

The Fairy Chronicles #48 

Meadowsweet and the Magic Fountain



J.H. Sweet

7-11

Age

3-4 Hours

Reading Time

While camping at Bryce Canyon National Park, Meadowsweet and her friends discover a mysterious pool of water that leads them to the underwater city of Zuletas, inhabited by graceful water spirits called selkies. During their visit to Zuletas, which includes the discovery of a magic fountain, the fairies undertake a mission to solve a terrible problem. They embark on a treasure hunt to locate and bring back an unknown magical object. During their travels, they encounter a magical rice measure, a fishing basket that always stays full, and a mythical basudi bird. The underwater journey tests both their patience and persistence before ingenuity and luck finally lead the fairies to the object of their quest.

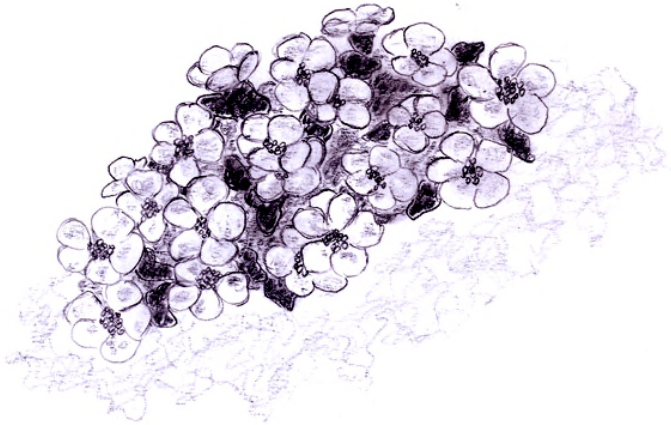
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the Magic Fountain

J.H. Sweet



Contents

Chapter One: Fairy Circle – 4

Chapter Two: Arches, Hoodoos, Stars, and Seas – 9

Chapter Three: Fairyland Loop – 17

Chapter Four: Flottie of Zuletas – 22

Chapter Five: The Magic Rice Measure – 32

Chapter Six: Hofu's Fishing Basket – 37

Chapter Seven: Castle Vizallas – 41

Chapter Eight: The Magic Fountain – 45

Chapter One

Fairy Circle

Three fairies were sitting by the edge of a pond on a glorious summer morning. An enchanted grasshopper happened to notice them. The grasshopper, who was called Monkeyshine, always enjoyed the company of fairies, so he stopped by for a visit. After a few moments of exchanging pleasantries, Monkeyshine decided to tell the fairies a joke that had been swirling around in his head:

An oak, a hackberry, and a black gum were walking along in the forest when they came upon a monkey and a parrot having a conversation.

The monkey laughed to see the three traveling trees, and he told the parrot, “Look, it’s a *treeesome*.”

Upon hearing this, the trees, who were not fond of puns, rose up very tall, and snootily passed the pair without pausing.

“Oh, they are so *fearsome*!” exclaimed the parrot.

“No...that’s a *firsome*,” replied the monkey, pointing to four fir trees standing next to a huge crock of huckleberry jam.

“Do you reckon they *atesome*?” asked the parrot with a caw and a cackle.

“No,” stated the monkey. “It would take four more fir to make an *eightsome*.”

To which the parrot replied, “Unless those four fir are looking in a mirror.”

“Let’s just go get some jam,” said the monkey, who was tired of trying to be clever, and who very much wanted to get his paws good and sticky.

When the grasshopper finished, the fairies laughed and clapped their hands. None of them had ever been treated to a grasshopper joke before. Monkeyshine took a small bow and bid the fairies farewell, promptly hopping away in search of more fun to fill his day.

After the grasshopper’s departure, Meadowsweet, Dandelion, and Aquamarine flitted back to their Fairy Circle gathering. This was the beginning of summer vacation, and the girls were very much enjoying their time off from school so far.

Eleven-year-old Meadowsweet, whose real name was Briony Foster, had only joined Fairy Circle last Christmas. And since she had been so busy with school and other activities in the spring, she was looking forward to getting to know some of her fellow fairies better.

Part of the herb family, the meadowsweet plant had a pleasant aroma and was used for both flavoring and medicinal purposes. Due to the fact that the herb had given rise to aspirin and many other useful drugs, Meadowsweet was given healing powers as her fairy gift. She was also one of the fairies associated with replenishing, restoring, rebirth, and renewal. In fairy form, Meadowsweet’s dress was made of dark green leaves that had fuzzy white down on their undersides. Clusters of small, creamy-white flowers with delicate petals and spindly centers were tucked

into the leaves of her dress. Her pale green wings were very tall, and she wore a headband covered with meadowsweet blossoms to pull back her dark hair. Meadowsweet's wand was made from a marmot whisker.

Dandelion, whose real name was Andressa James, preferred to be called Dande. She had dark hair and wore a silky, bright yellow dress made of long, crinkly flower petals with a fringe of fluffy dandelion seeds at the bottom of her skirt. Dande also had sparkling yellow wings and carried a gleaming harp string for her wand. In addition to being bewitched to perform fairy magic, the wand was full of harp enchantment, and faint classical music could often be heard issuing from the string. Because dandelion seeds were so light and airy, Dande was given the ability to make objects levitate without the use of her fairy wand.

Christina Marian was Aquamarine's name, and she had blond hair. She was a visitor to Fairy Circle, and was staying with Clover for a few weeks. As one of the Jewel Fairies, Aquamarine usually attended fairy gatherings in Michigan, where most of the Jewel Fairies lived. Her pale turquoise dress appeared somewhat watery and shimmered like the sun shining on shallow seawater. Her lacy wings were edged with a fringe of tiny blue gemstones. Water manipulation was Aquamarine's special ability. She could cause both whirlpools and waterspouts, create barriers using water, and even change the direction of flowing water if needed, including powerful flows of water such as rivers and falls. For her fairy wand, Aquamarine carried a crystal shard to match her own gemstone.

Three new fairies joined their gathering on this day. Though Laurel, Mint, and Apple were all attending Fairy

Circle for the first time, and were very excited to join their friends, most of the other fairies had already met them at a Girls Club meeting right after school let out for summer, so they weren't completely new.

While they visited with one another, the fairies enjoyed refreshments of blueberry scones, powdered sugar puff pastries, raspberries, homemade fudge, peanut butter and marshmallow crème sandwiches, sweet pickles, snickerdoodles, and lemon jellybeans. They also had iced coffee, limeade, and root beer to drink.

Many of the fairies in the region were on summer trips with their families, so the gathering was not quite as large as it could have been. Meadowsweet, Clover, Aquamarine, Dandelion, and Apple were very excited because they were shortly leaving on a camping trip to Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah. Madam Jonquil was chaperoning them. Since she didn't want the girls to have to miss their summer Fairy Circle, and because Sunday was a good day to begin traveling, she had decided that the group would leave directly after Fairy Circle. Her van was already packed full of camping supplies and luggage.

Clover's real name was Faith Llewellyn, and she had the fairy spirit of a purple-blossomed clover. Her dress was covered with dark green leaves, but the shoulder straps and belt were made of purple clover blossoms. She also had tall purple wings, blond hair, and carried a tiny rainbow cactus thorn for her wand. Clover's special fairy gifts were still developing but so far include enhanced luck and the ability to interpret dreams.

