THE LAST TOOTH

Visual Development of an original dark Faerie Tale

by Melissa Koch
Our story begins with a story, or rather storytime. It's the time of day when Kay and her Grandmother can get moments of peace together. Kay's parents, being busy with the new infant, don't always have time for Kay. So Kay and Nana steal time every evening after dinner. They retreat to Kay's room and Nana spins tales of fairies, ghouls and old Irish tales.

Nana came from Ireland and so she has a wealth of knowledge of the Little People, or the Good folk, or as most people know them, fairies. Kay ever, curious and always ready to believe, asks a new questions every night. It was the 1920's, years before the brain sucking power of the television.

Around the time Kay is about to lose her last baby tooth, she asks Nana about where the Tooth Fairy comes from. Nana begins by telling about the old legends of Ireland, how she was told as a little girl to bury her teeth to prevent the Good People from taking her teeth, for if they were to get their hands on them, they could use the power of her teeth for sympathetic magic and influence her actions. This leads to a discussion about more of the Good People and then Nana mentions the dark ones and grows quiet.

Kay presses and Nana reveals that the Dark Ones have no other name. They are the darkest Fey creatures because they exist and function with nothing but selfish reasoning. Not evil necessarily, or malicious, just selfish, and will do anything to get what they want, whether those actions are good or bad. As Kay's eyes grow wider and wider with worry, Nana reassures her that she believes the Tooth Fairy is a benevolent fairy that came into existence to protect children from the power of the Dark Ones.

Little does either of them know that Kay will soon find out the truth for herself.
Once again, art imitates life. Nana is based off of my paternal grandmother, the namesake for our protagonist. She’s the lore keeper, the one who introduces the wonderful world of Faerie to Kay.

Her ever curious granddaughter is always asking about the magical world, and Nana is only too happy to tell the tales Kay craves. An artist with a fascination for nature, Nana’s favorite subject to paint is old Oak trees, the great giant oak which sits in back of the family provide ever present inspiration for paintings and stories.
Gestures
After experimenting a bit with different styles, I decided on a slightly stylized realistic style for my characters and her world. This would add to the creep factor of my designs as well as allow for some removal from the situations our poor protagonist finds herself in.
Expressions
Not only are mirrors important but I’ve also discovered the invaluable resource of Mommy Blogs. It was important to explore many expressions for Kay in order to portray her precocious nature as well as how vulnerable she can be.
It was important to me that the house have a charm to it and be a bit different than the houses that are usually found in fantasy storybooks, ie Victorians.

On the front design of the house you can see that there is a secondary entrance to the house. This room as an addition to the house that ended up creating a sort of independent apartment in the home for Nana.
Front and Rear Elevations.
Initial layout designs for Nana's room

Line Art

Value Study
I wanted to get across the feeling of a day-dreaming 8 year-old girl in the room. Rooms often reflect the personality of the person who inhabits it, and so she has drawings on the wall, many books on her shelves, and a dollhouse converted into an animal menagerie where she keeps various creatures she captures out in the woods.

I also added the touch of bell jars that have been converted into lanterns using lightning bugs. It adds a touch of magic to the room, which when absent at the end of the book would be that much more apparent.
When Kay encounters Simon a struggle occurs to gain back her bear. A tear develops below its arm.

Angered by the loss of his new treasure, Simon gives chase, but as it turns out, he is simply driving her closer toward the tooth fairy.
The design process for the tooth fairy involved starting with overall shape and silhouette. Once I decided on a silhouette it became a matter of developing the design. The idea was to create a being that is beautiful from afar and horrible to behold up close.

I started off with “young beauty,” and decided to push the age so she looks as if she has aged gracefully since she is an ancient creature.
Cast of Characters. Character line-up.