

The Fairy Chronicles #21 

## Teasel and the Halloween Mysteries



J.H. Sweet

7-11  
Age

3-4 Hours  
Reading Time

Around the time of the special Halloween Fairy Circle, Teasel gets involved in trying to solve three separate mysteries: the reason for the odd tree on top of the half-finished bank building construction site; the explanation for the strange plants, flowers, and seeds being carried around in hollow bamboo containers by a Pomeranian and a parakeet; and the answer to where the Endless Stair leads. Along with Calliope and Pumpkinwing, Teasel discovers the secret of a magic dresser and a tiny witch in a bottle. The fairies must work diligently to solve the three mysteries, and to help break a curse to free the witch.

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# Teasel and Halloween Mysteries

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## Chapter One

### The First Mystery

On the way home from school on Friday, Darlene Young spotted something very odd. Looking out the windows of the school bus as they passed the half-finished bank building on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Darlene and her friend Macy both noticed that a fairly large pine tree was perched on top of one of the iron roof beams.

Both girls thought it was a rather strange sight, and neither of them could figure out a reason why the tree might be standing there. It looked almost like a Christmas tree waiting to be decorated. But this was October, so it really couldn't be a Christmas tree.

At the next stop, Darlene leaned forward and asked the bus driver if he knew why a tree would be set up on top of a building like that. He didn't know either.

But Darlene and Macy were too excited about something else to worry long about the strange tree. Later in the evening, both girls would be attending a very special Halloween celebration.

The girls' parents thought their daughters were going to a Girls Club Halloween party; but actually, the celebration was more special than that because it was really a Fairy Circle.

Darlene was blessed with the fairy spirit of a teasel flower, which was both an herb and a wildflower. In fairy

form, Teasel wore a pale, misty-green dress covered with thousands of tiny furry-looking spikes. Her pointed wings were very tall and feathery, and were covered with teeny white flower petals that looked like frost. Teasel's wand was a short piece of candlewick.

Macy had been given the fairy spirit of a pumpkinwing butterfly. As a fairy, she had creamy orange wings with soft brown accents; and both her dress and slippers were made of orange velvety fuzz. Pumpkinwing carried a bright purple tulip wand.

Sometimes fairy spirits ran in families. Teasel's sister, Erin, was also a fairy—an extremely rare moonflower fairy. And Teasel's grandmother, Eunice Young, had been given the spirit of a mariposa butterfly.

Moonflower wore a creamy white dress made of softly glowing moonflower petals. She also had pearly-white slippers and tall, fringed, milky-white wings. Her wand was an enchanted icicle that would never melt.

Madam Mariposa's silky, dark gray dress fell almost to her ankles; and her velvety wings were gray with orange and yellow accents. Madam Mariposa's wand was a frosted-purple hawthorn berry that dangled from its dark brown stem like a hanging lantern.

Sometimes, fairy gifts developed at different rates as the fairies aged. Teasel's gifts were still developing but so far included enhanced usefulness, cleverness, and resourcefulness, with the persistence to get to the bottom of things.

These abilities were related to the fact that teasel flowers were often used in practical ways. They were very beautiful in flower arrangements and potpourri, and dried

teasel flower heads were often used for household purposes like scraping off sweater and sock balls and scrubbing out stains. Teasel also had the ability to do very intricate work with her hands. Even at her young age, she had already mastered many complex and dexterous skills that other people struggled with such as knitting, crewel embroidery, calligraphy, and quilling, also known as paper filigree.

With butterfly spirits, both Pumpkinwing and Madam Mariposa had roughly the same fairy gifts. All butterfly and moth fairies were gifted with great strength and endurance. They could fly extremely long distances without tiring and were also able to lift and carry things of great weight.

Moonflower was the Fairy of Passion. Since she was only just eleven, her fairy gifts were also still developing. So far, she had the ability to motivate and inspire others. In the future, her gifts would expand to include the ability to inspire love and passion because the moonflower was a flower of passion.

Madam Mariposa resided in a small town about five miles down the highway from where her granddaughters lived. But that was plenty close enough for her to be able to see them frequently. By four o'clock Friday afternoon, she was already on the road to pick up the young fairies for the Halloween Fairy Circle.

Madam Mariposa was also assigned as mentor for Calliope, another young fairy who lived very close to Moonflower and Teasel.

Calliope had been given the fairy spirit of a calliope hummingbird and was the Fairy of Time, Speed, and A Thousand Questions Per Day. Her name was Sydney

Pascal, and her wand was one of the most unique in the fairy world: a spiraled sprig of wisteria with a *Season Spell* added to the wand enchantment. This made the wand green and leafy throughout the summer and fall, barren and twig-like during the winter, and covered with pale purple blossoms for the spring.

Calliope's dress and wings were made of tiny hummingbird feathers in iridescent colors of green, white, and purple. Her special fairy gifts included the ability to master a spell that speeds up actions. She could also fly very fast; and with her gift of a thousand questions per day, Calliope had the ability to be very thorough and get to the bottom of things very precisely. Sometimes the excessive question-asking was annoying to others, but it also proved very useful on occasion.

Madam Mariposa picked up Calliope for the Halloween Fairy Circle on her way to her granddaughters' house. Pumpkinwing would be riding to the party with her great-grandmother, Madam Toad.

## Chapter Two

### Halloween Fairy Circle

The girls were very excited about the special Fairy Circle. This was the first Halloween Fairy Circle any of the younger fairies of the region had ever been to. The fairies of the Southwest region were usually extremely busy with fairy missions, so gatherings strictly for fun were rare.

