

All in a Day's Work: A Midsummer's Eve's Grounding
by Lesley L. Smith

I am a merry good fellow, whom my king charges to make mischief, be it giving a good scare, knocking down a chair, or using love to snare. Sadly, most humans don't believe in fairies any longer--which makes my job most difficult. This midsummer's eve I had two excellent victims, er, prospects in my sights: Emily and Ashley. I thoroughly enjoyed interacting with such humans; their combination of child and adult was intoxicating. And their capacity for getting into trouble was admirable.

"Did you get it, Emily?" Ashley asked as her best friend entered her front door.

Emily nodded, whispering, "It wasn't easy. I finally had to light a little fire in the trash can outside to get my mom away from her keys." Sure enough, Emily had a smudge of black ash on her cheek.

Ashley gasped and then giggled. "Wow, Em, good work." She reached out and took the spell book. "Luckily, my mom is way too stressed out about her wedding tomorrow to pay attention to anything we do."

"Who's at the door, Ash?" Ashley's mom, Lisa, yelled from the kitchen.

"It's just Emily," Ashley yelled back. "I told you she was coming over."

Lisa walked into the front foyer. "All right." She always thought the girls could have been sisters they looked so similar with their slim builds and wild curly brown hair. "You girls, be good tonight. You know I have a lot of things on my mind."

The girls stood up straight, hiding the book behind them, and nodded solemnly. "Yes, ma'am." Lisa should have been suspicious that they were so cooperative, but Ashley was right and she was way stressed out.

"We're going to go play out in the backyard, mom," Ashley said. The girls scampered away, giggling. The backyard was ideal for shenanigans since it backed up to the forest, and all the trees in the yard made it difficult to see from the house.

Outside, Emily and Ashley congregated on the patio under the big old oak tree at the back of the yard. They paged through the spell book reverently. About midway through the book they found the spell to summon fairies. I didn't even have to prompt them. They giggled as they read the spell.

The instructions said:

*Sit where the cat sits,
Cross your toes.
Close your eyes,
And smell a rose,
Then say under your breath,
"I believe in Faeries,
Sure as death!
Gadflykins! Gladtrypins!
Gutterpuss and Cass!
Come to me fairly,
Each lad and lass!"*

The girls looked at each other and giggled again.

"Where does Calico like to sit?" Emily asked.

Ashley pointed at the center of the teak patio table.

"What about the rose?" Emily said.

"We can get one from Mrs. Rodriguez's garden next door," Ashley said, pointing over the fence.

That surreptitious mission was quickly accomplished and the girls plopped down on top of the table, and took off their shoes and socks. Crossing their toes was trickier than they thought it would be but finally they arranged them appropriately.

They closed their eyes and Ashley held up the rose and they sniffed it. They both said together, "I believe in Fairies, sure as death!" and then stopped. The wind rustled the oak boughs above them.

Emily opened up her eyes. "I forgot the rest."

Ashley opened her eyes. "Me too. And we can't read it with our eyes closed."

"Yeah," Emily said. "That's a problem."

They sighed.

From the house, Lisa called, "Girls, dinner!"

They ran for the house, all thoughts of spells forgotten for the moment.

It was a most importunate interruption, but I hunkered down to wait.

After they were stuffed full of human food, Lisa said, "I'll be back after the rehearsal dinner and Emily's mom will be by then to pick her up to take her home."

The girls moaned melodramatically.

"Aw, mom, can't she spend the night?" Ashley asked.

Lisa frowned. "We've been through this already. Not tonight. You're going to get your fill of each other next week when I'm on my honeymoon, anyway."

Lisa continued, "Don't make me regret not hiring a babysitter for tonight." In fact, Lisa would come to regret this.

The girls groaned melodramatically.

"Geez, mom," Ashley whined. "We're teenagers!" That was true; both Ashley and Emily had turned thirteen within the last month. And as was typical with teenagers, they thought they knew everything.

So, hardly worrying about the girls at all, Lisa went off to her rehearsal dinner.

As soon as she was gone, Emily and Ashley went back out to the patio and tried several more times to say the spell, but somehow couldn't manage to get it right.

