

From The Fairy Chronicles

Volume Four

Jewels and Superheroes

Chapter Three Trekking North

After quick stops at their houses for Raven and Obsidian to pack overnight bags, Madam Monarch drove the mission participants to her home on Cherry Lane.

In addition to her clothes and toothbrush, Obsidian had also packed her pouch of Trekker Dust. Invented by a sorcerer, the glittering magical travel dust would help them greatly on this adventure.

The Jewel Fairies had come to Texas by plane. They had secretly traveled in fairy form with a baseball team because one of the team managers was a fairy and had arranged the covert smuggle in an open-sided box. Everyone had assumed she was carefully carrying a cake, as a present for someone. But in addition to the cake, the box contained three fairies and their travel necessities. The trip had actually been very comfortable. However, the group was not going to be able to return to Michigan by plane.

Upon finding this out, Obsidian had immediately offered to use some of her magical Trekker Dust to help the group travel. She still had a fair amount of the dust left over from the mission she led the previous summer to break the *Seven-Continent Curse*. She saw no need to save the dust, especially since this was such a good cause. Obsidian wanted to use the Trekker Dust whenever possible to help with their fairy efforts.

In addition to the dust, all that was needed in order to journey to a specific location was a natural object such as a

pebble or a bit of sand that originated from the desired travel destination.

Obsidian had a small rock from Amber's back yard in Indiana, and the Jewel Fairies had a tiny piece of bark from a tree growing near their headquarters in Michigan. Madam Monarch gave both Raven and Obsidian small pebbles from her back yard to keep in their pockets, so they would be able to return home safely once their mission was complete.

After spreading the sparkling yellow dust on their palms, the five fairies joined hands, with Obsidian also clasping the small rock from Indiana. The Trekker Dust took thirty seconds to activate, at which time, the travelers were drawn into a kind of glittery yellow fog that floated them away in bright sparkles and complete silence.

They arrived safely in Amber's back yard in Indiana almost immediately. Since they were in fairy form and had materialized behind a clump of privet bushes, they were not in any danger of being seen. Amber was waiting for them near the bushes with three other Jewel Fairies. Citrine, Sapphire, and Diamond had been nearby, in their attempt to visit as many other fairies as possible in the North during their search for the missing superhero baby.

Amber's real name was Olivia Raleigh, and she had curly blond hair. She wore a smooth, golden dress that shone softly and appeared somewhat mysterious because a variety of orange and brown colors seem to flow just beneath the surface of the garment. Her delicate wings were a pale gold color, and her wand was a twig from a fig tree. Amber's special fairy gift was the ability to shapeshift. However, her talents were not like those of Topaz, because Amber could only shapeshift into forms roughly her same size, whereas, Topaz had the ability to take on many different sizes. Amber fairy spirits were somewhat like clover, sand, and obsidian fairy spirits, in that they were more commonly assigned to brownies, so she also had the ability to communicate well with animals.

Diamond was the leader of the Jewel Fairies. She had long dark hair, and her name was Josie Rodriguez. Her sparkling white dress was covered with tiny diamonds, and her glittering wings looked like pristine glass. One of Diamond's fairy gifts related to the hardness of the stone and gave her shield-like capabilities to resist attack and deflect objects. She also had the power to produce and channel energy.

Carrie Andrews was Sapphire's real name. She was a petite black girl and wore a sapphire headband to pull back her short dark hair. Her deep indigo dress resembled the bluest and deepest lakes, or perhaps the vastness of outer space, including the mysteries surrounding these largely unexplored areas. In gazing at the mesmerizing depths of her dress, mysterious swirls of light were observed moving slowly about, as though cloudy spirits were swimming or floating, either in water or space. Her tiny blue wings were covered with sapphire crystals that glinted brightly, even in the shade of the privet bushes. Sapphire had the power to control the weather.

Citrine's name was Samantha Garrett, and she had blond hair. She wore a bright, amber-colored unitard covered with streaks of tiny citrine crystals that looked like dancing flames. Her sparkling orange wings were very tall and pointy. Citrine was given the ability to draw power from starlight. This gave her extraordinary strength and allowed her to channel the energy into beams to use like weapons.

Shortly after the introductions, two brownies arrived riding on a miniature goat. Samuel was a graphite brownie with dark hair. Red-haired Ben had been given the spirit of Spanish moss. They were anxious to help with the mission to find the kidnapped baby superhero.

The fairies were happy to see the brownies, but they couldn't hide their surprise and amusement to see the two riding on the tiny goat. The goat lived on a farm next to a brownie orphanage. She often visited the boys to help them with their adventures whenever possible. Giving the goat

goodbye pats and scratches on her soft nose, Samuel and Ben sent her off through the bushes, back yards, and fields towards her home.

Indiana was very beautiful this time of year, especially the Southern part, which was somewhat hilly and full of trees. Unfortunately, the team was not going to be able to stay long to take in the sights.

However, the group was going to have to delay their trip to Michigan for a short while because it suddenly began to rain. They took shelter in the tool shed in Amber's back yard.

The storm became fiercer as they waited, and the rain was soon accompanied by thunder and lightning.

Not knowing much about the make-up of Trekker Dust, Obsidian was very worried about trying to use it during an electrical storm. The others trusted her instincts, so the group stayed in the shed for a while to wait out the storm. They visited with one another and ate sunflower seeds the brownies had been carrying in their belt pouches.

While they waited, the Jewel Fairies told the others a little more about the baby superhero.

"He's only four months old," said Aquamarine. "And his powers are being kept a secret."

"Why?" asked Amber.

"Probably for his protection," responded Topaz.

"But we do know a little bit about him," said Diamond.

"Yes," agreed Garnet. "You know how real superheroes have to work completely in secret, and their work isn't all over the newspapers like it is in the comic book stories?"

The others nodded.

"Well," continued Garnet, "his powers are somehow incredibly important to that anonymity factor. Like that's his special strength—something to do with secrecy."

Then Citrine added, "We don't know any more about him, except that he's incredibly important to mankind's future. But I guess that would be true of any superhero."

The fairies and brownies found this information very interesting, and they speculated as to what the baby's powers might be, relating to anonymity.

"I wonder if he has the power to become invisible," Ben said.

"Or maybe he has mind-control abilities," suggested Raven. "He might be able to make people forget what they have seen, or manipulate their thoughts in other ways."

