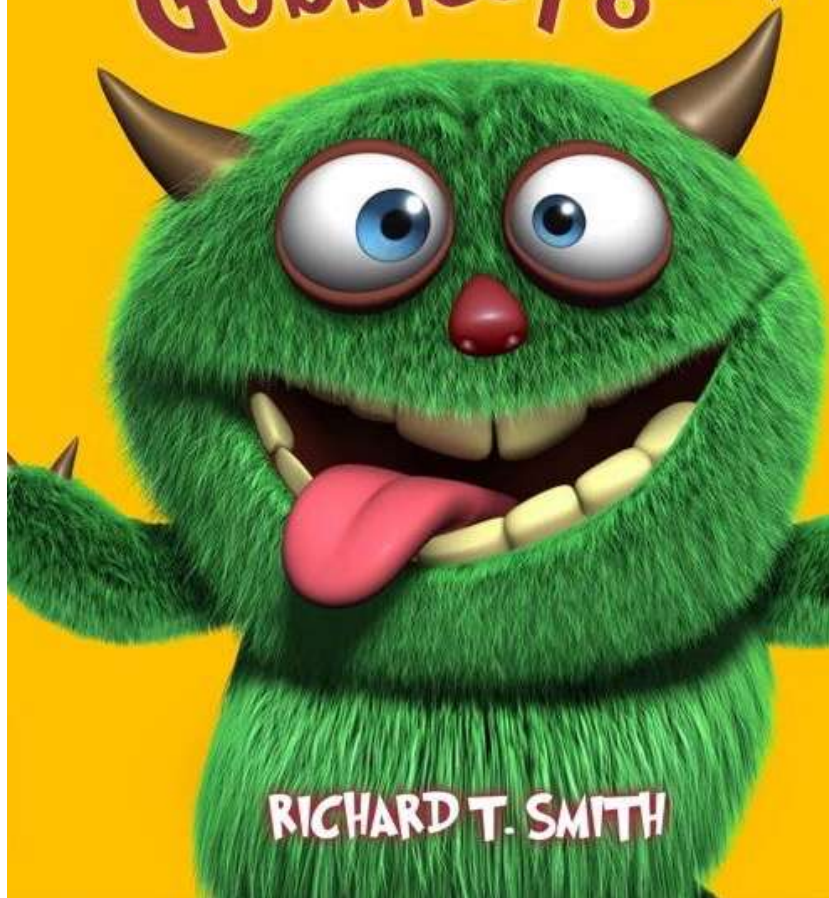


The Gobbledygook



RICHARD T. SMITH

The Gobbledygook

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Long, long ago, in the land of The Fen, children were told tales about a creature known as the Gobbledygook. The children were warned not to go out on the marshes, as that was where the Gobbledygook lived.

The Fen is the local name for an area of marshland, and some say that telling the children about the Gobbledygook was parents' way of discouraging them from venturing onto the marshes.

James and Jenna Hooper and their four children – Keira, who was ten; Adam, seven; Ella, six; and one-year-old Poppy –had moved into the village from the city and they were not aware of the Gobbledygook.

At first, the children didn't really like the countryside. They said it was boring and there was nothing to do.

'You'll make lots of friends when you start your new school on Monday,' Mrs. Hooper assured the children.

Their school was called Millers Bridge School, as it was built next to the bridge of the same name, which crossed the River Ouse.

On Monday morning, Keira, Ella and Adam attended their new school while one-year-old Poppy stayed at home with mum. The children felt very apprehensive about meeting the other pupils.

As they entered the school building, they came face-to-face with the school janitor, Mr. Davenport. He was an elderly man, with glasses, a little on the plump side and wearing a constant smile.

‘You’re new, aren't you?’ Mr. Davenport asked the Hooper children.

‘Yes,’ answered Keira, shyly.

‘It won't be long before you'll feel at home here,’ Mr. Davenport assured them.

The Hooper children smiled at Mr. Davenport as they made their way to their classes.

Mr. Davenport was right; the children made Keira, Ella and Adam feel very welcome; that is, all but one boy in Keira's class – Paul Johnson, or PJ as he was known. He was the school troublemaker, especially when there were new pupils. PJ was the same age as Keira, and although nothing happened during the first two days, on day three PJ went over to talk to her.

