

The Fairy Godteacher

Danny was the class complainer. “Do I have to?” he complained whenever the tall teacher called on him and not somebody else. “Not fair! Not faaair!” he complained if the teacher called on somebody else and not him. “This is booooring,” he complained when the schoolwork was too hard. “I know this already,” he complained about all other schoolwork.

“She took cuts! I hate this! He got to do it last time! I can’t see! His is bigger! Hers was easier! He took cuts! She tripped me! I wanted a blue one! His cupcake has sprinkles and mine doesn’t! That’s not even! It’s not fair! Not faaair!” The way he complained all the time, Danny sounded like the most miserable boy in the world.



One afternoon in the classroom at the end of the hall, the third-graders sat in their seats with books open on their desktops.



The room was silent. This period was called S.S.R., which stood for Sustained Silent Reading.

Danny rarely spent S.S.R. time reading. Most often he sat at his desk in the back row, stewing about a problem on the playground the previous recess.

“I got picked last to play soccer,” he fumed this time. “Then when I played, everyone started picking on me. It’s not faair!”

Meanwhile, Joey sat in the front row. He was one of the few third-graders who actually read during Sustained Silent Reading time. As he turned a page of his book, a note dropped onto his desktop. On the front it said:

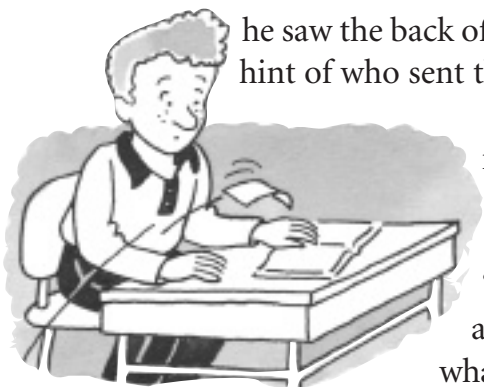
Pass to Danny

Joey turned and gave the note to Andrew, who held it by his side for George to take, and George flipped it to Kate, who dropped it on the floor, allowing Gabrielle to pick it up and hand it to Morgan, who tossed it onto Danny’s desk.

Still griping to himself, Danny unfolded the note and read:

*Dear Danny,
Meet me in the library at recess.
Your Fairy Godteacher*

He looked up and scowled. Being in the last row,



he saw the back of every head, but no hint of who sent the note.

“Someone’s playing a trick on me, and I hate tricks,” he grumbled. “Now I have to wait a whole hour to see what this is all about.”

When the recess bell rang, Danny raced straight to the library. Miss Reed, the librarian, stood behind the checkout counter. She held a bar-code scanner that looked remarkably like a pistol. This made Miss Reed appear more like a bank robber than a librarian. She aimed the scanner at the back of a book and zapped it.

“How’s school today, Daniel?” she asked.

“Terrible,” he grouched. “For social studies the teacher talked about boring continents. Then he talked about boring oceans. I never want to live near a continent or an ocean because they all seem boring.”

Miss Reed zapped another book. “That’s nice, Daniel,” she said. “By the way, someone left a note for you on my desk.”

This reminded Danny why he had come to the library in the first place. He took the note and read:

*Dear Danny,
Meet me in the 398 section.
Your Fairy Godteacher*

“What’s the 398 section?” Danny asked the librarian.

“Those are the fairy-tale books, Daniel. Halfway down the second aisle.”

Danny rushed to the 398 shelves. A third note was sticking out of a book entitled *The Encyclopedia of Fairies*. This one said:

*Dear Danny,
Please open.
Your Fairy Godteacher*

Muttering, “What a waste of time,” Danny pulled out the book. He thumbed through pictures of wood fairies, water fairies, sugarplum fairies, tooth fairies, sprites, pixies, brownies, and fairy godmothers and declared, “Boring!”



