

Amy and the Thief

Amy woke up to the sound of her sister's alarm clock ringing. Rolling out of bed, she stretched and yawned. Getting up this early was a real pain, Amy thought. She looked out the window at her sister's stirring form. Good, the noise will stop soon. She nodded in satisfaction as a hand suddenly shot up and slammed down on the alarm. Her sister had woken up. The sounds of their mother in the hallway made Amy ease deeper into the dollhouse her father had made some years back, there was no way she was going to be caught by their mother looking like this!

Serena made some irritable reply to their mother's comment on sleepyheads, before pulling herself out of bed and stumbling towards the shower. Ahhh, a hot shower would definitely feel great right now, Amy mused. It had been nearly a week since she had been turned into a fairy from legend, and things were finally starting to calm down. She had a dollhouse to live in, plenty of food, and her sister knew her secret. It was amazingly wonderful to have someone to confide in, and they spent hours talking late at night, something they had never done before.

Amy thought about the newfound connection to her sister. They'd been close before the...change. Amy always took care of her, kept her safe, made sure she had everything for school and picked her up when her bus got out. Now it seemed to be the other way around. It was Serena making sure she had everything she needed, sneaking food for her to eat and making sure she was comfortable.

My world has turned upside-down. She thought irritably.

Amy flapped her wings and buzzed out of the dollhouse. It was a wooden, two-story structure that her dad had built for her fifth or sixth birthday. It had four large rooms, one of which held a fireplace, and a balcony at the front. Her mother had made several custom pieces of furniture for it, including a comfy chair, bed, and sofa. The rest of the furniture was store-bought. Even the large wardrobe upstairs came from one of the Barbie™ collections on the market. About half the size of a doll herself, Amy found the dollhouse more than spacious. To tell the truth, it was really more space than she needed, but at least it was close to her size.

Out in the room, she grimaced as her small size was made even more apparent. Her sister's room felt like an aircraft hangar for a jumbo jet. She flew over the mountains, plateaus and valleys of her sister's human size furniture until she came to the desk. Her sister had set up a vanity mirror for her there. As she settled gently on the table, she began checking herself out in the mirror. Hair looked good, as did her face. The dress must have been wrinkle-resistant, because it looked freshly ironed on her. It was one of the weird things about being a fairy, it seemed. No matter what happened, she always looked great. Amy admitted it was nice not having to take a shower, but this magic stuff scared the living daylights out of her. It groomed her without her having to think about it, she could manipulate objects with her power; she had overheard her parents talking about a rose that she had made bloom in the middle of winter as gratitude to an elderly couple, and the silver comb she had made from a flower that her sister kept carefully tucked away in her drawer. Amy had no idea how this was possible, by all the laws of science it wasn't, but she could still do so. The only sane thing to do was to stop using all magic. She hadn't even experimented with it at all, because she was frightened of what it could do. Now, her body was performing magic without her say so! Her reflection grimaced back at her.

Amy felt her stomach growl. Well, at least she still had to find food for herself! Amy felt a bit better. It seemed Magic couldn't do everything. She flitted off towards the kitchen. She used the ceiling fans and lights to dart behind, checking to see if anyone was in the hall. Darting into the kitchen, she spied a bowl of cherries on the counter. Her mother must be going to have them for breakfast. The shiny skins showed that they had just been washed, and no one was in the kitchen. Mom must have been chivvying Serena out of the shower. Perfect. She dropped down and snagged one in a flyby. The large fruit dangled beneath her as she darted out of the kitchen. She careened around the bookcase and then dodged the lampstand. The sounds of her mother coming back down the hall reached her ears. Amy decided that it was now or never. Taking a deep breath, she flew rapidly up the hall. Her sister was just stepping out of the shower when Amy buzzed past her ear.

"Aaah, what?" Serena cried as Amy flashed in front of her.

"Honey! What's wrong?" came their mother's alarmed voice. The sound of her hurrying feet came from the hall. This was not going well. Amy darted for the door.

"N-nothing. Mom. I just saw a bug." Serena said, trying to cover for her. She was pretty smart for a seven-year old. Amy was proud of her.

