



*Aoife and the tale of the missing
Memory of Lillybell*

By Gerri Hennessy

Aoife was excited. Her Mummy was bringing her to see her best friend Caoimhe today and she loved playing with her. Though it usually took her mummy ages to get ready to go she decided to help her to see if they could get going sooner. She tidied her room and had her jacket and shoes on so that she was ready to go. She also had collected all her Brother Sean's things and had them by the door. At last, they were ready to go and her mummy was delighted at all Aoife's help. They all bundled into the car and were off.

Caoimhe's mother greeted them at the door with a big smile when they arrived. Aoife thought it was lovely that her best friend mummy was also best friends with her even though they were so old! Caoimhe came out from the kitchen and they were soon off to the garden to play. As Aoife looked back, she laughed to see Sean sitting between the two mummies smiling happily. He loved to be the centre of attention.

They had been playing happily in the garden when Caoimhe went upstairs to get another doll for their game. Aoife was sitting on the garden chair swinging her legs happily, when she heard a sniffing noise. She was not as startled as some may have been as she has been through a few lovely adventures met fairies and even spoken to animals in the last few days. She did not think much could surprise her anymore. She quickly hopped off the chair and getting on her knees, she looked around. "Hello", she called quietly.

"Is anyone there?" She listened for a minute and hearing nothing, she wondered if she had imagined it. Just then, she heard another little sob. "Please don't be afraid", she said again in the same gentle voice. "If you are upset maybe I can help you".

"I'm over here", a tiny voice came from the hedge.

Aoife walked to the hedge where she heard the voice coming from, and, peering in saw a tiny creature dressed in bright yellow with multicolored wings stretching above her head looking up at her with a tear stained face.

Just then Caoimhe came dancing out of the house waving the dolls over her head.

"Are you ok", Aoife asked the fairy quickly glancing up at Caoimhe who was looking at her curiously.

"Are you Aoife?" she replied looking up at her hopefully.

"Yes that is my name", she whispered.

Caoimhe walk up behind to where Aoife was kneeling.

"Who are you talking to Aoife?" Asked Caoimhe she asked peering into the hedge.

"Eh, no one", stuttered Aoife going red, as she knew telling lies was wrong. Hearing this, the little fairy burst into tears.

"Oh no", she wailed. "I was hoping you could help me. They all told me to find you and you would. As the fairy buried her head in her hand and sobbed loudly Aoife looked from her to Caoimhe and wondered what on earth she would do.

"Can you wait her for a minute", she asked quickly hoping that they would both think that they were talking to them "I'll be back in just a minute".

"Ok", they both said together though Caoimhe continued to look at her strangely.

Aoife scampered around to the side of the house searching in her pockets for the little bell that her friend Amber the tooth fairy had given her a few days before. Amber had said that if she needed

her to ring this bell and she would come to her. Aoife was hoping that the tooth fairy would hear her. She shook the bell and heard just a tiny tinkling noise.

"Amber will never hear that sound". Aoife thought to herself in dismay. Just then she heard a giggling sound in a bright flurry of glitter Amber was there fluttering in front of her face smiling delightedly.

"Aoife", she sang kissing her all over the face. "I'm so glad to see you, I have missed you".

"I saw you last night silly", Aoife giggled. "How could you miss me already?" Amber flew up to sit on Aoife shoulder.

"Time is different in fairyland remember", she replied. "And we always miss people we love when we are not with them". Aoife knew that was true.

"Oh Amber", she said hurriedly. "I'm here with my friend Caoimhe and while we were playing I have met a fairy that says she needs my help." Amber looked at her human proudly.

"That is great honey", She replied. "So why have you called me, do you need my help?"

Aoife explained that she was with Caoimhe and as her friend could not see or hear the fairy she wouldn't be able to help straight away and this new fairy looked so upset that she didn't want to ask her to wait until later.

"Well", said Amber slowly. "If we gave fairy dust to your friend, we would solve one problem at least.

"I would love that", said Aoife happily. "I have wanted to tell her about you, but will you get into trouble?"

Amber smiled cheekily "Trouble shmouble", she laughed. "Let's do it".

Amber came back around the corner with a huge smile on her face.

“What is going on Aoife”, Caoimhe asked her frowning. “Who are you talking to?”

Aoife grabbed her friends hand pulled her over to the garden table that was hidden from the kitchen window so they wouldn't be seen.

