

Why Knots?

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Once upon a time, there was a little girl who didn't like to comb knots out of her hair. Every night, her mother would say, "We need to comb the tangles from the day now, so they don't get worse. If we left them alone, they would be even bigger by morning."

"Why do they get bigger?" the little girl asked. Her mommy said, "I don't know. I supposed it's all the tossing and turning we do while we sleep – it just messes up the hair." So the little girl would let her mother comb out the tangles – but she was not happy about it, even though she really liked the silky smooth way her hair felt after it was combed.

One night, the little girl said, "Mommy, I don't want to comb the knots out tonight. I just want to see if they really get bigger by morning."

The mommy said, "Okay. Sometimes that's what it takes to believe something – seeing it for yourself."

So the little girl did an experiment. She combed half her hair out so it was silky smooth. She left the other half just as it was. All night long she tossed and turned, and when she woke up in the morning, there were knots everywhere.

The next night she tried another experiment, and slept on her stomach – but even then the knots got bigger. This puzzled her a lot: if her hair were getting knotted by tossing and turning, then sleeping on her stomach should have made no knots at all...or at least fewer knots or smaller knots. So she decided to stay up late and figure out how her hair was getting so tangled.

That night she lay down and closed her eyes and pretended to be asleep, hugging a flashlight where she usually had her teddy bear. She didn't move, and she breathed in and out very peacefully and rhythmically. It was hard to stay awake, and she was about to fall asleep when she heard a little scritch-scratch next to her ear. Then she felt something tug on her hair. She flung herself up to sitting and switched on the flashlight. She saw seven little creatures cowering

in fear, fleeing under her pillow. She lifted up the pillow and said, “Who are you?! And what are you doing in my bed?”

The little creatures were only about the size of a penny, and were bright shades of green and purple and pink. They had, feet, and hands, and fur, and very kind faces. One of them took a step forward and said, “Why, we’re only the Knot-tiers. We love to tie knots. You have great hair for tying knots.”

The little girl thought about this. “So, you’re the ones who put knots in my hair at night?”

“Well, not all the knots. We find some good ones when we come, just from you tossing and turning and rubbing your hair on the pillow. But we build some beautiful knots on top of those. And then your mother goes and combs them out and we have to start all over again the next night. We could make some really great knots if only you weren’t combing your hair out each night.”

“No, thank you, it hurts me to have knots in my hair. Hey, if you’re so good at knots, do you think you could teach me to tie my shoe laces?”

“Sure,” said the little purple creature. So they went to her closet and found her sneakers, and at first the little creatures tied just a plain, even bow. Then they showed the little girl how to tie a double bow. Then, they tied an overhand, and a shank. Then they made more and more complicated knots, one after the other, until they finally had something that looked like a miniature skyscraper sticking straight out from the shoe.

“I don’t think I can do that one,” said the little girl. “Besides, I’d never get it undone when I want to take off my sneakers.”

“Oh, it’s easy and fun to undo it!” said the blue one, and they all busily went about dismantling the skyscraper. They were so happy they were giggling, and at the end they rolled over laughing as the last twist came out.

“Phew, that was fun!”

The little girl had an idea. “You like untying knots as much as tying them?”

“Why, yes, we do.”

“Why don’t you just untie the knots that get made in my hair at night, then? You could tie knots in my hair all you want, and it would really help me if you would undo the knots you find as well as the ones you make.” She paused. Then she smiled a sneaky smile, and added, “I bet they form so fast you could never keep up.”

“Why of course we could. We are the fastest knot untiers around!” said the leader of the creatures, insulted. Then he smiled. “And we’d be happy to,” he added.

So ever after that, the little girl’s hair was always silky smooth in the morning. And her mother came in and said, “See? That new detangler shampoo I got really helps keep the tangles away, doesn’t it?”

And the little girl just smiled knowingly and said, “Yes, mom. You’re absolutely right.”

THE END

Epilogue: Years later, when the little girl wanted to wear dreadlocks, the creatures were very helpful!