

Prologue - The Beltane Attack

Fairies, who were only six inches tall, danced through the grass, arm in arm. They spun in circles until they got dizzy and fell down laughing. They playfully splashed each other in the crystal clear stream that ran through the center of the valley. Some lazily basked in the warm sun. Others in the miniature village sat in circles weaving flowers into crowns and necklaces while they gossiped.

Everything in the valley was completely covered in decorations. Small glass balls hung everywhere, some from large mushrooms, others from bushes covered in bright yellow flowers. These balls contained floating orbs of magical flame, each one a different color. The smell of roasted meats, covered in herbs and spices, was so strong anyone in the area would swear they could taste it. Juggling street performers and steaming food carts lined the soft dirt path that weaved between and around the small buildings made of living woven plants. Fairies played every instrument imaginable and their beautiful music could be heard everywhere.

This day, the first of May, on the island of Siorraidh Eilean was the Beltane Festival that marked the beginning of summer.

On any other day, not all fairies got along. The snow fairies were always worried the fire fairies would melt their icy homes. Fire fairies were always worried the water fairies would put out their flames. The earth fairies had a fear of heights, so they would never climb into the trees to visit the jungle fairies, and the jungle fairies disliked small spaces which made the underground homes of the earth fairies especially frightening. During the festival of Beltane, all these fears were forgotten, and all fairies came together to celebrate.

The island itself lay in the middle of the ocean, far from the continents populated by humans. Every once in a while a ship or cruise would pass near the island, but unless they crossed an invisible barrier a hundred feet from the shore, they would see nothing but empty blue ocean.

Even more infrequently a human would manage to land on the island and would explore. Due to the inherently natural architecture and small size of the fairies' villages, most people would walk straight past, none the wiser of the fairies' existence.

In the middle of the village there was a pile of wood. The strongest fairies gathered as much wood as they could carry and piled it together. Everyone was especially excited because the bonfire they were preparing marked the beginning of summer and would renew the protection given by the spirit of the isle they all called home.

As the sun began to set, all the fairies stopped what they were doing and made their way towards the tower of wood. They circled around and waited patiently, chatting with each other and nibbling on a variety of berries.

After everyone had arrived, a small carriage pulled by two pure white rabbits approached the circle. The carriage was made of wood and stone magically woven together by the royal crafts-dragon. A door in its

side opened up and a star fairy stepped out. Any fairies in the crowd who had not seen one of the rare star fairies gasped at how beautiful she was. The rest of the crowd whispered to each other in awe. Their queen had arrived.

The queen had long hair the color of moonlight that flowed down her back, and a crown of yellow flowers rested on her head. She looked no older than twenty-five years old, but everyone knew she was more than a hundred. Her eyes sparkled gold and a smile seemed to never leave her face.

For just a second, her wings poked out from behind her emerald green gown and glowed brightly before she tucked them away. Even with the wings hidden, the light they cast seemed to linger for several more seconds before fading.

“My lovely fairies!” The queen Lucillia called out to the crowd. Everyone cheered until she motioned for them to quiet down.

“Today marks the beginning of summer and the renewed protection given to us by the spirit of our island.” The crowd of fairies cheered again, even more loudly than before.

“When we ignite this bonfire, we promise to take care of this island. We promise to take care of the plants, the animals, and each other.” Lucillia walked through the crowd, gently placing a hand on each fairy’s cheek. Then, she began to sing. Each group of fairies gradually joined in. The earth fairies’ voices boomed deeply, while the ice fairies’ sounded like wind chimes. The water fairies made noises like bubbles in a creek, and the garden fairies softly introduced the lyrics.

*Fall leaves have fallen, green to gold
Winter has passed and lost its cold
Spring set in and brought new life
But summer brings the shields of old*

*Our island is a jewel a gleam
Hidden in the waves unseen
Threatened by the Outsiders
Our precious Siorraidh Eilean*

*We struggled for so many years
To bring together far and near
Our fae ancestors together
And find our purpose true and clear*

*The chosen two, a girl and boy,
Of two separate tribes but united in joy
Conquered trials so perilous
And found the spirit as envoys*

They knelt before the powerful being

*And reverently they started to sing
They asked for safety and for peace
For her to yearly bring*

*“Stand young ones, no need to kneel,
No hate in your hearts do I feel.
Light fire on each summer’s step
So I know your promises are kept.”*

*“Keep my flora green,” She said.
“Promise to see my fauna fed
Care for each other, no matter the cost
And see that all love is evenly spread”*

*The children returned to their mothers and fathers
They worked hard to see this gift not squandered
No harm will come to any on here
As long as Beltane is yearly honored*

The song grew louder and louder until the ground was vibrating. A young male earth fairy, covered in mud but wearing a simple suit, stepped out of the crowd. Another young fairy girl, a fire fairy, also stepped forth and took his hand. He held a torch out to her. She scrunched her eyes in concentration and a small flame appeared in her free hand. She used the flame to light the torch, and the two of them walked up to the edge of the bonfire.