“I have a huge secret that I have been dying to tell you. I didn't because I thought you might not believe me”, she said excitedly. “But I can tell you now. I would like you to meet my new friend Aoife the tooth fairy”.

“Is this a new game”, Caoimhe was asking doubtfully as Amber blew a tiny handful of fairy dust right at her nose.

“Achoo achoo”, She sneezed. “Oh gosh, what was that?” She lifted her head and blinked twice. When she had stopped sneezing and blinking Amber flew up to have right in front of her face and winked at her cheekily. Caoimhe let out a yelp of fright and leaned back so far in her chair that the chair toppled backwards, knocked the table and they all landed in a heap on the floor.

“What was that?” screeched Caoimhe trying to disentangle herself from the plastic legs of the table and chairs. “Is it a spider, a big bug? Get it away from me!”

Aoife grabbed her hand.

“Wait Caoimhe”, she implored. “It's ok, I promise. There is no need to be afraid. This is my friend Amber; she is a fairy not a bug”.

Caoimhe, who had just managed to stand up, sat down again heavily.

“Did you say a fairy?” Caoimhe said excitedly. “Where, where is it?”

Just then her eyes settled on the little fairy who was sitting on Aoife's shoulder swinging her legs and whistling a sweet little tune.

"Ah, so you are back with us then", said the cheeky little fairy grinning at her. "Shall we introduce ourselves?"

Caoimhe's mouth was a perfect little o as she stared at Amber.

"Ohh", she cried. "You are so beautiful". Amber laughed with delight.

"I can see I'm going like her ", she said winking at Aoife as she flew to Caoimhe and planted kisses all over her face.

The next few minutes were taken up with excited chatter and explanations. Then Aoife, remembering the little crying fairy decided that they would need to go back to her before she thought they had forgotten about her.

"Come on girls", she cried. "We have a new friend to help.

When they had made their way to the bottom of the garden to where the fairy had last been Aoife got down on her hunkers and peered into the hedge.

"Hello there again", she called gently. "It's me, Aoife, I'm back and I have two friends with me, but you can trust them I promise."

The three of them held their breath to see if the timid little fairy would come out. After what seemed a long minute they saw a tiny tear streaked face peering out from between some wildflowers. Amber fluttered down from Caoimhe's shoulder, where she had been perched.

"Hello", she said walking towards the fairy slowly. "My name is Amber, I a tooth fairy. What's your name?"

At that, the newcomers' bottom lip started to wobble.

"Th-that is the p-problem", she wailed. "I can't remember my name, where I live or even my mother's name".

Amber immediately put her arms around the sobbing fairy and patted her back soothingly.

"Shhh", she murmured gently. "You are with friends now and we will help you".

Aoife and Caoimhe nodded their heads in agreement.

"Of course we will", they said together both thinking how terrible it would be not to remember their mummies name.

First, a tissue had to be torn into small enough pieces for the little fairy to wipe her face and blow her nose. Caoimhe ran upstairs to open her bedroom window. They decided that this was the best place to make a plan that the grownups would not overhear.

When she signalled from the kitchen, Aoife told the fairies which window to go through so they could all meet there. Armed with snacks and juice Aoife and Caoimhe scampered upstairs where they found the two fairies sitting cross-legged on her bed. Amber was sitting close to her new friend who was eating something.

"It is called Lambas", Amber told the girls. "Elven bread, besides filling you up it gives a feeling of comfort and just makes you feel better, and I think that's just what this young fairy needs."

They spent the next little while munching their snacks and drinking their juice. The juice was very popular with the fairies and they both drank it in big mouthfuls from the thimble that Caoimhe found for them. When they had all eaten their fill, Amber leaned back against the pillow and prepared to get down to business.

"So sweetie", she said gently. "Can you tell us what you do remember?"

Tears welled up in her huge eyes, which she tried to blink away.

"That's just it", she replied in a wobbly voice. "I don't remember much at all. I woke up this morning beside a pond not knowing how I got there. Then I realised I didn't even know my name."

Amber moved to take the sad little fairy's hand in her own and pressed it encouragingly.

"I was crying for a while", she continued in a slightly stronger voice. "A squirrel heard me, she didn't know how to help, but she told me of a human girl that has been helping forest creatures and helped me to find you".

She had turned to Aoife and was looking at her with eyes bright with hope.

"Wow", exclaimed Caoimhe looking at her friend proudly. "You are a hero". Aoife shook her curly head.

