

A Lizard's Tail

It was just another day as far as Jack. Get up around dawn, work on homework, go to clas, go back to homework, sleep when he was exhausted from studying, and repeat the cycle over again. The lecutre had just finished, and as Jack dragged himself across the small campus to math lecture, he noticed something. Ignoring the hordes of people heading towards the lecture hall, Jack knelt down to look at the object. It was an old brown beer bottle that had somehow survived in one piece. The label had faded beyond any hopes of reading, but the cap was still on securely and the bottle was full. Jack stashed the bottle into his bag, then continued onto lecture. As usual, he sat alone in the front row and listened and took notes. Stirling's theorem. Proof. Factorials. Soon darkness enveloped Jack and when it brightened again, he heard: Class dismissed. Homework due Friday. With that, Jack continued the rest of his day uneventfully.

When he got back to his room, he pulled the beer bottle out, stuck it in the refrigerator, worked on his homework, then a few hours later, went to get the bottle. He examined it closely, and seeing no possible harm from it, unscrewed the cap. As he was about to take a good swig from it, a cloud formed above him and it materialized into a small, eight-legged lizard. The lizard hissed, "Free! Thanks, buddy! Hey, take me around so I can see your place!" When Jack hesitated to pick the little creature up, it continued, "I will make all your wishes come true if you carry me around, I can disguise myself as an earring!" With that, the lizard's green hide became silvery, the shrank, curled itself, then attached itself to his right ear. It continued, "If you don't believe, test me! Think of something you really want." As Jack paused, there was a knock at the door.

Nobody was there, but his organic chemistry midterm was sitting in front of the door. Shuddering, he picked it up, opened it, and then yelped in joy. He had a nearly perfect score. He could hear the lizard's voice in his mind. *Boring wish! I was hoping you'd be more creative!* He laughed and wondered if it had just been coincidence. However, over the next few weeks, Jack noticed that his academic performance had improved drastically, but as others had pointed out, it was from a dramatic change in his study habits more than anything else.

As an experiment one day, Jack started to chat with his friend, Jill Saepharn. She mentioned her strong dislike for the math department, and although Jack was doing well, he couldn't help but agree. It so happened that Jill mentioned that she had a dream about how the math professors and grad students all got turned into sheep, and Jack, having stayed up all night to study and also slightly intoxicated, mumbled that he agreed and wished that it would happen and that anything he dreamed up would also happen. Two days later, several people were talking about how the math building was suddenly filled with sheep. A few days later, all of the biologists on campus disappeared and were suddenly replaced by legendary warriors who taught combat skills instead of biology. Nobody really complained; the biologists had been annoying anyway.

One day, Jill asked Jack about the earring and after having a hard time of

getting Jack to tell her much about it, she decided to try something. When Jack was asleep, Jill snuck into Jack's room and picked up the silvery earring from his table. She examined it and noticed that the rhythmic pulsing in the middle. A small gust of fire came from "nose" and she swore. Jack bolted and as soon as he saw what had happened, he laughed and explained that this lizard was like a genie. "Dragon more like it," mumbled Jill. She then took her scorched hand and vowed to Jack that she would keep the dragon a secret.

After the tenth odd event involving the math building collapsing without explanation, people started to mutter amongst themselves. News reporters arrived by the dozens, but to no avail until they came to interview Jack and Jill. It so happened that someone commented on the tastelessness of the earring, and suddenly, the person found themselves thrown into a nearby duckpond and a small gust of fire hit the nearest reporter. Several policemen grabbed Jack and tried to figure out how he did that. Jill managed to narrowly escape squeaking out the secret, but the word "dragon" came out before she bit the policeman's hand and escaped. Another blast of fire came from Jack's earring and struck the policeman, forcing him to let go. The policeman suddenly fell to the ground and curled up into a ball.

In the end, Jack was knocked out by another policeman and the earring removed carefully, but not before several people were injured. The earring was then sent to a lab for analysis and then moved to a makeshift biology lab when the earring turned into the eight-legged lizard. It so happened that Jill visited the lizard in hopes of freeing it, and several people were pestering her with questions about Jack. She mumbled about wishing that the crowds would go bug someone else, and suddenly, the room was filled with gnats. One of the tourists heard her mumbling and went up to the lizard. A small jet of fire escaped its nostrils as the tourist approached. The tourist whispered, "I wish I were rich!" The lizard licked its eye and the tourist disappeared.

Word spread quickly about the lizard, or rather, genie, but many were also disappointed by the outcome of the wishes. A model wanted to have her hair touch the ground and it all fell off. An old man wished for youth and became a baby. An athlete asked for stronger muscles and became so strong that he broke anything he touched. A politician asked for popularity and got into trouble with the law. These and more botched wishies arrived, and people were starting to grumble at the genie. Finally, Jack and Jill arrived and tried to wish it free, but the lizard nodded its head sadly at them. Jill had the bottle in her hand, and after giving a loving nip on the students, the lizard became smoke and went back into the bottle.

Once the genie went back into the bottle, all of the odd changes on campus disappeared and people forgot about the eight-legged lizard, thinking it was all a bad hoax. The mathematicians were people again, the biologists were back, and the campus was back to normal, but the people who had made individual wishes still had their wishes. The bottle stayed around for a few more weeks with the occasional bit of extra food popping up at random, but soon it disappeared. Where, nobody knew, and like the rest of the world, Jack forgot that there ever was a genie-lizard in his life.