

The Fairy Chronicles #57 

Azure and the Butterfly Fairy Convention



J.H. Sweet

7-11

Age

3-4 Hours

Reading Time

The fairies of the Southwest region are all heading in different directions this summer. Special conventions of like-fairies such as moth, flower, bird, dragonfly, tree blossom, and bat have been organized all over the country. Azure and Pumpkinwing won't need to travel far because they are hosting the Butterfly Fairy Convention. However, when it becomes clear that some kind of evil force has taken over most of the attendees of this gathering, the local fairies end up in terrible danger. Meanwhile, on a special lone crusade, Daisy has opted to miss her Flower Fairy Convention. Thank goodness she decided to stay home because, fresh from her triumphant mission to save Troll Rock, she arrives at the Butterfly Fairy Convention just in time to help Azure and Pumpkinwing escape, so the three can try to put things to right.

Excerpted from The Fairy Chronicles Volume Four

ISBN 978-1-936660-08-7

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Azure and the Butterfly Fairy Convention

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Chapter One

The Fairy Conventions

This summer was going to be especially exciting for twelve-year-old Citrine Simmons. Since finding out that she was a fairy over spring break, Citrine had been busy for the last two months helping to plan the Butterfly Fairy Convention.

Citrine's fairy spirit was that of an azure butterfly, and she was called Azure by other fairies. In fairy form, Azure wore a shimmering blue dress with lacy sleeves. The gauzy dress had wispy fringes, instead of a hem, and fell to just below her knees. Her sapphire-blue wings were very tall and showy, and she wore a blue butterfly barrette to hold back her curly blond hair. Azure carried a fuzzy, sky-blue pipe cleaner for her wand; and her fairy gift involved telepathy. This was a very powerful gift, because she had the ability to send and receive mind messages across great distances. The telepathy related to both human beings and animals.

No one particularly knew why azure butterfly fairies were given this gift, though some speculated that it had something to do with the color blue, and a connection to the vast expanses of blue sky. This speculation was considered valid because during particularly cloudy or stormy days, the message-sending powers of azure butterfly fairies were not nearly as strong as they were on sunny and clear days. So

imagining that the mind could connect magically with the color of the sky was not too much of a stretch. Azure also had the other gifts common to most butterfly and moth fairies including strength, endurance, and the ability to attract or distract as needed.

The Butterfly Fairy Convention was not the only special event planned for the summer; in fact, seventeen conventions of like-fairies were set to take place at the same time in various parts of the country. The flower fairies were all heading to Vermont for the occasion. The Dragonfly Fairy Convention was set to take place in Louisiana. The moth fairies were all meeting in South Carolina. Idaho was hosting the Bat Fairy Convention. Both tree blossom fairies and bird fairies were meeting in Missouri, but in different cities. And the berry fairies were heading to Montana. Madam June Beetle and Ambrosia got very lucky with their convention because the beetle fairies were gathering in Hawaii. Of course, the parents of the convention attendees thought the girls were heading off to summer camps, band workshops, and such like.

Some of the fairies were going to conventions that weren't an exact fit as far as like-spirits, but this was necessary because they really couldn't organize a hundred fairy conventions. Harlequin, as the only snake fairy, was going with Madam Toad and Madam Chameleon to the Amphibian and Lizard Fairy Convention in Florida, since she couldn't really have a convention by herself. Silica, the glass fairy, was attending the Beetle Fairy Convention with Madam June Beetle and Ambrosia. This was a good fit for her because she was from Hawaii. Also, her original sand fairy spirit was very down-to-earth, like the spirits of beetle

fairies. As the only spider fairy, Arabesque chose to go to the Dragonfly Fairy Convention with Blue and Dragonfly. And Obsidian was planning to attend the Flower Fairy Convention since she also had a lilac fairy spirit. Her cousin in Indiana, Amber, was planning to meet her there.

Madam Swallowtail was Azure's mentor, but she had been very busy with other obligations in the last couple of months, so Azure was pretty much planning the Butterfly Fairy Convention on her own, with a little help from a couple of slightly older butterfly fairies. However, both Pumpkinwing and Dusty were also busy, with family events and school projects, so they weren't able to put as much time into planning the convention as Azure. This didn't bother Azure; she was happy to do most of the work herself, especially for such an important event.

Since Madam Swallowtail had been so busy throughout the spring and early summer, Luna was assigned as a kind of back-up mentor for Azure. Since Luna was now sixteen, many of the younger fairies looked to her for advice and guidance.

Luna's real name was Hope Valdez, and her spirit was that of a luna moth. She had pale green, glowing wings and wore a misty green dress and velvety slippers. Her wings had a soft pink edge with a curving tail and luminous eyespots. Her straight dark hair fell to just below her shoulders, and she carried a thorn from a prickly pear cactus for her wand. In addition to strength and endurance, Luna's fairy gifts included extraordinary eyesight and the ability to perform fairy magic without a wand. Her sight gift also allowed her to see things for what they really were. She was not easily deceived by appearances, since things

were not always what they seemed to be. Luna was the only fairy known to possess the gift of the ability to perform fairy magic without a wand, and this made her one of the most powerful fairies ever created.

Some of the younger fairies considered Luna to be somewhat strict, and they were a little afraid of her. But not Azure. She got along well with Luna, and looked up to her. Azure understood the need to follow rules, to be fair, and to be careful, which was what Luna was mainly focused on.

This was a cloudy Tuesday morning, and Azure was on her way to meet up with Pumpkinwing. Macy Parker was now fourteen. She had light brown hair, and her fairy dress and slippers were made of orange velvety fuzz. Her wings were a creamy orange color with soft brown accents, and she carried a purple tulip wand. In addition to the gifts of strength, endurance, and endless energy, Pumpkinwing could also attract and distract as needed, just like Azure, due to the vibrant colors of her wings and dress. Even though she hadn't had much free time lately to spend on fairy projects, Pumpkinwing was helping Azure plan out the last-minute details of the Butterfly Fairy Convention scheduled for Friday.

In addition to meeting new friends from all over the country, the convention would focus on plans to help the environment, along with unique uses of fairy gifts and magic. The fairies were also going to have guest speakers. A local witch named Drucilla, who was an expert on butterflies, was giving a presentation. An illusionist named Mr. Charades was set to perform a short magic show for them. And Mr. Dusel, a garden gnome, was giving a talk

on planting special flowers to attract both hummingbirds and butterflies.

The fairies were also having a party beforehand, on Wednesday evening. Both Pumpkinwing and Azure were very excited about the expected guests and planned activities.

Chapter Two

Troll Rock

Meanwhile, on the same cloudy Tuesday morning, Suzanne Mortimer, who liked to be called Susie, was out about town gathering last-minute signatures on a petition.