"But it could also be something like quick-thinking or super-intelligence," added Samuel. "Someone with those qualities might just be able to stay way ahead of things. Cleverness and mind-speed are often very valuable."

The others agreed that this was a very good guess.

When the storm showed no signs of slowing, the fairies and brownies began to fret about the precious time they were losing in being able to get started with their mission. After nearly an hour, with the thunder and lightning raging even closer than before, Sapphire, who seldom used her gift of weather control, decided she would have to act. With a nod of approval from Diamond, she moved to the door of the shed.

Without even using her sapphire shard wand, she raised her hands to the sky. Glittering blue light shot from her palms and spiraled through the air, up into the storm clouds. As she moved her arms back and forth, the light spirals continued to shoot into the dark clouds.

At first, the storm complained. The thunder became louder, and lightning hit the ground several places in a field very nearby, causing the tool shed to shudder violently. However, Sapphire's gift was very powerful. Though the wind knocked her about and the rain drenched her, she was persistent. After about two minutes, the thunder and lightning gave up and moved away, and the rain eased. Then the dark clouds began to break apart, opening up patches of blue sky to let the sun peek through at them.

Apple and the Legend of the Western Star

Chapter Five Candy and Flowers

Upon reaching the octagon-marked boulder on the cliff, the girls discovered that they were going to have to delay their return to the conservatory for a short while because an enormous monster was blocking the doorway to home.

The yellow and orange creature was nearly as large as Ms. Moongill's bungalow, and he looked like a cross between a cat and a dragon. But he had some feathers too, in addition to fur and scales. However, his wings were not as large as most dragons, so the fairies didn't think he was simply a furry dragon. He was obviously some unknown type of fierce flying creature.

While the girls were standing in front of the monster, but about twenty feet back, and debating what to do, a woman who had been beach combing climbed up the path of the cliff to talk to them.

As the woman neared, the monster opened his toothy mouth and roared. This was very startling to the fairies. However, the loud sound wasn't the only thing coming out of the throat of the beast. Within two seconds of the roar, the girls were pelted with about a dozen bouquets of flowers, tied with ribbons and lace, and several colorfully-wrapped boxes of candy.

Backing up about another ten feet, the fairies looked at one another, stunned, trying to get over their shock and surprise at having just had candy and flowers spit at them by a monster.

The woman who had approached laughed and said, "You're not from around here, are you?"

"No, ma'am," said Emerald. "We're just visiting."

“We call him the Candy-and-Flowers Monster,” the woman told them. “Men often come by when they have forgotten their wives’ birthdays or anniversaries, so they can get flowers and candy hurled at them to take home, so they won’t get into trouble.

“The poor creature had a curse put on him many years ago,” the woman continued. “The curse causes him to hurl curses at others. But as soon as the curses leave his throat, the nasty spells turn into candy and flowers.

“He is a terribly sad monster,” the woman added, shaking her head. “So unhappy to be forever doomed to throw candy and flowers at everyone.”

The woman soon bid the girls farewell and headed back down the beach to do more combing.

The fairies were eventually going to need to do something about getting back to the conservatory. However, instead of just finding a way to get past the monster to reach the boulder, they also wanted to find a way to help the unhappy creature, if they could.

After only a brief discussion, Pearl suggested, “What about the *Decurse Spell*?”

“That’s a good idea,” said Apple. “If the curse on the Candy-and-Flowers Monster is simple enough, the *Decurse Spell* should work to undo or reverse the original spell.”

Since the woman who had come to talk to them was now far below them on the beach, and there were no other beachgoers nearby, the girls decided to change into fairy form. Then they slowly flew towards the monster. As they neared, the unhappy creature again roared and spit boxes of candy and bouquets of flowers at them.

Emerald used her shield gift to deflect the flying objects. But she didn’t really need to because the fairies were able to dodge the boxes of candy, and the soft flowers didn’t hurt much when they hit.

Next, Pearl used her gift of telepathic persuasion to convince the monster to calm down. Her gift was working perfectly, and he quieted down within just a few seconds.

Then he sat looking at them, confused and dejected, but he didn't hurl any more candy and flowers at them.

Madrigal edged in next and chirped a few lyrical notes of lovely songbird music. Her gift of putting others to sleep was working perfectly because not only did the monster lay his head down to rest in the sand, and begin to snore, her fellow fairies all immediately fell over in slumber too.

"Ooops!" exclaimed Madrigal, bending down to shake Eglantine and Pearl to awaken them. She then moved to Apple and Emerald to wake them as well.

As soon as she was fully awake, Apple asked Madrigal, "Would you like to help undo the curse?"

Madrigal was thrilled at the prospect, but she was worried. Shaking her head, she said, "I know I need the practice, but Madam Starling told me not to do any real magic yet. I don't want to get into trouble."

"We'd be the ones in trouble, since we are the slightly older fairies," said Eglantine.

"But no one's going to get into trouble," added Apple, "because we are trying to help another creature. That's part of our job—to solve problems that will help others."

Smiling, Madrigal nodded in agreement. She very much wanted to help the Candy-and-Flowers Monster.

Standing side-by-side, Apple and Madrigal sprinkled pixie dust on the monster's nose. Then, pointing their wands, they both firmly stated, "*Decurse.*"

Glittering pink, green, and gold light immediately swirled from the tips of the piccolo and purple gladiola, to swish over the body of the Candy-and-Flowers Monster.

After about a minute, the light swirls faded and the monster began to wake. Yawning and stretching, he sat up, looking very relaxed, as well as happy and content. The Candy-and-Flowers Monster gazed calmly at the fairies, and smiled. He also breathed in deeply. With both Eglantine and Apple so near, the smell of apples was very intoxicating to the beast.

Since he looked so peaceful, and was not hurling flowers or candy at them, the fairies felt it was now safe to pass the creature to reach the boulder. The monster sighed, and purred, as the fairies flew past him. As they waved to him, he gave a short cough into his right front foot. Then he extended his furry, scaled paw to offer each of the girls boxes of bonbons and tiny nosegays of tea roses. Although the curse was definitely broken, it seemed the monster could still cough up candy and flowers if he wanted to.

The fairies thanked him kindly as they accepted the gifts.

As they were just about to pass back through the boulder, Emerald said, "I wonder what the men in this area are going to do now about getting candy and flowers for their wives."

