

Fairy Dust by Alisha Priolo

It was a rather gloomy and melancholy day in September. School had just gotten out and young children ran home to their awaiting parents and siblings. Six-year-old Melanie used her pink rubber boots to trudge through the thick mud, twirling her blonde ringlets in her small fingers. As she skipped, she used her big, baby blue eyes to glance over the lush-green forest for the perfect sticks, twigs, and butterflies. She had a rocky relationship with her mother, who always worked, so she spent most time outdoors and by herself. Her mother loved her but could show more affection. Melanie found this missing love in the forest. Her backyard was full of brush trees, thick bushes- some with edible berries and some with poisonous berries, and wildlife. The farther you walk back into the woods, the more engulfed in nature you become, but Melanie remembered her mother's soft voice saying, "Don't go too far, or you won't come back."

Since Melanie spent most time alone, she liked to gather things to use for her HappyLand. The Happyland was a small circle where Melanie made her home away from home. The HappyLand is a small area where the bushes and trees form together to make a small, hidden hang out spot. She collected sticks, leaves, bugs, and just about anything else she could find to add to her "home". She had already made a "bed" out of old hay and dead flowers picked from the field and was looking to make more furniture. Her imagination ran wild as she scoured the quiet forest thinking of all the crafts and "food" that could be made with a pail of sand and handful of dead lizards she found on her way over.

Melanie used a light purple backpack, with her name embroidered in magenta cursive on the top handle, reading "Melanie Herb", in which she used for school, and for her outdoor excursions. She found a decaying Willow tree and sat her bag down on the damp land.

"Yep, need this for my stove. I'll use these leaves for a campfire!"

She crumpled up the Scholastic reading article that Mrs. Andrew read aloud after lunch today and threw in a pile of crispy red and yellow leaves. She continued trailing the woods, watching for the sun. She knew mother wouldn't be happy if she got home past dark.

As Melanie hummed the lullaby her teacher sang every day, her doll-like eyes noticed small footprints on the lavender flower petals nearby. She ran closer to the sunflowers, noticing the missing patches of yellow pollen along the stems and petals, admiring the little bitty prints that extend across the free-range bouquets. She ran along the field of flowers, following the trail of mini prints, until she was led to a dark and mystical oak tree. This tree was grand in size and was older than Melanie could fathom. The hard bark was withered and fraying, grey moss covering the body, and right at the base of the tree, the footprints stopped. Melanie inched closer to the bottom of the tree, investigating the prints. She ran her soft and innocent fingers along the textured tree, and BAM! She slammed into the ground.

The tree bark opened, and Melanie fell directly forward, beyond and into the base of the tree. As she got up from the dirty Earth, she realized she had stepped through the tree, and into somewhere new. Brushing off her elbows and once white but now dark brown ruffled dress, she turned around and saw no way out, just the bark of the tree. She scarily crept forward, unsure of what was before her. She pushed a layer of moss back and her eyes opened even bigger than before. Her now dirty pink rubber boots stepped one after another and she became overwhelmed with the colorful, fun, fantasy realm in front of her. The sky had opened and become a sea of cotton candy mixed with a twinkling galaxy. The grass is so much greener than before, and all the trees have sparkling fruit hanging from each limb. There are a variety of shapes and sizes of rainbow mushrooms scattered along the ground, with drops of sweet dew falling from them.

“Woah, where am I? Is this where Elsa lives?” Melanie’s voice shook.

“Why this is the World of Possibilities!”, a small and delicate voice muttered to the right side of Melanie. She turned and saw what appeared to be a fairy. This creature was no more than three centimeters tall and had holographic wings that fluttered intensely behind her. She floated right before her eyes and Melanie gasped for air dramatically.

“Tinkerbell?!”, Melanie questioned in disbelief.

Flying around in little squirts of energy, casting off iridescent glitter particles with every magical movement. The fairy had tiny but bright eyes and a mini dress made from rose petals and vines that seemed to float in mid-air around her. Melanie tried to grab her out of the atmosphere, the fairy darted away from her baby hands screeching, “follow me!”.

Melanie followed the fairy-creature with few questions, completely in awe of everything they passed on their way to wherever they were headed. This was unlike any adventure she had ever had before, only like something she dreamed every now and then. It was like the same forest she always walked through, but as if she was able to see through a more magical lens this time around. The trees sang soft angelic songs, much like the ones Melanie’s teacher sang, making her feel at home. The velvet grass was home to tiny human-like creatures, they wore light blue pointed top hats and had no shoes. Their rosy cheeks peaked through the grass. “Mushroom people!”, Melanie thought to herself, too scared to say anything to the beings. They all gathered behind blades of grass and stems of flowers and stopped and stared up at Melanie as she passed by. The pond shimmered and glistened with loads of pink lily pads; Melanie wondered if mermaids lived there too. As she walked, the fairy stayed right by her ear, buzzing side to side. The two ended up in patch of beautiful meadow, surrounded by lavender and wildflowers. They were greeted by hundreds of other fairies, some blue and some green, some purple, all unique, and all flying around like gnats. There were beautiful glasses and mugs and teapots strewn

onto the lawn, with plush used mats used for sitting along-side. The mats were arranged in a circle and one by one, each magical fairy floated down to the ground to enjoy some tea. Mystical animals began to join the party, as well as the gnomes, and the mushroom people she passed by earlier.