Mysteriously, the next page turned by itself. Here Danny saw a picture of a plump, gray-haired fairy the size of a chalk eraser. She wore a floral cotton dress and held a tiny ruler. Wings as clear and thin as a bubble’s skin flapped at her shoulders. The caption read, FAIRY GODTEACHER.

“A fairy godteacher?” Danny exclaimed. “I thought it was a joke!”

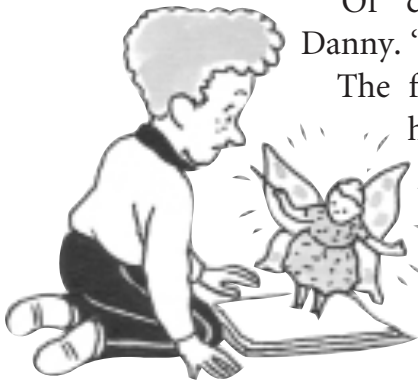
As he spoke, a fountain of silver glitter shot from the page. Danny held the book out with both hands and closed his eyes. When he reopened them, the very fairy that had been in the picture was hovering five inches in front of his nose.

The fairy shook her ruler at Danny. "Say 'here' when I call your name," she said. "Danny!"

"Huh?" Danny replied.

"No, not 'huh,' young man. Say 'here.'"

"Of course I'm here," said Danny. "Here I am."



The fairy frowned and shook her ruler again. "And don't get snippy with your fairy godteacher, young man."

Danny screwed up his face. "But what *is* a fairy godteacher?"

The fairy bobbed up and down. "Oh, children know so little about fairies nowadays," she said sadly. "Even though every classroom has a fairy godteacher of its own. Even though fairy godteachers have helped countless students whose teachers have treated them unfairly."

Danny nodded. "Teachers are *never* fair to me," he said. "But how could a fairy godteacher help?"

The fairy's wings fluttered faster. She buzzed around Danny's head, stopping before his face again. "Just name your beef, young man, and I have a spell



to fix it. Do you hate learning times tables? Well, try my Flash-Through-the-Flash-Cards Spell. When the teacher holds up a flash card, you'll be able to see right through it to the answer on back. Or are you tired of kids cutting in line in front of you? Then try my Cut-the-Cheese Spell. Whoever cuts in front of you gets a strong whiff of rotten cheese. And of course, young man, I've often heard you complain about long spelling lists. But the teacher will assign you only one word a week if I cast my special Spelling Spell."



Danny thought a moment. "But everything in this school seems unfair. They're always out of chocolate milk in the lunchroom. I never get to sit where I want to in music. I can't chew gum. My class never goes on field trips. Only fifth-graders can be on traffic patrol. My reading book has torn pages, and someone always hangs their coat over my coat in the coat closet."

"Sounds like you need a very special spell, young man—my most powerful one," said the fairy god-teacher. "Even if your entire life is unfair, this fairy spell will take care of it. What you need, young man, is my all-purpose, heavy-duty, extra-strength Bellyache Spell."

Danny nodded. "That sounds like the spell for

me,” he said. “OK, Fairy Godteacher, cast away.”

The fairy reached into a pocket. “First, some fairy glitter,” she said. Here she tossed a handful of silver glitter onto Danny’s nose. “Next, a wave of my wand.” And she whipped her ruler in the air as if casting a fishing rod.

Danny inspected his hands and arms. “Your spell didn’t work,” he complained. “My stomach hurts a little, but that’s all.”

Before the fairy could answer, the end-of-recess bell rang. “Time for my coffee break, young man,” she announced. “I’m off to the Fairy Godteacher Lounge.” And with that, she did a swan dive toward *The Encyclopedia of Fairies* and disappeared into its pages.

After recess Danny put on his sneakers for P.E. In the gym he stood along a black line with the rest of his class. They faced Mr. Dumbbell, the P.E. teacher. He was a short, stocky man who wore white sweatpants, a faded blue T-shirt that said W. T. MELON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL on the back, and blue sweatbands around his wrists.

“Third-graders. We’ll begin with exercises,” Mr. Dumbbell said. “Twenty jumping jacks. Ready?”