Apple was a thin black girl with shoulder-length, wavy dark hair. Her name was London Pierce, and she had been

given the fairy spirit of an apple blossom. Apple had pale pink wings with furled edges, and her dress was made of frothy white flowers with just a hint of pink streaking on the petals. The blossoms also had delicate, yellow and green centers. Her fairy wand was a bright purple gladiola stem.

For centuries, apple trees and blossoms had been used as religious symbols and were featured as extremely prominent elements in stories of both mythology and folklore. Even now, the fruit was considered by many to be an important symbol. In fact, one of the first things Aquamarine had told Apple upon meeting her was that the apple blossom was the state flower of both Michigan and Arkansas.

Apple was somewhat of an expert regarding the fruit's folklore. As a very young girl, even before learning about her fairy spirit, she had kept a copy of *Johnny Appleseed* under her pillow because it was her favorite childhood story. However, aside from folklore and symbolism, apples had a wide range of uses. Over the years, the fruit had given rise to a great variety of delicious edibles, and had been useful in making products such as vinegar and pectin. The healthful nature of apples had also been long recognized. Apple's fairy gifts related to all aspects of the fruit and included flexibility, widespread appeal, and healing abilities.

Chapter Two

Arches, Hoodoos, Stars, and Seas

Shortly before noon, Madam Jonquil gathered her troops to leave for their camping trip. The fairy mentor wore a white dress of silky, furred flower petals with bright yellow flower centers tucked amongst the furls. She had tall, sunny yellow wings and carried a conductor's pointer for her wand. Jonquils were basically the same as narcissus and daffodils, but were always a white version of the flower. Although jonquils were poisonous, they had long been used to make medicines. Relating to this, Madam Jonquil was given the gift of healing.

On the road, the girls had sandwiches and fruit for a late lunch. They also played games and read to pass the time on the long stretches of desert highway abundant in West Texas. They also talked about what they were planning to see on their trip.

Dande had been to Canyonlands National Park in Utah, but had only seen one section of the enormous, three-sectioned park. Some national parks were simply too large to see very much of during a single visit.

Aquamarine, Clover, and Meadowsweet had all been to the Grand Canyon in Arizona, but they hadn't hiked down into it. Bryce Canyon was a much smaller canyon, and they were going to hike down into it, which was a very exciting prospect, even for fairies who could pretty much fly anywhere they wanted to in wilderness areas.

They made it to El Paso in the early evening. The girls had dinner and went for a quick swim in the motel pool before going to bed.

The next day, they woke super early in order to make it all the way to Arches National Park in Utah. Though this was not their primary destination, the park was sort of on the way to Bryce Canyon, and Madam Jonquil wanted to make sure the girls got to see a few of the arches before dark. The neighboring town of Moab would be a good place to stay for the night.

They stopped very few times and made it to Arches in the late afternoon.

Before viewing the amazing sights, the group stopped at the visitor center where they learned the differences between arches and bridges as far as rock formations. Bridges were a type of arch formed mainly by water erosion, as opposed to the wind erosion that helped to sculpt other arches. Bridges also looked a lot like manmade bridges, generally flat on top. After a brief visit to the gift shop, they just had time to take two short hikes in the park to see Landscape Arch and Delicate Arch before it got dark and they needed to be checking in to their motel for the night.

The girls were a little disappointed not to have had more time to spend at Arches, especially in reading some of the books they had picked up from the gift shop, and they all wanted to come back some day to spend more time hiking and viewing the sights. Utah had such a large collection of national parks and monuments that they really did have to limit what they were seeing. There was just too much beauty and wonder here to be able to take in very

much of it on one trip. Probably ten or more trips to Utah would have been needed to really get a good, overall tour of the many natural features in this amazing state.

Upon noticing that the girls were sad about not getting to stay longer at Arches, Madam Jonquil assured them that they were going to an equally-spectacular place.

She was completely correct. Even on the approach to Bryce Canyon National Park, the girls knew they were in for an enormous treat. The colors of the rocky landscape and the smell of the pine forests were simply wonderful.

Since they arrived at the park fairly early, after choosing their campsite, they had time to drive all the way up to the highest overlook to view the magnificent amphitheatre of Bryce Canyon.

The rock formations were very different than those they had seen in Arches. Being part of a canyon, these had weathered differently over the ages, creating formations called hoodoos. The interesting shapes of the rock towers and spires very much reminded the girls of fairy tale castles and characters, and creatures such as giants and goblins.

The fairies knew that several of their friends were camping at Mammoth Cave National Park during this same week. As they took in the spectacular view, Clover stated, "I doubt Mammoth Cave is as pretty as this."

"It's a different kind of pretty," said Aquamarine. She had been to the huge park in Kentucky twice on family trips. "And it's not just a huge cave," she added. "There are rivers and forests too, and a big sinkhole."

The others agreed that there probably was just as much beauty in Kentucky. However, in seeing the vibrant, red and gold colors of the canyon flashing at them in the

afternoon light, they could hardly imagine a place more beautiful anywhere. Indeed, even aside from the thinner air at this higher elevation, it was somewhat difficult to breathe just from being in such awe.

“We’ll have to meet up with them to compare photographs when we get home,” said Dande, snapping about her tenth picture of the immense gorge.

After dinner and viewing the sunset from Sunset Point, the girls roasted marshmallows by wand sparks instead of building a campfire. They had been able to choose a campsite somewhat separate from other campers, so they had a little privacy to be able to change to fairy form behind their two tents and a few lush trees.

They purposely didn’t have a campfire because they wanted to be in as much darkness as possible to view the stars on this clear, cool evening. Just in front of the branches of a ponderosa pine, which helped to keep them hidden, the fairies spread blankets and got out their planisphere, which was a special kind of star chart, to be able to recognize more than just the Big Dipper. Then they pointed out the many constellations they were able to locate to one another.

Being away from the lights of cities and traffic, the darkened landscape provided perfect viewing for what seemed like billions of stars. Even in their other adventures, the fairies had never seen so many stars in any particular patch of the heavens before. This was so amazing. And they decided that even if they hadn’t seen the interesting rock formations and beautiful forests, the sight of the stars alone was worth the long hours of driving from Texas to Utah.

After nearly two hours of star gazing, Madam Jonquil and the girls *popped* back into regular person form to make a trip to the restrooms to brush their teeth. Then they tucked themselves drowsily into their sleeping bags and drifted off to sleep with the sound of the wind rustling the trees.

Having just seen about a zillion stars, the fairies all assumed their dreams would be filled with sparkles and twinkles, or perhaps a few rocks and pine trees similar to the ones seen in their recent travels. However, for some reason, all six of them dreamed about the sea, specifically, life under the sea.

While having breakfast the next morning and discussing the peaceful night in the park, the fairies discovered that they had all had nearly the same dream—of visiting a city under the sea that looked like an underwater version of Bryce Canyon, complete with many of the same streaked spires and layered rock formations. However, the colors were mainly blues and greens, instead of reds and oranges.

In their dream, they could see the lights of a large city in the distance, far away in the watery canyon; but they couldn't make out the shapes of the buildings or get close enough to see any of the residents of the city.

Clover, with her clever ability to interpret dreams, had an idea as to what the dreams might mean. "I think we are all headed for some sort of adventure involving water."

"But there isn't much water around here," stated Meadowsweet. "At least, we are not super close to any lakes or rivers or dams; and the ocean is a long way off."

“I was kind of having the same feeling as Clover about the dream,” said Aquamarine. “But I thought it was just my water gift.”