Susie was also a fairy and had been given the fairy spirit of a Shasta daisy. Daisy was the same age as Azure, and the girls went to the same school. Her fairy dress was made of brilliant white daisy petals, and she wore a daisy-covered headband to pull back her auburn hair. Rows of perky and sunny Shasta daisies encircled her waist and covered the shoulder straps of her dress. She also had bright yellow wings and soft slippers to match. Daisy carried a special set of three wands, instead of just one. A local witch, with an extreme love for daisies, had made the set for her. The wands were gerber daisies, also known as gerbera daisies, and the flowers were of three different colors—bright orange, deep pink, and lemon yellow.

Because daisies were such vigorous and bright plants, Daisy's gift related to this. She was always bubbling with energy, good ideas, and a bright outlook on life. Since daisies were also a flower of love and passion, Daisy had a very passionate nature, especially about things she really believed in. Whenever she came to support a particular cause, she did so with an ardent fervor and energy. She often surprised her family and friends with the intensity of her passionate nature when it came to things she felt strongly about.

Currently, Daisy was on a mission to save Troll Rock, a local mystical boulder situated in the middle of a hilly field near the edge of a large forest. For as long as anyone could remember, magical stories had been told about the stone. Over the years, several people claimed to have seen a creature, very much like a troll, in the area of the boulder on dark nights. Since many people believed in magical spirits, even without actual proof of their existence, numerous local people embraced the magic and wonder of Troll Rock. Stories about a troll living inside the rock were circulated, and claims of the nighttime sightings continued.

Three weeks ago, Daisy had actually met a troll named Mr. Trefas who lived in a secret cave under Troll Rock. While flying about after dark, she had seen a small light near the boulder, so she decided to investigate. The light turned out to be from a tiny lantern carried by a garden gnome named Mr. Tibbons.

Moonlight from the quarter-moon softly illuminated the boulder on this night; and as she neared, Daisy discovered a gathering of both magical and non-magical creatures on the far side of Troll Rock.

Mr. Trefas was sitting on a lower ledge of the boulder, and the others of the gathering were seated on the ground in front of him. In addition to Mr. Tibbons, Red Zipper, a blue heeler dog belonging to brownie brothers Dennis and Brian, was there. The gatherers also included two rabbits, a skunk, a family of bobolink birds, a fairy tern, and a grue named Ruse.

Mr. Trefas was a storyteller, and many local creatures came to hear his stories. The storytelling was just beginning on this night, and Daisy was invited to join the

gathering. Nothing was more fun than sitting in the soft grass and listening to stories by moonlight.

The troll loved to tell stories, mainly magical ones, of princesses and dragons, ghosts and goblins, and enchanted flowers and meadows. His tales made the spirits of trees and tall mountains come to life in the minds of his listeners. On that night, he told a story of a pure white phoenix, and another about a woman whose hair grew so long that she made a house out of the braids.

Most other trolls lived farther North, so Mr. Trefas didn't have very many friends, other than the ones who came to hear his stories. Some magical creatures came from far places to attend storytime. The ghouls from the Ship of Pools had recently made a special trip to hear the troll's tales.

Daisy attended troll storytime again, several nights after the first time, on an evening when she wouldn't be missed from home. A wood gnome named Mr. Ambertoes was there on that night, along with a fox, three field mice, a sooty owl, a trow named Murk, and Pernilla—Spiderwort's calico cat.

Two nights after Daisy's second troll storytime, she came again. A garden gnome named Mr. Wimple had brought his wife and two children. A family of squirrels also attended, along with a mockingbird, a sparrow, and Lucky, a dachshund living with Mr. Forrester on Bloomsbury Boulevard. A shy water pixie named Ren flew in just after Daisy arrived. The listeners loved the slightly scary story of a bewitched hair ribbon that made its wearer tell lies. The next story wasn't scary, but it was somewhat

sad because the tale was about a dryad who fell in love with a spirit trapped in a stone.

When the dryad story ended, and the members of the gathering were heading to their homes, Mr. Trefas asked Daisy to stay behind for a moment.

As soon as the others had left, Mr. Trefas said, “Troll Rock is in trouble.” When Daisy scrunched up her eyebrows in confusion, he explained, “The new highway is going to cut right through this field. Construction is set to begin in September.”

Daisy was surprised by this news. She hadn’t heard about the plans for the new highway. But local road-building wasn’t something she kept up with.

“I don’t want to have to move,” said Mr. Trefas. “I have lived here for forty-three years, and my grandfather lived in the cave before me.” After sighing and shaking his head, he added, “I know there’s really no way to stop progress, but I do know a little something about fairies. I know that they are problem solvers and fixers. Is there anything that can be done about this problem, to fix it? Troll Rock has been here forever. It would be a shame to have it blasted away to make room for the highway. That’s what they do to rocks that are in the way of progress; they just blast them away.”

Daisy was very distressed by this news, and she wanted to help, if she could. But she was going to have to think about this for a bit, in order to try to come up with some good ideas. Promising to come back again, when she had made some progress on the matter, Daisy left Mr. Trefas and flew slowly home, already trying to get her brain into storming mode to begin working on the problem.

The next morning, she began gathering signatures on a petition, and she made plans to attend the very next City Council Meeting, because the City Council had some influence on the City Planning Committee involved in zoning and growth issues relating to new neighborhoods, business, and roads.

The next City Council Meeting happened to be scheduled for the evening before the day of the various fairy conventions. However, Daisy had no problem missing the trip to the Flower Fairy Convention. To her, the opportunity to save Troll Rock was much more important.

Chapter Three

The Butterfly Party

Most of the area fairies departed on Tuesday and Wednesday in order to make it to the various conventions set to take place on Friday.

On Wednesday evening, the butterfly fairies gathered at Madam Monarch's house for the pre-convention Butterfly Party. Madam Mariposa wasn't attending the party or the Butterfly Fairy Convention because she had decided to go with her granddaughters, Teasel and Moonflower, to the Flower Fairy Convention. Dusty also was not going to attend the local convention because she and her sister, Morning Glory, were on a summer trip with their parents. So Azure, Pumpkinwing, Madam Monarch, and Madam Swallowtail were the only local butterfly fairies hosting the party and convention.

The decorations for the party were elegant, bright, and beautiful. Bewitched, butterfly-shaped balloons sailed about. Scrolling ribbons adorned with butterflies also drifted through the air. Since Madam Monarch planted many flowers specifically to attract butterflies, the back yard was filled with the beautiful, flitting creatures. Some of the butterflies also decided to visit Mrs. Hannigan's back yard, two doors down, just to give her a thrill, since she was such a butterfly lover.

Both inside and out, enchanted pastel soap bubbles in the shapes of butterflies floated about. They looked like

puffy glass butterflies, and because of the enchantment, the bubbles took a very long time to pop.

The food of the party was butterfly themed, and included various butterfly-shaped cookies, cakes, candies, and sandwiches. All of the goodies were served on plates with a butterfly motif. And the napkins were folded into butterfly shapes as well. Pumpkinwing's mother had a gelatin mold shaped like a butterfly, so Pumpkinwing had made an orange gelatin butterfly with mandarin oranges inside. Azure had made macaroons in the shapes of butterflies, and she had used food coloring to make the cookies blue.