So far this month, no important problem that needed fairy solving had presented itself. Madam Toad had both knocked on wood and crossed her fingers that nothing would come up to warrant a fairy mission. The rest of the fairy mentors also hoped that things would stay quiet for a while, so they could all have a little break and enjoy themselves.

Many of the younger fairies were so excited about the Halloween Fairy Circle that they had been sending nut messages back and forth to each other all week discussing costumes and whatnot. However, some of the young fairies were keeping their costumes a secret because surprises were fun.

When Teasel, Moonflower, Calliope, and Madam Mariposa set off towards a secluded bit of woods on the edge of town, they passed the bank building construction site on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. Teasel pointed out the pine tree to the other three fairies, but none of them knew the reason why it was placed on top of the building.

The fairies usually met in isolated spots for their gatherings so they wouldn't attract too much attention. And



Madam Toad always chose the locations for their Fairy Circles carefully. Sometimes they met under trees that had special meaning. Today, the Halloween Fairy Circle was being held under a massive elm tree. Since elm trees were thought to have the ability to ward off evil spirits, Madam Toad thought this would fit in well with the Halloween theme.

Many of the mentors had arrived at the Fairy Circle site early to decorate and set up refreshments. Madam Zinnia, Madam June Beetle, and Madam Monarch had spent some time carving tiny pumpkins, spreading cobwebs about that were bewitched to glow, and stringing the lower branches of the elm tree with enchanted decorations such as fake spiders and bats that moved around like real ones, and tiny ghosts that said, “*Boo!*” whenever anyone passed under them.

The refreshments included their usual fairy treats of lemon jellybeans, peanut butter and marshmallow crème sandwiches, homemade fudge, raspberries, and powdered sugar puff pastries; but there were also popcorn balls, black-night cupcakes, candy corn, licorice bats, caramel apples, and bubbling orange sherbet punch.

Several brownies had been invited to the party. Alan, James, John, Bob, and Stephen all arrived on a very large spotted owl. The owl liked fairies and decided to stay to watch the celebration. He perched himself on a high branch of the elm tree for a good viewing spot while waiting for his brownie friends.

James and John were twins and had both dressed up as mummies; Alan’s costume was that of a vampire; Bob wore a clown outfit, and Stephen was dressed as a ghost.

As the fairies began to arrive, they all had great fun admiring and laughing at each other's costumes.

Spiderwort was dressed as a scarecrow. She had met a magical scarecrow on a fairy mission once, so she just *loved* anything to do with scarecrows. Both Primrose and Hollyhock, cousins, had dressed as fairy princesses, which meant they were slightly fancier than their normal fairy selves with crowns and capes, and dressy shoes instead of slippers. The princesses were a beautiful contrast to one another. Primrose's shimmering dress and petite, gauzy wings were soft pink, while Hollyhock's furred flower-petal dress and tall, wispy wings were a purplish-blue color.

Hollyhock was the only deaf fairy of the group. Primrose was fluent in American Sign Language and usually acted as interpreter for her cousin. But many of the fairies in the region were taking sign language classes and didn't need help to converse with Hollyhock. In fact, some of the slightly older fairies like Dragonfly, Marigold, Snapdragon, Rosemary, Cinnabar, Morning Glory, and Firefly had been taking lessons for nearly two years and were already certified at Level One. Thus, they were accomplished enough in American Sign Language so as not to need very much help; but they were still interested in improving and working toward the next level.

Rosemary and Cisthene were both dressed as witches. Harlequin came as herself since a jester outfit was already very much like a costume, but she wore a green and blue feather mask for fun. Dusty's costume was that of a black widow spider, and Madam Finch was dressed as a bat. Dragonfly wore her soccer uniform. Heather and Aloe, who were twins, had dressed as two halves of an Oreo

cookie, so they looked funny when they weren't standing together. Cricket was dressed as a grasshopper, and Dove looked just like a crow. Alyssum was a candy apple; but she had trouble balancing the apple part of the costume on her shoulders, so she took it off soon after arriving. Cinnabar and Moonflower were both cats. Madam Goldenrod was a piece of candy corn. Snapdragon and Firefly had come as each other, and Pumpkinwing was dressed like a pumpkin.

But Teasel had the best costume of all. She was dressed as Madam Toad, complete with a sparkling, pale green dress; an extra set of wings in dark green, and a crown of miniature red rosebuds with a rosebud stem wand to match. Madam Mariposa had helped Teasel spray a temporary white coloring on her hair, so the young fairy would further resemble the fairy leader. Everyone liked that costume best, including Madam Toad. In fact, she was very flattered that one of the younger fairies wanted to dress up like her.

After everyone had visited for a while and enjoyed the refreshments, the brownies put on a magic show for their friends. All of the fairies had great fun watching the many magic tricks such as disappearing and reappearing objects, dancing ropes and scarves, and vanishing and rematerializing people.

Harlequin's fairy gift was the ability to become invisible. Since brownies were full of mischief, and Harlequin was the Fairy of Jokes and Mischief, she was good friends with many of the brownies. She used her gift during the magic show to help her brownie friends perform many of their illusions. When Harlequin "magically" vanished inside a magic box, then "magically" reappeared

again, everyone conveniently forgot that she had the power to become invisible, and cheered loudly, marveling at the fantastic illusion.

The brownies also put on a fanciful skit in which they rescued a fairy princess (Primrose) from an evil ogre king. Stephen had changed out of his ghost costume and donned short stilts to play the part of the ogre king.