"I am not," she laughed. "I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without Amber, she is the hero".
Amber flew up to land on Aoife shoulder.

"We are here to help each other", she declared. "And if that makes us hero's that is great. But Caoimhe I think we need another hero to join us on this adventure, what so you think?"

Caoimhe looked from the tooth fairy to her friend.

"Oh yes", she cried eagerly. "What do I have to do?" At that, that they all turned and looked expectantly at Amber. "Ok then. We need a plan", she said.

"I think the first thing is a temporary name for our new friend, any ideas?" Amber asked.

"Aoife 2?" asked Aoife quickly giggling.

"Oh that would be lovely", the lost little fairy said happily.

“Well, I think we could do better than that”, said Amber carefully not wanting to upset her friend. “From your wings I would say you are a butterfly fairy. How would you like to be called Butterfly for the time being?”

The little fairy stretched her wings up and high above her back and looked back at them stretching high above her head. All the colours of the rainbow swirled around them indeed looking very like the colours of all the different butterflies in the world.

“I think that would be a lovely name”, she replied with a smile. “Until I remember my own, that is”.

Aoife nodded in agreement.

“Now, I need to think”, she said, “Caoimhe, Do you have any more of that delicious drink?”

Caoimhe smiled, taking the thimble to re fill it.

“I have all you need”, she replied.

While Amber was thinking, the girls took the time to chat and giggle with their new friend.

It was not long before they heard sounds from downstairs that sounded like the grownups getting ready to leave.

“Amber”, cried Aoife. “We will have to hurry or my mummy will take me home.”

Amber jumped slightly, a bit startled.

“Well I have a plan”, she said. “We need to travel to the land of the elves.

” The two friends looked at each other delightedly.

"I usually go through water", continued Amber thoughtfully. "Through a lake or river, but we have no time for that."

She looked quickly around the room and her eyes fell on the large mirror resting against the wall.

"Hmm", she said to herself. "It could work."

She hopped off the bed and reaching into her pocket got a handful of fairy dust and flung it directly at the mirror. Immediately it began to shimmer.

"Ok, we need to go quickly", she said as they heard Aoife's name being called.

"Quickly girls, all hold hands and come with me."

"I'm scared Aoife", said Caoimhe uncertainly.

"Don't worry", soothed Aoife. As she took her friends hand in her own. "Amber is my friend too and I know we can trust her".

With that, they all followed Amber through the mirror.

There seemed to be a few seconds of complete silence.

Gradually the girls became aware of huge green trees looming high above them, they heard the sounds of sweet birdsong, the buzzing of bees and the sound of a stream gurgling, and bubbling over rocks as it meandered on its way.

They looked around them in astonishment they also saw flowers scattered between the huge trees with brightly coloured butterflies dancing among them and bees collecting their honey. Caoimhe's eyes were wide with wonder and happiness as she turned about her.

"Oh", she whispered. "This is the most beautiful place I have ever seen". Aoife's face mirrored her friends.

"Oh look", she cried pointing to Butterfly who had swooped up to join the butterflies who had gathered around her and were all dancing in the air above them in the dappled sunlight.

"I thought I could not remember anything", she cried happily. "But I do remember this".

"We need to go and find the lake", Urged Amber.

"Can't we stay a while", begged Caoimhe and Aoife who were happily splashing each other at the stream laughing uproariously.

Amber came to stand beside them, her tiny face serious.

"Girls, humans are not allowed in this forest", she explained. "And while it's not dangerous, I don't know what kind of trouble I would get in to if we are found here".

The girls nodded and got out of the stream, the last thing they wanted to do was get her into trouble.

"Sorry Amber", Aoife said looking downcast. "I didn't think".

"Don't worry honey", Soothed Amber. "I know the effect these woods have on everybody on their first visit".

Looking up at the dozens of butterflies it was difficult to pick out the butterfly fairy, but having heard her new friends calling to her the fairy known simply as Butterfly swooped to and beside them.

"Sorry", she said grinning sheepishly. "I was just so happy there for those few minutes I forgot while why we are here."

Amber guided them to a nearby tree to talk about what to do next. The breeze had picked up and was causing a whispering noise through the leaves.

"Listen", said Aoife delightedly. "It sounds like the trees are talking."

Amber looked at her sharply.

"I know that this is going to be difficult", she said urgently placing a hand gently on Aoife's arm. "You have to try very hard not to listen too closely to them or you will fall asleep and will not awaken until the elves find you. This is the way they keep humans out of their forest that find themselves here accidentally".