“Maybe it’s going to rain,” said Dande. “I’ve felt like it might ever since we arrived, but I thought I was just sensing more moisture in the air than we are having at home. Plus, for some reason, the smell of pine trees always reminds me of rain.”

Madam Jonquil didn’t have any good ideas as to why they were all dreaming about a city under the sea, but she tended to agree with Clover that it was some sort of sign of things to come. Many things in the world, especially in the magical world of dreams, didn’t have complete explanations.

Since no one had any other input about their watery dreamscapes, the discussion soon turned to their current adventure on land.

Apple had bought a book at the visitor center gift shop, which described many of the wonderful details of Bryce Canyon National Park. While they were having breakfast, the girls took turns summarizing and reading out tidbits of information to one another.

“Depending on the time of year,” stated Dande, “there are lots of flowers here.” The fairies had seen many flowers in the fields and particularly in the meadow housing a large prairie dog town not too far from their campground. “And in addition to prairie dogs and squirrels, elk and pronghorn also live in the area.”

“There are a lot of varieties of evergreens here,” said Aquamarine, now having her turn with the book, since Dande wanted to concentrate more on her eggs and bacon

than on reading. “Spruce, juniper, Pinyon Pine, fir, and Ponderosa Pine,” she added.

“The park is home to hummingbirds and peregrine falcons too,” said Clover, after receiving the book from Aquamarine and reading few lines while sipping from a grape juicebox.

“This part of the country also has a lot of fossils,” stated Apple, thinking about her own fossil and mineral collection at home. “Of course, I know we can’t collect anything like that from the park,” she added hastily.

Madam Jonquil smiled. The fairies were always careful to leave places such as state and national parks exactly as they found them so that future generations could enjoy the wilderness as it was meant to be.

They went on several of the park’s shorter hikes during the day, some of which were quite steep and challenging. As they traveled, both Dande and Apple took a lot of pictures. Madam Jonquil also had a camera, but kept forgetting to take shots, mainly because she was getting somewhat tired from the hiking. The ladies all stopped frequently for water and rest.

While they hiked, the girls marveled at the uniqueness of the rocks, especially the shapes, which looked much like recognizable items. They imagined many fun and fanciful things such as an elephant, a giant chair, and a family of trolls walking along a ridge. One formation even resembled a bride in a beautiful dress with a long train and several bridesmaids in tow.

Over the years, the erosion of the limestone in the area had uncovered colorful layers of sediment. Water and ice

had worked like sculptors in the amphitheatre, and had painstakingly formed these beautiful spires.

The various shades of pink, white, and gold in the rocky canyon melded perfectly with the greens of the vegetation, like a colorful artist's palette. Except for the red tones of the landscape, the fairies could almost imagine that this setting could exist under the sea, as in their dreams. And since many canyons were formed by the force of water, the idea of an enormous, underwater, hoodoo-filled gorge was not too much of a stretch, especially because the bottoms of seas and lakes were seldom perfectly flat.

Pausing to snap photos and drink plenty of water allowed the fairies to take their time on the hikes, which was especially important because it was taking them some time to get used to breathing in the higher elevation.

At one point, as she paused on the trail to catch her breath, Madam Jonquil said, "People living at higher elevations have to adjust the temperature of the oven when they bake because water takes longer to boil and things take longer to cook higher up."

Since the young fairies didn't already know this, they thought it was very good information to have, in case they ever wanted to bake cookies or a cake on a mountain, or someplace else fairly high up.

Chapter Three

Fairyland Loop

Early the next morning, the girls got to listen to a short lecture from Madam Jonquil.

“You must observe all rules relating to hiking and camping. This includes leaving things exactly as you found them and not causing any damage to plants, rocks, trees, or other natural things. Also, you must pack out all of your trash and belongings, leaving nothing on the trail.”

The girls nodded earnestly in agreement.

They had been given permission to hike one of the trails on their own, without the fairy mentor along. Having worn herself out climbing in and out of the canyon the day before, Madam Jonquil was mainly only interested in resting and visiting the gift shop today. Since the girls were planning to hike a trail measuring eight miles round trip, Madam Jonquil was happy to extend a fairy lecture to them, instead of trying to accompany them. Even flying along with them would have seemed like a chore for her sore muscles. Spending time on their own wasn't a problem for the fairies in areas such as national parks because they often went on outings in the wilderness as part of their job of protecting nature.

They listened carefully as Madam Jonquil went on. “You can access me by nut message fairly quickly if needed. I know you really want to hike in regular girl form instead of flying about in the canyon, but promise me you

will change to fairy form and hide if you notice other hikers. We don't want to get into trouble for you hiking by yourselves, without an adult. Even though fairies are often out in the wilderness without supervision, and can handle most situations in nature, the park rangers and other hikers don't know this, so we have to be careful.”

Again, the girls heartily agreed. They were very excited to be able to hike this particular trail, because they had been somewhat disappointed when Madam Jonquil declared herself, “...simply too worn out.”

The fairy mentor smiled as she finished the instructions. “One or all of you can always fly back to the campsite swiftly in case of emergency to get me. I am only going to the gift shop in the morning, so I'll be here all afternoon.”

After making sure they had plenty of sunscreen, food, and water, the girls donned their daypacks and hats. They waved to Madam Jonquil as they set off. The sun was just peeking over the rim of the canyon in front of them, and beginning to set the beautiful gorge on fire with vibrant red and gold morning colors, as though a gigantic fiery furnace was just heating up for the day.

The excited fairies were soon on their chosen trail and were thrilled to be traveling Fairyland Loop. This particular hike was not as crowded as many of the others because it was so long. The changes in elevation, as the path climbed in and out of the canyon numerous times, made this a strenuous hike, which not many people could endure. It was a very good thing the girls were healthy and strong.

Even in the first part of the hike, the fairies could tell how Fairyland Loop got its name. Many of the tall

hoodoos and rocky fins very much resembled objects that would be perfectly placed in a fairyland. Apple and Dande took pictures of rocks that looked just like a carriage, a spiky crown, a fabulous birthday cake, a horse, a lacy collar, and a train caboose. One spire even looked just right for a dark and mysterious tower, and the girls imagined Rapunzel getting ready to lower her golden hair down for them to climb up to visit her. There was also a long bridge formation, which made them think about their visit to Arches.

Although the scenery was very beautiful, the girls soon realized why this loop was considered to be one of the most strenuous hikes in the park. As the winding trail wove its way through the rocks and trees, the fairies were taken on an up-and-down journey that repeated itself many times. No sooner had the path led them up and out of the depths of the canyon, then they descended again. After about the sixth tiring time of climbing from the canyon floor, nearly all the way back up to the rim, heading down the sloping trail once more was a little disheartening because the girls knew that they would eventually have to climb back out again. And because they could tell from the map that they were not even halfway around the loop, they felt tired just thinking about all of the ups and downs yet to come.

The girls only saw other hikers once, on the trail far ahead of them, about halfway up the canyon wall.

After two more ups and downs, with a long break for water and a snack of energy bars, the fairies were almost tempted to change to fairy form and fly back to camp. However, they didn't really want to do this because that would be like giving up. They just needed a slightly longer

break for their tired legs and a bit more water to refresh them.

Even though they were in really good physical shape, the drastic and repeated changes in elevation would have tired just about anyone. Dande was having the least amount of problems, probably because of the endurance she had built playing field hockey and riding her bicycle nearly everywhere. Or maybe her climbing ease was due to her defying-gravity fairy gift. Apple and Clover both liked to jog, and Aquamarine was an accomplished swimmer, but still, this hike was very tiring. Plus, the girls were still getting used to the thinner air. Other than walking and fairy flying, Meadowsweet didn't exercise or participate in any sports, so she generally brought up the rear of the hiking group and had to stop more often than the others to catch her breath.