After the breathtaking fairy-princess-rescue, the fairies and brownies enjoyed more refreshments while listening to spooky music from an old Victrola that Madam Finch had brought. They also got very wet at one point while bobbing for red and green apples.

When everyone was stuffed very full of sweets and had visited for a long while, it was time for the fairies and brownies to go home. They said goodbye to one another as they gathered up leftovers and few of the tiny carved pumpkins and other decorations to take with them.

However, the excitement of the evening wasn't over when Fairy Circle ended because Teasel, Pumpkinwing, and Calliope were all going to a two-night sleepover at Madam Mariposa's house. Madam Mariposa dropped Moonflower off at home. Moonflower was busy with school and needed to work on an important class project with Primrose over the weekend. Primrose lived very near Moonflower and Teasel and spent a lot of time with them. And since Moonflower and Primrose were in the same class at school, they often did homework together.

## Chapter Three

### The Pomeranian and the Parakeet

Teasel, Calliope, and Pumpkinwing stayed up late talking about Fairy Circle, the magic show, and everyone's costumes. They weren't a bit tired at ten-thirty when Madam Mariposa came upstairs to tell them it was time to settle down and get to sleep, but they went to bed anyway and just whispered back and forth for a while.

The next morning, the girls were having cereal and fruit for breakfast in Madam Mariposa's sunny kitchen bay window, when Pumpkinwing noticed a small golden Pomeranian trotting down the sidewalk in front of the house. "That's funny," she said to her friends. "That dog has something tied around his neck."

Teasel jumped up and told the others, "Oooo! Hurry...he's a friend of mine, and what he is carrying is something of a mystery. Maybe you can help me figure it out."

Calliope and Pumpkinwing jumped up too and hurried outside. The girls caught up with the Pomeranian, whose name was Percival (according to his dog collar), just before he turned the corner at the end of the block.

Percy stopped for a bit so the girls could pet him. He also allowed Teasel to take the object he was carrying from around his neck. Then he sat, patiently waiting, enjoying Calliope's scritch-scratching behind his ears.

The object was a hollow bamboo tube tied on either end with a pink ribbon, which formed a loop to go around the

dog's neck. So it was kind of like a ribbon and bamboo dog necklace. The hollow tube had a stopper inside one end. As Teasel pulled out the stopper and carefully tipped the tube, a tiny blue periwinkle flower fell out.

Teasel told Pumpkinwing and Calliope, "I see him nearly every time I visit my Grandma; and since he is so friendly, he lets me look inside the bamboo tube. He carries all sorts of things inside his little bamboo necklace. Last week it was a sycamore leaf. Two weeks ago, I found a hazelnut. I've also found a strawberry, blades of grass, a bluebonnet, a walnut, rose petals, clover, a grape, tree bark, onion peel, and a sprig of heather over the last couple of months.

"I have followed him before to see where he goes," Teasel added. "He travels back and forth between two houses: a big white one on Coral Street and a smaller, gray brick home on Grover Lane. They are about three blocks apart."

Teasel replaced the periwinkle flower in the bamboo container and slipped the ribbon back around the Pomeranian's neck.

Percy immediately took off, turning at the corner and heading toward Grover Lane.

Then Teasel said, "Let me tell Grandma that we are taking a walk so we can follow him. I want to show you something else too."

After a quick trip inside, Teasel was back out again; and the girls were off, along the sidewalk and turning the corner to follow the dog.

When they reached Grover Lane, the fairies stopped about three houses down from the gray brick home and sat

down on a bus stop bench. They watched through a gap between the houses and shrubbery as the Pomeranian went around to the back of the gray brick home and stopped behind a large holly bush. The girls could barely see between a clump of oleander and the trunk of an oak tree, but it looked like the dog bent his head to the ground and used his paw to get the ribbon to slide over his ears.

Percy left the bamboo tube on the ground behind the holly bush. Then he happily scampered back the way he came, ignoring the girls on the bench as he passed them. Percy was much more interested in going to see a girl Pomeranian named Punkin who lived on the next street than he was in getting petted and scritch-scratched again.

“How strange,” said Pumpkinwing. “I wonder why he does that. If he is delivering the flower to someone, where is that someone?”

And Calliope said, “It’s similar to our nut messages, but more like little presents. I wonder who the little presents would be for—maybe a brownie?”

“But brownies use nut messages like we do,” answered Teasel, “and they don’t usually have dogs deliver them. This is very mysterious, but I haven’t been able to figure it out.”

As the girls were walking back to Madam Mariposa’s house, Teasel told them the final bit of information she knew about the perplexing, bamboo-carrying Pomeranian. “It’s not just the Pomeranian who carries the bamboo tubes. One time, I was passing the big white house on Coral Street and I saw a parakeet flying toward the back of the house. The bird was carrying a ribbon-strung piece of bamboo with his feet while he was flying. I bet if we continued to watch

for a while, we might even see more animals carrying the bamboo tubes.”

“Maybe witches or wizards are sending things to one another,” speculated Pumpkinwing.

“Who knows,” said Teasel. “Anyway, I told Moonflower about the Pomeranian and the parakeet, and she couldn’t make anything out of it either. But she said she would ask Primrose about it, since Primrose can figure stuff like this out so easily.”

The fairies spent the rest of the morning working on bead projects and playing string and handclap games.



## Chapter Four

### The Endless Stair

After lunch, the girls decided to take another walk to try to visit a few of their fairy friends who lived nearby. Cricket, Dove, and Blue all lived within a mile of Madam Mariposa's house.