Aoife shook her head to clear the sleepiness that has already started to take hold of her and noticed for the first time that they were all now the same size.

"Caoimhe", she asked. "Did you even notice that we are now the same size?" Amber took each of the girl's hands in her own

"We are the same size because we are in the land of the fairies." She explained. "Now we need to find the lake and to do that we will need the help of a friend so we must get going to find her first". Around them were the sounds of birds singing happily and bees buzzing busily. The

They set off following a path only Amber seemed to be able to see. The soft forest floor was carpeted in flowers in colours of every hue, some of the colours the girls had never even seen before, and they cushioned the sound of the four passing through.

Amber and Caoimhe were chatting quietly as they walked trying to decide what caused the magical atmosphere. They couldn't decide if it was the unusual colours or the birds singing so happily. It was a sound they had never heard so clearly before. Amber smiled at them.

"This place is the home of the elves", she told them in a soft voice. "The elves use their magic to help protect the forests and rivers of your world; it is at its strongest here.

Butterfly, walking happily between them turned to Amber.

"Why are we going to this lake Amber?" she asked.

"The lake has magic restorative powers", Amber replied. "I'm sure it will be able to restore your memory. My friend Sula will be able to bring us there. The elves are very protective of it, so we need an elf with us to find it. They walked further into the forest until they came to a clearing.

"Can you to wait here?" Amber asked them. "I will get Sula and explain to her why I brought humans to the forest. I'm sure when she knows the story she will help us."

The three friends sat down on the soft grass to wait and watched as Aoife disappeared off into the trees.

The two little girls and the fairy were snoozing in the warm sunshine when Aoife felt a poke in her side.

"Aoife", whispered Caoimhe. "Please don't think I am crazy, but I think there is a bird trying to talk to us".

Aoife sat up quickly.

"Where is it?" she asked.

"Over there by that tree", Caoimhe replied pointing at a nearby tree. "I think it called your name".

Aoife looked to where her friend was pointing and there sat a little bird looking at them with its little head to one side.

"Are you Aoife", the little bird asked nervously.

"Yes", Aoife replied gently. "What is your name?"

"Oh, this is so great", it said excitedly hopping closer. "My name is Petie. The others will be so jealous that I have met you.

"Caoimhe looked at her friend in amazement.

"Do you know birds as well?" she asked. "And how long have you been able to speak to them?"

Aoife grinned at her.

"Only since I met Amber and she gave me the fairy dust". She said. Turning to Petie, she smiled.

"Hi Petie, how did you know my name?"

Petie flew the short distance to where the girls sat and landed on Aoife's knee.

"Oh we all know about you", he replied. "You are the human girl that helps the forest folk, the way you helped find Maurice. We should have known that you would be the one to find Lillybel. We should have come to you first."

Aoife and Caoimhe looked at each other in confusion.

"Who is Lillybel?" they asked together.

"Lillybel", he laughed looking at the little fairy that they had been calling Butterfly. "Where have you been? Everybody has been looking for you.

"The fairy came quickly to where Petie was still sitting on Aoife's knee.

"You know me?" she asked hopefully.

“Yes, of course I know you”, he replied looking confused. “I know your Mummy and your sister and they have been so worried since you went missing.”

Lillybel looked at Aoife in distress.

“Oh no”, she cried. “I was so upset that I could not remember who I was, I didn’t even think about anyone being worried about me”.

“What do you mean you don’t remember your name?” He asked surprised. “And what are you all doing here? Do the elves know there are humans in their forest?”

The girls and the fairy looked at each other in concern.

“Well we don’t think they do actually”, Amber said slowly. “But we are here to help Lillybel, so you can’t tell them. I promise we are not here to do any harm.

Aoife quickly told the little bird about all that had happened.

“But how did you lose your memory?” the little bird asked doubtfully.

“I honestly don’t know”, Lillybel said earnestly. “I didn’t even know my name until you just told me”.

They all looked pleadingly at him.

“Please don’t say anything yet”, begged Aoife. “We need to get her to the lake where the water will restore her memory. Or at least that what Amber hopes it will do”.

“Is that Amber the tooth fairy”, Petie asked.

“Yes”, Caoimhe answered. “It was she that brought us here”.

The little starling’s eyes blinked quickly at this news.

"Did she get permission from Queen Coral?" he asked.

The two friends shook their heads.