“We can fly back to the campsite, if you want,” offered Dande, noticing how tired Meadowsweet seemed to be.

Apple nodded earnestly in agreement. If the hike was too much for any one of them, the girls should definitely head back by flying shortcut.

Clover and Aquamarine also agreed. There was a greater risk of someone getting hurt if they got too tired and pushed themselves too hard.

After catching her breath, Meadowsweet said, “No, I want to keep going. I just need a little break.”

They moved on slowly. In the parts of the climb with less trees and shade, the fairies were glad they were wearing hats and sunscreen because the sun beat down upon them rather cruelly. They made a point of reapplying

sunscreen just before lunchtime. According to the map, they were just over halfway around Fairyland Loop.

Stopping for lunch, they each ate a peanut butter and marshmallow crème sandwich and an apple. This nourishment revived them, along with the twenty-minute break, so even though this long hike had made them weary and a little frustrated—because they felt like the canyon was playing tricks on them, leading them up and out so many times, only to take them back down again—they were really glad they had tackled it and were not at all ready to give up. Taking on this challenge made them feel good about themselves, and they knew they could make it all the way back without taking a shortcut. Plus, non-magical people wouldn't have had that option, so they really needed to keep going in regular girl form.

They continued to drink plenty of water and stop frequently for rests. This gave Dande and Apple plenty of time to take photos.

It was a good thing Meadowsweet was bringing up the rear because she often had a knack for noticing things others might overlook, and she was about to discover something very unusual several feet off the trail, directly behind a thick clump of juniper.

Chapter Four

Flottie of Zuletas

While trailing her friends and taking her time to set the pace of the group to something she could handle, Meadowsweet paused and moved slightly off the trail to try to catch a closer glimpse of a passing hummingbird. She had thought hummingbirds would only be found in the meadow areas of the park, not down in the canyon, so she wanted to see where this one was heading—maybe to some hidden pocket of flowers.

The tiny hummingbird landed on a juniper twig and bounced slightly, turning his head to one side as Meadowsweet approached. However, he took off as she neared. As she turned to rejoin her friends, Meadowsweet noticed something very interesting behind the juniper bush, at the bottom of a pale pink boulder. Crouching down, she called to the others who had paused to wait for her on the trail. They soon joined her and bent down to examine Meadowsweet's find.

An overlapping stone, that looked as though it had been placed there, cleverly camouflaged a tiny tunnel in the pink rock. A few grasses also hid the entryway and seemed to have been planted for that purpose because they were growing in nearly an exact straight line.

The entrance to the tunnel itself looked just the right size for a fairy, so it almost seemed as though they were being invited in. The girls didn't have any bad feelings or

ideas of danger relating to this, so they decided to risk a little fairy exploring.

Making sure no one was around, they *popped* into fairy form. Meadowsweet led the way into the narrow tunnel, which soon opened out into a small cave. Other than a few boulders and rocks sitting about, the cave had only one prominent feature—a small pool of clear water. The oval pool, situated in one corner of the cave, was approximately four feet across. Standing right on the pebble-strewn edge, and bending over to look down into the water, the girls had some difficulty making out a bottom to discover how deep the pool might be.

Meadowsweet lit her marmot whisker wand with a little whisper of, “*Fairy lights.*” Her friends followed suit and the harp string, aquamarine shard, rainbow cactus thorn, and purple gladiola were soon lit as well. The extra illumination didn’t help the fairies determine how deep the pool might be; however, in glancing about them, they discovered that the walls and ceiling of this small grotto were covered with colorful pictographs.

The events depicted in the drawings looked to be taking place in an underwater canyon. Flowing, greenish-blue water spirits flitted about in a setting much like the Bryce Canyon amphitheatre, full of hoodoos, with a few arches and bridges mixed in. Though there were obviously some interesting activities going on in the rock pictures, the girls were unable to make out any specific story in the scenes. The art seemed mainly a collage of beautiful, underwater features with the graceful spirits floating about.

Clover chanced to glance back at the pool for a moment while the others were admiring the pictographs, and she

gasped. This drew the attention of her friends, and they all stared into the water to discover that some sort of lovely creature was staring back at them from about two feet below the surface. The water dweller very much resembled those in the artwork of the cave.

The fairies moved cautiously closer to the edge of the pool as the spirit slowly rose to pop her head up out of the water. In the clear water and in the light of their wands, the girls could tell that this beautiful water spirit was about two feet in height and looked much like a tiny nymph. She had flowing green hair, graceful hands and feet, and her dress resembled billowing strands of green and blue seaweed.

“I am a selkie,” the spirit said, “and my name is Flottie.”

Apple introduced everyone, as Flottie nodded in acknowledgement of their names.

As Meadowsweet hurriedly flipped the pages of her handbook in an attempt to look up selkies, Flottie gave a soft, watery laugh and said, “I’ll tell you about selkies, if you like, so you don’t have to look it up.” As the fairies nodded eagerly, Flottie smiled and continued. “Selkies are shapeshifting water spirits. We most often take on shapes about the size of elves, around two feet in height. We also like to look something like our surroundings, so many selkies choose to have their hair resemble seaweed or branches of coral. And our clothes may appear to look like kelp strands, sand, rocks, or whatever might be found in and around our homes.”

What a wonderful way for the fairies to learn about other magical creatures, directly from the source. Flottie

was doing at least as good a job as the fairy handbook would have, and she wasn't even finished.

“Selkies can occupy any of the various types of large bodies of water, whether salt or fresh. However, the majority of selkies live in seas and oceans, as opposed to lakes and rivers. There's just more room for us in the seas,” she added with another gurgling laugh.

“We live mainly in giant air bubbles designed by selkie engineers using *Water and Bubble Magic*.” At this point, Dande and Apple both laughed with delight and clapped their hands at this wonderful lesson on selkies.

But Flottie still wasn't done. “Selkies are quite different than either undines or kelpies, both of which are considered to be water spirits. Undines are pixie-like spirits, usually around two inches in height, and only some of them can change their shapes. They are also shyer than selkies. Kelpies are usually around the size of fairies, and all of them can change shapes. Unfortunately, most kelpies are mean and nasty. Believe me, you would rather meet a hundred selkies at once, all of them in a very bad mood, than come across even one kelpie.”

The fairies very much did believe this, especially Aquamarine, who had firsthand knowledge of the danger of kelpies, having helped to battle a pack of them the previous summer.

“Only magical creatures can find and enter this cave,” Flottie went on. “This pool is a passage to an underwater city called Zuletas.

“Would you like to visit our city under the sea? We have been hoping that a magical creature would come along. If you have time for a visit, you might be able to

help us with a problem. I have heard that fairies are notorious for solving problems.”

The girls immediately got very excited about the prospect of a fairy mission mixed with their national park adventure, and they agreed at once.

“You will be perfectly safe,” added Flottie. “I can cast a spell on you to allow you to breathe under water for forty-eight hours. But since you will be visiting the city, and will be in our protective bubbles part of the time, you will be breathing in an air setting too, just as you normally do.”

“We need to send a nut message to Madam Jonquil,” said Apple.