Madam Cloudless, whose spirit was that of a cloudless sulfur butterfly, was one of the party attendees. She was known to the local fairies because she had visited the area several times before.

Azure was fascinated by another blue butterfly fairy, with dark gray accents, whose spirit was that of a pipevine swallowtail. There was also a black-and-white-striped zebra swallowtail fairy. A Cramer's eighty-eight butterfly fairy had the most unusual markings of those at the gathering. Her rounded wings had a pattern of circles surrounding markings that looked like the number eighty-eight. Another guest had the spirit of a hackberry emperor butterfly. Her dress and wings were a creamy gray color with white accents. A red rim butterfly fairy had bright red accents on her jet-black wings.

Many of the visiting fairies' chosen names were very interesting. The pipevine swallowtail fairy preferred to be called PV. The zebra swallowtail was known as Zee. The hackberry emperor had chosen the name Madam Empress.

The red rim fairy liked to be called Red. And the Cramer's eighty-eight was known as Eighty-Eight.

Another fairy was given the spirit of a Gulf fritillary. Her dress and wings were a soft beige and pale orange color, with white spots. She liked to be called Fritillary. A Delaware skipper, the exact color of orange marmalade, was known as Skipper. And a common wood nymph butterfly, soft gray in color, with even softer gray striping, preferred to be called Nymph.

One of the visiting fairies had been given the spirit of a rare butterfly not yet identified by human beings. When discovered, the butterfly would eventually be known as a lambswool skipper, because it was a very light-colored version of a sheep skipper, being more of a cloudy white color, instead of gray. The lambswool skipper fairy liked to be called Cotton.

There were several other visiting butterfly fairies. However, Azure and Pumpkinwing, who were helping with the games and refreshments, didn't have time to visit with them now. The girls hoped they would have more time to get to know the guests at the convention on Friday.

Madam Monarch's yellow cat, Maximillion, was wearing a small set of butterfly wings for the occasion. He thoroughly enjoyed the party, being petted and fussed over by so many pretty fairies.

Before it got dark, several of the visitors donned blindfolds to try to break a butterfly piñata hung up on the back porch. Eighty-Eight was the one who struck the blow that caused the piñata to break and give up its treasures. The fairies scrambled to gather the candy and toys raining down upon the porch.

After playing a few other party games, the local fairies gave away several door prizes, including a fairy-friendly jigsaw puzzle with pictures of butterflies. The pieces of the puzzle were all triangular in shape. Since it was not made with a jigsaw, and had all straight lines, the puzzle was not afflicted with the goblin curse that trapped fairies in jigsaw puzzles. Madam Monarch had performed a test on it to make sure the puzzle was completely safe.

Other door prizes included butterfly kites, a butterfly and moth encyclopedia, framed pictures of enlarged butterfly photographs, a butterfly journal, and milkweed seeds. (Milkweed plants attract monarch butterflies.) The local fairies were saving several other special door prizes to give away at the convention on Friday.

While they were visiting, enjoying refreshments, and playing games, Madam Monarch and Madam Swallowtail took many pictures of the fairies in fairy form. Since the photographs would look just like regular butterflies, because the disguise magic of fairies extended to cameras, no one would ever be able to see the fairies. However, the pictures would be nice keepsakes for the partygoers, who would privately know that the butterflies in the pictures were actually fairies.

After three hours of fun, the party ended, and the visiting fairies all left Madam Monarch's house to head back to the hotel where they were staying.

Since the convention was scheduled for Friday, most of the out-of-town guests were going sightseeing on Thursday. Some planned to see the Alamo, along with a few other missions and museums in San Antonio. Several others were heading to Austin for shopping, dining, and other fun.

But they were looking forward to gathering once again at the convention.

While bidding their guests farewell on the front porch, Azure and Pumpkinwing noticed that the night seemed darker than normal, and strangely cold, and they wondered if a storm might be about to roll in.

After helping Madam Monarch and Madam Swallowtail clean up, Azure and Pumpkinwing left through the back door to fly to their homes.

Chapter Four

The City Council Meeting

On Thursday evening, Daisy was nervous, but very determined. The petition with nearly three hundred signatures was clasped in her sweaty palms, along with her note cards, as she waited for the meeting to begin.

She had to sit through several other issues, which didn't particularly interest her, such as switching garbage and recycle pick-up days for a particular area of town, and the details of a charity event planned for later in the year at Kraft Park. But the almost monotonous tone of these discussions helped to calm her nervousness somewhat.

Though she was a little sad to be missing the Flower Fairy Convention, Daisy was happy to have the chance to help Mr. Trefas. However, she had been struggling with exactly how to present her case. Just getting the issue on the agenda for the City Council Meeting had been tricky. However, with the help of her parents and Madam Chameleon, Daisy had composed a passionate but to-the-point letter, pleading to be heard on the issue of protecting one of the town's natural treasures, otherwise known as Troll Rock.

Individual council members and concerned citizens had only three minutes each to speak on any given subject, which was why Daisy had struggled so much with exactly how to explain her position and present a strong case.

Focusing on the faces of the council members helped to calm Daisy further as she tried to organize her thoughts to coincide with the note cards she was studying. At the far end of the meeting table in the front of the room sat a very familiar face. Daisy was surprised to discover that a local witch, Queen Violet Gladiola, was on the council. Of course, the non-magical townspeople only knew the witch as Ms. Violet Gladiola, owner of the *Sixth Street Flower Shop*. But the area fairies knew that she was the queen (which meant head member) of the Society of Gardening Witches.

Though she knew that Queen Gladiola would have to act like a regular person, instead of a witch, during this meeting, Daisy felt that her presence was a good sign. This was at least moral support, even if Ms. Gladiola couldn't do or say anything magical.

In preparing her presentation, Daisy's main dilemma had been how to convince the council members without giving away that she was a fairy who knew a troll. She really needed to present a logical case, instead of just a magical one, to convince the members that Troll Rock was worth saving. So she focused on the history of the boulder and the field in which it was situated, without mentioning the troll aspect at first.

The community members attending the meeting all gave their speeches by simply standing up in front of their seats.

“When I was in grade school,” Daisy began, “we took a field trip to study wildflowers and see Troll Rock. Our teacher told us that President Lyndon B. Johnson had once driven from Johnson City just to have a picnic there. The

magnificent wildflowers in this area are part of the reason Mrs. Johnson was inspired set up her wildflower center. The field surrounding Troll Rock is one of the best bluebonnet photo spots in the whole state because it is so hilly and beautiful. Many tourists come each spring to take pictures.

“Also,” Daisy continued, “people sit atop Troll Rock to view the migrating monarch butterflies each year, both in March and in October. It is a tradition. I have watched the monarchs myself from Troll Rock, with my friends. We need to preserve our traditions and legends,” she added, earnestly. “Many Native American legends, full of meaning and mysticism, are similar to the stories told about Troll Rock. There is an important hero tale relating to the stone. About sixty years ago, a troll saved a little girl who was lost in the woods near the boulder. He kept her warm and led her to the police station. The same troll might not be living at Troll Rock right now, but maybe another nice troll is.”