"Are you sure honey?" Her mother's worried voice.

Amy could hear her fussing over Serena in the hall. An unfamiliar anguish ripped through her. It wasn't her fault! She screamed. She hadn't wanted to worry her folks like this. She just didn't want to worry them more when they found out how much she had...changed. Amy sat down on the bureau to cry. A sound similar to mournful chimes sounded, but Amy was too miserable to care.

The door opened and Serena stepped in, towel done toga style around her body. She was angry.

"Sis, why did you scare me?" she scolded. She stopped at Amy's tearstained face. She began to look alarmed. Amy had to think fast.

"Sorry, kiddo." She sniffed. "I got hungry and went for breakfast. Mom was coming back so I needed to run."

Serena sat down on the bed. She looked ready to cry. "I'm sorry sis." She said in a small voice. "Didn't mean to..." She looked like a lost puppy.

Amy smiled. "I know you didn't." Casting around for something to change the subject, her eyes fell on the fruit. She took a big bite of the cherry, and smiled. "It's quite good." She said. Serena smiled tremulously before going to dress. Amy averted her eyes out of modesty, and finished the fruit.

After Serena left for school with Sara, one of Amy's friends that had taken to walking Serena to her bus and back, Amy wandered the room, feeling pretty lost. She had been cooped up in the room all week. Granted, it was her own choice, but she still yearned for something green, something *alive*.

The soft tread of her mother walking down the hall, talking on her phone, caught Amy's attention. She sounded really upset about something. Amy moved close so she could listen in.

"I don't know where the Anders account paperwork is. I haven't seen it since last Friday." There was a pause. "What do you mean I was the last one to have it? I put it back in the safe." Her mother said heatedly. "I don't care what Michaelson says, that guy is a creep." A pause. "He said *what!*" Her voice rose to a shriek.

Uh, oh. Amy thought. That didn't sound good.

"But, I didn't take it home with me." Her mother protested. "I swear. I've been too worried about the disappearance of my daughter." Silence. "I don't care. I didn't do it!" "Fine. I'm coming in. I'll prove I didn't take it."

Amy thought for a moment. Her mother needed help. There was no other option. She quickly flitted out of the room and darted down the hall. Her mother was on her phone, tossing stuff into the large brown bag she called a purse. Thank goodness her mom needed so much stuff, with her sister and her! Amy waited until her mom had turned away to replace the home phone in its cradle before she made for the purse. Amy zipped inside and down one of the inside pockets.

The sound of her mother's heels clicking on the floor told Amy that her mom was coming. She burrowed further in the pocket, praying that she didn't get squished by all the stuff in there with her. Amy's world suddenly tilted crazily as her mom picked up the purse and walked out the door. The crazy bag swung back and forth queasily, and Amy prayed she could hold on to her breakfast.

There was a sensation of flying, and then a jarring thump. Her mother had tossed the purse into the car. There was the sound of an engine starting up and then a feeling of movement. Amy settled back in the dark, wishing she had a tiny light or something. As if summoned by her thoughts, a soft glow enveloped the thin threads of her dress, and the jewel glowed with an inner light. The fey light slid down her skin until her entire body glowed a soft green light. Why green? Amy wondered. What was the significance? Perhaps it was just her color?

All thoughts on why her light was blue, and why her skin was glowing, was interrupted by her mother jamming on the brakes. There was a moment of weightlessness before Amy smashed into the fabric of the pocket as the purse hit the dash of the car.

"Ooof!" She exhaled, startled.

She froze, panicky that her mother might have heard that. Whatever was going on had her mother oblivious however, for Amy felt the bag being picked up and carried. They must be at the real-estate office where her mother worked. The bag was slammed down again, and Amy was jarred so hard her teeth clicked. That was starting to get old, fast. Amy glared up out of the pocket, unaware that the light was turning red.

"What's going on?" her mother muttered. "Did I leave my flashlight on again?"

Oh no! She'd heard Amy! Amy wished it was dark, and the light vanished from the pocket. Looking up, she could still see her mother's hand falling towards her. She held her breath, terrified.