'I'm PJ,' he said, introducing himself.

'I'm Keira,' she said.

'Has anyone told you yet?' he asked her.

'About what?' she asked.

'About the Gobbledygook,' he replied.

'What is the Gobbledygook?' Keira asked.

'It's a monster that lives out in the marshlands,' he explained.

'Has anybody seen it?' she asked.

'Only one person has ever seen it and lived to tell the tale,' PJ told her.

'What is it like?' Keira asked him.

'It's about ten feet tall, with three eyes, long teeth, and claws two feet long; and it's black and slimy,' PJ told her, menacingly.

At this point, Keira looked shocked.

'That's why nobody goes over Millers Bridge after dark,' continued PJ, terrifying Keira a little more.

At home time, Keira was unusually quiet.

‘Are you alright, Keira?’ asked Adam.

‘Yes, why shouldn't I be?’ she answered, sharply.

‘It's just that you're so quiet,’ Adam explained.

‘Yes, you haven't said a word,’ Ella pointed out.

‘I have something on my mind, that's all,’ Keira told them, and she wasn't wrong. Keira was wondering whether she should tell her brother and sister about the Gobbledygook. ‘What would happen if they went over Millers Bridge?’ she asked herself. She knew that if she told them, they would be scared. She didn't know which way to turn. In fact, worrying about it kept her awake late into the night.

Over the next few days, what PJ had told Keira about the Gobbledygook had affected her concentration at school so much that her teacher, Miss Gillespie, finally asked to see her parents.

Later that week Keira found herself with her dad sitting in Miss Gillespie's office.

Looking at Mr. Hooper, Miss Gillespie expressed her concern about Keira's lack of concentration and

suggested that something may have been troubling her.

‘Is this true?’ her father asked her.

‘I suppose so,’ she answered.

‘Why, what's the matter?’ her father asked.

‘It's, it's the Gobbledygook,’ Keira managed to stutter.

‘The what?’ he asked.

‘The Gobbledygook, father,’ she replied.

‘The Gobbledygook is a mythical creature, Mr. Hooper,’ interrupted Miss Gillespie.

Turning her attention to Keira, Miss Gillespie confirmed, ‘And that is all it is, Keira; mythical. It doesn't exist.’

‘How did you hear of this Gobbledygook thing?’ her father asked her.

‘PJ, I mean, Paul Johnson told me,’ answered Keira.

‘Why am I not surprised?’ asked Miss Gillespie.

Puzzled, Keira's father asked, 'Who is Paul Johnson?'

'He is a boy in Keira's class who is renowned for causing trouble, and I will speak to his parents over this matter, Mr. Hooper,' Miss Gillespie assured him.

'Thank you, Miss Gillespie. I'm sure it's just a practical joke; after all, he's only ten years old.'

When Keira and her father arrived home, her father told Mrs. Hooper and the other children all the details.

'So you see, Ella, Adam; ignore anything you hear about the Gobbledygook. It's nothing more than a myth and does not exist,' he explained.

At playtime the next day in school, Keira, Adam and Ella were talking when PJ approached them.

Addressing Keira he said, accusingly, 'You couldn't help yourself, could you? You had to tell Miss Gillespie,'

'You have nobody but yourself to blame, trying to scare me with the Gobbledygook,' Keira told him.

'It's true, he does exist,' he told her.

'The Gobbledygook is nothing more than a myth,' Keira told him.

'So, you believe Miss Gillespie and not me?' he asked.

'Yes, I do!' she replied.

'So, if there is no such thing as the Gobbledygook, you wouldn't mind going over Millers Bridge to the marshes on the other side?' PJ challenged her.

After a short pause, Keira told PJ that there wasn't any reason for her to go over to the marshes.

'It's not about whether you have a reason to go over to the marshes, it's about proving that you believe Miss Gillespie and that there isn't any such thing as the Gobbledygook. If you don't go over to the marshes, that proves I'm right,' PJ argued.

'I'm not scared,' Keira told him, angrily.