Pearl responded, "They will just need to remember their wives' birthdays and anniversaries, and plan ahead."

"However," Apple speculated, "I bet now that he feels better, and doesn't *have* to throw candy and flowers at people, the monster will probably still help the men get nice gifts for their wives. He just seems like a nice monster who would want to do that."

The others agreed.

Upon returning to the conservatory, Apple wrote the words *bungalow*, *alchemist*, *candy*, and *flowers* on the bottom of the doorframe.

As Apple was pocketing the chalk, the fairies thought they heard whispers again. But this time the voices sounded almost as though they were singing. However, Madrigal had been humming too, so they couldn't be sure if what they had heard was singing or birdsong. (Madrigal was just pretty happy to be having so much fun with her friends.) The lilting whispers faded within just a few seconds.

Obsidian and the Last Brownie Prince

Chapter Six Magpie and Bloodstone

On the same morning as the visit to Castle Penchaant, Magpie had just finished having a very important meeting with a brownie friend.

Magpie's real name was Petra Stewart. She had dark brown hair and carried a nightshade stem wand. Her black-feathered dress and wings always appeared very messy because she didn't particularly care how she looked. She had more important things to focus on, specifically, using her fairy gift of expert thievery to steal valuables from others. Due to the chill in the air today, Magpie was wearing a long black sweater and a red scarf over her dress.

Magpie and her brownie friend had been working on a crucial project to help one of their evil associates further hinder the area fairies and brownies in their efforts to do good works. The project involved compiling a detailed list of the area fairies and brownies, which included their real names, addresses, and the specific gifts and powers associated with each fairy and brownie spirit.

The list was now complete, and Magpie was going to get a fat sum for her efforts this time. But it wasn't just the money she was interested in; she wanted to teach those goody-two-shoes a lesson. She knew they were on to her, as far as her thieving. And since she was on her way to becoming one of the most notorious, clever, and uncaught thieves of all time, she didn't want a bunch of other people with powerful gifts getting in her way. Having to deal with sophisticated alarm systems, guard dogs, and other such security measures was enough.

Most of the people she was stealing from didn't actually *need* their antique coins, fancy jewelry, expensive watches, valuable stamps, and other such items. None of these folks

was on the verge of going hungry. Relieving them of some of their wealth and treasured belongings was not really doing them any harm. Plus, they were mostly just a bunch of snobs anyway. Imagine, an eleven-year-old girl outsmarting these rich people and becoming one of the greatest thieves of all time.

So far, nothing could be done to stop her because she wasn't using any magic that either the area mentors or Madam Toad could detect. She was simply using her fairy gift. And since she had such exceptional skills in thievery, she had never been caught, and was unlikely to get caught. Without actual proof of the inappropriate use of her fairy gift, her fairy spirit could not be taken from her.

Sitting in a lower limb of a fat pomegranate bush in her back yard, Magpie was startled by the roar of an engine heading toward the pomegranate bush. The sound wasn't loud enough to be a lawn mower or a grass trimmer.

Navigating the branches, Magpie moved very swiftly toward the outer edge of the bush, trying to catch a glimpse of what was making the noise. She didn't have long to wait for an answer. Just as she was nearing a spot where she could peek out into the yard, a very small dirt bike shot through the lowest branches of the pomegranate and into the barren area underneath, where it slid to a screeching stop very near the trunk of the bush. A fairy whom Magpie had never seen before was riding the dirt bike.

"Hey!" called the unknown fairy, as she parked the bike and flew up to light on a limb very near Magpie. The new arrival had tall, bright green wings; and her jade-colored dress was dotted with orangey-red spots that looked like rust. She also wore short boots that matched the reddish spots of her dress, and her red hair was pulled back into a dark green ribbon. Her wand, a slim rod of green stone with flecks of red, was tucked into the pocket of the down vest she wore over her dress.

"I saw you fly in here a while ago," continued the strange fairy, taking off her gloves and stuffing them into her

pockets, “but I was waiting for the brownie to leave before I talked to you. I don’t know any of the brownies in the area.

“I’m Carol Swindleon, by the way,” she added, extending her arm across a branch to shake Magpie’s hand. “But you can call me Bloodstone.”

“A Jewel Fairy!” said Magpie, in a surprised tone. “I thought all of the Jewel Fairies lived up North.”

“I used to live in Michigan, but we moved a couple of years ago because of my dad’s job.”

“Your bike is really cool,” said Magpie, taking off from the branch to have a closer look at the dirt bike.

“A witch made it the right size for me,” stated Bloodstone, also flying down. Then, laughing, she added, “It belonged to a neighborhood boy who was using it to annoy the witch. He would race by her bedroom window over and over again when she was trying to sleep. So she shrunk it down and gave it to me. The boy was pretty mad that someone had stolen it.”

“Serves him right,” said Magpie.

“I agree,” said Bloodstone. “And his loss is my gain.”

“Really cool bike,” said Magpie again. “And I like your name too, both Bloodstone and Swindleon.”

As Bloodstone smiled, Magpie finally gave her real name, adding, “But you can call me Magpie.”

“Cool fairy spirit,” said Bloodstone. “I bet you can swipe things easily because of your gift.”

Magpie eyed the Jewel Fairy warily. Bloodstone had brought up stealing twice now. Despite the fact that the gift of magpie fairies was commonly known, Magpie wasn’t sure she entirely trusted this fairy, especially since she had never seen her before.

“How old are you?” Magpie asked nonchalantly, running her hand along the seat of the dirt bike.

“Eleven,” answered Bloodstone.

“Huh,” said Magpie. “Me too. But I’ve never seen you at school.”

“Private school,” answered Bloodstone. “At St. Anthony’s. The uniforms are so stupid!” she added, with a scornful look on her face.

“Do you still have contact with the other Jewel Fairies?” asked Magpie.

“I never had very much contact with them, because we moved away just when I found out about my fairy spirit. I only met a couple of them anyway. Truthfully, I didn’t have much in common with them. And they seemed a little snobby. I was glad when we moved.

“But even down here,” continued Bloodstone, “I haven’t tried to get to know any of the fairies in this area. They seem a little tame, and way too prim and proper, for my tastes. I guess I don’t have much in common with them either.”