As the boy knelt down to light the bonfire, there was an enormous roar that sent pain through the fairies’ ears. From over the treetops a dragon came crashing into the village sending houses flying. The dragon’s pitch black scales reflected the moonlight, and ugly grey smoke rose from his snout.

Now, only a few dragons lived on Siorraidh Eilean, but all were close with the queen. Lucillia provided the dragons with shelter and food, and in return the dragons used their incredible intelligence and magic to craft fantastic items that almost everyone on the island used. The craft-dragons could create plows that would make plants grow in a day, candles that would burn for a year, shields that could stop a cannonball, and so much more. Every fairy benefitted from the queen’s relationship with the dragons in one way or another.

“Arturin! What are you doing? What is wrong?” cried Queen Lucillia to the black dragon. “Stop! You are going to hurt someone!”

Arturin didn’t reply; he only roared again and stumbled further into the village. Each step he took destroyed more of the tiny village. The queen could sense that something was wrong with Arturin, but she could not figure out what was causing him to act like this.

The queen's guards pushed Lucillia back and away from danger. Each one made a symbol with their hands and grew to be over 6 feet tall. They moved carefully towards the dragon Arturin, but before they could get close, three ogres also crashed into the clearing.

Normally, ogres remained in the furthest, most secluded parts of the island's mountains. They were shy creatures who feared everything magical, but were never violent towards it. Most fairies had never seen an ogre, and a few weren't sure they existed. Those few quickly realized how wrong they were when they met the ogres wreaking havoc at the festival.

The three ogres yelled in pain and clutched their heads as they staggered around. The largest one fell to the ground and rolled around. His enormous tusks snagged on the bushes and ripped them out of the ground. The other two continued to swipe blindly at everything in front of them.

Other guards also used their magic to instantly grow to the size of an adult human, but they struggled to contain the ogres and dragons. Some used ropes and nets to restrain the intruders and others worked to gather the other fairies up to help them escape.

The village was in chaos. Fairies fled in every direction just trying to get away from the dragon and the ogres. Most fairies spread their wings and took off flying. Some fairies, like the water fairies, had wings that did not work well for flight in the air, so they simply grew to full size and ran as fast as they could. In all of the chaos, the queen disappeared, and most fairies simply assumed the guards had taken her somewhere safe.

When the fairies that flew into the air looked back over their shoulders they saw destruction. It wasn't just the village where the Beltane festival was taking place. The whole island had large figures rampaging and destroying everything. Smoke began to blacken the sky as several villages caught fire. The fairies' home was in ruins.

Lucillia awoke surrounded by total darkness. She tried to spread her wings and shed some light, but she found they were covered and tied against her back with heavy chains. She waited patiently, and eventually her eyes adjusted. As a star fairy she had very good night vision.

The queen stood up and looked around. She was in an underground cavern surrounded by wet stone that smelled of mildew. Behind her was a dead end, and in front of her were metal bars that blocked her way. She tugged on the bars to see if any were loose, but deep in her heart she knew escape wouldn't be that easy.

As the queen of Siorraidh Eilean, Lucillia's magical powers were amplified beyond that of a normal star fairy. A normal star fairy could look at the world through the eyes of the stars themselves. Lucillia could use their light to project herself anywhere on the island. She sat down, closed her eyes, and began humming while making her fingers dance through a series of shapes.

She quickly realized something was wrong. Her magic was draining her energy at an alarming rate. She could feel the power of the island being cut off from her, so she wouldn't be able to maintain her spell for more than a few minutes.

With all her effort, she used the last of her power and looked out through the stars and saw a boat with two humans, a girl and a boy, floating near the island.

"Humans!" she thought to herself excitedly, "with all the fairies scattered, and my most of my power gone, they may be the only ones who can help us now!"

She knew their ship needed to be closer to see the island, so she made the starlight solid and stepped onto their deck. If anyone had been there that night, they would have seen the elegant queen, six feet tall, made of a ghostly sparkling glitter. She untied the anchors, let down the sails, and guided their ship gently towards the island.