The end of Daisy’s three minutes was nearing, so she sped up her words slightly. “Since legends and magic have long been a part of our culture, they should be considered important to our community. They are worth preserving, and Troll Rock is good for our imagination. Some of the most important discoveries of the world have been made because people were thinking in creative and magical ways, and because people were willing to take chances on things. I think we should try to preserve good things like this about our town.”

Daisy took a deep breath before finishing with, “As far as the issue of the troll...if he really does exist, we should take care not to destroy his home.”

Next, Daisy presented two witnesses, who had once sighted the troll. She had met Mrs. Davis and her five-year-old son while gathering the petition signatures, and they offered to come to the City Council Meeting to support her cause. They too wanted to save Troll Rock. The witnesses were each to be given three minutes to speak on behalf of this issue.

The boy’s name was Terrence, and he was happy to tell the council members what he knew about the troll. His eyes were nearly as large as saucers as he began. “We had a flat tire. So we had to walk by the big Troll Rock. I saw the troll. Mom saw the troll too. He was taller than me, but he was shorter than my dad.” Terrence took a deep breath, and went on. “He wore green, and he had an orange shirt.” After a short pause, the boy finished very emphatically with, “He did *not* have a hat!”

Since it was obvious that Terrence was finished speaking, Mrs. Davis rose to say, “Other than to confirm what my son just told you as the truth, because I saw the troll too on that night, and he definitely did not have a hat, I would like to donate the rest of my three minutes to Susie Mortimer, so she can tell you a little more about trolls.” With this, Mrs. Davis sat back down.

In addition to what she knew first-hand about trolls, Daisy had done some research. She started with, “Few people can see trolls, even when the creatures are out and about at night, because trolls blend in so well with nature.

Many people might have actually seen the troll of Troll Rock, and not even known that they had seen him.

“In other countries,” Daisy added, “such as Iceland and Norway, where trolls are even more common, the people plan their highways and communities around magical rocks believed to harbor troll spirits, so they won’t disturb the trolls, or interfere with the magic in the world. We need magic, and we need to be able to believe in magic, especially in our troubled times. With everything stressful going on in the world today, magical things such as this help to give us hope.”

A couple of the council members smiled encouragingly at her as she went on. “Just like the people in those other countries, we too should try to protect things that are magical, and natural wonders with so much history. If we blast the rock, or move the rock, or dig around the rock, we might destroy something very wonderful and magical. And I don’t think we should take that chance.”

After a short pause, Daisy finished with, “I have nearly three hundred signatures of people who support this cause. Would it be possible to change the plan for the highway, slightly? Just by a few hundred feet would do it, so that Troll Rock can stay as is, undisturbed.”

Next, another witness to a troll sighting near Troll Rock came forward. When she had first met the woman, Daisy was in two minds about asking her to speak at the City Council Meeting. Ms. Bankse was a ditzy red-haired woman who lived next to an evil warlock on the South side of town. Since she wore too much make-up, flashy clothes, and acted very flighty, Ms. Bankse didn’t seem nearly as credible as Mrs. Davis and Terrence. However, Daisy

decided that every bit of support would be good for the cause, no matter how credible. And how credible were people claiming to have seen trolls anyway?

Smacking her chewing gum loudly, and smiling very broadly, Ms. Bankse rose to speak. “I never saw the troll myself, but my Aunt Velma did, twenty years ago. But she’s passed on now. Anyway...Aunt Velma said he was about four feet tall, with bushy blond hair and eyebrows. She was walking in the moonlight through the field. The troll smiled and waved to her, and she waved back.”

After a short pause, with everyone in the room looking at her expectantly, Ms. Bankse stated, “That’s all. I believed her. I think she really saw the troll. Aunt Velma was never one to tell stories.”

Chapter Five

Queen Violet Gladiola

No one from the community came forward to speak against what Daisy was proposing. And since there were no additional witnesses, or others wanting to speak in support of the cause, the issue was turned over to the council for discussion.

Unfortunately, one of the council members, a tall gentleman with sandy blond hair, raised the issue of the cost of diverting the highway, even by a few hundred feet. He spent his entire three minutes explaining how difficult it would be to juggle the funds to resurvey and reengineer the whole project. He finished with, “I just don’t think it is feasible to hinder progress for the sake of a boulder. There are a lot of other large rocks in the area. If we divert our roads every time we run into one that someone wants to save, we’d never build any highways, or they would all be zigzags or spirals, or some other impractical shapes, not fit to drive on.”

Before any of the other panel members could embark on further issues of budget, or other reasons to oppose diverting the highway slightly, Councilwoman Violet Gladiola raised her hand to give her three-minute opinion.

“We can’t deny that there is magic in the world,” she began, “though the true magic of the world is likely not the kind we see in magic shows, on stage, or on television. And the real magic of the world is also probably not similar

to what we read about in fantasy books. I personally think the magic is in the nature surrounding us. How could anyone look at a butterfly or a flower and not believe in magic? And who really knows what magical spirits live in trees, rocks, flowers, and other natural objects?"

Ms. Gladiola smiled as she went on. "Because so much destruction of nature occurs with our growth and progress, we should try to protect things that are possible to protect, whenever we can, especially things that might be magical. We cannot deny that Troll Rock has a long history of legend. The troll stories have been told for many years. This is not a case of someone suddenly deciding to make up a story to save a rock that had no legend or history attached to it previously. I remember the stories from way back when I was a girl.

"Aside from the history of the rock," the queen continued, "and the possibility that it holds magic or is home to a magical spirit or creature, the boulder is very beautiful to look at. When we have something that is very aesthetically pleasing in our community, we should try to preserve and protect it. I believe we should vote to divert the road by a quarter-mile. I think we can spare the funds to do this, and I would be happy to serve on both the Planning and Budget Committees to facilitate this. I believe resituating the road is feasible because it would not conflict with any other current construction plans, or private property, since all of the land on that side of the railroad tracks is city owned."

Ms. Gladiola evidently knew what she was talking about because when the council voted on the issue, all but one member, the tall blond man, agreed to divert the

highway by one quarter-mile. And that was enough of a majority to make it happen without any further discussion.

As Daisy left the meeting, Queen Violet Gladiola winked at her.

Chapter Six

The Day of the Convention

Azure had arranged for the Butterfly Fairy Convention to take place at a local activity center. She had reserved the entire second floor, which had three large meeting rooms, for this purpose, so they would have plenty of space, and so they wouldn't be disturbed.