However, Pumpkinwing, Calliope, and Teasel never made it as far as any of their friends' homes because as they were crossing Walker Park, Teasel remembered something else she wanted to tell her friends. "Since we were pondering a mystery this morning," she said, "I wanted to ask you two about another mystery. Do either of you know anything about the Endless Stair?"

Neither Calliope nor Pumpkinwing had ever heard of the Endless Stair, so they shook their heads.

Teasel made an abrupt turn in the middle of Walker Park as she told her friends, "It's in this far corner over here, through the pecan grove. No one has ever been able to figure out where the stairs lead."

Once they were through the pecan grove, and saw that there was no one around in the lonely corner of the park, the girls changed into fairy form with three small *pops*.

As the fairies flew toward a rocky cliff, they noticed two brownies below them, loping along on the back of a cottontail rabbit.

Teasel called to the boys, "Hello!"

The fairies then landed beside the rabbit who had paused upon hearing the greeting to allow Joel and Michael to dismount.

Joel was a moss brownie with blond hair. He was twelve years old and wore a mossy green cap. Michael was eleven and got his brownie spirit from a pinecone. He wore a string of miniature pinecones around his neck. Both boys were dressed in the traditional brownie tan shirts and pants.

As the rabbit wandered off a ways to nibble grass and wait for the brownies, Michael asked, “So what are you three up to?”

“We came to look at the Endless Stair,” answered Pumpkinwing.

“We were doing the same thing,” said Joel. Then he added, “No one has ever reached the top. Michael and I decided that maybe next summer, we might plan a month-long trip to try to make it all the way up, if we are able to carry enough supplies for that long.”

As he said this, the boys led the fairies through a small crack in the cliff that widened out after a few feet. Directly in front of them, carved out of an extremely tall and slender tower of natural stone, was the Endless Stair. It wasn't very wide, only about a foot or so, and the stair was so steep that it almost seemed to go straight up instead of at a slant. As it rose into the air between two enormous boulders, the staircase zigzagged. The fairies lost sight of it through the low-hanging clouds surrounding the cliffs and trees above them.

Michael told the fairies, “Even if regular people could make it through that narrow crack in the cliff, they wouldn't

be able to see the Endless Stair because it is magically disguised to look like a rock spire. I wish we knew where or what it leads to.”

Then Joel told them, “The only time a brownie expedition was mounted to try to solve the mystery of where the Endless Stair leads, the climbers had to turn back after three days. There just wasn’t time to go farther, and they were afraid of running out of food and water.”

And Michael added, “The only other thing we know about the Endless Stair is that it was built by an evil wizard who wanted to hide something extremely important at the top. But no one has ever been able to figure out what he is hiding up there.”

With what the brownies had described, Teasel thought that even Snapdragon, the fastest flyer among the fairies, might never reach the top. However, Teasel wasn’t going to give up on the idea of investigating. In situations such as solving mysteries, her persistence always kicked in. Accomplishing things like this may take time, but that was okay. Teasel had both time and patience in abundance.

Teasel suddenly had a good idea and said, “Calliope, you are the Fairy of Time and Speed. Can you think of anything we can do to reach the top quicker than with normal flying?”

Calliope thought for a few seconds, then answered. “Madam Mariposa has told me that when I am older, I will be able to master a fairy *Speed-Up Spell*. It’s part of my gift. Evidently, only hummingbird fairies can perform this spell. And it is only supposed to be used in conjunction with our job as fairies.”

Then Pumpkinwing said, “We can ask Madam Mariposa if she will teach it to you now, so we can see what is at the top of the Endless Stair. As long as we ask permission, and a mentor is supervising so nothing can go wrong, she might agree. Since this isn’t someone’s private property, seeing as how it is right here in a city park, it’s not like we are planning to trespass. Even Harlequin is allowed to use her invisibility gift sometimes, as long as she keeps her mischief under control and doesn’t do anything illegal or anything contrary to the Fairy Code of Conduct.”

The fairies got very excited about the prospect of being able to embark on an unofficial fairy mission if Madam Mariposa approved, and they were anxious to get back to ask permission. Teasel, Calliope, and Pumpkinwing all said goodbye to Michael and Joel.

As the brownies were leaving, Joel told the fairies, “We are going to be around the park in the afternoon too. Look for us later and let us know how your adventure turns out.”

And Michael added, “Or if you need help, just call for us. We’ll be around.”

When the girls got back to the house and discussed the situation with Madam Mariposa, the fairy mentor listened with interest. (Teasel was careful to repeat what Pumpkinwing had said about the park not being private property and not going against the Fairy Code of Conduct.)

Madam Mariposa smiled as she listened, observing the hopeful, earnest faces of the three girls. She knew how clever her granddaughter was, and how smart all of the young fairies were for that matter. It was very reassuring to her that they had come to ask permission, instead of acting impulsively or secretly.

After careful consideration, the fairy mentor said slowly, “I will help Calliope perform the *Speed-Up Spell*.”

Teasel, Pumpkinwing, and Calliope all got very excited. But they managed to contain their enthusiasm somewhat to listen carefully as Madam Mariposa went on. “However, I will have to come with you on the adventure. Since Calliope is so young, the *Speed-Up Spell* will need to be closely supervised. She is already extremely fast; and since she is a hummingbird fairy, she has some unique, mastery-of-time qualities. Time itself is very mysterious. So I guess I want to impress upon you that this is no longer a Saturday afternoon play in the park. This is now fairy business, so we have to take it seriously.” The three girls solemnly nodded their understanding.

