

You Think It's Easy Being the Tooth Fairy?

BY Sheri Bell-Rehwoldt

ILLUSTRATED BY David Slonim

A Conversation with author Sheri Bell-Rehwoldt
and illustrator David Slonim

chronicle books





All over America, kids are losing their teeth. And who is there to gather them up, leaving coins in their places? The tooth fairy, of course! A self-described “action kind of gal” with plenty of attitude, she reveals her secrets at last! Learn about her amazing Tooth-o-Finder. Marvel at her ingenious flying machine. Watch her in action, dodging dogs and cats and gerbils. The tooth fairy’s nights are long and hard. But she’s up for it. She never misses a tooth. How does she do it? For the first time ever, she reveals everything!

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CB: Chronicle Books SBR: Sheri Bell-Rehwoaldt DS: David Slonim

CB Sheri, what inspired you to write *You Think It’s Easy Being the Tooth Fairy*?

SBR I wrote the book after registering for a picture book workshop offered by The Highlights Foundation. We were told to arrive with a completed picture book draft—which would be critiqued by the instructors and our fellow students. So, early one morning, as the deadline loomed close, I told myself that I couldn’t get out of bed until I came up with my book idea. As my brain rattled around, jumping from thought to thought, I eventually found myself wondering why the tooth fairy is always portrayed as this dainty, magical creature—complete with wings, wand, and flouncing skirts. To my mind, what has kept the tooth fairy going all these years is the thrill of the hunt. I bet she’s as addicted to nabbing baby teeth as I am to dark chocolate! I see her as very James Bondish—with quite the attitude!

CB And she does have attitude! David, did the tooth fairy visit you as a child?

DS *The tooth fairy faithfully left me a quarter for every tooth. I never did see or hear anything. Just woke up and there was the money! It was the easiest job ever. It could have made me rich, but I quickly ran out of baby teeth.*

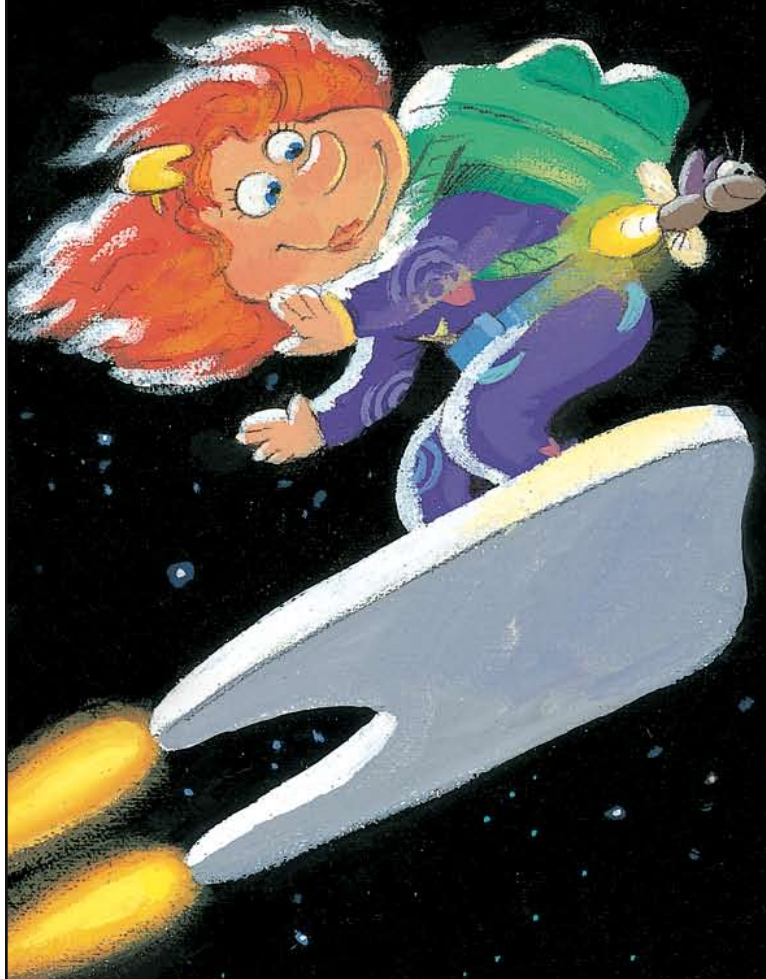
CB Did you have an affinity for fairies as a child?

DS *No, but looking back on it, I suspect that one of my teachers may have been a troll.*

SBR Absolutely. My favorite, hands down, was Tinker Bell. Think about it: she got to hang out in Never Land, she could fly, and she was incredibly loyal. She gave her life for Peter Pan, remember, when she drank the poison intended for him. I also really liked Cinderella’s fairy godmother. I soooo wanted to be Cinderella when I was a kid! No more chores, no more pesky sisters, no more missing out on the fun! Her fairy godmother really had her fairy stuff together—just as the tooth fairy does in this book!

CB Do you have a favorite story about losing a tooth?

SBR Yeah. It involves my twin sister, Jeri. She was always coming up with harebrained ideas that usually meant pain for me. It was her smart idea that I tie one end of a piece of dental floss around my loose tooth—and the other end to a doorknob. Jeri swore up one side and down the other that after she slammed the door, my tooth would pop out—pain free. She was wrong, as usual. My tooth stayed firmly in my gum—for another week, mind you—as I nursed the large bump I got from slamming my forehead into the door! I can still remember Jeri saying it was MY fault that it didn’t work!