Magpie didn’t say anything in response to this. Instead, she just looked at the Jewel Fairy, sizing her up and weighing her words. Magpie was something of a loner, without many friends, and she didn’t easily trust other people. Plus, being a skeptic and questioning everything was crucial in her line of work.

“Do you want to ride my bike?” asked Bloodstone.

Magpie smiled. “I’ve never ridden a motorcycle before.”

“It’s easy,” answered Bloodstone, “once you get the hang of it.” When Magpie seemed reluctant, Bloodstone added, “I’ll tell you what. There’s a field behind my house, over on Adams Street, with lots of sand and soft dirt. Hop on the back, and we’ll go there for your first lesson.”

This was actually something Magpie couldn’t resist, even if she didn’t entirely trust her new friend yet. Within a minute, the two were flying through the trees, heading for an alley that would take them to Adams Street. They didn’t wear helmets, of course, because Bloodstone never wore one. She was a thrill seeker, without a lot of common sense when it came to safety and danger.

After the first lesson, which went pretty smoothly, the two sat together in the shade of a tall tree to rest and brush some of the dust and sand from their hair, wings, and dresses.

However, the excitement of the morning wasn't destined to be over yet because Bloodstone had another thrill-seeking activity to share with her new friend. Laughing, she pulled a long crystal out of her pocket. The shiny pink shard was wrapped with a silver cord. "Do you know what this is?" she asked Magpie. When Magpie shook her head, Bloodstone said, "It's a talisman. My witch friend gave this to me. I can jump into jigsaw puzzles and not get trapped."

"No way!" yelled Magpie.

"Way!" shouted Bloodstone back. "Sixteen times now!" she added proudly.

"Wow!" said Magpie, now in total awe of her new friend. "How is it possible though? I've never heard of a jigsaw puzzle talisman, or antidote, or whatever."

"I guess witch magic is just a little more powerful than the goblin curse on jigsaw puzzles," answered Bloodstone.

"That makes sense," said Magpie. "There are some really powerful witches out there."

"So," continued Bloodstone, "do you want to try this too? Or are you too shook up from the dirt bike?"

"I'm not shook up!" said Magpie defensively.

"Well, your knees were shaking when you got off the bike."

"That's because I'm not used to it," said Magpie. "Sure, I'll try the jigsaw-puzzle jump," she added, with a smile. "I'm game."

"Cool," said Bloodstone. "I have one set up in my basement. Let's go."

By lunchtime, the girls had made two jumps into the jigsaw puzzle. The experience, which was hard to describe, made them both very dizzy. They held hands, so that the talisman Bloodstone was gripping tightly would protect them both. Then, they simply jumped from the low coffee table in Bloodstone's basement onto the three-hundred-piece puzzle, half-pieced together, set up on the floor.

As they were magically shrunk down by the goblin curse, to a size close to that of a dust mite, the girls were pulled

along the winding curves of the puzzle, as though they were riding on a fast rollercoaster, but skidding along on their heels, instead of sitting down. The air around them swirled madly and was full of vibrant colors that seemed to poke and prod at them. Just when Magpie felt she couldn't stand it anymore, Bloodstone jerked her arm, with a very hard yank, and pulled them toward the edge of the puzzle. Good thing the Jewel Fairy was familiar with the twists and turns of this particular puzzle, or the two might have been on the ride forever. A couple of seconds after the jerk, they flew out one of the straight edges of the puzzle frame and landed with two *thumps* on the basement floor, regaining standard fairy size nearly at the exact instant of the *thumps*.

After catching their breath, Bloodstone went to the basement refrigerator to get a couple of sodas for them. As she *popped* back into fairy form to sit next to her friend on a blue shag throw rug, Bloodstone said, "I'm glad I met you, Magpie. I haven't had anybody to share things like this with since we moved here."

"I'm glad I met you too," said Magpie.

After a few sips of soda, Bloodstone, deciding she was bored, shot a spark from her fingertip into a nearby, shrunk-down wastebasket filled with paper. The spark ignited a small fire in the basket, and Bloodstone laughed as she said, "I like to practice my fairy gift sometimes. I can produce and control fire."

Magpie nodded as she watched the tiny, dancing flames.

Then Bloodstone added, "I know. Kids aren't supposed to play with fire."

To which Magpie replied, "We're not supposed to steal things either. But I'm really good at it, and I'm going to be incredibly rich someday."

"You've never been caught?"

"Nope," answered Magpie. "I'm too fast and too clever. I'm always three steps ahead of everyone else."

As she rose to get a glass of water to put out the trash fire, Bloodstone said, "Maybe you can teach me a few tricks

sometime. I've always been too scared to swipe things. But I have wanted to, on many occasions."

"Okay," said Magpie. "You keep giving me dirt-bike-riding lessons, and I'll teach you how to steal."

"Sounds like a plan," said Bloodstone.

As the two headed up the basement steps to the kitchen to have sandwiches and soup for lunch, Magpie invited her new friend to come with her on an important errand in the afternoon, the one to deliver the list of fairy and brownie names to a particular individual.

Snowdrop and Four o'Clock Meet the White Elephant and the Dancing Rabbit

Chapter Two Radish Sandwiches

Four knew that Snowdrop liked to spend time under the pomegranate bush, so she had taken a chance that this was where she would find her friend.

The girls talked about Four's Thanksgiving trip, while poring over a stack of photographs of Pennsylvania that Four had brought with her. They also discussed the upcoming Christmas Fairy Circle, set to take place at Madam Swallowtail's house in the country. Sheltered from the December wind, the girls were very comfortable under the pomegranate bush.

Since it was nearing lunchtime, Snowdrop said, "I think I'm psychic, and my subconscious knew you were coming, because I made two sandwiches." Smiling, she added, "Radish sandwiches. I just had a craving."

“I’m allergic to mayonnaise,” said Four.

“Oh, but I made them with mustard,” said Snowdrop. “Stone ground mustard.” With this, Snowdrop removed the two sandwiches from the paper lunch sack. Smoothing the sack out on the ground in front of her, she unwrapped the sandwiches and placed them on the paper bag. Leaning forward on her knees, she lifted the top slices of bread from the sandwiches, and said, “See...mustard.”

Unfortunately, at this point, Snowdrop lost her balance and fell forward. As her outstretched hands landed on the far side of the sandwiches, the pouch of pixie dust on her belt upturned. Before she could right herself, half of the contents of the pouch landed on the open radish sandwiches.