Finally, on a lighter note, Madam Mariposa told the girls, “Yes, I could just see me trying to explain to Madam Toad how you all ended up in Tibet or Antarctica when Calliope performed the *Speed-Up Spell* and I wasn’t watching closely enough. I will definitely need to keep an eye on things for this adventure.”

Teasel and Pumpkinwing thought the idea of ending up in another country, or on a continent far away, was very funny. But Calliope had gotten a jolt when she heard Madam Mariposa say this.

Calliope had only learned about her fairy spirit at the end of the summer. She already knew how serious fairy business was, but the idea that she possibly had the power to travel thousands of miles quickly was a great shock to her. Suddenly, an extremely funny feeling settled in her stomach, and she felt hot and tingly all over. But Calliope didn’t tell her friends what she was feeling. After all, with

Madam Mariposa along, everything would be okay—she hoped.

Teasel and Pumpkinwing also agreed that an older fairy was very much welcome on their excursion. They had both had a pretty nasty experience over the summer when there was an enormous fairy problem to fix, and none of the mentors were available to help them. Thankfully, everything had turned out okay because the girls had been persistent and resourceful, and had gotten some help from their brownie friends to solve the problem.

Teasel, Pumpkinwing, and Calliope led Madam Mariposa to the foot of the Endless Stair. Then Madam Mariposa instructed Calliope to take out her wisteria sprig wand. Calliope did so, but slowly—the tingly, hot-all-over feeling was back.

Madam Mariposa noticed Calliope’s apprehension and smiled. The fairy mentor gave Calliope a small hug and said, “Don’t worry; if something goes wrong, you probably won’t end up any farther than Panama on your first try at the *Speed-Up Spell*. And we’ll come find you.” As Calliope swallowed hard upon hearing this, Madam Mariposa laughed and added, “Just kidding. You’ll be okay, I promise.”

Next, Madam Mariposa said, “Put the spell on Teasel first. Point your wand at her wings and repeat after me.” Then Madam Mariposa slowly and carefully chanted, “*Haste-race, flash-dash, chase-pace, fast-blast.*”

As Calliope repeated the words, a glittering stream of bright blue light sprang from the tip of her leafy wisteria sprig and spiraled out to lightly trace the edges of Teasel’s left wing. Then the light moved on to her right wing.

Teasel told the other fairies that it felt like a soft tickling. When the blue light-spiral finished tracing the edges of Teasel's wings, it simply disappeared.

Then Calliope pointed her wand again and said, "*Haste-race, flash-dash, chase-pace, fast-blast,*" to perform the spell on Pumpkinwing.

As soon as Pumpkinwing's blue light-spiral wing-tickling ended, Calliope turned to Madam Mariposa and did the same thing.

Finally, Madam Mariposa told Calliope, "Now just point the wand over your shoulder and do your own wings."

Other than the tickling, none of the fairies under the *Speed-Up Spell* felt any different, which was actually a good thing for Calliope's confidence. The least amount of surprise, or things that were different, meant that she would be less likely to worry or panic.

When everyone was set, the fairies approached the bottom of the Endless Stair and began to fly up, following the steep, zigzaggy line of stone steps. As they traveled upwards, they seemed to be passing through clouds and mist. But as they went along, the path of the stairs became very dark; and the farther they traveled, the darker it became.

After just a few minutes, it was too dark to be able to see the stairs clearly, so the four fairies took out their wands and whispered, "*Fairy light.*" The tips of the candlewick, purple tulip, hawthorn berry, and wisteria sprig glowed softly to help light the way.

The fairies must have been traveling very fast indeed, though the air seemed quite still around them, because they reached the top of the stairs in less than fifteen minutes,

which was very surprising. Even though the fairies knew the *Speed-Up Spell* would work, they assumed it would only make them *somewhat* faster. Since Joel and Michael had told them the brownie expedition up the stairs had to turn back after three days, they assumed it would take them at least several hours to reach the top.

When they arrived on the landing at the top, the fairies discovered that it was no more than a platform about ten feet square in size. At the far end of the platform sat a narrow bedroom dresser with seven drawers.



## Chapter Five

### The Magic Dresser

The dresser was made of dark cherrywood and was highly polished. It gleamed softly in the light of the fairies' wands. The top drawer was the only one with a keyhole.

Hovering in front of the dresser, the fairies tried to open the top drawer. It was locked. But the second drawer down was easy to open. Even though the dresser was made of heavy wood, the drawer slid open smoothly when Teasel pulled on the handle.

The second drawer contained stockings. Since there was nothing significant about a pile of stockings, the fairies pushed the drawer closed and moved down to open the third drawer. Inside the third drawer, they found a heap of tangled-up belts. Closing the third drawer, the fairies proceeded to the fourth and found a bundle of scarves. The fifth drawer contained neckties. The sixth drawer was full of assorted ribbons. And the bottom drawer contained a mound of shoelaces.

Upon finding nothing of extreme interest in any of the drawers, the fairies moved backwards slightly to ponder their next move.

After a couple of minutes, when Teasel couldn't come up with any good ideas to figure out what was so important about the dresser that it had to be located at the top of the Endless Stair where hardly anyone would ever be persistent

enough to find it, she flew forward and opened the fourth drawer again. In attempt to be thorough, Teasel rifled through some of the brightly-colored ribbons inside.

The other fairies were watching; and after a few moments, Calliope suddenly cried out, “Wait a minute! The fourth drawer had scarves in it before, not ribbons!”

Teasel couldn’t believe she had missed noticing that. She closed the fourth drawer and moved up to open the third one again. It now contained the shoelaces that had been in the bottom drawer.