"I don't think she asked permission from anyone", Aoife told him. "Who is Queen Coral?" Petie looked from one to another.

"Gosh, you really don't know do you?" he asked looking surprised. "She is the queen of the elves and rules here in the land of the elves. Nobody should do anything here without her permission, and certainly not bring visitors."

The girls looked very worried at this and both were asking themselves if they had done the right thing coming to the forest.

"Will we get in trouble", Caoimhe asked in a frightened voice, beginning to wish that she had not gotten involved at all.

"Oh little girl, I didn't mean to scare you", Petie reassured her. "The queen is not evil; she would never hurt you or your friend. Though, Amber will get a telling off for breaking the rules. Where is she?"

The girls looked greatly relieved at this.

"Amber has gone to find a friend to help us", Answered Aoife. "She is called Sula I think Amber said."

Petie nodded his head at this news.

"Sula, is the queens' niece", he told them. "She is a steady girl, and very close to the queen, which means she will listen to her".

He cocked his head to one side and looked at the two girls and fairy thoughtfully.

"I will go back to the others and tell them that there is no sign of Lillybel here", he declared.

"That should give you some more time, but as I don't know where this lake is either I won't be able to help there".

"Oh thank you so much", said Lillybel gratefully. "But I hope it won't get you into trouble. I seem to be getting all my new friends into trouble for helping me".

"Don't worry about me", he said cheerfully as with a flutter of his little wings and rising into the air above them. "I laugh in the face of trouble". And with that he disappeared over the tops of the trees and was gone.

The three sat back down on the soft grass to wait once more.

"I wonder what's keeping Amber", said Aoife worriedly. "I hope she hasn't been seen."

Caoimhe patted her on the shoulder.

"Don't worry honey", she said comfortingly. "I'm sure she knows what she is doing".

Not long later, they heard voices. Both girls stood up and looked in the direction they were coming from.

"Why are you being so secretive Amber?" said one voice.

"You will see in a minute", Amber could be heard saying soothingly. "You'll have a great surprise, I promise".

Just then, they both came into the clearing across from where Aoife, Caoimhe and Lillybel were waiting.

"Hello there", said the newcomer cheerfully walking towards them. "Are you Amber's surprise?"

When she got within a few feet, she came to a complete stop, her eyes wide in shock.

"Are they humans?" she cried looking wildly about. "What are they doing in our forest? Tell me they aren't with you Amber."

The two human girls looked at each other in concern; this is what has they been worried about.

Lillybell stepped forward, holding her hands out to the newcomer.

"Please Sula, isn't it?" she asked.

The elf nodded her head silently.

"Can you please let us explain, I promise we are not here to hurt anyone, and these humans can be trusted", she pleaded beckoning Aoife forward. "This is Aoife, have you heard of her?"

Sula looked at Aoife startled.

"Are you Aoife?" she asked. Aoife nodded shyly.

"Well maybe that is not so bad, even my Aunt Coral has heard of you", She said.

At that they all looked relieved, especially Amber who had been thinking that this had not been such a good idea after all. Sula looked at them all in turn.

"I think we should find a better place than this for you to tell me all about it", she smiled. "I know a good place and it's not far from here."

Sula let them off through the woods, past beautiful huge old trees that had the most colourful leaves and flowers the girls had ever seen and smells they could not even imagine.

"This places is so wonderful", whispered Caoimhe to Aoife.

Her friend grinned back at her thinking the same and hoped it would all turn out for the best. Soon they came to another clearing. At the other end there was a huge tree with a wide opening at the base.

“Quick”, whispered Sula urgently. “I need to get you all out of sight”.

The two friends glanced at each other, grabbed hands and followed their fairy friends across the soft green grass to the hollow at the base of the huge tree. When they got close to it, Aoife could see a door in the great trunk. Sula turned the handle quickly and they were inside.

“Please, come this way”, she ushered them.

At this point Aoife and Caoimhe were again beginning to feel a little frightened.

Amber, noticing their scared little faces ushered the girls into a lovely little room that seemed to be lit up from a shaft of light over their heads.

The girls, forgetting their fear for a moment, looked up.

Their breaths caught as they saw light coming down from above them. It seemed it was bouncing over and back the whole way down the tree trunk. Sula looked up and smiled at them.

“It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” she smiled. “It’s the first thing I do every time when I come here, stand right there and look up at the light”.

“Sula, my friend”, said Amber putting her hand on the elf’s arm. “I know I have may get you into trouble, but I had a good reason”.