"Martha! There you are. My office. Now!" Barked an angry male voice.

“Right away, Mr. Gillycuddy.” Her mom replied. Amy could hear the fear in her voice. It must have been her boss. What little Amy knew of him told her that he liked to nuke problems and ask questions later.

The sound of her heels hurrying away gave Amy her chance. She darted out of the bag and to the ceiling. She spotted the recessed panels of the lights. Damn, no chance of hiding there. She spun quickly, looking for a hiding place. There! A heating vent was in the ceiling as well, the opening large enough for her to squeeze through. She hurried to it and squeezed in, amazed at how easy it was. Looking back down, she noticed a deformation in the metal, and a soft glow where her hands had been. Oops! She had apparently used magic again to bend the heating vent. Hopefully, no one would notice. Breathing slowly to regain her air, she looked down for the first time at the office.

The room was very large, and had dozens of dividing walls arranged in small, eight-foot by four-foot cubicles. In each of the cubicles was a desk, computer, chair, and filing cabinet, plus whatever personal objects the people inside had. From her vantage point, she could see plants, pictures, posters and what looked like a model ship. The sheer size of the space she had to search was intimidating. How was she to find whatever her mother was looking for in all that!

What her mother was looking for... the meeting! Amy realized she could find out what she needed by going to the meeting. She looked down the duct with a smile. And she had the perfect highway to get there. With a flick of her wings she zoomed down the tunnel, dust kicked up in her wake. Her sensitive ears searched for the sound of her mother’s voice.

A snatched word made her veer left at a cross road. Her mother suddenly spoke, startlingly clear below to her. Amy splayed her wings to stop and glanced out a vent hole beneath her. Her mom was in an enclosed office with a balding, fifty-some man with a hooked nose and big gut. Amy couldn’t make out any more details other than, he was angry, and it was directed at her mom.

“What’s the big idea of disappearing for a week and *taking our Anders account information with you?!*” The man roared, spit flying from his face. Amy recoiled from the volume, as her mother did below from the spit.

“I already told you, Mr. Gillycuddy, I’ve been dealing with the disappearance of my daughter. I never took the account information home, and I certainly didn’t leave them lying about.” Her mother replied nervously.

“Well something bloody well happened to them.” Mr. Gillycuddy yelled. Amy fancied she could see steam boiling from his head. “This firm stands to lose millions in this deal. If our competitors should get the account information, the company is finished! So you had better find out what happened to the papers, or so help me, I’ll have you arrested and jailed!”

Amy’s mother reared back, shocked. Amy realized she was furious. A strong red light suffused the vent as she glared at the balding pate of the fat man beneath her. There would be no way she would allow that creature to arrest her mom!

She became aware of sudden weight in her hands. Glancing down she blinked at the twin rapiers that appeared in her hands. Even her own inexperienced eyes could tell they were exquisitely crafted. They had been etched with the patterns of flowers and vines, and some fey writing on the blades. Looking at them inquisitively she read aloud:

"Aſve'gar and Lil'gar, We are the Hope of the Forest and the Bane of the Dark. We shall drink the blood of the unrighteous and Defend the Weak"

Taking an experimental swing she was delighted to realize how easily they swung. They seemed like living extensions of her arms. She moved through several forms that she had never done before, but somehow easily recognized.

It's like I've been trained my whole life in their use, but never had the training! The thought sobered Amy. She might have the moves, but she doubted she had the *ability* to fight. It took more than moves to fight successfully with swords; you needed the training to recognize openings and which defense to use.

I can't fight with these, not yet. Besides, they're not what's needed here.

With a small flash of light and white, glowing smoke, the blades vanished. She marveled at it and then glared back down the vent at Mr. Gillycuddy. She would prove that her mother didn't take those papers, and she knew how to go about it!