As the fairies went on to open and close the various drawers, the contents of the dresser continued to magically shift themselves around. The stockings were now in the necktie drawer, the ribbons had somehow made their way to the scarf drawer, and the shoelaces were back in the bottom again.

After playing with the shifting-contents-drawers for several minutes, the fairies discovered that the dresser wasn’t going to perform any additional magic tricks. But Teasel wasn’t planning to give up on trying to solve the mystery of the items in this enchanted dresser. Several times in a row, she opened and closed the fifth drawer, each time discovering that the neckties had disappeared, the stockings had replaced the belts, the ribbons had showed up again, and the pile of shoelaces had moved once more.

Teasel briefly wondered if the colors of the drawer contents were in any way important. The scarves were mostly pastel colors like creamy peach and milky green. Some of the ribbons were so bright they were fluorescent. The neckties were also bright and included patterns of stripes, polka dots, and paisley. The stockings were normal

stocking colors such as taupe and white. The belts were ordinary browns, blacks, and burgundies. And the shoelaces were solid colors of red, white, and blue with a few green ones mixed in.

After a few more times of opening and closing the fifth drawer, Teasel finally realized what was going on and told her friends, “We are being distracted away from the locked drawer. The top drawer is the most important drawer of the dresser; otherwise, it wouldn’t be locked. The other drawers and their contents are meant to confuse us. I must admit, it is a very clever distraction tactic.”

The other fairies hadn’t thought of this and were very impressed that Teasel had figured it out. They would have likely been there all day opening and closing drawers, and marveling at the contents moving around inside.

As Teasel pondered further she said, “Still, the things inside the drawers must have some importance.”

Determinedly, she slid open the third drawer and began pulling out all of the stockings. Pumpkinwing, Calliope, and Madam Mariposa helped Teasel empty the drawer and search through the contents.

The pile of stockings yielded no interesting discoveries, other than the fact that some of them looked new and some of them looked old; but that would be true of anyone’s stocking drawer.

Next, the fairies emptied the fourth drawer, scattering the ribbons across the floor and examining them. Again they found nothing out of the ordinary.

But when they moved on to the fifth drawer and piled the shoelaces on floor, they did discover something odd. One of the twisted clumps of shoelaces contained a definite

hard bulge, and that particular tangled clump of shoelaces was heavier than the others.

Getting the shoelaces untwisted took some time, but Teasel was persistent. She was very good at this type of thing. Her friends often asked for her help to get knots out of necklace chains and to untangle jewelry pieces from one another. Teasel was extremely patient and could do delicate, intricate things like this easily.

Sitting down with the clump of shoelaces, Teasel had them untangled in less than five minutes. She was overjoyed to find a key inside of the mass of laces.

Flying up to the top drawer with the other fairies beside her, Teasel inserted the key into the keyhole and turned it. With a small *click*, the drawer unlocked. Teasel held her breath, and slowly slid the drawer open.

None of the fairies were prepared for what they found. Sitting at the bottom of the drawer, on its side, was a large clear glass bottle with a tiny witch inside.

## Chapter Six

### A Witch in a Bottle

The fairies were very surprised to discover a glass bottle containing a two-inch witch. The bottle also had a small bed with a pink pillow and flowery sheets. In one corner sat a miniature refrigerator about the size of a matchbox. A teeny sink and toilet occupied the opposite corner.

Since this was easily the most unusual sight any of the fairies had ever seen, no one was able to say anything for a while. They had all seen a ship in a bottle before...but a witch in a bottle?

The witch had been sitting on the bed; but as the fairies stared down at her, she rose from the bed and looked back at them with a surprised expression on her face. Clearly, she had not expected visitors.

Still, there was silence for a time as the fairies glanced at one another, not sure of what to say. Even Madam Mariposa had never seen anything like this. Her mouth was open, but she was at a loss for words.

Finally, some of the shock wore off, and Pumpkinwing asked the tiny witch, “Why are you in this bottle?”

The witch did not say anything. Instead, she put her hands out in front of her, palms up, and looked sadly at Pumpkinwing.

“Who are you?” tried Calliope next.

The witch looked pleadingly at the fairies and slowly raised her fingers to her throat. Then she covered her mouth with her hands.

Teasel had been watching the witch closely and told her friends, “Evidently, she can’t answer us.”

As the witch nodded, Teasel had an idea. “Calliope, you are good at asking questions. Ask the witch a bunch of *yes* or *no* questions. If she can just nod or shake, we might be able to communicate with her.”

Calliope was happy to comply. Asking questions was her favorite thing to do. And she was in true form today:

“Can you speak at all?” asked Calliope first.

The witch shook her head.

“Do you have anything to write on or write with?”

*shake*

“Do you know sign language?”

*shake*

“Are you trapped in this bottle?”

*nod*

“Is it some sort of spell or curse?”

*nod*

“Do you want us to help you?”

*nod*

“Can we open the bottle somehow?”

*shake*

“Is there a spell that can free you?”

*shake*

“Can anything free you?”

*nod*

“Is it a person?”

*shake*

“Is it something alive, like an animal or an elf?”

*shake*

“So it is something inanimate.”

(Calliope paused.)

“Hmmm...is it bigger than a pea?”

*nod*

“Smaller than a bicycle?”

*nod*

“So it’s bigger than a pea but smaller than a bicycle.”

(She paused again.)

“Is it bigger than a stapler?”

*nod*

“Is it smaller than a watermelon?”

*nod*

“Bigger than a screwdriver?”

*frantic nodding, with a slight jumping up and down*

“I think you hit on something,” said Pumpkinwing.

“Maybe it’s a tool of some sort.”