Sula went to a tiny cupboard and pulled out five little glasses. Once she had them filled with glittering clear liquid, she asked them to follow her to the next room where there were comfortable chairs scattered about.

“Please forgive me girls”, she smiled at Aoife and Caoimhe. “I forgot my manners. Please have a glass of mountain dew”.

The girls relived took the glassed and drank happily.

“And you”, she said to Amber. “Explain to me why you, a tooth fairy, a butterfly fairy and two humans should be hanging around in the forest of the Elves?”

As the two girls and the butterfly fairy drank the glass of mountain dew, they again felt energy and happiness flooding through them. The three felt they had better let their tooth fairy friend, Amber, explain the story without interruption, as they knew too many voices would confuse everything.

As Caoimhe heard her new fairy friend tell what had happened in the last few hours she could hardly believe it herself. How could she, who had never seen a fairy before today, be in a forest owned by them, and that was not even supposed to exist outside of storybooks? As she watched Caoimhe could see Sula smiling slightly and nodding. Amber finished the explanation of why they had come to the elven forest without permission and they were all relived when Sula agreed that they had done the right thing.

“But why didn’t you just come to the queen and ask her permission”, she asked. “Or even come and find me Amber?”

“That is probably my fault”, explained Lillybel. “I was so frightened when I couldn’t remember anything I didn’t know who to trust, or why this had happened to me. The forest creatures that found me convinced me that I could trust Aoife, and I suppose I knew I could trust her friends.”

“You know me Sula”, grinned Amber. “I didn’t stop to think about asking permission until we were already here. It seemed a bit late then, that’s why I came to find you”.

Sula smiled back at her friend and knew that it was normally the case that Amber acted first and asked permission later. She also knew however, that in all the years they had known each other; Amber had a good heart and always did the right thing. This is why she normally got away with it.

“Alright, if we are going to the lake we had better get started”, she said briskly. The others all looked relieved. Amber hugged her elf friend grinning at the others in delight and knew that she had done the right thing asking Sula for help.

“Where do we need to go”, asked Lillybel eagerly.

“You will need to follow me”, said Sula. “We need to hurry though before the others find out you are here.

They trooped back out the way they had come in, Caoimhe and Aoife pausing for a moment to look back longingly at the beautiful place they were leaving. Once outside, Sula led them quickly through the forest.

Again the girls were breathless looking at the beauty of the forest. They never in their wildest dreams could have imagined a place so beautiful, bright and peaceful. The path seemed to become a little clearer, as though it had been used many times. After a short time they came to what looked like a cliff face. Sula walked up to it and pushed between the thick green bushes.

“Through here”, she whispered urgently as she glanced around. “We need to go quickly.

With Amber leading, the two girls and Lillybel coming next and Sula bringing up the rear, they pushed through the undergrowth. Even after all they had seen, nothing prepared Aoife and Caoimhe for what they saw next.

As they stood straight and looked around they saw a huge glittering lake of the deepest blue and green. All around the lake grew towering trees and hundreds of flowers all the colours of the

rainbow, and some that weren't even in the rainbow. Dipping in and out of the water were birds bathing, the air full of their joyous song, mixing perfectly with the sound of the bees busily going from flower to flower collecting the pollen to make their honey.

They stood in silence for a moment, trying to take in everything at once. Amber turned to look at Sula who smiled back at her.

"You may be the first humans to see what you are seeing", she told them. "This lake is the most sacred place in the elven forest. It's where most of our magic is born. We use it to protect our forest and from there to protect as much of your world as possible".

"I didn't know there was any elven magic in our world", Said Caoimhe. "How is it we haven't heard of this place before?"

"We have to do it in secret", replied Sula. "We help all the woodlands in the human world to grow and stay healthy.

Amber ushered Lillybel to the lake edge and pointed to the glittering water.

"Take a drink Lillybel", she told her "it will restore your lost memories".

Lillybell looked to Sula who nodded her head to assure the butterfly fairy it was alright to do so."

Sula knelt down and took a handful of water that shimmered in her hand and drank deeply.

"Oh", she sighed. "That tastes wonderful".

All at once her eyes widened and she looked around at her new friends.

"It worked", she cried rushing to try and hug them all at once. "I remember everything.

Then she stopped and frowned.

“Although the last thing I remember was having my breakfast and planning a walk to the river with my little sister. I had just finished my strawberry juice, and I don’t remember a thing after that”.

