

Chapter 2

A Good Hunt

Mark felt the heavy weight of the book burning a hole in his backpack all the way to his house. He was so excited to read it that the moment he stepped inside, he went straight to his room and closed his door firmly. He barely noticed the note taped to his door that read:

Gone to see the doctor with your sister. Father will be home soon.

-Love, mom

Mark knew he could have as little time as an hour, or until his mother came home, depending on how late the office kept his father. With all the medical bills from his sister's illness piling up, his father had to be at the office longer hours instead of at home like he wanted. Mark knew how much his father resented it, he had grown increasingly short-tempered as the stress ate at him.

Placing the book spine down on the floor, he started to read when he noticed a slight bulge on the inside of the book, near where the library tag had been affixed. Mark frowned. *Now, I wonder how that got there. I don't remember seeing it at the library.* He thoughtfully ran his finger along the edge of a small envelope taped near the bottom. He shrugged. *Must have simply missed it in my haste. It is the same color as the book cover after all.* Pulling it out, he read:

Welcome to the strange and mystical world
of the Fey. Through painstaking hours of study
and research, I have managed at last to unlock
many of the secrets that have long eluded
mortal man.

It is my intent, dear reader, that this
knowledge be shared with only a select few, so

that the fey may continue their noble work on this Earth.

When you read thys piece, it is my wish that you will return what you remove from nature, so that the balance may continue. Remember, a proper scientist does not change what he studies, he only observes.

—Doctor Alphard Driscoll,
Royal Society of Scientists,
1896

What a bunch of nonsense, Mark thought offhandedly. A scientist, as he well knew, could not help but change the world he examined, either by removing samples, interacting with subjects, or simply stepping in the dirt! Such a notion as leaving everything exactly the way they found it was a pipe dream. Besides, he only intended to keep one fairy, what harm could there be in that?

Mark carefully returned the letter to its pouch and started reading the main body of the book. He found it slow going at first mostly because the book was *handwritten*, something he wasn't used to, and used words and terms he didn't know. Fortunately, the author often accompanied his points with sketches that were easier to understand, and he soon fell into easy reading.

The clock on his desk read 4:02 when the front door opened. Mark hastily pulled his bedcovers over the top of his book to hide it and went to the door to help his mother bring Mary in. She seemed paler and much thinner than that morning, Mark thought unhappily. He started to push her directly towards the dining room for dinner, but Mary shook her head.

"No thank you." She managed. "I'm not hungry right now, could you push me to my bedroom."

"Are you sure? I mean, hadn't you better eat a little something?" Mark needled her. He looked concernedly at her pinched waist and drawn face.

"I'm sure." Mary said firmly. "I'm tired." And that seemed to be the end of the conversation. Mark pushed her to her bedroom and helped her get into bed. There was no need to undress her, she had on only her pajamas and robe, even to visit the doctor's. She lay beneath the covers and quickly fell into a deep sleep.

Mark closed the door on his sleeping sister. He began to worry that she was fading too fast, and he feared that unless he found that fairy, he would lose his sister.

Ignoring his own dinner (despite his mother's repeated calls to come and eat the stroganoff before it got cold) Mark pulled the book of fairies from its hiding place and began hurriedly flipping through the pages. Surely, he reasoned, somewhere inside there had to be a mention on how to *catch* a fairy. There were copious notes on every aspect of fairy life, from their tiny villages that blended in so cleverly with the forest few humans ever saw them, to their clothing and speech, to their determination to help the natural order of things. Mark barely saw them, as he spun through the pages. He would have time later, he was positive, to explore the book in depth.

The account he searched for finally opened up right in his lap. Mark controlled his breathing as he read the long sought after pages.

As to the entrapment of a fairy:

THIS SHOULD NOT BE UNDERTAKEN LIGHTLY.

Fairies are one of the antibodies of nature, removing or fighting always those forces that seek to destroy all that is light and good in their world.

However, an intrepid scientist, seeking to gain appropriate data about height, weight, sex and other valuable insights into these remarkable creatures can collect (for a short time) a specimen in this manner:

The fey, as with most of Nature's creatures, are curious about new things, and are insatiably hungry for honey, syrup, or other extraordinarily sweet things, no doubt to maintain their body weight as flying absorbs

much of their energy. However, they are extremely flighty creatures who can zip away as quick as thinking.

Therefore, a wise and stealthy scientist, using all due and proper caution, may be able to lure a fairy by using a appropriate combination of sweets to attract them, and a special glue mixture (shown below) similar to bug traps to secure the fairy's feet.

Most or strong enough to easily escape, but by mixing a drop of suitable sleep draft with the solution, you can easily drug the subject for about twelve hours. Do not use more than one drop, for that will become deadly to the fairy.

