

Of Fairies and Monsters and Zombies – and the child within us all

An Event Review by Jill Johnson

The Story Swap at All for Kids Bookstore on October 13th was more than a little unusual. As the coordinator of the event, I got to the bookstore a bit early. The clerk asked me if I knew about the parents who were bringing their child to hear his story read. Parents? child? a story read? I knew nothing about any of this. Next Eden Bossom and her four year old son, Gabriel, showed up. We chatted for a few moments and then she asked me if I knew who was going to perform the story. Sheepishly, I shook my head. Was I supposed to? What in the world was going on? Then two more parents showed up: Lisa and Ken Schiely and their four year old daughter, Louise. As Gabriel and Louise fidgeted, Lisa explained - the story was written by both of the children. Someone had told them that they could come and bring the children to hear their story performed. I was now utterly lost.

Then John Wasco appeared: the mystery teller. And, slowly, the story began to unfold.

While at the C& P Coffeehouse, a popular coffee house in West Seattle, John had spotted a story taped to an espresso machine: “The Fairy, the Monster, the Zombie, and the Vampire” by Gabriel and Louise – August 15, 2006.” He read it with delight, asked George, an employee, who wrote it; and George told him. John asked if he could get a copy of the story. George hesitated; they would need someone’s permission to do that. So – George called Lisa, permission was granted for John to copy and tell the story, and both families were informed of when and where.

Before he began, John introduced the two children, explained the situation, and apologized for reading (as opposed to telling) the story. He also asked Gabriel and Louise’s indulgence if he didn’t “get the story right”. Then he read the story. And, as he did, the children were motionless, the whole audience was wonderfully attentive, and the parents beamed with pride.

To present the story, John said he tried to imagine himself as four years old. Then, he said, “I just got into it. Watching the kids – as I told it - was wonderful. Eyes wide... jaws open... they were transported.” I told him that the adults in the audience seemed to be transported as well. Experiencing that story with those children gave us all permission – even, if only for a moment - to become child-like; to think and feel as a child once again.