I was getting quite impatient as dusk fell. They had appeared so promising! Couldn't they manage a simple spell? If I failed in my mission, my king would not be happy.

Finally, I decided it was getting too late, I would have to help them summon me. I popped into their presence on the patio. "Good evening, ladies. May I be of assistance?"

Emily and Ashley gasped.

"Who're you?" Emily asked.

"I'm a fairy, of course," I said patiently. Humans were always slow on the uptake.

"But you're so big," Ashley said.

I grinned. "You were expecting someone tinier, perhaps?"

They both nodded. "Uh, yeah," Ashley said.

"Myth," I said, smiling. "We're just as big as you are. Clearly."

"And where are your wings?" Emily asked.

I decided to indulge them. I constructed some wings and fluttered them at them. They gasped appropriately.

"So?" I asked. "I'm guessing you wanted something?" I knew what they wanted, a love potion, my king had already ordered me to make it out of a certain flower I know of.

"Can we, uh, get a love potion?" Ashley asked. She had a crush on a boy in her class named Tyler.

"Two doses, I'd like one too," Emily added quickly. She had a crush on a boy named Ryan. Ah. Young love. I took advantage of it all the time to cause mischief.

"Why, certainly, ladies," I said. "I'd be happy to give you two doses of love potion as soon as you summon me properly."

"Huh?" Ashley said.

Emily said, "You're here. Why do we have to summon you?"

"Don't ask me." I suppressed a sigh. "Those are the rules."

The girls looked at me blankly.

Humans really could be quite stupid. "Good grief!" I said. Uh, oh; I'd been cautioned against using slang. "Er, I mean, alas!" I scowled at them. My king would be exceptionally disappointed if I didn't cause any mayhem tonight. And I did not want to be punished. If these two weren't going to cooperate, I needed to move on. "Look, do you want the potions or not?"

They nodded.

"Then, try again." I pointed at the top of the table. With a lot a coaching, the two girls finally got the spell right.

So, I held out two enticing glass bottles with a dramatic flourish.

The girls hesitated.

"It's safe, right?" Ashley asked.

Of course not. "Of course," I said, smiling. They'd get into all kinds of trouble if things went as I planned.

Slowly, Emily took a bottle, and Ashley followed her lead. You gotta love peer pressure. I smiled in relief; I'd snared them.

"How does it work?" Emily asked.

"You just have to spread it on the eyelids of your young man and he will swoon in love with the first person he sees," I said.

"Eyelids?" Ashley asked, the corners of her mouth turning down. "That sounds complicated."

I shrugged. "To tell the truth, the eyelid thing doesn't actually matter; just get it on their skin...but be careful you don't get any on your skin, it'll make you fall in love, too."

Ashley looked a bit concerned at this.

Emily did not. "Okay, thanks," she said. Ashley was clearly the smarter of the two girls.

They hurried back in the house to call the objects of their affections. My work was as good as done. I settled in to enjoy the fruits of my labors.

Soon, Tyler and Ryan were on the front porch knocking on the front door. I gazed upon them as they shifted back and forth nervously on their feet; each of them was an intoxicating man-child. Tonight would be delightful.

Having painted their faces with Lisa's beauty aides, Ashley and Emily opened the door. The girls said, "Hi," in unison.

The boys mumbled, "Hey," and shuffled inside.

"Uh, do you want to come in?" Emily asked Ryan.

"Uh, sure," he said. Ryan hitched up his too-big shorts. He had the overly large feet of an animal who wasn't fully grown yet.

"This way," Emily lead him toward the family room. I knew she wanted to hold his hand but did not have the courage to do so.

"I can get you a drink or something in the kitchen," Ashley said to Tyler. "C'mon." At least the girls had planned adequately. If they were alone with their young men, presumably the spells would go smoothly. I knew better. Such things never went smoothly.

Tyler smiled cockily at Ashley. His smile was a cover for his nervousness. "Sounds good," he said as they entered the kitchen.

Hands shaking, the girls uncorked the dazzling bottles and poured them on their young men. For their parts, the young men seemed quite confused.

The doorbell rang.

The love spells were undone by the open floor plan of Lisa's house; there were no walls between the kitchen and family room.