'Prove it,' PJ demanded.

'Alright. When?' she asked him.

‘Go after school finishes today; that’s if you’re not scared,’ PJ said, laughing.

‘Ok, I will,’ Keira agreed.

‘We will go with you,’ Ella said.

‘That’s right, all three of us will go,’ added Adam.

Later, as all the pupils left school to go home, Keira, Adam, Ella and PJ headed for Millers Bridge.

As soon as they reached it, PJ said, ‘Off you go!’

‘Aren’t you coming with us?’ Keira asked him.

‘No, I’m not. I know the Gobbledygook exists,’ he assured them.

Keira took a deep breath before starting to cross the bridge with Ella and Adam, all walking side by side for reassurance. Upon reaching the other side, she looked back towards PJ who was pointing towards the marsh in the far distance, indicating that their task wasn’t yet complete. As they walked towards the marsh, Keira reassured Ella and Adam that there was no such thing as the Gobbledygook. After awhile they reached the edge of the marshland

where the grass became dense and high. Suddenly, Keira saw the grass move. Curious, she wondered if it had just been the wind or if there was something hiding in the undergrowth. As she looked closely, she thought she saw a rabbit with big blue eyes. Walking towards it she realised that she could only see the eyes; everything else was green. Just as she got within two feet of the big blue eyes, Adam suddenly asked, 'What is it?'

'I think it's a rabbit,' replied Keira.

As she reached out to part the grass to get a closer look, something jumped out at her shouting, 'What are you doing over here?'

Keira toppled over backwards in shock at seeing what appeared to be a small green monster.

'Who are you?' asked Keira. She was so shocked she didn't know whether she was coming or going.

'I'm the Gobbledygook,' came the reply.

'Where do you live?' Adam asked the Gobbledygook.

‘I live among the thick bushes. My house is made from long grass mixed with clay to keep the water out,’ he replied.

‘So PJ was telling the truth ... but you don't look the way he described you,’ said Adam.

‘Oh, and how did he describe me?’ the Gobbledygook asked.

‘He said you were ten feet tall with three eyes, long teeth, and claws two feet long; and that you were all black and slimy,’ replied Adam.

‘If I were ten feet tall I couldn't hide in the grass could I? And if I were black and slimy I couldn't blend in with the grass either.’

‘I'm sorry, you don't look horrible at all,’ Ella told the Gobbledygook.

‘Thank you for being so kind,’ said the Gobbledygook.

‘Why do people talk about you like that?’ asked Keira.

‘It's to stop children coming onto the marshes and risk getting hurt, and – up to now – it has worked,’ explained the Gobbledygook.

‘What do you mean “up to now”,’ asked Keira.

Looking down at the ground sadly, the Gobbledygook told them that when they got back and told the villagers about him, the whole village would visit him and his life wouldn't be peaceful anymore.

‘We won't tell anyone, will we?’ Keira said, looking at Ella and Adam.

‘I promise I won't,’ said Adam.

‘I promise I won't, either,’ said Ella.

‘So your secret is safe with us,’ Keira assured the Gobbledygook. ‘We'll say that we stopped before we reached the marshes because we believed the legend of the Gobbledygook.’

‘Do you promise, too?’ he asked her.

‘I promise,’ she repeated.

As Keira, Ella and Adam started to walk away, the Gobbledygook asked if they would come back to see him.

‘Yes, if you would like us to,’ she said.

‘I would, very much,’ he said.

All three happily agreed that they would visit the Gobbledygook again.

When they crossed the bridge to where PJ was waiting, they told him that they had stopped walking just as they reached the start of the marshes; they were willing to put up with PJ’s gloating and to let him think they had believed him without even having seen the Gobbledygook.

From that day on, Keira, Ella and Adam were true to their word, and regularly visited the Gobbledygook. The marshes became their own little world that nobody knew about ... except, of course, for the Gobbledygook.





One day, when Keira, Ella and Adam were visiting the Gobbledygook, they told him they had been to the village shops to buy a birthday present for their sister, Poppy, as she was now two years old. The Gobbledygook asked what it was like in the village.