Focused, Amy flew back to the heat vent above the main room. She needed a chance to investigate one of the computers. She scanned the room carefully. An empty cubicle with the people gone showed good promise. Diving down, she landed perfectly on the keyboard. If anyone had been watching that, they might have thought I was an expert, Amy thought amusedly. She kicked the mouse to make the screen wake up. It came up with a password block. Amy was stumped. How am I going to find the password? She wondered. The memory of the rose flashed in her mind, and a grin slid onto her face. With magic, of course! Spreading her fingers, she concentrated, willing the computer to unlock. A familiar glow built up and a beam of light shot from the palms of her suddenly gloved hands and hit the screen. A moment later, the computer unlocked and brought up the main window, a tropical beach. At least the user has good taste, she thought happily.

Quickly glancing at the files in front of her, she selected the one labeled computer. She then accessed the intranet that the office computers were set up on. With glee, she realized that there was no firewall blocking her access to the other computers! How naive, there was almost no security here. Amy was almost disappointed. She had been the top of her class in computer skills and this system was posing no difficulties at all. She began her search for any clue of the Anders account. Using her wings, she would flit over the key she needed, and drop down. It became almost like a dance for her, and soon she was sweating from her exertions.

After about an hour with no luck, Amy was starting to get nervous. It was only sheer chance that she hadn't been discovered yet, and there was still no sign of the information. There had to be something. The information couldn't have just vanished. Vanished. Her body went still as Amy processed that thought. What if someone had deleted the information specifically to prevent the company from having it? It sounded exactly like something a cyberbully would do in school. Perhaps the same was happening here?

This could be her last chance to search for information. Whoever worked in this cubicle could come back at any time. Amy began dancing once more. Keys clicked rhythmically under her ministrations. The parameters were loaded into the system, and then Amy hit execute. She could hear the fans in the

tower whine as they sought to cool the circuits. Amy crossed her fingers in hope. The screen flashed blue and line of characters appeared: FILE FOUND.

Excited, Amy quickly entered the keystrokes that would retrieve the file. Whoever had tried to destroy the file hadn't done a good job, she realized. There was almost no difficulty in recovering the file, and what was more, she realized that she could tell the user that had used the internet program to send the file to the shredder.

Curiosity overtook her and she opened the user profile. She froze as she read her mother's name.

That's impossible. She thought numbly. Then she looked at the date the profile had been active, and growled under her breath. It *was* impossible. The date the profile had been in use had been the times her mother was at home talking to the police! Someone had used her mother's account to frame her!

The sound of voices near the cubicle frightened Amy. Sending the file to the computer of Gillycuddy, she deleted the user data from it and the system. She burned to realize it would protect the identity of whoever *had* stolen the data, but it would save her mom her job.

Closing out the window she jumped up to the vent as a young man walked in. He sat down at the computer with a frown, noticing his save screen up on the monitor instead of the black screen from long disuse.

"That's strange." He muttered. Then he stiffened. Typing hurriedly, he accessed his system and began scrolling through the computer logs. He cursed softly; Amy realized that she'd forgotten to delete the computer log that showed when it was last accessed. Most people didn't look at that, so she hadn't bothered.

"Crap, crap, crap." He cursed. He moved quickly, pulling up several files in quick succession. Amy frowned as she watched. With dawning realization, she realized that this must Michaelson her mother had been talking about before. She felt her anger start to rise up again as she watched his quick movements. It was obvious to her that he was trying to recover the email and data she'd sent to Gillycuddy.

Good luck with that one, she smiled smugly. *I checked the flag when I shut down, he's already opened the file. If you pull it now, he'll realize who it was.*

Suddenly the entire complex went dark. There was several curses and even a couple of screams echoing around the building. Michaelson's computer stayed online however, and Amy froze. She realized he'd managed to kill power to everyone's station and the building except his own. None of her training had prepared her for that.

She watched him retrieve the file she'd sent and pull up her mother's profile information! He was going to frame her again!

The swords were back in her hands again, and this time there was weight on her shoulders and head. She dimly realized she was dressed in light armor. There was *no* way she was going to let him get away with framing her mother and sending her to jail! With a shout she leaped down from the vent and charged at him, swords gleaming in the sudden brilliance of her light.