Once they were in view of the island, Lucillia released the spell and collapsed back in her jail cell in exhaustion. She would need many hours of sleep to recover enough energy to perform that spell again.

Charli Jade looked out over the calm waters of the ocean from the edge of her boat and daydreamed of adventure. She and her brother had sailed their small wooden ship almost nonstop for several days after getting caught in a storm. She was exhausted, but needed a moment to enjoy the calm ocean before eventually going to sleep in a hammock below deck.

"If you aren't careful, you're going to fall overboard." Colton finished tying one of the sails down before walking over to his sister. "Go get some sleep, you look terrible," he said with a bit of a laugh.

Even though Colton was two years younger than her, he acted like an older brother, always looking out for her. Charli yawned and replied playfully, "at least I'll look better in the morning; your ugly face will still be the same." They both laughed and then worked together to lower the anchor so their boat wouldn't drift off while they slept.

Once they were sure everything was secure, they each retreated to their quarters to get some much needed rest.

The next morning Colton was rudely awoken by Charli's shouting from the top deck. She was normally up before him, as she was always anxious to get the most out of a day, but she usually let him sleep in. Colton tended to stay up late pouring over maps and books, trying to plan as far ahead as possible.

"Colton! Get up here! Now!" Charli Jade squinted her eyes as she looked past the sunrise.

Groggily, Colton walked towards her, rubbing his eyes. "What do you want? I wasn't done sleeping."

“Look,” Charli pointed towards a large island directly in front of the boat. “I don’t remember that being there. Raise anchors, and let’s go!”

A nervous look crept onto Colton’s face. “Where’s the anchor? Why is that rope untied? Something’s wrong. I think we drifted in the night.” He began running around the deck checking knots and ropes and sails. He then ran into the cabin on the back of the deck and came back with a map and compass.

“Here is where we should be.” Colton pointed at an empty area of the map where there was only ocean. “Here is the nearest land mass.” He pointed at a continent hundreds of miles away. “There is no island according to the map. I don’t like this. We should mark where it is, and then go get other people to explore it with us. We don’t have the right gear. We aren’t prepared.” He started to rattle off more concerns, but Charli cut him off.

“We just found a completely undiscovered island, and you want to mark where it is and leave? Are you crazy? We need to go explore it! Maybe there’s even buried treasure!” Charli’s mind raced with all of the possibilities of adventure on the mysterious island in front of them. She didn’t even wait for a response from Colton; she just clambered up to the crow’s nest with a spyglass in hand.

“There’s smoke!” she called down.

“We should really go and get help...” Colton trailed off.

Charli yelled back, “What if they need help right now? We can’t wait. Man the wheel and I’ll navigate. Let’s go!”

Colton sighed knowing that arguing with his sister was useless sometimes. He grabbed the wheel of the ship and steered it towards the nearest shore of the island.

When they reached the shore Charli was the first to jump out of the boat into the cool surf. She landed a little bit off balance and fell face first into the water. She quickly pulled herself up and shook her head to get the water out of her blond curly hair.

She grabbed a rope and pulled the boat as much onto the sand as she could. She knew now that their anchor was gone they couldn’t trust the ship not to float off if they left it in the water.

Colton joined her a minute later with an oversized backpack strapped to his back. It had a sleeping roll, a shovel, three water bottles, and twenty other tools tied onto the outside. He could barely walk under its weight.

Charli rolled her eyes. “Thank goodness you have all that gear, now I don’t need to worry about anything.”

“You are correct, it is a good thing I have all my gear. I also have a towel in here. It looks like you fell in the water on your way to find buried treasure. Do you want it?” Colton folded his thin arms across his chest and raised his eyebrows at her.

“I was just trying to cool off,” Charli jumped back into the water and splashed around. “Anyways, I don’t want to wait an hour for you to dig it out of your pack and then another hour for you to put it back.”

Colton just shrugged.

“Wait, stop splashing. Did you hear that?” Colton cupped a hand and put it up to his ear. “I think it’s coming from a little further around the beach, past that boulder.

The two of them cautiously made their way to the boulder and peeked around the edge.

They saw two figures, no more than six inches tall, who looked a little like people. One had glittering blue skin, webbed fingers, gills on her neck, and hair that looked like seaweed. She had her face buried in her arms and was sobbing. The other person had tan skin and wore what looked like an old pirate outfit. She also had simple wings that stuck straight out from her back. The top edge of each wing looked like a razor-sharp cutlass. She had gold earrings on her pointed ears, and had her hand resting on the back of the blue person. She wasn’t crying, but she looked both angry and exhausted.

