

Mr. Twinkly Toes

By A. C. Zito

The storm didn't seem to be passing. Margaret was still crying. Robert didn't know what to do. Her stuffed animal of a little pink puppy could be anywhere along the trail they hiked earlier that day.

"I know. Sweetie; I know. Yes. Yes. Yes, of course." His wife was detailing every corner of the trail that they stopped to take a break as she and their daughter stayed in the car in the parking lot while he searched in the dark in the pouring rain with his flashlight. And what made it worse, the flashlight kept flickering on and off on him as his phone's battery was close to dying on him. If he got lost out in the middle of nowhere Robert didn't think twice about just sitting down and the pouring rain and getting a good five-minute cry in before he tried to stumble through the darkness and head on back.

"Are you sure we left it by that little creek?" Valery asked she stroked her daughter's head, trying to sooth her down. Robert whispered out angrily:

"I'm buying her a new one! I'm sure that stuffed animal is still at Cole's on the clearance rack!"

"Babe; it was on the *clearance* rack. *Clearance*, babe. *Clearance!*" Robert rubbed his temple with two of his free fingers as he let out one more stressful sigh before continuing his never-ending search. He was sure that the rain had already washed it away into some pile of mud that it *had* to be gone. Gone forever. Just like his little daughter's happiness. At least for the next two days until him and his wife finally buy her a big ice-cream cone with her favorite: moose tracks. He thought about yelling out the stuffed animal's name. Then he thought again: *What the heck! Why not?*

"MR. TWINKLE TOES! MR. TWINKLE TOES, WHERE ARE YOU?" He then heard his four year-old daughter's cute, little voice in the back of the phone chime in with him:

"Mwister Twinkie Toes, ware are yuuuu?" Robert felt his heart flutter at the sound of his daughter's voice. She was so *cute!* He just wanted to find Mr. Twinkle Toes for her. That's all he cared about. He wouldn't care if he lost his job tomorrow; or if he had stand in the pouring rain for ten days straight. As long as he found Mr. Twinkle Toes his life would be made.

His daughter did a couple more sniffles again as she began her silent crying again, trying to hold in the absence she had in her heart for her best friend in the whole wide world. Her rock to her ocean; her Sonny to her Cher; her Ketchup to her Mustard; her Rocky to her Adrian. Robert knew what he had to do. He had to find that stuffed animal.

He had already check the first two places they stopped to take a break and now there was only three more left: the creek, the bench with the view of the old willow tree, and the garden with the red and yellow roses. The creek was where Valery said they *had* to have left it but as he came closer and closer his heart fell right out of his chest. The stuffed animal was nowhere to be found. It slid into the

water and drifted to never-never land. Robert just knew it. But he had to keep hope. For his daughter, he had to keep hope.

Robert took one big leap and flew past the tiny creek and went further onward into the creepy darkness the trail laid in store for him. After what seemed like a quarter of mile more he finally came onto the scene where the bench faced the old, droopy willow tree. The moonlight shined on the tree with a beauty that made Robert want to linger and take in the jaw-dropping, magnificently eye-enticing spectacle. But he quickly shook off the God-given glory of His nature and move onward as Mr. Twinkly Toe was not anywhere near, around, or even close to its premises.

His pace picked up as his final destination was only minutes of an arm's reach.

"Please, oh God! Please! Please, please, please, *please!* I love my daughter, and I'd give my left arm and anything else you want from so help me God, just please bring Mr. Twinkly Toes back to us safe and sound! I'll work out more, I'll eat less cheeseburgers, maybe I'll even go vegan... or vegetarian... or pescatarian... gosh God maybe I *will* stop eating red meats just give us our Mr. Twinkly Toes back!" The rose garden neared in on his view, and he saw the beautiful array of flowers. The red and yellow arrangement of the roses made the most breathtaking of patterns.

Shuffle shuffle shuffle Robert squinted his eyes as he tried his best to peak into the thick shrubbery that were entangled and twisted and looped, having thorns sticking out in every which direction.

"That you, Mr. Twinkly Toe?" Obviously it wasn't, but Robert only said this from feeling a nervous tingling wash over his face and stopped him cold in his tracks. Suddenly, a bright yellow, furry creature popped out from a little tunnel etched out like it was woven precisely for the ugly fur ball. "What in the—" Robert didn't have time to finish his sentence. For as soon as he caught a glimpse of what was in the creature's mouth, he knew right from the get-go that it was Mr. Twinkly Toes.

A chase ensued as Robert ran off into the night to retrieve the night thief. What was it though? Robert hadn't the faintest of a clue. What he did know was that his adrenaline was pumping, and he had faith in the two legs connected to him that he would sometimes call, '*My two lightning bolts.*' The little *Speedy Gonzales* was faster than the rain hitting the ground. It curved and twisted to where soon enough it had Robert off the trail and into the dense forest terrain. He weaved to and fro skimming branch and jumping over mud puddle. He felt alive. He felt like the world was his oyster. And then he saw his chance. The animal began to slow its pace as the ground picked itself up on them. They were trudging their way up a hill and a big one at that. The closer they got to the top, the close he came to catching the little bugger.

Steady now, steady... steady yourself, Roberto the speedy wonder he loved calling himself: '*the speedy wonder.*' And this time he actually felt like he deserved the name. For right when the hill plateaued...

BAM! Robert wanted to scream in rage!

"*Nooo!*" He felt himself uttering painfully. The tree he collided into had him actually seeing *Tweety Bird* and a gang of his friends flying in circles above his caked-in-mud face.

"Baby?" Robert looked over and away from his delirium and over to see his wife. Was it really her? Could it be? Or was she just going to turn out to be another member of the *LooneyTunes* family.

"Valery?" His wife giggle and said:

"*Awww,*" as she came over to him and wiped the mud from his face.

"Daddy, Daddy!" Margaret came skipping out from where Valery came with a bundle in her hands.

"Is that my golf towel?" Robert asked as he got a better look at what she had. She shook her head gleefully, squealing out:

"NO! Daddy, it's a puppy!" And sure enough there wrapped in his golf towel was the furry creature he had been chasing.

"What's it got in its mouth?" Robert asked, curious now as he realized that it wasn't Mr. Twinkly Toes after all but, instead, a little blue ball. The puppy squeaked the toy in joy as the little girl cuddled up closer to it sighing, saying:

"I *knew* it would happen one day! I just *knew* it!" Robert and Valery looked at each other confused and then Valery asked:

"Knew what, sweetie?" Margaret perked up, her mouth opening wide into the biggest smile you've ever seen as she squealed out:

"That Mr. Twinkly Toes would come to *life!*" And neither her mom or dad denied this as they both stared at the little bundle of joy in amazement.