Meadowsweet was already fishing in her pocket for one of the handy acorns she always carried. She quickly penned a short note, telling the fairy mentor that they had found a cave with a magical pool and were going with a selkie to visit an underwater city and possibly help solve a problem. She also made sure to tell the location on the trail where Madam Jonquil could find the tiny cave, if needed.

Stepping outside the cave, Meadowsweet discovered that the hummingbird she had observed earlier was very nearby. He buzzed nearer and was happy to take the acorn to Madam Jonquil, though being such a tiny bird, he had some difficulty figuring out a way to carry it. Thank goodness this particular acorn still had its hat on, equipped with a small stem to give the hummingbird something to grab onto.

The fairies left their daypacks in the cave, since it would have been somewhat difficult to swim with them. Plus, at this point, they didn’t anticipate needing much gear on their underwater adventure.

Pulling a small blue wand out of her hair, Flottie gave it a tiny flick. The wand, which looked something like a sea urchin spine, immediately spewed a stream of glittery green and blue speckles at the fairies. The sparkling stream of magical light broke into four parts to swirl around each of the girls' heads, covering their hair and faces with blue and green dots that tickled as they faded.

“There!” exclaimed the selkie. “Now you should be able to breathe under water for the next forty-eight hours, if necessary.”

The spell was evidently working perfectly. As the fairies cautiously entered the water, they had no difficulty breathing.

As they began to swim downward, following Flottie, the fairies discovered why they had had such a hard time seeing the bottom. The pool was very deep, with the rocky walls surrounding them gradually slanting to become a tunnel, though this one was much larger than the entry passage leading into the tiny cave.

Flottie made her way so gracefully through the water, she seemed almost to be skipping and gliding, along with swimming. And at one point, she kind of spiraled through the water to pick up speed.

The underwater passageway contained a few twists and turns with several smaller tunnels branching off at various points.

After swimming for about ten minutes in total, Flottie and the fairies surfaced in a large, three-tiered fountain in the center of a courtyard. The courtyard and the three houses surrounding it were encased in one of the large, glassy bubbles of Zuletas.

Stepping from the fountain, the girls were very surprised when they were somehow magically dried within about three seconds. Though their hair, wings, and dresses had definitely gotten wet during the swim, after feeling only a brief puff of cool air, followed by a slight tingling sensation, the fairies were perfectly dry all over.

The courtyard and houses in the bubble were situated on a cliff overlooking a vast city built into what looked like an underwater version of Bryce Canyon, but with blues and greens as the prominent colors, instead of reds and oranges.

There was a lot of vegetation, but of different varieties than those on the land above. Many of the plants looked like bushes and trees formed of streaming seaweed instead of leaves. Other vegetation resembled giant anemone and sponges.

The buildings and houses of Zuletas all appeared to be made of stone. The various-sized underwater bubbles containing the settlement looked like clear glass spheres that reminded the fairies of snowglobes, though much larger, of course. The houses in the bubbles did not appear to be fancy, but they were sculpted very beautifully, mainly in dome and arch shapes, with a few spirals and leaning towers mixed in.

After taking it all in for a few moments, the group moved to sit on benches near one of the homes, at which point, Flottie offered them refreshments of sweetened orange sea-tea and bite-sized chocolate kelp-biscuits.

Several empty pottery vessels that looked like fat vases, jugs, and pitchers sat at their feet as they visited and admired the view.

Aquamarine had especially enjoyed their adventure so far, particularly the swim through the tunnel. But, then, anytime the Jewel Fairy got into the water, she felt as graceful as a mermaid, since she was truly in her element.

Upon discovering a magical, underwater city directly beneath Bryce Canyon, the girls were now even more taken with the national park than they had been before.

As they continued to enjoy the tea and biscuits, the fairies noticed a second fountain in the courtyard near a clump of bushes sporting flowers that resembled starfish. Made of pale blue stone, and gushing frothy blue water, the fountain was very tiny.

“It’s strange to see fountains under the water, even inside of dry bubbles,” stated Dande.

“I didn’t think of that,” said Clover. “Why would an underwater city need to have fountains?”

“Well, some of them are passages to other places, like the one we just came out of,” answered Flottie.

The girls nodded, understanding. The selkies would need to have ways to travel to places other than the sea in which their city was located.

“But that smaller fountain is a magic fountain,” the water spirit added.

Having the girls’ complete attention, she went on. “No one may touch the fountain itself, and only selkies may touch the actual water, probably because of our connection with water. However, selkies are not allowed to take any of the water from the fountain.”

Although the information about the magic fountain was interesting, Apple suddenly remembered why they had

come to Zuletas. “What sort of problem do you need help with?” she asked.

The other fairies looked eagerly at Flottie, who sighed and began slowly. “Thousands of selkies in Zuletas are currently sick with an illness that only affects selkies, and they will soon wither away and die if they are not healed.”

“We could perform a fairy *Healing Spell*,” stated Meadowsweet, looking at Apple who was nodding.

“Yes,” said Apple, “Meadowsweet and I are both healing fairies. So is Madam Jonquil.”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” said Flottie, shaking her head. “That won’t work, even though it is a good idea and a nice thought. Unfortunately, there is only one thing that can be done to save the residents of Zuletas. A magical being, or five in a group, will need to go on a quest to find something magical, a specific item, and bring it back.”

The fairies looked at one another excitedly. So far, the project to help the selkies didn’t sound so hard. They listened carefully as Flottie went on. “Two weeks ago, a mountain gnome who was traveling through Bryce Canyon paid us a visit and went in search of the magical item. He was not able to find what we needed, but he did happen upon a wonderful sea-pomegranate bush in his travels, and he brought us back some fruit. Sea-pomegranates usually don’t grow in waters this deep so that was quite a treat.

“Unfortunately, I can offer you no more help in discovering the object of the quest than I offered him. You see, I cannot reveal exactly what the item is or it will lose its magic. Even though I know the secret, I will not be able to tell you what it is. I cannot even tell you if what you will be seeking is animal, vegetable, or mineral. So we can’t

play the *Twenty Questions* game. In other words, I wouldn't be able to tell you what you are looking for even if you correctly guessed. However, if you do manage to locate the mystery article and bring it back, I can then confirm it is the magical item that can help us."

"Well," stated Clover, "even though this is a very serious matter, it sounds like a lot of fun."

"Exactly," said Dande. "May we leave right away to start looking?"

Apple, Meadowsweet, and Aquamarine were all nodding eagerly.

Flottie smiled as she answered. "Yes, and thank you for agreeing to try to help us."

Just then, another selkie popped his head out of the fountain from which they had arrived in Zuletas with a nut message for the girls. "A hummingbird just delivered this to the cave," he said, quickly walking over and handing the acorn to Aquamarine.

She quickly opened the nut and read the two-page note. Then she summarized the message for her friends. "Madam Jonquil says we can spend the night in the underwater city if needed to complete our mission, but we have to be back at the campsite by tomorrow afternoon or send another message to her to explain our delay. She already called our parents to check in this morning, so no one will likely be looking for us. And, of course, she's available by hummingbird nut message if we need her. But she's not really up for any swimming, if we can manage without her."

Chapter Five

The Magic Rice Measure

“I am allowed to give you one hint regarding the object you must seek,” stated Flottie, as she led them across the courtyard to leave the bubble and begin their quest.

The fairies listened closely as she explained. “The item is something that holds a treasure related to life, bounty, good fortune, and renewal. All of those properties will be needed to heal the illness that currently plagues us. What you seek also has qualities relating to success and prosperity.”