Colton tried to grab Charli’s arm as she stepped out from their hiding place behind the boulder, but he was too slow.

The person who looked like a pirate jumped up and started moving her fingers in weird shapes. All of a sudden, she grew to be a head taller than Charli, and she flicked her sharp wings out in front of her.

Charli froze, but saw the pirate wasn’t coming any closer.

“We aren’t here to hurt you,” Charli called out with her hand held up to show she was unarmed. “I’m Charli Jade, but most people call me Charli, and that scaredy-cat behind the rock is my brother Colton.”

The pirate person didn’t relax, and kept her sharp wings at the ready. “Did you cause the attack? Why are you here? Speak!”

“There was an attack?” Colton cautiously joined his sister at her side. “Our anchor broke off and we drifted near here by accident.”

“Yeah, and we saw smoke so we came to see if anyone needed help,” Charli added, leaving out the part about her wanting to look for buried treasure. “Are you OK? What’s your name? And I’m sorry if this is rude, but what are you?”

In all of the chaos, nobody noticed as the sands swirled off the beach and formed the shape of Queen Lucillia. She looked even more haggard than when she used her power to project herself onto Charli’s and Colton’s ship.

“Please, all of you be calm. I don’t have long, and I shall need all of your help.”

It took a moment for the two fairies to recognize their queen, but as soon as they did they kneeled in respect.

“Queen Lucilia! Where are you? How did this happen?” the beautiful blue fairy asked.

“There will be time for questions later. For now, all you need to know is that I have been imprisoned on the island and my connection to the island has been destroyed. Now listen closely. Young ones,” she turned to face Charli and Colton, “I need you to take my subjects to another island to the east. There you will be safe. Once you have found the island, return and help ferry the rest of my Fae to the new island. I fear our beloved Siorraidh Eilean is no longer safe. I can no longer heal or protect it.”

The queen fell to her knees and started breathing heavily, clearly about to faint.

“My Queen, where are you? We need to rescue you as soon as possible!” the pirate fairy cried out.

“I fear I do not know. Regardless, it is unimportant. I order you to help everyone else first. Only once you are sure everyone else is safe may you even consider my rescue. Now go!”

With that the figure of Lucillia collapsed back into a pile of sand.

All who remained were speechless. The pirate was the first to move.

She relaxed and her wings retracted back into her back. She took off her black triangular hat and bowed low and with a flourish.

“I am Fiona, fairy of the pirate variety, and my friend is Faith, a water fairy. So you two are sailors, eh? I am too. Or at least, I was until the ogres destroyed my ship. I imagine that is why Lucillia brought you here, because you have a boat”

The water fairy Faith also made hand gestures and grew, although she wasn’t as tall as Fiona. She wiped the tears from her eyes.

“And to answer your earlier question, yes, we were attacked. Now we have no home. We didn’t even have a chance to light the bonfire and get the blessings of protection from the island’s spirit.” Faith looked like she was about to cry again, but she stopped herself.

“We need to find our queen. She can help us restore the island.” Fiona put a hand on Faith’s shoulder.

“No! We must obey her orders,” Faith objected. “We need to get everyone to safety and then I promise we will go find our queen.”

Fiona looked like she was about to say something, but Faith simply shook her head, so she stopped.

Charli looked back at Colton, who nodded his head. “We would be happy to take you on board, as long as you help us sail and navigate, but is there anyone else here who needs help right now?”

Faith shook her head and said, "No, I think everyone is safe for now. I have been talking to other fairies across the island, and everyone has gathered and just needs somewhere to go, somewhere off this island. Most of us can fly or swim, but it is exhausting to go for long distances so we need to give them a specific location."

Charli held out her hand, "Then we have a plan! We will find the island, and get its location back to everyone here so they can join us there."

Fiona grabbed Charli's hand and shook it firmly. "Aye aye, captain. When shall we set off?"

"We need to leave now. We need to get these people, I mean fairies, to safety as soon as possible," Charli stated with a determined look in her eye.

So the party of four loaded up their gear onto the ship and set sail east in hopes of finding the fairy queen and a new island for fairies of Siorraidh Eilean. Fiona worked the rigging on the sails and Faith swam gracefully around the ship and guided them through the more treacherous waters. They knew it would be a difficult journey, but they were confident that they would succeed.