However, when the guests began to arrive, both Azure and Pumpkinwing noticed something very strange about their fellow butterfly fairies. For one thing, after *popping* into fairy form upon reaching the privacy of the second floor, both Madam Swallowtail and Madam Monarch appeared to be moving about in somewhat of a strange manner. They seemed very stiff when walking. And instead of their usual flying style, which was normally very flitty and floaty, they both looked as though they were struggling to stay airborne, almost as if they were carrying a lot of extra weight. Since the fairy mentors looked pretty normal, otherwise, Pumpkinwing and Azure couldn't account for the strange flying style and walking movement.

Also, early arrivals Zee and Madam Empress did not smile at all when picking up the Schedule of Events and their tote bags full of goodies. And both Fritillary and Cotton actually glared at Azure and Pumpkinwing when they arrived, leaving the local fairies to wonder what they possibly could have done to upset or offend their new friends.

However, when Azure gave Eighty-Eight, Red, and Skipper their numbered tickets for the door-prize drawings, the three visiting fairies smiled pleasantly. This made Azure feel somewhat better, until she caught Skipper staring very coldly at her several moments later.

Madam Cloudless and Nymph were standing by the table containing the door prizes, which were very special and consisted of a butterfly quilt, a wristwatch with butterflies circling the numbers, a butterfly lamp, and a silver brooch shaped like a butterfly. When Pumpkinwing approached the table to talk to the guests, the two moved quickly away, as though they didn't want to speak to her.

Since it was almost ten o'clock, Azure was beginning to wonder why Mr. Dusel hadn't arrived yet, since he was the first scheduled guest speaker.

She wasn't going to have long to wonder about what was keeping the gnome. As soon as all of the guest fairies had arrived, and Pumpkinwing and Azure had moved into the room, away from the door leading to downstairs, Madam Monarch and Eighty-Eight locked the exit door with a key. Azure and Pumpkinwing noticed this, and were about to tell Madam Monarch that Mr. Dusel was expected and that the door needed to remain unlocked. However, something in Madam Monarch's eyes made them both back quickly away from the older fairy. The look was icy and almost hateful.

Glancing about the room, Azure and Pumpkinwing noticed the same look in all of the other fairies' eyes. With the coldness of these expressions, and the stiff mannerisms, the room itself suddenly became very cold and stiff. And

the coldness in the air was not due to the air conditioning setting. Something was terribly wrong!

Unable to account for the odd behaviors of their friends, Azure and Pumpkinwing were not going to stick around to try to figure things out right now, because they could very much sense enormous danger in this situation. However, they were currently in a slight state of panic because the exit door was both locked and blocked by the numerous other fairies in the room.

In an instant, the two normal fairies fled into the adjoining conference room. The other butterfly fairies swiftly followed them. Inside the second meeting room, which was slightly smaller than the first and didn't have an exit door of its own because it was meant to adjoin the larger room, the girls took refuge inside a storage closet. There hadn't been time to try to flee through the windows because the other fairies were right behind them.

Inside the closet, Pumpkinwing and Azure propped a broom against the door. Changing into regular girl form, they also wedged a dustpan under the bottom crack and stacked two boxes of copy paper against the door, to hopefully keep the other fairies from entering while they frantically tried to think of what to do. The girls *popped* back into fairy form to keep watch through the keyhole at the others trying to get at them.

The answer as to what was wrong with their friends was pretty simple. The butterfly fairies were currently possessed by the spirits of genies from an evil land called NetherSek. The genies had taken over the fairies after the Butterfly Party on Wednesday evening. Azure and Pumpkinwing got missed because they left through the

back door of Madam Monarch's house. The genies had caught most of the fairies as they were leaving. Then they entered the house to possess Madam Monarch and Madam Swallowtail after Pumpkinwing and Azure had left. Using their own brand of magic, and with help from a demon in the form of thought called Malatrocious, the genies were able to take over the bodies and minds of the fairies in order to possess them.

Realizing that there were still two other butterfly fairies in the area, as yet unpossessed, the genie-possessed fairies quickly made their own plans for the Butterfly Fairy Convention. The gnome, witch, and illusionist guests were immediately cancelled. Malatrocious and the genies wanted to be able to take over the final two butterfly fairies, then wait until the rest of the area fairies returned from their respective conventions to infiltrate further. This was a prime area to target, as far as taking over fairies, because the region had a higher concentration of fairies than any other place in the world. And taking over powerful magical beings such as fairies, who were always doing good and fighting evil, was necessary to Malatrocious' wicked plans. Most demons were intent on causing human misery, and Malatrocious was the worst of the worst, as far as his plans to torture and torment mankind whenever possible.

Meanwhile, inside the closet, Azure and Pumpkinwing were trying to think of what to do. They could hear the others trying to get in. Eventually, with so many fairies, and because the fairies all had strength gifts, those outside were going to be able to open the door.

Azure was thinking that if Luna hadn't been gone to her Moth Fairy Convention, she would have been able to tell

instantly that something was wrong, because of her sight gift. Then they would have been able to escape right away, and they would not have become trapped in this closet. But thinking about what might have happened wasn't going to help them now.

Fortunately, it was taking some time for the other fairies to break in, because they currently didn't seem to know how to use their wands properly. Through the keyhole, Azure and Pumpkinwing observed Madam Swallowtail point her wand at the door to try to produce an energy burst. However, the white clover blossom barely sputtered and gave off only the tiniest spark. Red tried to use her polished splinter of olive wood to do the same, but she had no success either. At this time, it seemed the fairies didn't know how to channel energy through their wands to produce streams or bursts of energy. This was strange because most fairies were capable of shooting either sparks or fireballs from their wands when needed.

However, the strength gifts of the fairies were obviously working perfectly because they were making great progress by pushing on the door. The copy paper boxes had already slid back nearly an inch, and the dustpan was really scraping and straining against the floor. Soon, the handle of the broom began to bow, and the door finally gave several inches, allowing the possessed butterfly fairies to enter the closet. Once inside, they grabbed Azure and Pumpkinwing and dragged them outside, where they took their wands and pinned them against the wall.

Two genies floated next to the swarm of currently-evil fairies, ready to take possession of the final two.

Though Pumpkinwing and Azure had never encountered genies before, they knew what genies looked like by the descriptions they had been given by their mentors and handbooks. Since NetherSek was recently recognized as a very definite threat, all of the fairies had lately been given information about Malatrocious and the genies under his influence.

Though genies were shapeshifting and were able to take nearly any form, even to the point of impersonating people, they had to expend enormous amounts of energy to change their shapes and appearances. So they preferred to remain in their true state, as these were today. Though the genies appeared to be made of colorful and cloudy vapors, they were about the same size and shape of regular people. However, instead of having legs, the lower torsos of the floating apparitions tapered off into what looked like trailing tails. Since genies most often liked to float and sail about, they didn't particularly need legs, so not having them helped to save their energy.

This human shape with a trailing tail was the form many ghouls also preferred to take. However, ghouls were mainly of a pea green or sickly yellow color, whereas, genies were most often brightly multicolored. And their cloudy colors seemed to be everchanging. The genies also wore vapory clothing consisting of stringy tunics, vests, and wide belts in mostly solid colors. The two genies floating in front of Azure and Pumpkinwing looked a lot alike, except for streaky variations in their colors. However, one looked more like a male genie based on his hair and facial structure, and the other looked more female because she had slightly longer hair and more delicate features.