I NEVER wear pink flouncing skirts or twinkling glass slippers! That's Cinderella. She does a lot of sitting around the castle looking pretty.

BORING!

Me, I'm an action kind of gal.

I live for danger!

For suspense!

CB The tooth fairy appears to be in great shape, she's resourceful, and she has a knack for gadgets. Was she inspired by anyone you know?

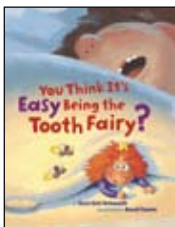
SBR Ummm, no. But I kept envisioning this lumpy older woman who really worked up a sweat as she worked. Really, she should have given up the job years ago, but she loves it too much. Part of her problem, as I saw it, was her addiction to donuts (she carried a six-pack on each hip). David chose to illustrate her sans donuts—and very much in shape—which was probably the smarter way to go! I love tongue-in-cheek humor, which is what I was going for, but I adore David's vision of her. She's all sass!

DS My inspiration for the tooth fairy is a little girl in my church named Aubrey, with big blue eyes and long, red curly hair. I gave her a jet-powered flying tooth board so she could have a really fun way to get around. Since she does all her work at night, I gave her fireflies to be her faithful sidekicks. I really wanted to see her in action a lot, so she has a floss pack on her belt for rappelling down walls, and spandex pajamas to help her move easily.

CB David, we recently read that your daughter, Mary, inspired the character of Sophie in *He Came with the Couch* [David's quirky picture book that has become a "cult favorite"]. Will you tell us a bit more about your inspirations and influences in general?

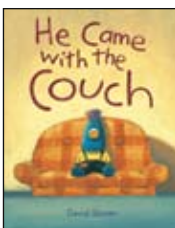
DS When I was a kid, I drew my dad a lot. I still do. The character of Moishe in *Moishe's Miracle* looks a little bit like him. My mom shows up in that book as the wife asleep with a pillow over her eyes and her nose poking up. The father in *He Came with the Couch* looks like another version of Dad. He would always be the first one up in the morning, wearing his suit and tie, ready to go to the office wearing his hat.

One of my favorite artists is William Steig, who wrote a book called *When Everybody Wore a Hat*. Somewhere I read that Steig didn't do any sketches before creating his art. If that's true, it's amazing. I'd take my hat off to him, if I had one. I do a lot of sketches and studies. Piles of 'em. Behind each image in the books are many pencil sketches, miniature paintings in black and white acrylic paint, little color studies, then trial and error on the final art until I get it right.



You Think It's Easy Being the Tooth Fairy?

written by Sheri Bell-Rehwoldt
illustrated by David Slonim
ISBN: 978-0-8118-5460-3
\$15.95 HC • Ages 4-8



He Came with the Couch

written and illustrated by David Slonim
ISBN: 978-0-8118-4430-7
\$15.95 HC • Ages 4-8

Virginia Readers Choice
Recommended Books 2007-2008

Washington Children's Choice
Picture Book Nominee 2008

Missouri Building Block
Picture Book Award Nominee 2006

Alabama Emphasis on Reading
Program Book List 2006-2007



Moishe's Miracle

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illustrated by David Slonim
ISBN: 978-0-8118-5234-0
\$6.95 PB • Ages 4-8

The New York Times
Top 10 Picture Books of the Year

National Jewish Book Award Gold Medal

Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Gold Award

Featured in "Chanukah Stories"
animated children's television special



Oh, Ducky! A Chocolate Calamity

written and illustrated by David Slonim
ISBN: 978-0-8118-5227-2
\$6.95 PB • Ages 4-8



DS *I don't write with a particular audience in mind. I start with an idea that interests me, from a point of view that makes me laugh. One day my family was stuck in heavy traffic behind a pick-up truck with a guy sitting on a couch in the back. That was the beginning of He Came with the Couch.*

CB **Do you make visits to classrooms?**

DS *I love visiting schools. We always have a great time. During one visit to an elementary school in Wyoming, I challenged the principal to a chicken walk contest. The poor guy was so caught off guard he walked like a wounded Egyptian! The kids were cracking up.*

SBR *I'm looking forward to visiting schools and sharing You Think It's Easy Being the Tooth Fairy? I have some really fun "teeth and gum" related activities, lessons, and crafts planned for all different grades and ages. Keep in mind that February is National Children's Dental Health Month!*

CB **One last question. Do you take good care of your teeth?**

SBR *Fanatically! And I loved to brush my teeth when I was a kid. But I don't remember doing such a good job at flossing. Maybe that's why I got my fair share of cavities.*

DS *Yes. I brush and floss carefully every day. I've become very attached to my teeth and hope they stay attached to me!*



About the Creators

Because she was a "military brat," **Sheri Bell-Rehwoldt** lost her baby teeth in Texas, Oklahoma, Utah, New Mexico, and Hawaii, but the tooth fairy always managed to visit. When Sheri had her wisdom teeth pulled at age 20, she put them under her pillow. Alas, the tooth fairy was no longer interested, so now they sit in Sheri's sock drawer, waiting to be made into earrings. Sheri is an award-winning magazine writer. She has also written five nonfiction children's books and has just penned a middle-grade novel. This is her first picture book.



In addition to being the illustrator of *You Think It's Easy Being the Tooth Fairy?* and *Moishe's Miracle*, **David Slonim** is the author-illustrator of *He Came with the Couch* and *Oh, Ducky!* He paints in oils in addition to illustration work. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, David has also worked in animation and puppetry, has completed an internship with the Muppets in New York, and now lives in Indiana with his wife and their four children.