From the kitchen, Tyler glanced at Emily in the family room and he tried to smile cockily, but failed. He was smitten.

Ryan glanced at Ashley in the kitchen and his mouth fell open. He was smitten.

The girls glanced at each other as if to say, 'who could that be at the door?'

Ashley marched over to it, Emily and Ryan trotting after her. Tyler leaned against the kitchen counter and attempted to look cool.

Ashley flung open the door to a cavalcade of youngsters. They stormed inside, bearing a variety of food, and especially drink. Now it was Ashley's turn for her mouth to hang open. I smiled.

Finally Ashley said to the newcomers, "Uh, hey, what are you guys doing here?"

Ryan stared at her. "Tyler and I called a few people before we came over, but now ...I wish we hadn't."

Teenagers continued to stream into the house.

Someone put on the stereo. Cans popped. Teens talked.

Emily was trying to get Ryan's attention--unsuccessfully.

People started dancing.

"Hey, let's dance, Ryan," Emily said.

Ryan continued to stare at Ashley.

Ashley looked at Ryan and couldn't help noticing he was staring at her. Ashley then looked over at Tyler lounging in the kitchen. He was staring at Emily and smiling not-at-all-cockily.

"Oh, crap," Ashley said, putting two and two together. Then she looked at Emily. "Give it up, Em. It got messed up." She pointed at Tyler.

Emily looked over at Tyler, who gave her a little wave. Emily shrugged. Tyler was cute, too, and he was on the tennis team. Emily decided to go over to the kitchen and say hi.

Ashley decided Ryan was cute, too, in a big puppy-dog sort of way. She could live with that.

That's the spirit, girls!

Dancing ensued. And drinking. And carousing, and kissing and all manner of general merriment.

I was enjoying myself mightily when the front door crashed open and two angry middle-aged women stood on the threshold.

"What is the meaning of this!" Lisa demanded.

The other woman, Emily's mother, Sarah, said, "Emily! Where are you?"

All the teenagers froze like deer caught in headlights.

Ashley extricated herself from Ryan on the couch and Emily appeared from somewhere in the kitchen. She'd been making out with Tyler.

"Uh," Ashley said. "It was an accident?"

Emily approached the front door very slowly and cautiously. "We just invited a couple guys over. No big deal."

If either Lisa or Sarah had been a medusa, half the teenagers in the room would have been stone by now. In fact, they very nearly were anyway.

"Is that beer! Everyone, out! Now!" Lisa bellowed.

After a further second of stillness, the young people started scurrying out like rats leaving a sinking ship. I faded somewhat.

Soon Ashley and Emily were left alone with their mothers.

"What were you thinking?" Lisa said.

"Frankly, I'm shocked at your behavior," Sarah said. And she didn't even see what Emily had been up to in the kitchen.

"Emily suggested we use the spell--" Ashley started to say. Perhaps she wasn't as smart as I'd thought.

Emily made chopping motions across her neck and shook her head violently.

"Excuse me?" Lisa said.

"Spell what?" Sarah asked. "Not my spell book?" She shook her head. "I knew that fire was suspicious."

Lisa shot Sarah a look. "Your what? Wait. What fire?"
The girls nodded.
Sarah gritted her teeth and said, "Who or what did you summon?"
Ashley pointed at me. "Him."
I unfaded and stepped forward.
Lisa said, "Oh. My. God." and her eyes got as round as saucers.
I grinned and said, "If we shadows have offended, think but this, and all is mended, that you have but slumber'd here while these visions did appear." I executed a nice hand flourish.
"Can it, Fairy-Man, or you'll regret it!" Sarah said in a most unfriendly tone of voice.
I guessed she didn't want to hear the rest of my speech. Too bad; it was very nice; I'd used it before. I closed my mouth and faded into the background. Surely my king would be happy with the evening's events in any case.
Sarah turned to the girls. "You two are SO grounded."
Lisa put her hands on her hips. "I agree. I'm not sure what happened here tonight, but I am sure you're grounded."
The girls groaned melodramatically.
"But, mom!" Ashley opined.
"That's not fair; it was that stupid fairy," Emily whined, pointing in my general direction.
My day's work done, I chuckled and went home.

Copyright 2008 Lesley L. Smith