Pulling a round-shaped crimson crystal, attached to a gold chain, from her pocket, the female genie dangled the pendant in front of the faces of the two as-yet-unpossessed fairies, while the evil fairies kept them pinned to the wall.

The crimson crystal had an immediate effect on Pumpkinwing and Azure. At the very instant they saw the first red glint, the girls became very sleepy. The crystal was a powerful genie tool designed to soften and fatigue the mind in order to make other beings susceptible to mind infiltration and body possession. It seemed the two fairies were doomed to suffer the same fate as their friends.

However, Azure and Pumpkinwing were about to get a little help in their efforts to resist becoming possessed by the genies. Since Daisy had to miss her Flower Fairy Convention to attend the City Council Meeting, Pumpkinwing had invited her to join the Butterfly Fairy Convention.

Daisy arrived at the activity center, in an incredibly happy and bouncy mood, anxious to tell her friends about the results of the City Council Meeting. She was also looking forward to meeting the visiting butterfly fairies and having fun at the convention. However, she had arrived slightly late because she had helped her mother with the housework before leaving for the day of fun and frolic.

When she arrived on the second floor, the locked door didn't surprise her at all. In fact, she thought the door to the Butterfly Fairy Convention was probably locked for privacy, so that no non-magical people would disturb the fairies. Undeterred, Daisy quickly used one of her wands to perform an *Unlocking Spell* to gain entrance; then she used a *Locking Spell* to secure the door again behind her.

Finding the first meeting room empty, but hearing noises from the second, she passed through the empty room in search of her friends. Upon reaching the second room, and discovering the fairies all hovering together near the closet on the far side of the room, she loudly announced, “Troll Rock is saved!”

Daisy smiled a brilliant and bubbly smile as she made her way toward the area of the closet. She noticed the genies floating next to the hovering fairies, but thought they were probably expected guests of the convention. And since not all genies of the world were evil, she had no reason to think there was anything particularly wrong with this scene. Daisy didn’t realize anything was off until she moved a little closer to the group and saw the frightened and sleepy expressions on the faces of Pumpkinwing and Azure, who were still pinned to the wall. So she asked, “What are you all up to? Is this some sort of hiding or closet game?”

With all eyes now on Daisy, who had reached the exact center of the room, Azure and Pumpkinwing were able to shake off their sleepiness. Using all of their strength, they loosed themselves from their captors and grabbed their wands. Then they quickly flew straight up, above the other butterfly fairies and the genies, and zoomed across the room and out the door into the first meeting room.

Daisy had finally realized something was terribly wrong, but she couldn’t move. As she hovered in the middle of the room, with her mouth hanging open, facing the advancing fairies and genies, Azure swooped back into the room and yelled, “Daisy, fly! Hurry up! Follow me!”

This was all it took to get her unstuck. She quickly flew back into the first meeting room.

Pumpkinwing had succeeded in getting the exit door unlocked. However, the genies and possessed fairies were too close to Daisy. They were gaining on her and were going to catch her because most flower fairies couldn't fly quite as fast as insect fairies.

In an effort to distract and slow down the pursuers, Azure streaked across the room toward one of the windows. Then she zoomed back. Her ploy worked. The possessed fairies and genies slowed down, as their eyes followed the blue flash across the room and back.

Both Daisy and Azure were able to make it through the exit door before the pursuers reached them, where Pumpkinwing used a *Locking Spell*, securing the door, to hopefully delay the pursuit further. Then the three fairies sped down the stairs to exit a side door on the first floor.

Chapter Seven

Luna Returns

After leaving the building, the three fairies hid amongst the dense foliage of a nearby stretch of woods. They still had a view of the activity center from this position, which was good because they wanted to be able to keep an eye on things while they tried to figure out what to do.

Azure's earlier thoughts about Luna proved very useful in this situation because she suddenly knew what they needed to do. Since she couldn't ask the help of her mentor right now, because Madam Swallowtail was one of the fairies currently possessed, Azure told Pumpkinwing and Daisy, "I'm going to try to contact Luna using my telepathy gift."

"Good idea," said Daisy.

"But she's so far away right now," said Pumpkinwing. "She'd never be able to make it here to help us."

"She can give us advice," countered Azure, "because I can receive mind messages too."

"Oh, that's right," said Pumpkinwing. "Then it *is* a good idea."

Though she had had very little practice with her fairy gift, and had no idea if she could make her power extend all the way to South Carolina, Azure hoped that she would somehow be able to reach Luna with a mind message. When she had practiced her gift before with Madam Swallowtail, she had to hover to send her thoughts into the

sky. For some reason, her gift didn't work when her feet were touching the earth. Rising about three inches off the ground, Azure closed her eyes to concentrate. Then, taking her brain to an alert but peaceful spot, she sent the message as strongly as possible.

Luna received the telepathic words almost instantly. And Azure's message was much like a powerful headache coming on all of a sudden, due to the imperative and frantic intensity of the words. *Luna! We desperately need your help! All of the butterfly fairies are in terrible trouble. We are in the woods outside of the activity center on Castell Street!*

Luna didn't hesitate in responding. *Hang on! I'm coming!*

As soon as Azure received the response, she landed next to Daisy and Pumpkinwing. Smiling, she told them, "She's on her way."

Daisy barely had time to ask, "What do you mean?" when Luna appeared out of thin air in a spot about five feet from their position in the trees.

Not even taking time to tell the others at the Moth Fairy Convention where she was going, Luna had used a special one-time-only magic-transport seed that had been provided to her in secret by a powerful witch.

The witch had only recently given Luna the magic seed. All she had to do was swallow it and think of where she wanted to travel to, in this case, the woods outside of the activity center on Castell Street. The seed was a rare and difficult-to-get powerful magical object, so Luna was only planning to use it in an emergency, which this evidently was.

The other fairies at the Moth Fairy Convention wondered and worried as to why Luna had suddenly disappeared, but she hadn't had time to explain because Azure's call was filled with such urgency.

As quickly as possible, Azure explained what was wrong. "We haven't seen any of them leave the building yet," she added, breathlessly.

Luna nodded. "That's a good thing. They all need to be in one spot right now." As firmly as possible, Luna added, "I need the three of you to stay put while I go in."

Pumpkinwing tried to protest. Surely, four fairies were better than one in facing this much evil.

But Luna was stern and would not allow any argument. "No," she said, quietly but forcefully. "Listen to me. I need the three of you to stay clear of the situation right now. I need to focus, and I don't want to have to worry about what might happen to you." After a slight pause, she added with finality. "You are safe here for now. I am going in alone, and I need you to stay put!"

Though they weren't happy about this, they knew better than to argue with Luna. Not many people would have ever dared to disagree with one of the most powerful fairies ever created, or one with such good judgment.

