

On the Grind
By Julianna Avery

Wright Now Play Later: January

Prompt: Patricia Mitchell, “Renovating your garden, you discover actual fairies living in your fairy mound.”

A tooth fairy, PUMPERNICKEL, enters the home he shares with his wife, POPPYSEED, dragging behind him a large tooth.

PUMPERNICKLE

Babe?! I’m home! You gotta come see this.

POPPYSEED emerges from the back of the home wearing rubber gloves, an apron, a bandana etc. She has clearly been doing chores all day.

POPPYSEED
(totally unenthused)

What is it?

PUMPERNICKEL

It’s the best day of our lives.

POPPYSEED

Did you find another gumdrop?

PUMPERNICKEL

No, it’s... it’s...

He steps back to reveal the tooth he’s been carrying.

It’s Timmy’s last tooth!

He picks Poppyseed up and shakes her a little.

That’s it! I’m done, Poppyseed, I’m done! The last kid in the house has lost the last tooth and I’m done. I can retire.

POPPYSEED
(feigned enthusiasm)

That’s great, hon. I’m really happy for you.

PUMPERNICKEL
(flopping on the couch)

This is it. From now on it’s just the good life. I’m gonna stretch my wings, put my feet up, and let someone else spread the fairy dust and good cheer.

POPPYSEED
(Turning to go back to her work)

Uh-huh.

Where should I put it? PUMPERNICKEL

Oh, anywhere. POPPYSEED

You want me to move it to the workroom for you? PUMPERNICKEL

Oh, no, just leave it. POPPYSEED
(Quickly coming back)

I don't mind. PUMPERNICKEL

Just leave it. I'll get it later. POPPYSEED

No, I want to get it put away. PUMPERNICKEL
(Pushing the tooth toward the door)

*PUMPERNICKLE opens the door to the
workroom.*

Just LEAVE IT! POPPYSEED

Too late.

Poppyseed. PUMPERNICKEL

Beat.

What is this?

It's not what it looks like. POPPYSEED

It looks like a collection of teeth. PUMPERNICKEL

It's kind of what it looks like. POPPYSEED

I don't understand. Why haven't you been grinding these? PUMPERNICKEL

Now, Pumpernickel, I *have* been - POPPYSEED

This room should be full of fairy dust. PUMPERNICKEL

POPPYSEED

It's not totally devoid of fairy dust.

PUMPERNICKEL

It's full of teeth! Not a single one has been ground up into fairy dust!

POPPYSEED

That's not fair! I've ground up over a dozen teeth!

PUMPERNICKEL

A dozen! Mortals have 32 teeth in their mouths. This family has three children. That means that there are...

He counts quickly on his fingers.

96 teeth to grind up! 9-6! That's 8 dozen teeth! That's -

POPPYSEED

Don't condescend to me, Pumpernickel.

PUMPERNICKEL

I'm just... I'm stunned.

POPPYSEED

I know. I'm sorry. I should have told you I was kinda behind.

PUMPERNICKEL

Kinda behind? Kinda behind?!

POPPYSEED

(irritated)

Yeah. I'm a little behind. I've been really busy.

PUMPERNICKEL

Saying you're kinda behind is like saying ogres have kind of bad breath! Or that leprechauns are kind of obnoxious!

POPPYSEED

Don't get started on leprechauns again.

PUMPERNICKEL

We were supposed to cash in our fairy dust and retire. I can't believe you did this.

POPPYSEED

I'll get around to it all eventually -

PUMPERNICKEL

You had one job. I watch over that family, I wait for the teeth to fall out, I go get them, and you grind them up. That's it. One job. ONE.

POPPYSEED

One job? You think just because I'm a stay-at-home fairy I don't work? You think little Starshine and Apple Blossom raise themselves? Huh? Who helps them with their homework and gets them off to

school? Who collects the dew drops for the septic system or the dandelions for our dinner? I DO. Who cleans the knothole, huh? Me! Not you. Me.

PUMPERNICKEL

Oh, excuse me. I didn't realize you had it so hard. I just have to go out there and risk my fairy-ass every time one of those kids bites into an apple!

POPPYSEED

Oh, you love it. The danger, the excitement, the adulation!

PUMPERNICKEL

You just say that because you don't know what it's like out there.

POPPYSEED

I'd like to find out!

PUMPERNICKEL

Don't be ridiculous. The dude fairies go out and collect the teeth and the lady fairies stay home and grind them into fairy dust.

POPPYSEED

I think that's stupid.

PUMPERNICKEL

Those are the rules. That's how it is.

POPPYSEED

Says who?

PUMPERNICKEL

Says everyone. Everyone knows how it is, Poppyseed. The guys go out and the girls stay home.

POPPYSEED

Is that what you want for Starshine and Apple Blossom? A life spent at home, waiting for some guy to bring them teeth to grind?

PUMPERNICKEL

It's what they're made to do.

POPPYSEED

I can't even believe you just said that to me. That is some patriarchal, privileged fairy bullshit.

PUMPERNICKEL

When I married you, you said you'd be happy to stay home and grind teeth! You said it was your dream!

POPPYSEED

Oh please! No one dreams about grinding teeth, Pumpernickel! I said that because it was what I was supposed to say. I didn't have any other options. I've spent the best years of my life, tucked away in this knothole, taking care of your food and your kids and your damn teeth.

She takes off her apron and her gloves and throws them to the ground.

PUMPERNICKEL

What are you doing?

POPPYSEED

I'm embracing my destiny! I'm going to go out there and find myself.

PUMPERNICKEL

You're going to find yourself in the jaws of a cat!

POPPYSEED

Then at least I will die living my life to the fullest.

She goes to the door.

PUMPERNICKEL

What should I tell the kids?!

POPPYSEED

Tell them I'm leading by example. Oh yeah, and if you need me, I'll be with the leprechauns. I've been sleeping with one of them.

PUMPERNICKEL

Jesus!

She slams the door and exits.