The perspective of the room seemed to change as she came hurtling down, wings flaring to pull her out of the dive. Michaelson spun around in his chair, eyes widening in surprise as he looked at her. It was then she realized she was as big as he was! She'd grown!

The realization slid off the outside of her anger like a passing wave under the bow of a ship. The swords flashed on either side of Michaelson's neck and she paused, the blades quivering, as they dimpled his neck slightly. If he twitched even slightly he would bleed. His eyes were so wide they seemed all white, matching his suddenly pasty skin.

"Who—who are you?!" he squeaked.

"Justice." She snarled. "You've stolen from...this store. I won't have it." She cursed her slip, if she revealed her mother he'd have power over her.

"But, but." He stammered.

"NO BUTS!" she roared. Outside she heard people fall quiet as they heard her. Then the sound of running feet, in seconds they'd be at the door to the office!

She pointed at the door with one of the swords, and the door sealed itself shut. The sound of something heavy hitting the door and rebounding off before shocked cursing sounded outside came to them. Michaelson gulped and trembled wildly.

Amy replaced the blade at his throat and pressed in slightly to drive her point home.

"You will return the information you have stolen and admit that it was you who took it and tried to frame another, or I will deal with you—harshly." She snarled.

"Iwilliwilliwill." He pleaded quickly.

"I will be watching you, to make sure. Do not make me come back!" she snapped at him.

She jumped into the air, the swords flashing before his eyes. His head snapped back and he tumbled to the floor, having fainted from the fright.

Immediately she shrank back to her previous size. The magic around the door released; it fell open revealing the shocked and scared faces of the office, including her mother. They took in the body on the floor as Amy made her escape into the vent. No one noticed.

She watched from above as several people patted his face. Gillycuddy came in himself, looking bewildered and angry. He slapped Michaelson hard, making the younger man sputter and shake, opening his eyes and looking wildly around.

"Where is she?! Where is she?!" he screeched.

Many people asked who he was talking about. He shook his head in terror, looking around the office wildly.

"She came...from...above."

Several people looked up at the ceiling in disbelief but none noticed her in the tiny opening of the vent.

"I don't know who you are talking about." Gilycuddy growled. "But I have questions for you. Someone sent me an email with the Anders account, and then tried to take it back out using missus Wilder's account! But *she* happened to be sitting in the office with me waiting for the police! So, I want to know exactly you were doing in here ***with the Ander's account on your computer and Melody's PROFILE UP?!"***

Several people recoiled from the volume the man reached. His dark eyes flashed in anger and his big hands clenched into fists as he stared down at the cowering lump of flesh at his feet.

"Never mind." He growled in a more normal tone. "You can explain it to the judge. Regardless, you are FIRED from this firm!"

"Yes! YES! Thank you!" Michaelson sobbed. He glared daggers at Amy's mom, who stepped back from the sheer hatred in those eyes. Gilycuddy leaned so he blocked Amy's mom from Michaelson.

"I don't know what kind of demon you have Melody, but I'll find out!" he snarled,

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Amy's mom protested.

"I'll find out! I'll find out and expose you!" Michaelson howled. He struggled against Gilycuddy's firm grip.

Amy felt the swords and armor reappear. She tensed, everything hinged on a knife's edge.

Before anything else could happen, two police officers walked in. Gilycuddy passed Michaelson over to them and they led him out, still ranting at Amy's mom, who looked completely baffled.

"Well." Gilycuddy said when the police had finished interviewing everyone and left. "Melody, you'll have a bonus coming in your paycheck for all of this, and extra time off for your daughter."

"Thank-you sir." She said politely. "I still need to get back to Serena."

"I understand. I hope you find Amy." Gilycuddy nodded. He went back to his office.

Amy rushed through the vent until she spotted her mom starting to walk out the door. When she stepped into the hallway where no one else was looking, Amy darted into the purse, thanking her mom for having an open-top style.

Outside her mom put the car into drive and pulled out of the parking lot while Amy settled down and smiled, feeling good about how the day had gone. She almost looked forward to her next adventure, knowing she had the power to protect her family and better yet, the world around her from people like Michaelson.