Giving her three friends one last firm look, which was basically a threat not to disobey her, Luna calmly flew to the side door of the activity center. Then she made her way to the second floor and unlocked the door by just pointing her finger at the lock. Not only did Luna have the ability to perform fairy magic without the use of her wand, she also no longer needed to speak the words of spells, since her

thoughts alone had become as powerful as her words when enacting fairy magic.

Madam Cloudless, PV, and Cotton were in the first meeting room. After closing the door behind her, Luna flew slowly towards them; but she didn't wait until reaching their position to act. Pointing her finger at Cotton, she thought, *Evict!* She didn't need to speak the word for this spell either. Next, Luna very quickly pointed to PV and Madam Cloudless, each in turn, and thought, *Evict! Evict!*

The magic had an instantaneous effect. Colorful vapors immediately began streaming very rapidly from the fairies' eyes, ears, noses, and mouths. When the streams of vapor had completely left them, the three simply fell right out of the air. Thank goodness there was a table beneath them to break their fall because they were unconscious in their weakened state.

The colorful vapors took the shapes of the three genies that had inhabited the fairies. Recognizing that they were no match for Luna, especially since genie magic was really only strong inside NetherSek, the genies decided to flee, rather than face the powerful moth fairy.

Luna decided not to try to stop them because her priority now was to save the butterfly fairies. However, she did watch, as two of the genies passed through the crack of a window that was raised about an inch. The third genie squeezed out under the exit door.

Before heading into the next room, Luna briefly examined the three fairies, still unconscious for the moment. Their breathing, heart rates, coloring, and temperature all seemed normal. Since they were not in any

immediate danger, Luna made her way to the second meeting room.

So that none of the fairies would get hurt from high falls when the genies inhabiting them left their bodies, Luna landed on the floor in the center of the doorway. This basically forced the others in the room, when they finally noticed her, to head in her direction and fly low to the ground.

As they approached, Luna did her point-and-think routine to each of the advancing fairies. When the *Evict Spells* hit the possessed fairies, vapors immediately began streaming from their eyes, ears, noses, and mouths. They dropped out of flight, unconscious, as soon as they were free. The genies all fled under cracked windows, since Luna was blocking their way to the door by the stairs.

Luna found the final two fairies, Zee and Fritillary, hiding in the closet, where she *evicted* their genie spirits too. However, Luna found something else in the closet as well, something she wasn't particularly expecting. Though she had never encountered him before, there was no mistaking Malatrocious, the Specter of Evil.

To others, Malatrocious would have only appeared as an extremely vague shadow, since he was a demon consisting entirely of evil thought. However, thanks to her sight gift, Luna could see powerful dark thoughts as dark shadows. And to her vision, the Specter of Evil's darkness took a specific form. The demon looked like a tall man made of smoky black clouds streaked with red. His shadowy form held together fairly well, even when he moved. He also had deeply-sunk eye sockets, a thin nose, and a mouth fixed in a permanent sneer.

Hovering in front of the open closet door, Luna didn't move, even when Malatrocious began to slowly advance towards her. Instead, she smiled, and raised her left hand, palm outward. With her hand held so, the Specter of Evil found he couldn't move. And he was shocked, having never encountered a fairy with such mysterious magic before. Evidently, she was strong enough to hold him in place, without a wand, and without even words.

Luna had no difficulty holding him in place. And she wanted the demon to stay put for a while so that she could speak to him. However, since he was giving off a coldness equal to that of an intense winter day, she was hoping that her teeth wouldn't soon begin to chatter, so that she could be understood clearly.

She began calmly, in a very precise and quiet tone. "You are not much more powerful than the Demon of Darkness, are you? In fact, I believe you are completely insignificant without the help of those you have bent to your will through evil mind control. Without their help, you are virtually powerless."

Luna smiled softly as she went on. "You are especially insignificant against strong minds and against those who are truly good. You cannot corrupt truly good people with your influence, because their will is stronger than yours. And no matter how many evil agents you set upon us, we will always be victorious."

While Luna was speaking, Malatrocious attempted to invade her mind with ugly and persuasive dark thoughts. He had done this thousands of times over the years, to many types of beings, and he was usually successful in

bending others to his evil will, which is why he had so many followers.

As the demon bombarded her mind with the dark thoughts, Luna laughed. “Well, I have to admit that does tickle a bit. But you stand no chance of influencing me at all, so you may as well save your energy, and your evil thoughts. I am not at all susceptible to your infiltration, or your wicked persuasion. And I am not capable of committing evil acts to harm innocents, so I will never work for you, or with you.”

Malatrocious, recognizing the truth in her words, did stop his mind assault.

When the demon ceased his attack, Luna lowered her hand. However, she wasn't ready to let Malatrocious leave just yet. Instead, she moved forward slightly to speak her final words to him. Her expression lost all humor, and her voice became very dark, as she said, “You will be wise to take this advice.” After an emphatic pause, she added, “Leave! And never bother us again. Take your evil doings somewhere else. I am giving you fair warning. I will always be here. And I am easy for other fairies, even fairies in far places, to find. I will not let you set your will against fairies, here or anywhere. So take care not to cross me.” Luna's voice lowered almost to a whisper, as she finished with, “I won't let you off this easy the next time we meet, so you better hope we never meet again.” Luna then backed slowly away from the closet.

Malatrocious didn't exit the room the way the genies had. Instead, as he moved out of the closet, his form simply broke up, as he magically transported himself back to NetherSek, where he currently made his home. To

Luna's eyes, his departure looked simply like dark smoke dissipating in the room.

Hoping that her warning would be enough to keep Malatrocious at bay for a while, Luna went to retrieve her friends from outside.

Chapter Eight

Stories and Rumors

As she passed through the first meeting room on her way to the stairs, Luna noticed that the three fairies on the table were starting to stir slightly. However, she didn't stop to see to them. Instead, she hurriedly flew down the stairs and out the side door to her friends waiting in the woods.

Pumpkinwing, Daisy, and Azure were incredibly relieved to see Luna, safe and sound, and not possessed. The four returned to the second floor of the activity center, where the rest of the fairies were now rousing and on their way to recovery.

All of the previously-possessed butterfly fairies had terrible headaches, and they were horrified because they remembered everything that had happened. They had been aware of what was going on while possessed, but they were powerless. However, some small part of them had been struggling with the genies; and that small part was what had messed up the genies' attempts to use their wands to perform magic.

The fairies spent the next two hours making phone calls and sending nut messages to those attending the other sixteen conventions, to warn them of what had happened, in case the genies and Malatrocious were striking in more than one place.

Luna made sure to call Cinnabar and Cisthene at the Moth Fairy Convention, so they wouldn't continue to be worried about her disappearance.

While making their many calls and sending the nut messages, the fairies had refreshments to gain back some of their strength. The food and drinks helped to ease their headaches; and they all felt revived, as well as relieved, that this whole horrible situation had turned out as well as it had.