The girls nodded their understanding, happy for any information relating to the unknown object of their quest.

As they stood at the edge of the courtyard, looking out into the watery depths of the canyon, Flottie said, “Tap any bubble gently from either side, and a circular door will open for ten seconds to allow you to either leave or enter.”

How convenient. The designers of the magical, underwater bubbles were certainly very smart.

Meadowsweet took the lead and gently tapped on the glassy surface of the bubble wall directly in front of her. Immediately, just as Flottie had said, a circular opening appeared. None of the water from the sea came into the temporary doorway. Some sort of force was holding it back.

Aquamarine was the first to go through the doorway into the water. The others quickly followed to make it through in the ten seconds before the circle closed again.

Flottie swam with them for a while as they descended into the canyon and wove their way through rocks and ocean greenery to a point at the edge of the city where two paths branched off through the boulders and rocky fins of the vast, underwater landscape.

“This is as far as I can take you,” said the selkie. “You must choose your own path from here.” With this, Flottie turned and headed back through the city to her home to await the fairies’ return.

They decided to take the left path first. The trail very much resembled that of Fairyland Loop, but they were able to swim along, instead of climbing. At some points, they walked a little, but swimming was more fun under the water. Plus, the currents seemed just right for their wings to work somewhat to help propel them, so it seemed as though they were flying along the trail in some places.

With scenery so beautiful, it was almost easy to get distracted enough to forget they were on an important treasure hunt—almost...but not quite. The fairies did pay close attention to areas behind bright rocks, under shadowy cliff overhangs, and inside waving clumps of bushes.

After traveling nearly an hour, they came upon a tiny village. This small, underwater settlement would have fit easily into the pocket of Zuletas with room to spare. Even the glassy bubbles were tiny in comparison to the splendor of the larger city, and if the fairies were allowed to choose a name for this town, they would have called it Quaintsville.

Thirty-six selkies lived in this village, and they all came out to visit with their fairy guests. These water spirits seemed a bit smaller and were slightly different colors than those living in Zuletas. Both their skin and clothing were streaked with shades of deep gold and pale green, mixed with darker greens and blues. But since selkies were shapeshifting, the fairies imagined that this might just be how they chose to look at this moment.

The girls replied in greeting to the warm welcome they received.

After all of the introductions, Meadowsweet said, “We are looking for something magical, but we don’t know exactly what we are looking for.”

“We have a magical object right here in our village,” exclaimed one of the selkie children. “Follow us and we’ll show you,” he added eagerly.

The fairies followed the boy and one of his friends, a girl selkie, to the far end of the village. There, sitting on a very small pavilion, was a lovely wooden rice measure with oriental markings on each of its sides and brass inlays on its curved handle. The rice measure was slightly larger than a basketball and was completely filled with rice.

Breathlessly, the girl selkie told the visitors, “The rice measure always stays full as long as it is never moved. We can’t move it, or the measure will lose its magic and cease to produce rice for us.” She smiled as she added, “This is a great help to us in years when we have poor kelp crops. We can still eat in the lean years.”

“We also use the rice sometimes to barter for fish from a neighboring village,” the boy told them.

“This certainly is a special magical object,” stated Apple, with the other fairies nodding in agreement.

“You may take some of the rice, if you like,” said the boy selkie. “Even though it isn’t magical rice, it is very good.”

“No,” said Aquamarine. “Thank you, though.”

“That is a very nice offer,” added Dande. “But we don’t really need any rice right now.”

The fairies were just heading out of town, accompanied by the boy selkie, to continue their search for the magical something to take back to Zuletas, when they noticed two other selkie children tailing along behind them, very close to Clover. The two girl selkies were obviously much younger than the boy. As he too noticed the followers, he laughed and explained, “Selkies, especially little selkies, are always fascinated by various types of clover, because clovers are considered to be lucky.”

The group paused for a moment, and Clover reached into the pocket of her dress to withdraw two four-leaf clovers. (She always carried four-leaf clovers with her.) She presented the tiny treasures to the little girls, who could barely take their huge green eyes off their new good luck charms long enough to thank the clover fairy.

After bidding the boy selkie farewell at the outskirts of town, the fairies continued to follow the same path, swimming and strolling along through the water.

“There’s no way we could have taken that rice measure, even if it was the object that would heal the people of Zuletas,” said Meadowsweet.

“Right,” said Dande. “Even if it could have been moved without losing its magic, it wouldn’t have been right to deprive the village of something so important to them.”

The others agreed, and Apple added, “That city may have been smaller, but the people living there weren’t any less important than those living in the larger one.”

“So you don’t think the rice itself might have been something that could heal the people of Zuletas?” asked Clover.

“The boy said it wasn’t magical,” said Meadowsweet.

“Plus,” said Aquamarine, “Flottie told us the mystery item ‘holds’ something, like the rice measure is holding the rice.” She paused for a moment, thinking, then added, “The magical production of rice would be a treasure related to life, bounty, good fortune, renewal, prosperity, and success for the people of that village.”

“So that must have been it—the magical object we are looking for,” said Apple.

“Probably,” replied Meadowsweet. “But we definitely can’t take something that belongs to someone else, especially an item that is that important to them. We’ll just have to keep looking for something else magical that fits the criteria of the hint we were given.”

Again, all of the fairies agreed.

Chapter Six

Hofu's Fishing Basket

Not very much farther down the winding path, the fairies came upon another tiny village, this one completely enclosed in a single bubble, as opposed to several smaller ones. This town was just as quaint as the first one.

After the visitors tapped and entered, all twenty-eight residents of Quaintsville Too (and Two) greeted the fairies happily. These selkies were also slightly different than those of the larger colony. Some were extremely pale, while others had darker and more vibrant colors.

The fairies again explained that they were searching for a magical object. This time, an elderly gentleman selkie led the girls to a point slightly outside the bubble of the town, to a small platform constructed of flat rocks. Upon the rocks sat a fishing basket about the size of a squat laundry hamper. The basket was filled with swimming fish.

“Long ago,” the gentleman began, “we had a terrible year of undersea drought. Crops failed and many fishes perished. We couldn't get enough to eat, and many selkies died of starvation. Fortunately, a magician named Hofu was passing through and decided to help us. He conjured up this magical fishing basket.”

Meadowsweet reached out to lightly touch the curved willow branches on the side of the basket as the selkie went on. “As long as the basket is not moved, it stays full of fish. This helps us during our leanest years. And we can

barter for rice in a nearby village, which also helps to feed us.”

The fairies nodded, admiring the basket and the story. It was nice of the magician to help the selkies through the year of undersea drought.

“Would you like to take some fish with you?” asked the selkie.

“No, thank you,” said Meadowsweet. “We don’t need any right now.”

The girls bid the gentleman farewell, and returned to the path. However, they were forced to stop their journey on the undersea trail fairly quickly because the path soon came to a complete dead end. Facing a steep canyon wall, the girls were somewhat discouraged. In addition to having twice discovered a magical object they could not take back, they were also very suddenly halted.

Since it was getting rather late, they decided to return to Zuletas. Before leaving on their quest, Flottie had invited them to stay at her house for the night. The fairies thought it would be a good idea to take her up on the offer and start a fresh search in the morning.

On their trip back to the large city, the girls had another discussion similar to the one regarding the rice measure.

“Even if the fishing basket is the magical object,” said Apple, “we definitely can’t take something that belongs to someone else.”