“Are you okay?” asked Four, reaching out to grab Snowdrop by the shoulder to help right her. As she pulled her friend back up to her knees, Four added, “Stone ground mustard *and* pixie dust. Yummm!”

Snowdrop laughed as she brushed off her hands. Then she tried to brush some of the pixie dust from the sandwiches. “Oh, I guess they’re ruined,” she said. “Bummer.”

“I don’t think they are ruined,” said Four, kneeling beside her friend and helping to wipe away some of the sparkling dust. Then she picked up one of the sandwiches and blew on it, raising a cloud of pixie dust. Even with the good blow, there was still a liberal coating of the glittering dust stuck to both the mustard and the radishes.

Snowdrop used the same blowing technique on the other sandwich. Then she peered skeptically at the remaining dust. “It probably won’t hurt us,” she mused.

By this time, Four had already closed her sandwich and taken a bite. “I guess we’ll know soon enough,” she said, through her mouthful of bread, radish, mustard, and pixie dust. “Oh, it tastes really good,” she added, as soon as she had swallowed.

With Four’s reassurance that the sandwich tasted okay, and with her stomach rumbling a little from hunger,

Snowdrop too tasted the radish-and-pixie-dust creation. “You’re right,” she said. “It is good.” With this, both girls settled in cross-legged to finish their lunch.

As soon as they had finished the sandwiches, the fairies began to feel very strange. The strangeness started as a fuzzy feeling in their brains. Then the feeling moved down the backs of their necks and across their shoulders, eventually spreading all the way through their bodies and out their arms and legs to make the tips of their fingers and toes tingle. And with this now-all-over fuzzy and tingly feeling, something else strange happened. The fairies began to shrink.

The girls were speechless with shock.

They shrank fairly quickly until they were barely one inch high. Unfortunately, the shrinking didn’t end at that point. At a slightly slower rate, the fairies shrank even more for about another two minutes, until they finally came to a point where they didn’t get any smaller.

“Ooops,” said Snowdrop, finally finding her voice. “That must have been what the handbook meant about a radish being needed to make a fairy smaller.” She quickly explained to Four what she had read the day before regarding fairy sizes.

“So a lot of pixie dust added to a radish makes fairies get smaller,” said Four.

“What should we do?” asked Snowdrop, now panicking slightly.

“Maybe it will just wear off,” suggested Four, still calm for some reason—probably because the girls weren’t in any immediate danger.

“We are way smaller than a pea,” said Snowdrop, looking around them. This was true. In fact, a dried-out pomegranate lying under the bush seemed nearly the size of a huge warehouse to the girls.

“We might be even smaller than a mustard seed,” said Four, looking across the expanse of dried leaves and sandy dirt at a pecan that seemed a good deal larger than a school bus compared to their current size.

“Are we even smaller than a speck of dust?” asked Snowdrop.

“Maybe not quite that small,” answered Four.

A roly-poly pill bug happened to be crawling through the dirt nearby. He was just slightly taller than the fairies in their present state. Looking around further, the girls discovered a rather forlorn, green glass bead that was also much larger than their current size. With both of them pushing on it, they managed to get the bead to move; however, the effort tired them out. A few inches from the bead, which seemed like a mile to the tiny fairies, they found an old penny. Even with both of their efforts, they were unable to move the penny; but they did climb up onto it. Neither of them had ever looked this closely at a penny before.

Next, the fairies decided to head for the thick trunk of the pomegranate bush, which seemed like a good place to be in their currently teeny state, because being next to the trunk would probably help them feel protected. Their wings were working fine; however, when they spotted a beautiful red oak leaf below, they landed on the leaf for a little exploration and fun. Walking along the veins of the leaf was like walking on narrow bridges. Laughing, after jumping from the edge of the leaf into a soft pile of soot, they stood up and brushed the dirt from their dresses and wings. A bluebird feather lay next to the oak leaf. The fairies had great fun playing amongst the fluffy feather tendrils in what they imagined was their own, private, giant, feather-boat. After playing in the feathery softness for some time, they proceeded to fly to the trunk of the pomegranate, where they sat together next to the immense trunk on a small twig that seemed like an enormous log.

They had intended to consult their fairy handbooks, to gain some advice on how to reverse the radish-and-pixie-dust size-change. However, the girls didn't even have a chance to retrieve the books from their belts because an unexpected visitor arrived, stepping right out of the trunk of the pomegranate bush.

Journey's End

Chapter Six Carizzo Caverns

Three days after the basement meeting, a large fairy and brownie group was having a meeting of their own under the branches of a blue spruce in Kraft Park.

The Jewel Fairies and Northern brownies had arrived and were getting organized. They had already sent a message to Dyna Rolltop and Scenario, requesting their presence. Luna had assigned Obsidian, Amber, Fern, Raven, and Ambrosia to help with the efforts to stop the phoobas. Thanks to a local spy, the fairies had found out about the first part of the wicked triple plot. Two of the Elemental Fairies, also called Caprixies, were in the area as well. Kindel and Silvre, whose elements were those of fire and metal, had come to visit their friend, Ambrosia. When they heard that the phoobas were planning to kidnap babies with fairy and brownie spirits, they immediately offered to stay and help.

Since Mother Nature kept Luna apprised of newborns given fairy and brownie spirits, the fairy leader had been keeping watch on specific households in the area containing baby fairies and brownies. Three fairies and one brownie had gone missing in just the last two days. The phoobas were more than living up to their reputation as expert baby-stealers.

Local officials were in complete bedlam over four kidnapped infants in such a short time. People all over the area were in a huge state of panic. But it wouldn't matter how hard people tried to protect their babies—the phoobas were too clever and skilled in their jobs. The kidnappings were bound to continue because there were currently fifty-seven fairies and brownies in the area under the age of two.

A local witch named Lady Yardley, also known as the Two-Foot Witch because of her incredibly small stature,

arrived under the spruce boughs at the beginning of their meeting. A brownie was with her.

Lady Yardley had recently made the decision that the time was right to bring Vincent, the Last Brownie Prince, out of hiding. Vincent had been prophesied to be the one who would help bring about the downfall of the evil warlock and Malatrocious.