They also held the door prize drawing. Madam Empress ended up with the quilt. Luna got the butterfly lamp. The watch went to Eighty-Eight. And Skipper won the silver brooch.

Though the prize drawing, refreshments, and visiting with one another were some consolation for the terrible ordeal they had all just been through, the fairies were sad that their convention had turned out this way. Azure was especially upset, having worked so hard to plan the whole thing.

While the fairies were sitting around, sadly pondering the situation, Daisy had a very good idea as to how to cheer everyone up and take their minds off of what had happened. "Let's all go to Troll Rock tonight, for storytelling," she suggested.

This was a wonderful idea, and all of the fairies agreed.

They met in the hilly field shortly after dark. This time, a giant named Troth was there. Of course, if any non-magical beings happened to see the giant, they would have thought he was another boulder, even larger than Troll Rock, because of the disguise magic of giants. The listeners tonight also included a family of possums, a fancy

hamster with invisible blue shoes, a cardinal, and a pair of grackles.

Mr. Trefas first told a tale very similar to that of Cinderella, but the story had an island setting and used a golden glove, instead of a glass slipper. After *Betina and the Golden Glove*, the troll told a story no one had ever heard before, about a witch and a firebird, and the Egg of Truth. As soon as the Egg of Truth was recovered, and safely returned to the King of Honesty, the storytime attendees made their way back to their homes.

Since the visiting butterfly fairies were not leaving until Sunday, all of the fairies met at Madam Monarch's house on Saturday morning for brunch.

They briefly discussed what had happened with the genies. But since most of them wanted to forget about the terrible ordeal for the time being, they tried to talk more about summer plans, projects, and family events. However, the subject did eventually turn back to NetherSek and Malatrocious.

"Can you believe the rumors?" Madam Swallowtail asked Madam Cloudless. (Madam Swallowtail was referring to the stories circulating about the Dark Witch.)

"I am having a very hard time believing that she is working with Malatrocious and the genies," Madam Cloudless answered.

Luna was sitting beside Madam Swallowtail on the sofa. Having known the Dark Witch for many years, Luna also had great difficulty believing that her friend was now in league with evil forces. However, she didn't join in the conversation this morning. Instead, she listened.

Pumpkinwing also had something to say on the matter. “What’s really scary is the rumor of her association with the evil warlock.”

Madam Swallowtail agreed. “This is all very disturbing. Since the warlock has been known to work with the genies and Malatrocious, adding the Dark Witch to their alliance of evil is a terrifying thought. If they have truly combined forces, I don’t know how they can be stopped, unless the elves get involved.”

“But they don’t usually get involved in things like this,” said Pumpkinwing, “unless mankind is threatened on a large scale.”

Madam Swallowtail sighed, feeling a heavy weight of dread and sadness about this situation, with the terrible prospect of nearly unstoppable evil forces. Since she couldn’t think of anything reassuring to say right now, she chose not to say anything else at all, for the moment.

“But has there been any recent news of the Dark Witch in conjunction with the Light Witch?” asked Madam Cloudless. “The rumor last year, about their alliance, reached us in Oregon, so we were wondering if the story had merit.”

“I’d say it’s a good possibility that the rumor is true,” responded Madam Swallowtail. “The Demon of Darkness and the Light Witch have often worked with Malatrocious and the genies. So it’s not too much of a stretch to imagine that the Dark Witch has joined forces with all of them.”

“Two powerful witches, working together with evil demons and genies,” said Pumpkinwing. “That’s pretty scary.”

“It’s odd how the Demon of Darkness and Malatrocious rarely act themselves, but most often get others to act on their behalf to commit evil deeds,” added Madam Cloudless.

“That’s often the case with both darkness and evil thoughts,” said Madam Swallowtail. “Neither is particularly powerful on their own, until they work their way into the hearts and minds of others. And they have no power at all over those who are good and strong. That’s why the Demon of Darkness and Malatrocious work with beings such as evil witches, warlocks, and genies, who can be influenced and controlled.”

No one else said anything for a few moments.

Luna shortly rose to leave because she had an appointment on the South side of town. She changed into girl form before exiting Madam Monarch’s front door, because she wanted walk, instead of flying. Walking helped her to think.

Thirty minutes later, after lots of walking and thinking, she arrived at the house next door to the home of the evil warlock.

Luna had met Ms. Bankse while helping to organize a project at the Community Recycle Center two years ago. Since then, she had tried to visit the colorful Ms. Bankse at least once a month. Not only was it good to have friends in the community, but it also didn’t hurt to keep a close eye on the evil warlock. And she couldn’t get much closer than next door.

Ms. Bankse’s nephew, Charles, had come to live with her last year. His hair was nearly as red as his aunt’s, and

he had about a million freckles. Luna smiled, thinking of the fairy saying, *Freckles really are fairy kisses.*

Neither Charles nor his aunt got along at all with the white-haired man next door, because he was so standoffish, mean, and grumpy most of the time. But they were able to tell Luna something of the man's comings and goings, and provide descriptions of his visitors. This was helpful because Luna was able to get a little information about Magpie's association with the warlock. Luna had been keeping an eye on the fairy-gone-bad for quite some time, and the extra information about Magpie definitely helped.

Meanwhile, back at Madam Monarch's house, Azure had managed to arrange a small surprise for their afternoon. Since many of the scheduled events of the Butterfly Fairy Convention had not taken place as planned, Azure had contacted Drucilla, Mr. Dusel, and Mr. Charades, to ask them to come to Madam Monarch's house.

The fairies all enjoyed the witch and gnome presentations, and Mr. Charades' magic show. And Luna made it back to the gathering just in time to see the illusionist make all of the butterfly fairies disappear at once. However, this time, she didn't need to rescue them, because Mr. Charades made them reappear again only a few seconds later.

The Fairy Chronicles Series

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Dragonfly and the Web of Dreams
Thistle and the Shell of Laughter
Firefly and the Quest of the Black Squirrel
Spiderwort and the Princess of Haiku
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Cinnabar and the Island of Shadows
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Tea, Sterling, and the Heart of Fire
Scarlet, Willow, and the Two-Foot Witch
Obsidian and the Last Brownie Prince
Helenium and the Really Very Confused House
Azure and the Butterfly Fairy Convention
Snowdrop and Four o'Clock Meet the White Elephant
and the Dancing Rabbit
Aurora and the Lights of Marfa
Journey's End

Though the entire story of *The Fairy Chronicles* follows a specific timeline, the individual adventures are stand-alone books that can be read in any order.

About the Author

J.H. Sweet is the author of *The Fairy Chronicles*, *Wind Horses and Horned Lions*, *The Wishbone Miracle*, *The White Sparrow*, *Foo and Friends*, *Juan Noel's Crystal Airship*, *The Time Entity Trilogy*, *The Gypsy Fiddle*, *Cassie Kingston Mysteries*, and *The Heaviest Things*. She lives in South Texas and has a degree in English from Texas State University.

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