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A Fairy with Horns

Have you ever seen a fairy? No! But you must have read or heard about them in fairy tales. In children's stories, fairies are often described as lovely little beings, mostly female, with magical powers. Sometimes they are shown in the shape of winged women, dressed in white clothing. They often come to the help of children in distress. In his play *Peter Pan*, J.M. Barrie, a Scottish writer, says: 'When the first baby laughed for the first time, the laugh broke into a million pieces, and they all went skipping about. That was the beginning of fairies.' In other words, the name of fairies has always been associated with children, laughing, singing and dancing.

In J.M. Barrie's play a boy named Peter Pan escapes from ordinary life with some other children, and goes to live in the *Never Never Land* of the fairy Tinker Bell. In this land the children never grow older and always remain at the same age. After a series of adventures, the children return to their former ordinary life, but Peter Pan stays back to live a life of eternal boyhood.

Now read this story:

Grandfather was very fond of pets and had a large variety in the house. But my own favourite pet was a black goat. She had followed me home from the mustard fields across the Son River.

Before the rainy season this little river would be a little stream. I liked wading across it and then wandering through the fields and tea-gardens on the other side.

One day I was sitting on the bank of a small irrigation canal. A couple of herons were fishing in muddy water. While I sat gazing at them, I felt my elbow being nudged. Looking around, I found at my side a little goat, jet-black and soft as velvet, with pretty gray eyes. Neither her owner nor her mother was around.



mustard	: plant with yellow flowers and (black or white) sharp tasting seeds; sarson.
Son River	: a river passing through M.P. and Bihar, joining with the Ganga at Patna in Bihar.
wading	: walking with an effort (as through water or mud).
heron	: water-bird with a long neck and long legs that lives in marshy places; sarus, bagula.
nudge	: push somebody or something gently.



As she continued to nudge me, I looked in my pockets. I found a biscuit and held it out to her. She ate it with **relish**. Then she sat down beside me and began **nibbling** at the grass.

- 15 A little later when I got up to leave, the goat also rose. When I started walking homewards she followed me unsteadily, her thin legs taking her this way and that.

'Go home!' I said, as she danced around me. But it seemed her home was on the other side of the river bed, and she followed me to its bank.

- 20 I took the goat in my arms and carried her across the stream. Then I set her down, hoping she would now find her way home. But she remained beside me, rubbing her warm body against my legs.

- I set out for my home with quick steps, feeling sure that I would soon leave the little goat behind. But her legs were stronger than I had
25 thought. She came along running right up to the gate of our house.

Now there was nothing I could do but carry her in at the gate. I presented her to Grandfather.

- 'Not another!' said Grandmother, when she saw the goat in the verandah, **lapping** at a saucer of milk. 'I have told both of you again and again
30 that I'll not tolerate another bird or animal in the house.'

But Grandfather knew the art of changing a problem into a **prospect**. He at once pretended that he had bought the goat for Grandmother's sake.

'Goat's milk is very good for your **rheumatism**,' he told Grandmother.

- 35 The formula worked. Grandmother tolerated the new pet even though it would be some time before the goat could give us any milk.

All pets in the house had names of their own. The goat was named Tinker Bell, after the fairy in the story of Peter Pan. (see the Introductory note on Page 29.)

- 40 And there was something of the fairy about Tinker. She skipped about very **daintily**. Her feet seemed to have springs in them. It was a joy to see her leaping and dancing about the front lawn of our house.

relish	: great enjoyment of food.
nibble	: take tiny bites of something.
lap(ping)	: drink something by taking it up with the tongue.
prospect	: a hopeful thing.
rheumatism	: disease which causes pain, stiffness and inflammation, in the muscles and joints.
daintily	: (<i>dainty + ly</i>) in a delicate and pleasant way.

I tied a little bell to her neck. Its tinkling always told us where Tinker would be.

- 45 She slept curled up at the foot of my bed. She woke me in the morning by licking my feet. She loved an early morning walk, and was in many ways a better companion than a dog. She did not get into quarrels with cats or **stray** dogs.