‘Haven't you ever been there?’ asked Ella.

‘No, I daren't go there,’ replied the Gobbledygook.

‘That's a shame,’ remarked Adam, sadly.

‘If only we could think of a way for you to see the village,’ said Keira.

‘I wonder what the people would do if they saw you,’ wondered Ella.

‘I don't know if they would like me or be scared,’ replied the Gobbledygook.

‘You're not scary at all,’ Keira told him.

‘But even if they weren't scared, I would be constantly pestered by people curious to see what I'm like. I would have to leave and find another place to live,’ the Gobbledygook told them, sadly.

‘Oh no, we wouldn't want you to move away ... We would miss you,’ said Ella.

‘I have an idea that would enable you to see the village without being recognised,’ Keira said excitedly.

‘How?’ asked the Gobbledygook.

Keira explained, ‘On Halloween night, we all go around the village doing trick or treat.’

‘That's right, and we get dressed up,’ Adam said.

‘Halloween, trick or treat,’ the Gobbledygook said in a confused manner.

Keira went on to explain to the Gobbledygook that on Halloween night all the children dress up as witches, vampires or monsters and knock on doors saying “trick or treat” to whoever opens the door.

Then people put sweets into a bag that the children use to collect the sweets.

‘The people will think you're a child dressed up in a costume, as you're the same size as us anyway,’ said Adam.

‘Do you think it would work?’ asked the Gobbledygook.

‘I don't see why not,’ replied Keira.

‘When is Halloween?’ asked the Gobbledygook.

‘It's in five days' time,’ the children told him.

The Gobbledygook was very excited about the thought of seeing the village for the first time.

Over the next few days, the children showed their Halloween costumes to the Gobbledygook. They had a hooded black robe for the Gobbledygook to wear so only his head and hands would be showing.

The night of Halloween finally arrived, and the children went over to get the Gobbledygook who looked magnificent in his new robe.

‘Here is your bag for collecting the sweets,’ they told him, and off they went over Millers Bridge to the village.

‘Here is the first house. Are you all ready to collect some sweets?’ Keira asked everyone.

‘Yes,’ said Ella, Adam and the Gobbledygook, feeling very excited.

With that, Keira knocked on the door. As the lady opened the door they all shouted ‘trick or treat’. With sweets in her hands the lady told them, ‘You all look amazing, and you have taken a lot of time and trouble to look so good,’ One by one she put sweets into the children's bags, but upon reaching the Gobbledygook she said, ‘You look too cute to be scary, so I'm giving you an extra sweet.’

This shocked the Gobbledygook, who was so taken back by what the lady had said that his ‘thank you’ was in a low, hushed voice Closing the gate on their way out, the Gobbledygook asked, ‘Did you hear what she said? I look too cute to be scary!’

All the children smiled.

‘She's right, you are,’ said Ella.

The Gobbledygook was delighted to hear that, especially after all the bad rumours about him being a horrible monster.

They continued knocking on doors in the village until, suddenly, they bumped into PJ who was dressed as a vampire.

Looking at the Gobbledygook he said, 'Call that a costume? You couldn't scare anyone with that!' Then he walked away laughing.

'Who was that?' asked the Gobbledygook.

'That was PJ, the boy who said you were a horrible monster, and that you were ten feet tall with three eyes, long teeth and claws two feet long, and that you were black and slimy,' Keira told him, laughing.

'That's how well he knows you!' said Adam.

With that, they walked the Gobbledygook back to his home on the marshland.

'Thank you so much,' he said.

'Here you are, these are yours,' Keira told him as she passed him his bag full of sweets.

'I have never eaten a sweet before,' the Gobbledygook told them.

'Try this,' said Ella.

'What is it?' asked the Gobbledygook.

'It's chocolate,' Ella told him.

So the Gobbledygook ate the chocolate.

‘That tastes lovely,’ he said.

‘Don't eat them all at once otherwise you will be sick,’ Keira warned him.

‘I won't,’ said the Gobbledygook, happily.

The children said goodnight and promised that they would return the following day. The Gobbledygook was very happy knowing that it would be possible to visit the village at least once a year, and also that the people of the village didn't think he was a horrible monster... And little did he know, neither did PJ.