For the last year and a half, Vincent had been living directly next door to the warlock, with a woman named Ms. Bankse. Lady Yardley had put a *Disguise Spell* on him to change his appearance. The neighbors all had the impression that Ms. Bankse's nephew had come to live with her. Lady Yardley felt that hiding Vincent in plain sight was the best plan, because the warlock would never suspect the brownie prince to be so close.

Ms. Bankse was a longtime friend to Lady Yardley and was happy to help the cause in any way she could. While outside of her house three days ago, she had heard the first part of the triple plot, so she was able to alert Lady Yardley as to what was going on regarding the phoobas.

A late-morning rainshower was actually welcomed by the gatherers under the spruce because the sun was shining brightly, and that meant the phoobas were probably nearby. Splitting up into small groups, the fairies, brownies, and Lady Yardley all set out to search for signs of potatoes.

Vincent called two eagles so the brownies could be airborne, like the fairies. Since he was acquainted with Obsidian, he asked her to join him on one of the eagles. Samuel, Ben, and Abraham quickly mounted the other one. Lady Yardley rode on a bright purple feather duster, so she could also keep to the skies while searching. She didn't really need the feather duster to fly, but it was a lot of fun and allowed her to zoom about very quickly.

The rain was very light, so the weather did not hinder their travels.

Emerald, Pearl, Fern, and Kindel were the first ones to spot a trail of kettle-fried potato chips. The chip trail led to a

pile of curly potato peels, so the fairies felt sure they were on the right track. Since the other searchers were not far away, Pearl was able to send a message telepathically to ask their friends to join them. Soon, the entire group was traveling together.

Next, they came upon three waffle fries, along with an empty bottle of catsup and a salt shaker, under the low branches of a peach tree in a small orchard. Hunting around, they soon discovered more curly potato peels and some tracks in the mud that looked like they were made by pig hooves.

The hoofprints led to a rocky valley. Continuing to follow the trail, they wound their way through boulders and scrubby trees. When the tracks abruptly dead-ended into the side of a cliff, the searchers found an entrance to a cave. Vines and mosses hung over the opening, cleverly hiding it from casual passersby. As soon as they landed, Vincent sent the eagles away with his thanks.

Lady Yardley left her feather duster hidden in some tall grasses, and the group quietly snuck inside the cave. However, just as they were entering, they met a group of phoobas preparing to leave the cave. In the dark, the fairies and brownies were all small enough to hide behind several rocks. However, there were no rocks quite large enough for even a very small witch to crouch behind. Fortunately, Lady Yardley was always prepared for situations such as this. She immediately reached into her pocket and retrieved a small seed, which she popped into her mouth. The moment the seed touched her tongue, she completely vanished. The magic seed would provide ten minutes of invisibility for her. Presumably on a quest to steal more babies, the phoobas quickly passed.

Once the pig-goblins had exited the cave, Ambrosia and Diamond lit their wands, so they could see more clearly. Only one tunnel led deeper into the cave from this particular spot, so the choice was a clear one.

The fairies flew low to the ground while the brownies and the invisible Lady Yardley walked. (She turned visible again at the exact ten-minute mark from when she had taken the seed.) Following a steep and winding path, the searchers were led on a downward journey for nearly thirty minutes, until the narrow tunnel ended at a cliff ledge.

An enormous cavern opened up directly in front of the group, and the cliff dropped off into a deep chasm filled with fiery rocks and steam. Looking into the chasm, they could see several encampments of phoobas on large rock ledges. Also present were the phoobas' spectral genetic creations. The tall-as-a-tree goblin was currently playing ball with the dog-lizard monster.

From their viewpoint, the searchers could see several other tunnel entrances behind the phoobas' encampments. Raven's gift of truth and foreshadow told her that one particular tunnel led to a chamber where the babies were being kept. In whispers, she told her friends about this. Before she could even finish speaking, Magpie and Bloodstone came out of the tunnel in question.

Unfortunately, another creature was also in the cavern, and his presence was going to keep them from acting right away. A gigantic, bright purple dragon, nearly twice as large as a school bus with his wings folded, meandered out from underneath the cliff overhang from which the rescuers were watching the scene below.

Making as little noise as possible, the group swiftly turned and headed back up the tunnel toward the cave entrance. They needed to back out in order to discuss strategy and make plans.

Lady Yardley had already magically called her purple feather duster to her, so she and the brownies could ride, instead of making the long climb back out. They had only walked about fifteen feet when the duster zoomed up to them. As soon as the brownies and Lady Yardley had mounted, they all flew swiftly up the steep and winding tunnel to exit the cavern.

The rain had stopped by the time the group reached the rocky valley. They found a secluded spot behind a clump of pampas grasses to discuss the situation and make plans. The rescuers very much needed to take a pause because none of them wanted to have to face a dragon. And at this point, they weren't exactly sure what to do.

"There must be another entrance into that cavern," said Amber. "A dragon couldn't fit down that tunnel, and neither could either of those goblin monsters."

Ambrosia was very familiar with the many caves and caverns in the area. "I think this is probably part of Carizzo Caverns," she told her friends. "If so, there are at least two other known entrances about a mile from here. There might even be more. The caverns are considered too dangerous for exploration and mapping, so no one really knows much about them yet. Plus, they weren't even discovered until about thirty years ago when a small earthquake uncovered an entryway."

No matter where the other cavern entrances were located, the group was going to need to wait until the superheroes arrived to take action, because no one, not even Lady Yardley, could think of what might be done to face off with a dragon. Dragons were beyond-this-world fierce. Though they were generally peaceful creatures, who kept to themselves, they were terrifying and basically unstoppable, even by magical means. No amount of witch or fairy magic could successfully battle a dragon. So the issue of what might be done was a gigantic dilemma at this point.

Fortunately, help was on the way. Within ten minutes of pondering what to do, not only did the group in the valley receive the much-welcomed arrival of a superhero named Indev Sli, who was familiar to Obsidian, but he came with two dragons.

Mr. Sli was riding Élan, who was very familiar to the area fairies because he frequently visited them. And Obsidian had met the other dragon, Moana Ena, on a mission to Hawaii a couple of years earlier. Obsidian had actually been fortunate

enough to witness the baby dragon's birth. Moana Ena, who was a powder blue color with some pink streaking on her back and wings, was still considered to be a baby dragon; but she was larger than she had been, and was currently about the size of a delivery van. Élan, a green and orange dragon, was smaller than the dragon in the cavern; but he was still the size of a school bus with his wings folded.