- 50 The only things she chased were butterflies. In her eagerness to follow them she would often tumble into **ditches**.



Goats grow fast, and (unlike the fairy Tinker Bell of 'Peter Pan') our Tinker had to grow up. To begin with, she had a neat little pair of horns.

- 55 Tinker Bell's appetite also began to grow, mainly in the direction of the garden. The leaves of the **sweet-pea** and the **geranium** were her favourites.

One morning Grandmother found all her sweet-peas destroyed. I blamed a cow. I said it must have got into the garden during the night.

- 60 Grandmother made no comment; yet the look in her eyes suggested that she knew the real **culprit**.

stray	: having no fixed place or purpose.
ditch	: narrow channel dug at the edge of a field, road, etc. to hold or carry off water.
sweet-pea	: climbing green plant with brightly-coloured and sweet-scented flowers.
geranium	: garden plant with red, pink or white flowers.
culprit	: one who has done something wrong.

Next day the gardener came to Grandmother. He looked very angry. He said that while he was bending over the sweet-pea bed, putting it right again, Tinker came up quietly and **butted** him from behind. He
65 refused to work in the garden until Tinker was tied up.

Grandmother was **furious**, but we calmed her down. 'By the way,' said Grandmother, 'when are we going to have that milk you promised?'

Grandfather stroked his beard and tried to look innocent.

'Oh!' said Grandmother.

70 We now knew that trouble was coming, and it did come before long.

Tinker had discovered the uses to which she could put her horns. Now she began using them at almost every opportunity. The postman, the vegetable vendor and our cook — all had complaints to make.

The **climax** came during the visit of one of my aunts. She had the
75 habit of bending over flowerpots and talking to the flowers.

She was bending over a pot in the verandah, talking to the geranium. Tinker suspected that my aunt was also interested in eating geranium leaves. She decided to butt her rival out of the way of her favourite **snack**.



It was the end of Tinker's stay with us. Grandmother chained poor
80 Tinker and ordered the cook to take her straight to the bazaar and sell her at any price.

butt (ed)	: hit or push with the head, as a goat does.
furious	: full of violent anger.
by the way	: a phrase used to introduce a comment that is only indirectly related to the main subject of conversation.
climax	: most interesting or significant event.
snack	: small meal, usually eaten in a hurry.

85 Tinker seemed to know that she was being taken away for ever. Her eyes were moist. I stood at the gate and watched her being dragged away. She kept looking back and bleating. I could only wave to her. I prayed that her next owner would be kind, and a pure vegetarian.

90 When the cook came back, he said that Tinker had been sold for fifty rupees. But later, when I was alone with him in the kitchen, he told me that he had not sold Tinker. He had taken her to his own house. He promised that Tinker would be well looked after and that I could see her whenever I liked.

95 I visited Tinker quite often. And in due course of time I found her with a little white kid. Tinker was giving the cook's family a good supply of milk, and they were pleased with her. Now she butted only strangers who came too near her kid.

D.1.

Answer the following questions very briefly (in not more than two or three sentences each):

1. Where did the narrator find the little goat? What was he doing there?
2. What did the narrator give the little goat to eat? Did the goat enjoy it?
3. What did the goat do when the narrator started for home?
4. Why did the narrator carry the goat across the stream?
5. What shows that the narrator had no mind to take the goat to his home?
6. What did Grandmother say on seeing the goat? Why did she say so?
7. How did Grandfather save the goat from being turned out of the house?
8. What was the goat named? Why was she given this name?
9. What did Tinker Bell love to eat in the garden?
10. What was the gardener's complaint?
11. How did Tinker Bell use her newly-grown horns?
12. Why did Tinker Bell butt the narrator's aunt?
13. What did Tinker Bell do when the cook dragged her out of the house?
14. What did the cook do with the goat?
15. Why does the narrator call the goat a Fairy with Horns?

moist : slightly wet.