“Please join us, Princess Melanie. We’ve been awaiting your precious arrival.”, said the fairies in unison.

Melanie blushed and plopped down as a group of fairies lowered a pink glass teacup to her hands, “I’ve been waiting for you too.”

She drank her pixie tea and relished in the bliss of this whimsical tea party. Melanie wondered if she was dreaming. Ignoring her thoughts, she twirled like a princess, round and round, with her blonde curls jumping on her back. Her muddy dress returned to white as she spun around in pure bliss with the magical creatures of this world. Melanie so easily forgot about the real world she left behind as she chatted away with Bon Bon, her new bunny friend, and she relaxed with the little shroom families. Time became an illusion; the tea never became cold and the sky never changed. Melanie sipped teacup after teacup and ate cookie after cookie. She never knew this side of the woods.

Melanie eventually came back to her senses and remembered her mother’s lovely voice, which may now be a stern one by the time she arrives home. She expressed her concern to her fairy friend and wanted to return.

“A princess who visits must stay. In the World of Possibilities, it is impolite to leave too soon.” Says the fairy in a light but serious voice.

Melanie would wait and wait, asking the fairy to leave every ten minutes or so, to which the fairy would sternly reply, “No, a princess must stay for the entire duration of the party.”

Melanie stood up and tears started forming in the corner of her aqua eyes. She remembered wishing to be a princess on her last birthday cake, but not if she couldn't return home. Silently she wept as the other creatures danced and ate goodies all night long. Every now and then a child shroom would pop by to wipe her swollen eyes away with a leaf, but all Melanie could think about was how her fantastic evening had turned into a nightmare.

She finally had enough of her fairy friends and decided she would find her own way out. When they had their backs turned, she slipped away and into the colorful forest. Melanie sprinted past all the talking flowers and singing grasshoppers, ignoring the special beings and keeping her eyes on the dirt path and trying to recall the mystic tree she came from. She wandered but eventually became lost. This forest looked nothing like the one she knew. Every path she took ended up being a mythical creature's home, or just plain the wrong way. Losing hope for the night, she found a soft patch of grass near a purple mulberry bush and laid down.

As she closed her eyes, she felt a hot steam on the back of her neck. She quickly rolled over and was eye to eye with what looked like some sort of bear, hiding in the bush. The animal had bright green eyes, brown and black messy hair all over, and a wet snout that nudged her. While she was slightly scared, she had seen just about everything under the sun today- the animal didn't faze her, and she was happy to no longer be alone. The beast closed his eyes and the two of them slept snuggled tight for evening. When they awoke in the morning, Melanie expressed her absolute need to find her way home. The beast let out an enormous yawn and gave Melanie a look that consisted of empathy and trust.

The beast escorted Melanie back through the magical forest, where they eventually found the tree she came from. In the blink of an eye, the beast's eyes flickered in front of Melanie's and suddenly barked, creating a POOF! of magical dust in the air.

Melanie opened her eyes and felt groggy. Not knowing where she was, she stood up in the dark room, tripping over her favorite doll. She turned on the nearest light switch in a panic and opened the door in front of her, revealing her bedroom. She slowly exited her bedroom closet and wondered how she wound up falling asleep in her closet.

“I don’t remember taking a nap in my today..”, Melanie thought to herself.

“Dinner is ready!” She heard from downstairs.

“Did you have a good day today, honey?” Her mother asked in a serious tone from across the table, after sweeping her long brown hair out of her face and wiped her flour-ey hands on her dirty blue apron. Melanie sat confused and ignored her mother’s question, playing with her green beans and carrots. She couldn’t really remember what exactly happened today- just that she went to school, and then woke up in her closet. She thought about the fairy she saw in her dreams.

“Yeah, I had the strangest dream mommy. I met a pretty fairy and we had tea together! She even showed me a magical path through the forest.”, Melanie mumbled.

“Make sure you eat those green beans, baby. Sounds like you’ve been watching Alice in Wonder Land a little too often, huh?” Her mother managed to spit out while chewing on a piece of pork chop. Mother’s charming brown eyes watched Melanie scoot the vegetables all over her plate.

As her mother washed the dishes in the sink, Melanie changed into her Tinkerbell pajamas. She combed her blonde curls and waited in bed for mom to come and tuck her in. She wiped away cookie crumbs from her mouth and noticed tiny flecks of glitter on her fingertips. She smiled and thought of the fairies, Bon Bon, and the shroom people.

She got up out of her toddler bed and headed for the closet. She arranged her princess themed blankets into a pallet inside the small doorway, grabbed her pillow, and laid down. Melanie wasn't the slightest bit tired, but shut her eyes in a rush, looking forward to reuniting with her magical friends in her dreams.