No, my little fellow. I'm sorry to say I've not seen your laugh," said the Jolly Little Witch.

"A pixie can't dance without his laugh," sighed Twinkling Feet.

"No, of course he can't. Dear, dear! How sorry I am for you," said the little witch, shaking her head.

"And if a pixie loses anything on Hallowe'en, he must find it before midnight or give it up forever."

"I could have helped you on any other night, but you see I always spend Hallowe'en in the village with the children. I shall be late to-night if I don't find those goggles." And again she began to search for them.

The pixie looked at her for a moment. Then he asked, "Do the children laugh a good deal on Hallowe'en?"

"Why, my little man, it's the time in all the year when they laugh most. To-night there is to be a witch's party. I shall secretly join the children, and play all sorts of tricks for their amusement. What a nuisance it is that I've lost those goggles."

"I'll help you search for them, Jolly Little Witch," said the pixie. "I suppose I must give up my laugh, for I don't know anyone else to ask about it. Please tell me what your goggles look like."

"They are two round glass windows, which I wear over my eyes when I ride through the air," said the little Witch.

Away started the pixie to search for them. He looked carefully around every ragweed stalk in the meadow, but he could see nothing which looked like "two round glass windows."

"Perhaps one cannot find *anything* which has been lost on Hallowe'en," he said to himself.

Slowly he walked back to the place where he had left the Jolly Little Witch. When he reached her he stared sharply at something on top of her head.

"Please tell me more about your goggles," said Twinkling Feet. "Are they like the two glass windows across the front of your hat?"

“Across the front of my hat!” exclaimed the witch, putting her hands up to find out what the little elf meant. Then she burst out laughing, and said, “Well, well! What strange things do happen on Hallowe’en! Come, Jack-o’-Lantern! Come! The pixie has found my goggles. They were on top of my head all the time!”

And turning to Twinkling Feet she said, “You shall go with us to the village, and see the merriment if you like. I’m sure Jack will carry you in his lantern.”

“Of course I will,” said the lantern man. “And while you are playing tricks at the children’s party, I’ll carry him anywhere he wishes to go. It is a long while before midnight.”

“I want to see the children, and hear them laugh,” said Twinkling Feet.

The Jolly Little Witch pulled her goggles down on her nose, and mounted her ragweed stalk. The pixie hopped into the lantern, and away through the air the three sailed.

When they drew near the village, the little Witch lowered herself to the ground.

“Meet me here before the party is over, Jack-o’-Lantern,” she said. “I shall leave before the children take off their masks. In the meantime, let Twinkling Feet see the fun the children will have on the way to the party.”

Away she ran up the village street to a corner where she joined a group of jolly little boys and girls on their way to the party. They wore black dresses, high, pointed hats with narrow brims, and funny little masks. Not a word did anyone speak, but the sound of their merry laughter reached Twinkling Feet’s ears.

He slipped out of the lantern, and ran toward the group of children as fast as he could go. Before he reached them, however, the tiniest bit of a creature, turning somersaults faster than anyone could count, came bounding to him. It climbed up the pixie’s little body, and disappeared into his mouth. Twinkling Feet burst into the merriest laugh, and ran back to Jack-o’-Lantern, crying out, “I’ve found it! I’ve found my laugh! My dear little laugh! Oh, how happy I am! Jack-o’-Lantern, please take me back to the pixie ring. I’ve found my dear little laugh!”

He hopped into the little man’s lantern, and away over the fields they flew. As they drew near the green ring where the pixies were still dancing, the delighted elf called out, “I’ve found my laugh! I’ve found my dear little laugh!”

“Welcome back, Twinkling Feet,” answered the dancers.

He hopped out of the lantern, and joined the other merry pixies. When they stopped dancing for a little while, the Fiddler Pixie slipped up to the Twinkling Feet, and whispered slyly, “Always watch your laugh carefully while you are dancing.”

—*Cornish Legend, Adapted.*

Source:

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