“It looks like we will have to find out the rest when you get home”, said Amber.

“The thing is, we will have to go and explain this to Queen Coral”, Sula told them. When she saw how nervous this news made Aoife and Caoimhe look she was quick to comfort them.

“The Queen is very fair and helpful”, she assured them “And she is my Aunt, so I know you needn’t be worried. She would have wanted us to have helped Lillybel”.

“Don’t worry Aoife”, said Amber glumly. “If anyone is in trouble, it’s me”.

“We will be fine”, Sula assured them before turning to the human girls. “I think that you both would benefit from a drink from the lake now that we are here”.

“Are you sure it’s allowed?” asked Aoife doubtfully, as she did not want to get anyone in even more trouble.

“I know it will be fine”, Sula grinned. “Wait until you see how it makes you feel.”

They went to the waters edge and knelt to scoop up a handful of the glittering water. As they swallowed it they felt tingles running all through their bodies. Aoife stood up feeling better than she had ever felt before and laughed aloud.

“That is just wonderful”, she cried spinning around in a circle.

“It is wonderful”, Caoimhe agreed catching Aoife’s hands and spinning with her.

Sula looked on with pleasure, enjoying their reaction.

“Well, we had better go and meet my aunt the queen”, she said and turned to walk towards one of the biggest trees surrounding the lake. “We may as well get it over with, and this is the quickest way”.

As they neared the base of the tree, the girls were amazed again to see a shimmering doorway and watched as Sula stepped through and disappeared.

“Come on, we can all hold hands and go through together”, said Amber smiling bravely holding out her little hands.

They all held hands, walked up to the shimmering doorway and stepped through.

When they opened their eyes, they were greeted by a rather large gathering of elves. At the front, they could see Sula talking earnestly to someone who was kneeling in front of her. A moment later, this person stood up and walked towards them. The girls’ eyes widened even further than they had all day with all the amazing things they had seen. Before them was the most beautiful woman they had ever seen.

They saw she was tall, had huge green eyes that sparkled with laughter with long black hair that flowed over her shoulder and down her back and seemed to move and dance in the sunlight. She wore a long flowing green gown that just reached her toes that seem to shimmer with all the shades of green imaginable.

“Welcome to the home of the elves”, she told them, her smile not only lighting up her face, but the whole area around her. “Please come and join us”.

“You are not going to put us into a sleep that we will never wake from”, blurted out Caoimhe fearfully.

"Oh human child", she smiled soothingly. "You have nothing to fear from the elves. While it is true that those humans that find their way to our forests sleep, it is only until they are returned to where they came from. They have no memory of being here, just a feeling of peace and happiness. So come, be welcome, and tell me of what brought you here. My niece has started to explain things; we made need you all to help.

They were lead to a clearing filled with sunlight where they were given moss cushions to sit on and clear icy water to drink. As Amber told the story with parts added by the others there were smiles and nods of approval by those gathered around.

"My mother must be so worried", said Lillybel suddenly. "I must go to her".

"Don't worry little butterfly fairy", the queen said to her. "Your mama has been told that you are safe and is on her way here. Your little bird friend tried to keep your secret. When he heard how worried your mother was, he told me his part of this tale. Please don't think he broke his promise, sometimes it's better to tell someone even if you have to break a promise."

"You are right your Majesty", Lillybel said earnestly. "We should not have asked him not to tell.

"Maybe once she gets here, we can find out how all this happened in the first place", the queen said looking around at all of them smiling knowingly.

Just then they could hear a voice sounding panicked. The crowd parted to let a tall fairy with long flowing golden hair with large colourful wings into the clearing. She rushed straight to Lillybel and gathered her up in her arms hugging her tightly. "My baby, my baby", she cried into Lillybel's hair. "You are safe. I was so worried."

Lillybel wrapped her arms around her.

"Oh Mama", she cried. "I am so sorry to have frightened you. I don't know what happened. I couldn't remember anything. I was so scared".

"I know what happened to you", said a little frightened voice.

Lillybel looked up with her arms still wrapped around her mothers waist.

"Is that you Fia?" she asked. "Little sister, how would you know anything about this?"

"Because it was me", she wailed. "I used your new wand that you were going to try out at the river. You were so cross with me that I thought you wouldn't bring me. So I thought that if you forgot you knew I had used it, you wouldn't be cross with me anymore."

"Oh Fia", said Lillybel. "I wasn't that cross. I had promised I would bring you hadn't I?"