One morning the Gobbledygook was having a nice lie-in when, all of a sudden, he was woken from his slumber by a loud tapping noise, which stopped as suddenly as it had started. The Gobbledygook closed his eyes, thinking it must have been a dream, only to be woken again by a loud tapping.

Jumping out of bed and going outside, he realised the tapping sound was coming from high in the tree. On closer inspection he saw a bird banging his beak against the tree. The Gobbledygook had to shout to make himself heard, 'What are you doing?'

The bird stopped tapping the tree and looked down at the Gobbledygook.

'What are you?' the bird asked.

'I'm a Gobbledygook,' he replied.

'A Gobbledygook?' asked the bird.

'Yes, I'm a creature of the marshes,' he explained.

'Mm, you look a funny creature,' said the bird.

'I think you're a funny creature banging your beak against the tree. 'Why do you do that?' the Gobbledygook asked.

'I'm a woodpecker,' the bird told the Gobbledygook.

'A woodpecker? I've never heard of a woodpecker before,' the Gobbledygook exclaimed.

'Yes, we peck and peck until we've made a hole in the tree, and then we live in it.'

'How long does it take?' asked the Gobbledygook.

'It takes a few days,' replied the woodpecker.

'Where will you stay tonight,' asked the Gobbledygook.

'I'll stay on the branch all night until morning, and then I'll start pecking again.'

'You can stay in my house until you have made yours,' suggested the Gobbledygook.

'Well, it does look as if it's going to rain,' said the woodpecker, thoughtfully.

'So, will you stay in my house?' the Gobbledygook asked again.

'If it's alright,' replied the woodpecker.

I have a large amount of wild blueberries and blackberries collected from the bushes around the marshlands and you are welcome to share them with me,' the Gobbledygook told him.

'You are a very kind Gobbledygook,' said the woodpecker, gratefully.

So, later that day, the woodpecker visited the Gobbledygook's home and had blueberries and blackberries to eat.

The Gobbledygook asked the woodpecker if he had a name.

'Milo is my name,' the woodpecker told him.

After eating the berries, Milo asked the Gobbledygook if there was anything he could do for him.

'I can't think of anything at the moment,' the Gobbledygook told Milo.

Over the next few days, Milo continued to create his house in the middle of the tree until it was completed.

'You will be staying in your house tonight, Milo?' asked the Gobbledygook.

‘Yes, I will be. Thank you for letting me stay with you,’ said Milo.

‘I enjoyed the company,’ the Gobbledygook told Milo.

‘I’m not going far away, I’m only moving into the tree next to where you live; you can still come out to talk to me.’

‘I would like that,’ the Gobbledygook said.

The next day the Gobbledygook heard loud tapping noises again, the sound he had heard when Milo was making his home. Going outside and looking up at Milo, the Gobbledygook asked him why he was tapping the tree.

‘I was letting you know that humans are heading towards your home!’ Milo told him.

Seeing Keira, Ella and Adam approaching, the Gobbledygook told Milo it was alright, that they were his friends.

‘You have humans as friends?’ asked Milo.

‘Yes, I do,’ the Gobbledygook told him.

His friends arrived, bringing with them cake and biscuits from home, and the Gobbledygook told them about Milo, pointing upwards towards his home in the tree.

‘Hello, Milo,’ shouted Keira, Ella and Adam.

Milo called ‘hello’ back to them.

The Gobbledygook told them that Milo warned him that they were coming across the Marshland.

‘That’s great, Milo; you can warn Gobbledygook whenever there are strangers around,’ shouted Adam.

‘I never thought of that,’ said the Gobbledygook. ‘So, anytime I hear Milo tapping I will know there are people on the Marshland.’

Milo agreed to let the Gobbledygook know whenever there were strangers on the Marshland. This pleased Milo, as it was a way of repaying the Gobbledygook’s kindness.



Acknowledgements

Absolute editing
Stephen Williams

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The Tuffy Stories

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Small Book of Life Changing Quotes

100 Nuggets of Gold

One Liners & Put Downs

A story teller