“Agreed,” said Meadowsweet. “And just because there are a lot of selkies needing help, we can’t say that those in the smaller city aren’t equally important.”

“Plus, the basket would lose its magic if moved,” said Clover.

“I think that means neither of the magical things we found today are the right ones,” said Dande. “Just being magical and holding things like bounty and prosperity wouldn’t make them correct, especially since moving the objects would cause them to lose the qualities that make them so special.”

“You’re right,” said Meadowsweet. “We’ll just have to look harder tomorrow. We’ll take the other path,” she added optimistically. “Surely, that will lead to the real magical something we are looking for.”

The fairies made it back to the city in good time and headed directly for the courtyard. Flottie was waiting for them on one of the benches. She had been reading a book.

Meadowsweet explained that, so far, they were not successful, but that they were hoping to start fresh very early in the morning. At this time, the fairies didn’t want to share the discoveries of the rice measure and fishing basket with Flottie. For one thing, they didn’t think either was truly correct as far as the magical something they were seeking. Plus, they felt a little discouraged about not finding what they were looking for on their first try.

Flottie didn’t seem disappointed at all, but she did look rather tired, probably from the long day.

As the fairies headed inside her house for the evening, Flottie told them she was waiting for her brother to arrive to help her move two stone tables together for dinner. Right away, Dande offered to move the tables. Using her power of levitation, which was an ever-growing gift, she was easily able to levitate both tables to a position in the center of Flottie’s dining room. Since she was able to do this without the use of a fairy wand, her friends were much

impressed with her gift. None of the other fairies had that ability.

When Flottie's brother arrived, they all sat down together for a wonderful meal of sea-grass stew, kelpie pickles, sweet-peach-coral cupcakes, candied sea-squash, and saltwater sugarcane chews.

After dinner, the fairies fell asleep easily in a five-high bunkbed that was as much fun as sleeping in a treehouse. And the fact that the bunkbed was built to sleep five made them wonder if they had somehow been expected. It seemed almost as if the selkies of Zuletas had been awaiting them and had magically made these accommodations. This thought made the girls hopeful, as though they were definitely meant to be here, and would be successful in the morning. After all, there were many cases in the past where fairies had had to be both patient and persistent on missions. Sometimes it took a second, or a third, or a fifth try to accomplish things that were really important.

Chapter Seven

Castle Vizallas

Early in the morning, the fairies made their way to the edge of the city and took the path on the right.

Not even ten minutes down the winding trail, they came upon a huge underwater bubble encasing an enormous rock formation. The formation was a combination of arches, fins, hoodoos, and bridges, and looked much like an elaborate castle. This was a correct observation because a sign directly in front of the bubble read Castle Vizallas.

The structure appeared to be empty. Even after tapping and entering the bubble, the girls came upon no other creatures as they made their way to the fortress and passed through the front arched entryway.

Flitting around the various large rooms of the castle, the fairies admired the many intricately-carved rocks forming the walls, floors, and ceilings. Even the furnishings were beautifully sculpted. One chair looked exactly like a leaping dolphin. A set of table and chairs very much resembled a bear with four cubs. And a bed in one of the rooms was shaped like a hippo.

In one of the turrets of Vizallas, the fairies discovered a glass case containing a very special object. Resting on a blue silk cloth in the case was a small nest containing a single, very distinctive-looking egg.

“This must be it,” breathed Apple.

Although egg-shaped, the egg looked exactly like a pale blue cloud, almost as if it were made of cotton instead of eggshell.

Meadowsweet was already thumbing through her handbook with concern creasing her brow. After reading a few lines of a specific entry, she told her friends, “The egg is that of a basudi bird.” Then, quoting directly from the handbook, she added, ““The magical basudi bird is very rare, as rare as halcyon, blazenbirds, and firebirds. The basudi is sometimes called a cloudbird because it can turn into wisps of clouds. Both the egg and the bird are very delicate. The basudi dies immediately after laying the egg because it has actually laid its own egg, so it can be reborn as another basudi. The magic of the bird relates to rebirth and renewal, and the basudi is considered to be a symbol of prosperity.””

The others continued to listen as Meadowsweet went on, ““They are said to be even more mysterious than other magical birds like firebirds because less is known about their origin and purpose. Some speculate they were originally messengers for ancient gods. Others think their magic relates directly to life and death, and that the basudi can even communicate with spirits in the hereafter.””

“So we can’t take the egg back either,” said Apple. “Right?”

The others, though disappointed, had to agree.

Staring at the fluffy blue egg in the case, Dande was about to say something when the egg moved slightly in its nest.

Transfixed, the fairies all watched as a tiny crack appeared in the fuzzy shell. After only a brief second, the

entire shell shattered into about a hundred pieces, which turned into wisps of clouds that dissipated above the nest that now contained a baby basudi bird. He was pale blue and very small, not much larger than the hummingbird the fairies had befriended in the canyon; and he looked like a tiny, bird-shaped powder puff. He chirped softly at the fairies, but only once, then he tucked his head under his cottony wing for a little nap.

“But this must be it,” said Clover, “the magical something we were supposed to find. Maybe the basudi ‘holds’ the magic that can heal the selkies.”

“But we can’t take back a baby bird,” said Dande.

“True,” said Aquamarine. “He’s just too little. We might harm him by moving him. The handbook said basudi birds were delicate.”

“And again,” offered Meadowsweet, “this magical something belongs to someone else. What if the basudi has as much or more purpose and value to someone as the rice measure and fishing basket? And what if the bird loses *his* magic if moved?”

“But what if he will only help one individual right here,” suggested Clover, “but he might help thousands in the city?”

“We just can’t know if that’s true, and we can’t be the ones to judge one individual to be less important than others, even lots of others,” said Aquamarine.

Her friends agreed, but all of them were crestfallen upon leaving the fortress. And they were even more disappointed to discover that the trail ended a very short distance beyond the castle.

After pausing for only a moment to admire a lovely underwater flower of some sort growing at the foot of the steep canyon wall that had stopped them, the girls turned slowly and headed back down the path toward Zuletas.

Chapter Eight

The Magic Fountain

As the fairies stood in front of Flottie, who was again sitting on her favorite courtyard bench, Meadowsweet expressed how badly they felt not to have found the magical something.

“It’s okay,” said Flottie. “Don’t feel badly. The gnome couldn’t find it either.”

“But we didn’t even bring you a sea-pomegranate or anything,” said Dande.

“We could have brought you rice and fish,” said Meadowsweet, “but we didn’t because we knew they weren’t magical.”

“Oh, we have plenty of rice and fish,” said Flottie, all of a sudden looking very tired. She pulled an afghan from the back of the bench over her lap and gave a little shiver as she said this.

Suddenly remembering, Apple took a small package out of her pocket and offered it to the water spirit. “Dried apples,” she announced. “*An apple a day keeps the doctor away*, or so the saying goes.”

“And I have some aspirin,” said Meadowsweet, pulling a packet out of her pocket. “I took some out of our first aid kit because the sun was kind of giving me a headache on the trail. But I never took it because the headache went away on its own. Doctors on television are always saying to take two aspirin and call them in the morning.”

Flottie smiled, but politely declined both offers. Her eyes were looking very droopy, and she seemed very weak. The fairies assumed she was one of those currently affected by the selkie illness.

The water spirit yawned, and her eyes looked even heavier. Within just a few seconds, she fell asleep on the bench, curled up in the afghan. The fairies moved away so as not to disturb her.