"I know", Fia murmured hanging her head in shame.

"Tell her what you told me Fia", said their mother looking sternly at her.

"I thought I could make you forget, so I put some rose root in your juice", she said with tears flowing down her face. "I thought it would just make you forget a little. But when we got to the river you didn't even know me. I hid until you fell asleep and then went to find Mama to ask her what I would do."

"It turns out that the packet tipped and she put far too much in", Lillybel's mother said to her. "I use it to heal the bracken around the forest, but it has many uses".

"I'm so sorry". Fia cried. "I was so worried about you. I promise I will never touch your things again".

Lillybel went to her sister and hugged her tightly.

“Don’t make promises you cannot keep little one”, she said laughing. “It’s alright now. I am safe, and I have even made new friends.”

“Let us hope that everyone doesn’t start making friends in the human world and bringing them to the forest without permission”, said the queen sternly.

“Am I in very much trouble?” Amber asked the queen.

“Not this time”, she smiled. “Though there is a reason we have to hide our forests from humans. They seem to have a great fondness for cutting down trees. They cannot and must not find our forests and destroy them as they have done to so many of their own”.

Aoife and Caoimhe felt very uncomfortable at the gasp of horror that went up from the assembled elves and fairies.

“My dears”, said the Queen gathering the two girls into in her arms. “Of course, we know it’s not all humans, especially not two little girls. But while we can trust you, neither of you can ever mention of your visit here”.

“Oh, we won’t”, they promised. “It will be our most secret thing ever!”

There was lots of laughter and kissing for a while, as Lillybel was re-united with her family and with the two human girls being introduced to everyone. Everyone wanted to meet the human girl that they had heard so much about as well as her friend. There was much praise at their efforts to help a new friend.

All too soon, Queen Coral clapped her hands to get everyone’s attention. At once, the laughter and chatter died down and they all turned to pay attention to their beloved queen.

“I think it’s time to take these young ladies home”, she said turning to Amber. “They have been trying to conceal their yawns for quite a while now”.

"Oh no", cried Caoimhe. "I'm only a little tired; please can we stay a little longer?"

"Child, we can see you are tired and it's not surprising considering all the excitement you have had today", she said smiling. "It's better to go home now and return in the future when we can properly welcome you".

"You mean we can come back?" gasped Aoife smiling delightedly.

"Of course", Queen Coral told her. "I couldn't be that mean to give you a glimpse of our wonderful forest and then send you home. The next time you come we will show you more of the wonders that abide here".

Aoife, Caoimhe, Lillybel and Amber gathered to hug and kiss each other goodbye. There were a few tears and then a lot of giggling. All too soon, it was time to go.

"Come this way", said the Queen pointing to a space between two towering trees. "You will return to the exact place and time you came from. Good bye for now, and we will look forward to seeing you again soon".

The girls crossed the clearing to where the queen had pointed and between the trees saw the shimmering gateway that would bring them home. They turned and waved at their new friends grabbed each other's hand and stepped through.

After a moment of silence, they could see Caoimhe's room again and knew they were home. Caoimhe felt a little tap on her shoulder and turned to find Amber hovering behind her.

"I couldn't let you go without a kiss from you", she said giggling and kissed her on both her cheeks before fluttering over to Aoife to do the same.

"I'll see you soon Aoife, I love you", she said. "Maybe Caoimhe could have a sleep over and I could see you both".

Just then Aoife's mummy could be heard calling her from down stairs to say it was time to go.

"Time for me to go too", giggled Amber and vanished with only a sparkle left where she had been a moment before.

"Oh Aoife, what a day", sighed Caoimhe happily as they headed out the bedroom door.

"I know", giggled Aoife. "It was great wasn't it?"

When they reached the bottom of the stairs where both their mummies were waiting they were still giggling.

"Well, you two seem to have had a good time", smiled Aoife's mummy. "I wonder what you both were up to."

Both girls looked at each other and burst out in a fit of giggles.

"Just playing mummy, that all", said Aoife.

As they walked out to the car, Caoimhe hugged Aoife.

"I'm so glad that you are my friend and that I met Amber too", she whispered quietly.

"Me too", whispered Aoife back. "It will be so much better to have you to have adventures with too. I wonder what the next one will be.

They all got in the car and prepared to go home. Aoife sat back happily, closed her eyes to dream of all her new friends the elves and wondered how soon she could meet them again.

And so, dear readers, for now, this is

The End.