Mr. Sli was tall and muscular, with short dark hair. He was from Colorado, but spent much of his time in Hawaii, which is how he had met the dragons and Obsidian. His superhero powers related to control of mountains, rockslides, lava flows, and other things related to earth and fiery earth. He was also a strongman with exceptional speed.

The rescuers were happy that help had arrived.

Élan quickly explained to them that the dragon working with the phoobas was called Erik. Erik had been banished from the dragon colonies for bad behavior after failing twice to complete his odyssey to receive his toering and *Eternity Status* in the order of dragons.

When it was discovered that Erik had aligned himself with the group of phoobas, Élan and Moana Ena, under direction from Queen Elektra, had come to help. When Mr. Sli discovered the nature of the problem, he too wanted to offer his services.

Very shortly, the two expected superheroes from Michigan also arrived in the valley. Pearl had been sending out mind messages every ten minutes to alert Ms. Rolltop and Scenario of the fairies' current location, so when they got close enough, the superheroes would be able to find them. Quite a few superheroes lived in Michigan; however, many of them were on other important missions in various parts of the world. But that didn't matter because these two were plenty powerful.

Dyna Rolltop was a stunning blond woman who could actually temporarily blind others with her smile. The distraction and confusion effect of her power often provided plenty of time for escapes and other strategic maneuvers to

take place. Today, Ms. Rolltop was wearing a form-fitting light blue pantsuit.

Scenario was a tall blond gentleman with the power to change his surroundings using powerful illusions. He often used this ability to distract and confuse others engaged in conflict so that they would flee, instead of staying to fight.

Since the fairies had previously assisted the superheroes in recovering a stolen superhero baby from the phoobas, the superheroes were happy to be able to return the favor. With dragons, a powerful witch, and superheroes on their side, the fairies and brownies were very thankful to have so many friends willing to come to their assistance.

Élan knew the location of a secret entrance into Carizzo Caverns that was large enough for use by dragons. He led Moana Ena to this location, while the fairies, brownies, superheroes, and Lady Yardley all entered the narrow tunnel.

At one point on their way down, the passage became too narrow for regular-sized human beings to pass. However, this was not a problem for long. Indeve Sli simply used his strength and control over rock to easily break several stones loose from the side walls. He then slid the stones back out of the way of the travelers to create a larger tunnel opening.

By the time they reached the ledge overlooking the immense cavern opening, Élan and Moana Ena had already arrived and had backed Erik up against the cliff wall underneath the ledge. They were going to keep him occupied while the rest of the rescuers battled the phoobas, their monsters, and any other enemies. Already, Erik was shooting great, throaty bursts of fire at the other two dragons; and Moana Ena and Élan were sending streams of fire back at him. Since there were two of them, they managed to hold their ground against the larger dragon.

The brownies rode on Indeve Sli's shoulder as he quickly climbed down the rocky cliffside to reach the phoobas' main encampment. Since Lady Yardley hadn't brought her feather duster down with her, she traveled just as many other witches did. Using a magical floating-and-gliding method, she

simply drifted down to the floor of the ledge near the phoobas' location. While the fairies flew down, Dyna Rolltop and Scenario followed Mr. Sli's path as closely as possible to reach the bottom.

Evidently, Magpie and Bloodstone had already left the cavern because they were nowhere to be seen.

Though the phoobas had been initially distracted by the dragon fight, they soon noticed the other intruders. Immediately, they attacked. Most of the pig-goblins were armed with weapons called lightning sticks. The magical metal sticks shot out red and green lightning bolts, along with powerful yellow fireballs.

The fairies used their speed to dodge the bursts, while the brownies and Lady Yardley took refuge behind rocks. While zooming about, the fairies were able to use their wands to send bursts of energy back at the attackers. In addition to her shield gift, which helped to protect other fairies close to her, Diamond was able to produce great energy bursts with her diamond shard wand. Obsidian and Emerald also helped provide shield protection for their friends. Ambrosia, Fern, and Amber stayed behind them to keep from getting hit. Kindel was able to shoot strong streams of fire from her firebird feather wand, which was helpful in keeping the goblin-giant and dog-lizard monsters from advancing.

Though most witches didn't carry wands, Lady Yardley did. Mere seconds after the attack began, the curly peapod vine sprang into action, emitting purple and gold sparks, which wound their way out to the phoobas to sting them on their noses and rear ends.

When the action of the battle caused several rockslides to occur, Mr. Sli was able to divert the cascading rocks away from his friends so that no one was injured. Though he generally preferred higher elevations, his command of earth and rocks was still very powerful under ground. Several times, he was also able to deflect bursts of fire overflowing from the dragon battle directly behind their position.

Since Kindel also had control over fire, she was able to help protect Fern and Raven from a vicious assault by about fifteen phoobas. Positioning herself in front of them, she simply commanded the fires in the depths of the cavern to rise. The flames rose swiftly to form a barrier wall between her friends and the advancing phoobas. This particular cavern was not volcanic. However, Erik had been active since his arrival. With his fiery dragon breath, he had heated many rocks and crystals to the point of molten. Since these would take as much time as pools of lava to cool, plenty of fire was available for Kindel to use. Obsidian, who was beginning to develop the ability to manipulate fire, in addition to resisting it, helped Kindel maintain the wall of fire as a barrier against attack.

At one point, a group of phoobas backed Topaz and Amber into a recess in the rocks. Cornered, they appeared to be in great danger from the advancing goblins. However, since they both had shapeshifting gifts, they were able to find narrow rock crevices to squeeze into. Even though they remained cornered, they were protected. The phoobas who had backed them into the recess soon lost interest in waiting for them to reappear out of the narrow cracks.

A few moments later, when the battle heated up to a particularly fierce level, the cavern suddenly became filled with a melodious humming sound. The echoing music sounded like a combination of spring breezes rustling piles of leaves, soft chanting, and the patter of rain, all mixed with a faint background chorus of a thousand flutes. Moana Ena, having broken off her battle with Erik, had begun singing. Since an enchanted hawthorne branch, capable of bringing peace to conflict situations, had been present at the moment of her birth, she had been given the gift of the *Dragon Song of Peace*.