Mark's thoughts whirled smoothly as he studied the list of ingredients he would need to make the fairy bait. Most he found would be easy to grab from the kitchen: sugar, honey, molasses, (he thought syrup would suffice for that) placed on a flower petal (the type would determine which breed of fairy would show up) and set in a moonlit glade would bring the fairy in.

Mark set himself to collect the ingredients. He was running out of time. It was already Sunday, and tomorrow would be his last day out of class. Much of the supplies he scrounged from the cupboards and some he got from the pantry. The sleeping pills he managed from his mother's medicine cabinet in her bathroom the next day while she was at work and his father making lunch for Mary. The flower petal came from one of his father's white roses. Mark mixed them together in a sealable container and placed the flower petal in a second. He planned to make his move that night. He would have one chance to do so, because on Tuesday he would have to go back to class, and he didn't think he could manage to escape a second time in a row.

It was a moonless night when he crept over the windowsill of his room and dropped lightly to the ground. On his back he wore a backpack with the ingredients placed securely over his black hoody and sweatpants.

I hope that no one sees me tonight, he worried. Or they're going to think I'm some thief moving around and call the cops on me.

He couldn't let his fear paralyze him, however, and he slid quietly through the next two rows of houses, avoiding the lights along the side of the road until he reached the outer ranks of the forest. He disappeared into the collection of trunks, making for a small clearing he remembered that lay about a twenty minute walk straight from the road. There was, or had been, a small path that wound its way through for joggers and the occasional hiker. Mark wasn't sure he could find the path in the dark, but didn't think he could miss the clearing.

As he walked, the trees seemed to get closer together, and he began to feel like being watched. He breathed a sigh of relief when the trees opened abruptly in front of him and he stood on the edge of a broad grassy meadow. The tall grasses would make a perfect place to lie in wait, and the large rock near the edge would be the place for the bait.

Opening his pack he laid the rose petal in a crag on the face and poured his mixture over it, careful to leave part of the petal exposed. Resealing the container and placing it in a ziplock, he placed it back in his pack. Hiding himself in the grass, he hoped his outfit would hid him from the fairy's eyes.

The wait seemed intolerable. Time crawled by, leaving Mark fighting to keep his eyes open. He felt his head bob like a float above a fishing lure that'd been caught by a fish.

A small light, much like that of a lightning bug, came slowly from the far side of the trees. Mark felt his heart beat faster in excitement.

This is it. He thought.

The light dropped down to the boulder, landing swiftly and surely on the crag. Mark's eyes adjusted slowly to the light, realizing it was emanating from a pair of gossamer wings that sprouted from the back of a tiny woman, about as tall as a human hand, greedily sucking down the thick mixture. She used her

hands to scoop great handfuls at first, but when that did not satisfy, she bent over and, placing her lips on the surface, proceeded to inhale the molasses with surprising vigor.

Long before she finished the entire meal, however, she sat up satisfied. Moving slowly to the top of the rock, she curled up to sleep under the light of the stars. Her chest began to move rhythmically up and down in slumber.

Stepping up, he collected the fairy, ignoring the pins of pain stabbing at his arms and legs in his triumph. He placed the slumbering creature inside one of his bug jars, screwing the cap on tightly to prevent any escape, though she seemed so heavily asleep that nothing would wake her.

Exultantly, he flicked on a flashlight he dug from his pack and shone it around. The broad curve of a path showed on the far edge of the meadow from him. Making for it, he soon found himself back amongst the familiar houses and yards of the neighborhood.

Creeping through the window, he remained alert to any sound that might give him away. Nothing stirred, and he sighed with relief as he shut his window soundlessly. Pulling the jar out of his pouch, he peered down at his little captive.

“Now, to show you your new home.” He whispered.

Near the back of his room, tucked into a little corner, he had a large glass bowl that stood on an ornately cast glass pedestal. The entire bowl/pedestal stood in one piece, before he had modified it to suit his design. It now sported a fish-tank top he’d scrounged and glued tightly to the top. The flip top could be latched and locked shut to prevent escapes, and the air filter and small slats would provide her with plentiful air.

Inside, he’d fixed it up with a floor of moss lying on dirt, surrounding the center of a small pool he’d placed there for scenery and bathing. A larger patch of moss, much thicker but soft as down he’d placed in the back as the bedroom, and curtained it off from the rest of the bowl with a couple broad leaf plants, giving a forest appearance to the bowl.

Placing the fairy inside her new home, he locked her prison securely and watched her sleep.

They really are extraordinary creatures, fairies. He thought muzzily as he pulled the covers of his bed up to his chin and shut his eyes. Moments later he was asleep.