The group ended up very near the tiny magic fountain, which was currently gurgling very pleasantly like a babbling country brook.

On impulse, Meadowsweet said, “Maybe water from the magic fountain can help her.”

“She said they weren’t allowed to take the water,” said Clover.

“But we could bring it to her,” said Dande. “Then *she* wouldn’t be taking the water, *we* would be.”

“Good idea,” said Apple.

“But we can’t touch the water, and no one can touch the fountain,” said Meadowsweet, remembering more of what Flottie had told them. “So how do we get the water?”

“That’s easy,” said Aquamarine, smiling. She was already walking back to where Flottie was resting. As quietly as possible, she picked up one of the ceramic jugs from the foot of the bench and rejoined her friends. Then, using her gift of water manipulation, along with a bit of help from her crystal wand, the Jewel Fairy caused a tiny spout of water to jump out of the fountain and sail into the mouth of the jug.

After filling the jug brimful, Aquamarine and her friends made their way back to the bench. Flottie was just opening her eyes as they approached.

“Water is so good for people,” said Meadowsweet. “Maybe this will help you feel better.”

“We didn’t touch the fountain or the water,” said Dande, “but this is water from the magic fountain.”

“Yes, I know,” said Flottie. “And it holds a treasure related to life, bounty, good fortune, renewal, success, and prosperity.” With this, Flottie took a small sip from the jug. She looked better right away, and smiled at the fairies’ astounded faces.

“So...we found what we were looking for?” asked Meadowsweet.

“Yes,” said Flottie. “I’m sorry I couldn’t tell you that it wasn’t far. If I had given you that hint, the water from the fountain would have lost its magic and would have been of no use in healing us.

“One drop each is all that will be needed to heal us,” the water spirit continued. “So if you can fill three more containers, all of the selkies in Zuletas will be healed.”

As quickly as possible, the fairies helped Aquamarine fill two pitchers and a vase. They carefully carried the treasure back to Flottie who told them, “The water from the magic fountain is a healing elixir, but we are not allowed to get it ourselves, nor are we allowed to ask for it. I am certainly glad you figured out that it might help us, and managed to get it.”

After a moment’s pause, Meadowsweet, looking puzzled, said, “I have a feeling that this was something more than just a way to help the selkies of Zuletas.”

“You are very clever,” answered Flottie. “And you are correct. Though we did need genuinely need help, this is something of a test for magical creatures.”

The fairies, though slightly confused, listened carefully as Flottie went on. “I believe it relates to both use of magical powers and good decision-making skills. Since you mentioned rice and fish before, I am assuming that you discovered the magic rice measure and Hofu’s fishing basket. Yet, you chose to leave them in their places.”

The girls nodded, and Dande said, “We also found a basudi bird, but we didn’t try to bring him back either.”

“That was very wise of you,” replied Flottie. “He would not have survived if you had.”

The girls looked wide-eyed at one another, relieved that they had talked each other out of taking the baby bird. Then Flottie added, “I know you were frustrated because you thought you had failed, but you passed the challenge because you were patient and persistent. And you didn’t put the lives of many before the lives of just a few. That shows wisdom and caution, especially when you didn’t understand everything. You tried to find another way, and you didn’t try to take the easy route. That was very smart and shows good decision making. You five more than passed the test.”

Smiling, Clover said, “It’s pretty neat that what we were seeking wasn’t very far away—kind of like finding a treasure in our own back yard.”

Flottie swam with the fairies back to the pool in the tiny cave. As she was saying goodbye, she told them, “The selkies of Zuletas have been ill for several years, and many magical creatures have participated in this test. Now that

the quest will no longer be necessary, we still hope to have visitors. Please, come see us again sometime. This magical passageway from Bryce Canyon to the fountain in the courtyard will always be here.”

The fairies nodded and waved as Flottie dove under water to return home.

After retrieving their daypacks, they left the cave and transformed back to regular girl form to resume their hike. Dande and Apple took lots of pictures, and even got a close-up of their friend, the hummingbird, when he paused for a moment to pose on a twig for them.

Though the final half of Fairyland Loop was a tiring hike, the girls weren't tempted at all to change to fairy form and fly back to their campsite. They very much enjoyed the challenge.

At one point, Meadowsweet found a small pinecone on the trail, all smooth and closed up tight. She slipped the tiny treasure into her pocket, thinking that it might be fun to plant it later, to see if a tree would grow.

The fairies made it back to Madam Jonquil early in the afternoon and shared their adventure story with her.

That night, after a wonderful meal of cheesy potato wedges, hot dogs, raw veggie sticks, baked beans, and cookies, the ladies engaged in more stargazing and made wishes on the many shooting stars they saw. Again, they roasted marshmallows, followed by teeth-brushing and quickly falling asleep snuggled in their soft sleeping bags.

They left for home the next morning, after packing up their gear and carefully checking the campsite for any debris or belongings.

Meadowsweet forgot about the pinecone she had picked up until they made their first stop. As she was fishing in her pocket for money to buy a candy bar, she felt the cone.

Somewhat confused, she took the pinecone out of her pocket, amazed to discover what had happened to it. In the warmth of her pocket overnight, the cone had opened like a flower, and now looked totally different, transformed, as though it had already been planted and had decided to begin to sprout.

As soon as they made it home, before even unpacking, Meadowsweet planted her treasure in the far back yard of her house; and she gave the planting a full jug of water to nicely settle the pinecone in.

The Fairy Chronicles Series

Marigold and the Feather of Hope
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
Periwinkle and the Cave of Courage
Cinnabar and the Island of Shadows
Mimosa and the River of Wisdom
Primrose and the Magic Snowglobe
Luna and the Well of Secrets
Dewberry and the Lost Chest of Paragon
Moonflower and the Pearl of Paramour
Snapdragon and the Odyssey of Élan
Harlequin and the Pebble of Spree
Dove and the Parchment of Dulcet
Cricket and the Enchanted Music Box
Blue, the Mermaid, and the Fisherman's Tale
Aloe and the Spring of Hale
Pumpkinwing and the Week of Opposites
Minnow and Mr. Keen – the Brilliant Troll
Teasel and the Halloween Mysteries
Calliope and the Land of Bliss
Heather and the Basket of Understanding
Honeysuckle and the February Garden
Sandpiper and the Ship of Pools
Brandtii and the Perils of Prima Della, Top Strawberry,
and Big-Wag
Ginger and the Purple Ibex
Swan and the Realm of Hollowness
Larkspur and Alyssum Meet Sniggerbly Wiskerfink
Clover and the Flying Turtle
Arabesque and the Return of Clack Palaver
Thyme and the Magic Dollhouse

Bumblebee and the Maze of Regret
Fern and the Candle of Friendship
Cherry and the Adventures of Pwensfourth-Greeves
Mistaken
Ambrosia and the Elemental Fairies
Jasmine, the Journal, and Magnolia's Sacrifice
Raven and the Children of the Rainbow
Pennyroyal and the Last Rhinoceros
Lilac and the Secret of Obsidian
Sparrow and Edelweiss's Ghost
Quince, Amethyst, and the Forever Journey
Dandelion and the Box of Illusion
Hollyhock and the Christmas of the Swans
Eglantine and the Laughing Owl
The Glass Fairy
Berylline and the Tree of Joy
Meadowsweet and the Magic Fountain
Jewels and Superheroes
The Adventures of Red Zipper
Laurel and the Inn of the Whispers
Apple and the Legend of the Western Star
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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