Her humming, along with mystical dragon words that were as old as time, was more than capable of lulling others into a temporary serenity. As she grew older, the power of

her song would increase to work on larger conflict situations and would end up having more lasting effects.

However, the current effect lasted plenty long enough to allow Scenario, who had been hiding behind the rocks in order to stay protected from the bursts of the lightning sticks, to enact a powerful illusion to change the setting and confuse many of the phoobas. Soon, the sprawling area of the encampments resembled a flower-filled meadow, fringed by tall trees. Birds and butterflies chased clouds overhead. The goblin-giant was so confused, and thrilled, he immediately sat himself down in the meadow grasses and began picking flowers.

The brownies had also been hiding behind rocks to remain protected. With many of the phoobas now distracted by Scenario's illusion, the boys were able to step out from their positions to hurl rocks at the goblins, which knocked the weapons from many of their hoof-like hands. In the present illusion, the lightning sticks sank into the meadow flowers and grasses and were difficult for the phoobas to locate.

Silvre had managed to find a vein of copper in one cavern wall, and she was able to manipulate it much in the same way that Kindel had used the fire. Soon, a wall of copper was protecting Raven, Dyna Rolltop, and the brownies from further assault. However, Ms. Rolltop left the protection of the copper wall to skip around the meadow and flash her smile at as many phoobas as possible. With only short bursts of her smile, she was able to mesmerize large groups of goblins, completely immobilizing them. By the time the phoobas were able to move, and were rubbing their eyes in order to see properly again, the fairies and brownies were able to reposition themselves nearer to the tunnel leading to the kidnapped babies.

Moana Ena shortly had to stop singing in order to help Élan battle Erik because, unfortunately, the *Dragon Song of Peace* had no effect on other dragons. However, with both of their fierce efforts, they were able to get Erik to move sideways along the cliff wall toward one of the larger exit

openings of the cavern. When Erik realized they were not going to stop their assault on him, he eventually gave up his fiery onslaught and left.

Though the situation had calmed slightly, many of the phoobas were now starting to find their weapons hidden in the meadow grasses. However, surprisingly, more help soon arrived. Mr. Trefas, a local troll, had traveled from his cave to the caverns via a secret tunnel. Upon entering the meadow, the troll immediately took position on a large rock. Gathering about thirty phoobas around him, he began telling the goblins a story. Mr. Trefas was a master storyteller, and the phoobas sitting around him could not tear themselves away from his enchanting tale. The dog-lizard monster too was completely entranced, and flopped down panting at the foot of the rock to enjoy the story. The phoobas couldn't tear themselves away because they had to know what happened to the princess, enchanted to live as a golden scorpion, but turned to silver, and forced to live on an island to serve an evil sorcerer. By the time the princess's rescuer showed up to break the enchantment and carry her away, the fairies and their friends were successful in making their way to the tunnel leading to the chamber where the kidnapped babies were being kept.

A tall phooba stood guard next to the tunnel entrance. As Emerald and Ambrosia were just raising their wands to shoot energy bursts at him, to get him out of the way, Raven stopped her friends by grabbing onto their arms. Her gift of being able to recognize truth told her that something was different about this phooba. She was correct. In fact, this pig-goblin, whose name was Graelo, had a conscience. Even back in Michigan, he had recognized that this venture was not right. In a roundabout way, by alerting several birds and animals in Michigan to the phoobas' plans, he had actually helped the Jewel Fairies uncover their information about the plot to travel south. Raven didn't want Graelo to get hurt, since he was not truly an evil phooba. When Emerald and Ambrosia looked questioningly at Raven, she shook her head

and led them around Graelo. Though they were confused, because Raven didn't have time to explain, they followed her lead.

As the three fairies circled around his shoulder and entered the tunnel, Graelo pretended not to see them and wandered over to hear the last of the troll's tale. He had mainly only been standing next to the tunnel opening to alert the rescuers to the correct chamber, since he didn't know that Raven could tell where the babies were hidden.

After Graelo wandered off, as discretely as possible, the rest of the rescuers slipped into the tunnel as well. The chamber containing the four children was not very far in. The babies all appeared well taken care of and reasonably happy. Scenario and Mr. Sli carried the infants, who seemed to know they needed to stay calm and quiet, as the group snuck back out the tunnel to the larger cavern chamber.

Moana Ena and Élan had already exited, having followed Erik out to make sure he really left.

The giant-goblin was still picking flowers in the meadow. He had been tucking them into his bushy hair, which was now nearly covered in a carpet of the beautiful blossoms.

Mr. Trefas was still holding his audience spellbound with a description of how the hero had climbed the tallest mountain on the island to find a special jade stone to break the enchantment and free the princess. Now, all of the phoobas were gathered around the troll, with some of them petting the dog-lizard, who was whining softly with happiness at having his ears and noses scratched.

Just as the rescue party reached the exit tunnel at the top of the cliff, the story listeners below burst into appreciative applause as Mr. Trefas finished his tale. Then, the phoobas rewarded the talented, storytelling troll with an enormous bucket of crispy, salty tater tots to take back to his cave. By the time Mr. Trefas was waving at his many admirers, and exiting via the tunnel leading to his cave under Troll Rock, the rescuers were just reaching the cave opening in the valley.

Élan and Moana Ena were there waiting for their friends. With help from the speedy dragons, the superheroes would be returning the stolen babies to their homes right away. Since the process would be fast, and because both Scenario and Dyna Rolltop could distract with illusions and smiles, they were confident they would be able to return the babies without being arrested as the kidnappers.

The fairies, brownies, and Lady Yardley all said goodbye to the dragons and superheroes. After delivering the babies to their homes, the dragons were going to take the superheroes home as well. Then, Élan and Moana Ena, by further orders of their queen, would set off after Erik. Queen Elektra needed to know the bad dragon's movements because she was making her own plans to keep him from committing further mischief. Dragons were simply not allowed to participate in activities such as stealing babies or causing other kinds of harm to mankind, except in rare survival situations. Queen Elektra and several other Dragon Elders would be dealing with Erik sooner, rather than later.

Lady Yardley, Vincent, and the local fairies next said goodbye to the Northern brownies, Pearl, Diamond, and Topaz who also needed to be getting home. Emerald and Aquamarine were going to stay for awhile. Aquamarine's aunt lived in the area, and the two Jewel Fairies were planning to stay with her for another two weeks.