Danny folded his arms in front of him. “I hate exercising,” he said. “It makes me sweat.”

Accustomed to Danny’s complaints, the class stood hushed. They waited for the P.E. teacher’s reaction. But instead of his usual lecture on the importance of physical fitness, Mr. Dumbbell said





something shocking. “Oh, poor Dan. We don’t want you to get all sweaty, do we? We wouldn’t think of making you do something you didn’t want to.”

Danny stepped backwards. Was the teacher making fun of him? No, Mr. Dumbbell was smiling at him without a hint of sarcasm on his face.

“You just stand right there, Dan,” the P.E. teacher went on. “Don’t worry about doing any of these exercises. Now, all you others. Twenty jumping jacks. Ready? Begin.”

Danny’s stomach fluttered. He shuffled his feet on the hardwood floor as he watched his classmates do jumping jacks, sit-ups, and deep knee bends. “The fairy godteacher’s spell must be working,” he told himself. “Finally a teacher is treating me fairly.

I exercised twice as hard as anyone last P.E. period. So why shouldn't I get a break this time?"

Afterward, Mr. Dumbbell grinned at Danny. "Good job, Dan," he said. "Now, third-graders, for P.E. today we'll run some relays. And Dan, I know how you hated the relays last week. So you can sit right there for the rest of the period. No, wait. I remember how you disapprove of this dirty floor, so why not go sit on the stage."

"It's only fair," Danny replied as he walked to the stage. "One week I run relays, the next week I rest. Even-steven."

The other third-graders stood with frozen faces. A few muttered words of protest.

After P.E., Miss Count, the computer teacher, stopped the third-graders in the hallway. Danny, at Mr. Dumbbell's urging, was at the head of the line. Miss Count placed a hand on Danny's shoulder and said, "Danny, next time your class comes to the computer lab you can sit at the best computer. I know how you hate the ones with sticky keys."

Farther down the hall Miss Treat, the lunchroom lady, came out of the cafeteria. "Danny, I've heard you fuss about the school's hot lunches. So the cooks are preparing a special lunch just for you, all your favorites—pepperoni pizza, root beer, and a hot fudge sundae."

The pain in Danny's belly sharpened. Grumbles from his classmates followed him down the hall. "This is embarrassing," he said to himself. "But why

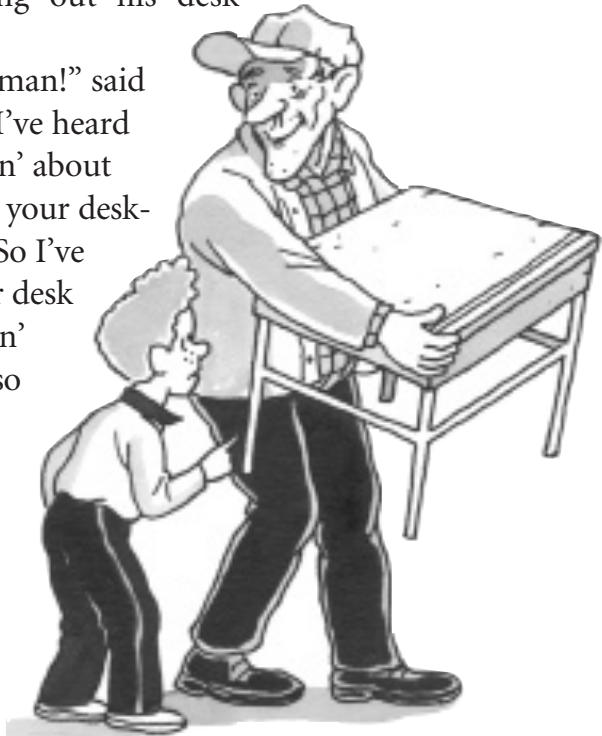
shouldn't I get what I deserve at school? Teachers have been picking on me for years."

