

Babysitting

L.F.S. Alden, March 2020

Kaylyn turned smoothly into the driveway of the blue house in a quiet neighborhood.

Kade smiled with gratitude, "Thanks for the ride."

"No problem - I'm sorry your mom's car had a... what was it?"

"A bad thing."

"A bad thing. Are you sure you've got a ride home?"

Kade looked at the family piling out of their front door. "Mr. Schwartz drives me home after the babysitting gig, I'll be fine."

"OK, see you Sunday at work!" Kaylyn waved and waited to back out, ready to head home. The street was unusually busy, so she waited long enough to hear Kade call out to her.

He was running across the lawn. "Mr. Schmidt is away - Mrs. S figured that my Mom would pick me up..."

"But your Mom's car has a bad thing. I can do it - I actually live only a couple of blocks away."

"You're a lifesaver!"

She grinned. "I am!"

Three hours later, Kaylyn stomped on the brakes harder than she ever had in her life. A tiny, white-clad ghostly figure ran right in front of her headlights when she approached the Schmidts' house.

The ghost was screaming with the ear-splitting power of a three-year-old. Kaylyn pulled the car over and turned it off in one instant and jumped out of the car. She could hear Kade yelling in the house as she ran after the little ghost.

It took some serious scrambling, but soon the little girl was safe in Kaylyn's arms, crying and sobbing something about monsters. "Monsters? Kid, I'm Kade's friend, let's go right back to him and see about these monsters."

The girl squiggled more and more as they approached the house to find Kade juggling a screaming baby and chasing a Kindergartener.

Kade looked at his wit's end. "It's been like this all night. Monsters. I keep trying to tell them I can protect them..."

The six-year-old, Kade introduced him as Benny, wept openly, "They're *real* monsters, I keep telling you! They're *real*!"

Kaylyn kept a solid arm around the little girl in the nightdress (who turned out to be Gretta). "Wait, do you guys not know about Kade?"

There was a startled break in the crying. "He's our babysitter," said Benny. "And do you know *why* he's your babysitter?"

Benny and Gretta looked at each other. The baby began to settle down. "It's because he's a monster-fighter."

Silence. Kade's eyebrows went up.

"The Queen of Elfland herself made him a knight of her court with the special quest of fighting monsters."

Benny's eyebrows furrowed. "How do you know that?" He demanded.

Kade took a breath. "She was there. Kids, this is... Sir Kaylyn, knight of Elfland. She was there when the Queen knighted me."

Kaylyn stood. "And this is Sir Kade, my trusted friend and comrade." She took a considering breath. "Now, where are those monsters?"

The children showed them the door down to the basement. Kade nodded slightly to Kaylyn. "OK, kids, what's in your toy box?" Kade and the baby kept an eye on the basement door while Kaylyn taught Gretta and Benny how to turn their blanket into a hiding fort and turn their blocks into Arrows of Light. They

gathered all of the Arrows into a pile and snuggled down behind the blankets. Kade settled the baby safely between them.

“Ready, Sir Kade?” Asked his comrade.

“Ready!”

Kaylyn and Kade, armed with a broom and a dictionary, opened the door to the basement. They swept the monstrous energies out of the house and bound them away forever with words of goodness. Benny and Gretta even dared to throw a few Arrows of Light after the retreating monstrous energy.

Mrs. Schmidt came home just as the adventure was ended. She apologized for being late and gave Kade a rather big tip.

The companions were silent until they had pulled out of the neighborhood. “Do you think they’ll remember?” Asked Kaylyn.

Kade shook his head. “If they do, they’ll think we were playing with them. Excellent binding spell. Solid as a rock.”

“Better believe it. Those kids are safe in that house forever, now.”

“Yeah,” Kade agreed. “Hey, thanks for the ride - and the backup.”

Sir Kaylyn and Sir Kade fist-bumped their right hands, clicking their matching rings, given by the Queen of Elfland to all her loyal knights.