

SNOGGLEPUSS

Once upon a time there was a quiet young girl called Sylvie. Sylvie played away her youngest years with her best friend Snogglepuss. Snogglepuss had purple skin with yellow spots and a fluff of blue hair. He was even taller than a grown-up and had a beautifully crooked nose.

Snogglepuss lived in a hole in the big old oak tree at the bottom of Sylvie's garden. For many happy years the two friends climbed trees, played Tig, and made up stories about faraway lands.



Then one day, someone (she can't remember who) told Sylvie that Snogglepuss was an imaginary friend. Sylvie felt very cross that Snogglepuss had kept his imaginarieness a secret for all these years and ran to the bottom of the garden to find him. There he was, in his favourite place, sitting with his back pressed-up against the ancient oak.

'Hello,' he said in his funny party whistle voice, like nothing at all had changed.

That made Sylvie even crosser and she shook her fists all the way from her eyebrows to the tops of her thighs. Her face swelled up like a red balloon and she took a really big deep breath.

'You are not real, you are not real, you are not real,' she shouted (because she'd heard that saying it three times gets rid of fairies and thought it might work with imaginary friends too). And, right before her eyes, Snogglepuss faded, spot by spot, until he disappeared altogether.

A few days passed when every time she thought about Snogglepuss, she felt angry. But after a few weeks, Sylvie forgot that she was cross. Sylvie was bigger now and didn't have time to waste being angry with imaginary friends. In fact, after a few weeks, Sylvie didn't think much about her friend at all and soon Snogglepuss slipped out of her thoughts altogether.

Now Sylvie was bigger, she had friends who were little girls like her, not enormous purple friends with strange noses. Now Sylvie was bigger, she talked to her friends on the phone about important things like ballet and football results. Now Sylvie was bigger, she and her friends went to each other's houses and dressed up in their mums' going out clothes.

But then one day Mummy shouted at her, really loud so it hurt her ears. More than anything, Sylvie wanted to cuddle Snogglepuss and tell him how mean her mother had been. She wanted him to pull silly faces until he made her laugh. She didn't want to talk to her silly giggling friends in their silly high heels. She wanted her friend Snogglepuss.

Sylvie ran away from Mummy's angry face, tears splashing her cheeks, to the bottom of the garden. She reached the big old oak and looked around... But of course Snogglepuss wasn't there. She had sent him away. She had made him disappear. And who knew where he was now? How could she have been so horrid? Poor, poor Snogglepuss. Sylvie sat at the bottom of the tree and sobbed.

But as she sat there, eyes tight shut with crying, she heard a tiny little sound. 'Hello,' someone said, in a funny party whistle voice.

'You are real, you are real, you are real,' Sylvie cried and before her eyes, Snogglepuss appeared spot by spot, until his fluff of blue hair grazed the branch above him.

Snogglepuss flung his arms around her and in that moment Sylvie knew he was her very best friend of all.

Story by Becky Cherriman.
Image by Martyn Roper.