*more jumping and nodding*

“Is it a drill?”

*shake*

“A clamp?”

*shake*

“A hammer?”

*frenzied nodding, and a jump so high that her head hit the inside ceiling of the bottle*

“Is the hammer near here?”

*shake*

“Does it belong to a carpenter?”

*shake*

“Another witch?”

*shake*

“A wizard?”

*big nod*

“Does it perhaps belong to the evil wizard who built the Endless Stair?”

*even bigger nod*

“But how will we recognize it? The wizard might have many hammers. Is it made of iron?”

*shake*

“Stainless steel?”

*shake*

“Bronze?”

*shake*

“Gold?”

*big nod*

“So we are looking for a gold hammer in the evil wizard’s house,” stated Calliope with finality.

The witch was now both nodding and smiling, as Teasel said to her friends, “The brownies know where the wizard lives. We could go with them to try to get the hammer.” Then Teasel turned to the witch and told her, “I promise we will be back soon.”



## Chapter Seven

### Breaking the Curse

Evidently, the *Speed-Up Spell* was still working perfectly. As the four fairies descended the Endless Stair, they looked just like colorful little blurs.

Joel and Michael were waiting for them at the bottom of the Endless Stair. The brownies were so curious about what was at the top of the stone steps that they had decided to wait for the fairies. All the brownies were able to see, just before the fairies arrived at the bottom, was four small shapes of light gray, orange, dark gray, and green streaking down the last hundred or so steps. Then the fairies appeared, standing right in front of them.

Teasel explained what they needed to do, and the brownies immediately called two eagles to carry them all to the wizard's home. By speedy eagle-flight, the trip to the wizard's manor house took less than thirty minutes.

The stone house was part of a large estate on the outskirts of town. The manor was five stories tall and looked very stately.

When the eagles deposited them on the ground near the house, Joel and Michael waited with the birds while Teasel, Pumpkinwing, Calliope, and Madam Mariposa scoped out the house by flying around it and looking in as many windows as possible.

As they made the round of the second floor, they got very lucky. Sitting next to a stack of books on a desk in the wizard's study was a small golden hammer. The luck of the

group extended even further as the fairies landed on the windowsill and tried to raise the window. It took all four of them, but with the two butterfly fairies' superior strength, they managed to open the heavy wood and glass window.

There was a floor lamp turned on next to the desk, but the room was not occupied. Thinking that the wizard might suddenly come into the room, the fairies hurried. The four of them worked together to lift the heavy hammer. Again, it was a good thing Pumpkinwing and Madam Mariposa were there. They joined forces to lift the hammer near the middle, while Calliope and Teasel did what they could to help with balancing the ends.

Then the four fairies flew swiftly out the window and down to the brownies and eagles. They were anxious to get back to the Endless Stair quickly in case the wizard discovered the hammer missing and figured out what they were up to. The fairies had no doubt that the powerful wizard could probably head them off and thwart their plans, so speed was essential.

They didn't have much to worry about though because the brownies had been keeping an eye on the wizard through one of the first-floor windows. Michael told the fairies, "He's sacked out, fast asleep on his couch. If we leave quickly, and if you are able to speed up the Endless Stair as quickly as before, you should make it in time."

Since the hammer was extremely heavy, the brownies hurriedly summoned a barn owl who lived nearby. Michael and Joel rode on the owl balancing the hammer between them. The weight of the hammer didn't slow the sturdy owl down at all, and the group made good time back to the foot of the Endless Stair.

The brownies then said goodbye to the fairies and wished them luck. Teasel promised to send Michael and Joel nut messages to tell them how everything worked out. Then the girls thanked the eagles and the owl, and the birds departed.

The *Speed-Up Spell* was still working fine as the fairies ascended the stairs carrying the hammer. Then, the four fairies struggled to carry the hammer up to the top drawer of the dresser.

The tiny witch was overjoyed to see them.

When the fairies reached the bottle, Teasel asked the tiny witch, “Are we supposed to break the glass with the hammer?”

But as the witch nodded, Calliope asked worriedly, “Isn’t there a pretty big danger of the glass cutting you?”

The tiny witch shook her head earnestly.

“Okay,” said Teasel, trusting the witch. “Here we go. On the count of three—*one...two...three!*”

It was rather a sideways swipe, since the fairies were losing their grips while hovering with the heavy hammer. But even the somewhat awkward blow worked, presumably because the fairies were swinging a “magic” hammer.

With the soft *chink* on the glass, the bottle instantly shattered, surprising the fairies by not just breaking into pieces, but rather, by turning into sparkling dust all around the tiny witch.

When she was free of the bottle, the witch floated out of the drawer and changed back into regular witch size to stand in front of them. She thanked the fairies several times for their help and went on to explain how she had gotten trapped in the first place.

“I have been trapped for nearly twenty years,” she said. “The wizard was very angry when I wouldn’t join with him to do his evil bidding. So he imprisoned me in the bottle, took away my power of speech, and built the dresser and the Endless Stair to keep anyone from ever finding me. No one has ever made it to the top of the Endless Stair before.”

Then she told the fairies, “I am going to live with my sister, far away, so when the wizard discovers I am gone, he cannot find me. Thank you again, so much, for your help.” The witch bid them farewell, and with a smile, she simply disappeared.

The fairies were happy that they had been able to break the curse, but they were in a hurry to leave, since they couldn’t be sure if the wizard might come looking for his hammer. They left the golden hammer in the dresser drawer with the heap of glass bottle-dust. Teasel, Calliope, Pumpkinwing, and Madam Mariposa then swiftly descended the Endless Stair and flew quickly home to safety. The fairies were very relieved that they never had to encounter the evil wizard.