"Yoo-hoo, Danny!" the Playground Lady called from the playground door. "Next recess you get dibs on any ball you want. I'll also make sure you'll never need to whine about anything on the playground again."

"It's Danny's Choice Day in music," Miss Sing sang out from the music room. "We'll sing any song Danny requests."

Danny held his stomach and hurried to his classroom. But when he reached the door, he found Mr. Leeks carrying out his desk and chair.

"Dan, my man!" said the janitor. "I've heard you bellyachin' about the gouges in your desk-top for ages. So I've replaced your desk with a spankin' new one. I also brought you a new chair so you won't have to gripe anymore about this old one that squeaks."



Danny blew out his cheeks and turned. His classmates were eyeing him with fury. Shrugging, he slunk to his new desk in the back row.

When everyone was seated Richard began passing out cupcakes. Today was his birthday.

“Richard,” said the tall teacher, “make sure Danny gets the cupcake with the most sprinkles. And remember, he doesn’t like chocolate frosting. And since he also doesn’t care for the birthday song, we’ll skip it today.”

Danny slouched farther down in his seat. Richard held a cupcake cocked behind his ear, ready to throw it right at him.

At that moment Mr. Principle’s voice came over the intercom. *“Attention, all W. T. Melon students! Due to the unfair treatment Daniel in third grade has been receiving at this school, here are some new school rules. First, since Daniel dislikes the smell in the boys’ bathrooms, the one nearest the office will be for his official use only. Second, since Daniel has found that people bump into him in the hallway, all students except Daniel will walk on the left-hand side only. Rule three. Since Daniel is always unable to see the stage during assemblies, there will now be a special tall chair in the front row just for him. Rule four ...”*

As Mr. Principle’s voice droned on, a note landed on Danny’s desktop. As he suspected, it wasn’t from the fairy godteacher. The note read:

Teacher’s pet. Teacher’s pet.



*What Danny wants, he will get.
Your Class Enemies*

Danny moaned. "This is unbearable," he said. "The Bellyache Spell has worked so well I doubt I have a friend left in the whole class ... in the whole school." His hand crept upward. "Can I go to the Boys' Room?" he asked. "I gotta go real bad."

The tall teacher smiled. "You can do whatever you want, Danny. Take your time. Stop by the gym and shoot a few baskets, why don't you. Help yourself to the doughnuts in the Teachers' Lounge. If you need a nap, lie down in the nurse's room."



Holding his belly, Danny peeled out the door and straight to the library. He sailed past Miss Reed and hurried to the 398 section.

Upon opening *The Encyclopedia of Fairies*, he said, "OK, Fairy Godteacher, we need to talk."

Silver glitter sprayed from the pages, and the plump fairy appeared before Danny's nose. "Say 'here' when I call your name," she piped out. "Danny!"

"I'm here, and here's what I need," Danny said. "You must take the Bellyache Spell off me. I've become the worst teacher's pet in the school. Kids hate me. *I don't even like me!*"

"But what about all your complaints, young

man?” said the fairy. “You said teachers weren’t treating you fairly.”

“My only complaint is that there’s nothing to complain about,” said Danny. “I just want teachers to treat me like everyone else. Even-steven.”

The fairy buzzed around Danny’s head. She whipped her ruler in the air, and the ache in Danny’s belly was gone.

“So if you have no further need for me, young man, I’ll return to my fairy godteacher’s desk,” said the fairy. “No doubt other class complainers will soon want one of my spells.” With that, she did a back dive into *The Encyclopedia of Fairies* and vanished.

Danny returned the book to its proper place and headed for the library door.

“Daniel,” Miss Reed called after him. “I have something special for you.”

Danny stopped in his tracks. “Not again,” he groaned.

“I laminated some bookmarks,” said the librarian. “One for each student in the school.”

Danny let out a long breath. The bookmark Miss Reed handed him was red, and although he hated the color red, his only reply was, “Thank you.”

“So how was your afternoon at school?” the librarian asked.

“Fine,” said Danny. “Nothing to complain about.”