## Chapter Eight

### Three Mysteries Solved

At home on Sunday evening, Moonflower told Teasel to get back in touch with Calliope and Pumpkinwing because Primrose was coming over to discuss something very important that was a surprise.

Pumpkinwing was very excited to see her friends again so soon. She sat with Calliope and Teasel on Moonflower's bed while they waited for Primrose to arrive.

Pumpkinwing also had important news to report. Her father was a building contractor, and he had given his daughter the answer to the mystery of the tree on top of the unfinished building. She told her friends excitedly, "When construction workers reach the highest point of a building they are putting up, they place a pine tree at that spot. It is a tradition called 'topping-off' and is considered good luck. The tree is supposed to help the workers finish the project smoothly, on time, and with no one getting hurt. It is somewhat superstitious, but no one wants to break a tradition."

Primrose arrived just as Pumpkinwing finished telling her friends what her father told her. The girls were happy to learn what the tree meant, but what Moonflower and Primrose were about to report was going to be even more interesting to them.

Though Moonflower and Primrose had both been busy with their school project, they had taken the time to make a

trip to investigate the mysterious activities of the Pomeranian and the parakeet.

Primrose was the fairy best able to solve mysteries. When Moonflower told her about the bamboo containers with the leaves, nuts, berries, flower petals, and whatnots inside, the prospect of investigating the mystery was just too irresistible.

Since Moonflower spent a lot of time in her grandmother's neighborhood, she already knew that the Pomeranian belonged to a teenage girl named Elaine; and the owner of the parakeet was a boy, about Elaine's age, named Jarod. Since Madam Mariposa lived a tad too far to easily reach by fairy-flying, Primrose and Moonflower had asked their friend, Brownie Alan, to arrange transportation for them. Alan was happy to help and quickly summoned a hawk to take the fairies to look into the matter.

Once they were there, it had been a simple thing for the two girls, in fairy form, to enter the bedroom windows of the owners of the Pomeranian and parakeet. They knew this was being a bit nosy, but the fairies were very curious, and they didn't plan to snoop too deeply.

Within a few minutes of looking around Elaine's room, Primrose had a pretty good idea of what all the carrying things back and forth was about. She and Moonflower then flew on the hawk to Jarod's window three blocks away. After a quick look-see in his room, the two fairies were hawk-flying back home with the answers.

Moonflower and Primrose sat down with Teasel, Calliope, and Pumpkinwing to explain what they had discovered. Moonflower started by telling them, "First of all, I heard from some kids in Grandma's neighborhood that

Jarod and Elaine are not allowed to see or speak to one another.

“The reason for this lies in an old feud between the two families. The parents of Jarod and Elaine evidently despise each other, and it is rumored that the dispute and hatred go all the way back to their great-grandparents. The uncles, aunts, and cousins of each family also dislike all the uncles, aunts, and cousins of the other family. So it is pretty nasty.

“But Jarod and Elaine met at school when they were very young and became close friends. They didn’t find out about all the family strife until they were already very attached to one another. When their parents found out, the two were forbidden to see each other or spend any time together.”

Moonflower let Primrose take over from this point in the story. “Well, they found a way around this. Jarod and Elaine both have matching green journals. The journals contain lists of plants, flowers, nuts, leaves, and other things that are actually part of a secret code. Apparently, the teenagers communicate by sending herbs, flowers, leaves, nuts, twigs, berries, stems, fruit, and seeds to one another. Each of the items has some sort of special meaning that translates into a message.”

Next, Primrose related to her friends what she was able to remember of the entries in the journals:

*“‘morning glory = Saturday*

*carnation = I miss you.*

*clover = I need your advice.*

*cedar twig = I left a present for you in the tree stump.*

*mint = yes*

*oak leaf = no*  
*nutmeg = Meet you at the same spot.*  
*onion peel = this afternoon*  
*parsley = Monday*  
*cherry = Tuesday*  
*olive = four o'clock*  
*rose thorn = two o'clock*  
*pine needle = tomorrow*  
*dill = Cool it for one week; parents are suspicious.'*

“There are hundreds more of them,” Primrose continued. “Sometimes they send blueberries, pecans, pieces of straw, dandelion seeds, almonds, honeysuckle flowers, ivy, sunflower seeds, holly berries, rose petals, jasmine, salvia, peas, oleander leaves, and daisy petals. They seem to be using things that are easily accessible in this area.

“All of the items fit with their code and translate to messages like ‘*I’m sad, I agree, think about it for a while, very funny, I’m sorry, don’t forget, brother, sister, mother, I don’t understand, Easter, Christmas....*’ Their code is very intricate and extensive.”

“Wow!” said Pumpkinwing. “That’s really clever of them.”

The other fairies agreed.

Moonflower was especially glad that she and Primrose had gone to investigate. Since she was the Fairy of Passion, she loved to hear inspirational stories like this. She told her friends, “Won’t it be neat if they get married someday? The idea that they could end the family feud by joining forces is



very romantic. That theme has been used many times in classic literature and movies.”

Everyone agreed that it would be very special indeed if Jarod and Elaine eventually got married.

Teasel was very pleased to finally have all of the answers to her Halloween questions. With the mysteries of the tree, the Pomeranian and parakeet, and the Endless Stair cleared up, she was looking forward to having only her schoolwork to tease and tickle her brain for a while. Though the weekend adventures had been very exciting, Teasel felt she had had enough of mysteries for the time being.

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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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