

A lush, magical forest scene with tall, moss-covered trees. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a soft, ethereal glow. In the foreground, a large tree trunk has a glowing, golden, oval-shaped hollow that serves as a portal. Small, glowing particles or fairies are scattered throughout the forest floor and around the hollow. The overall atmosphere is dreamlike and mysterious.

Call To The Faeries

by Ellie

A young woman unexpectedly goes missing
into another realm.

One

The park was pretty empty at this time of day, the late afternoon that is. It was a little too quiet. Only a few birds could be heard, accompanied by the crunching of leaves underneath Tabitha's black converse shoes as she walked the all-too familiar pathways. She had travelled many times before. Her destination was pretty clear in her mind, she was headed to her best friend's house and this was the fastest route that she had found from her place to theirs.

There were only a few more minutes left to walk. All she had to do was take a right at the fountain up ahead and she would almost be on her friend, Ezra's street. But yet, why did she have a sudden sense to turn left into the shrubbery and gardens nearby? As if something was urging her to go through that way. Tabitha shook her head, forcing herself to direct her gaze away from the

plants. She needed to ignore her curiosity right now, it was distracting enough and she had to hurry on ahead. Her friend was surely waiting for her to arrive. Although, it was as if Tabitha's feet had a mind of their own, and the brunette felt herself be carried off the path and into the direction she hadn't wanted to go.

Tabitha slowly pushed through the plants from the fairly large garden beds, no idea what she was intending to find by going through this way. Perhaps, she was exploring that odd sound that had rather peaked her interest once she heard it, only moments before. A sound so vividly out of place in this world. It sounded like swords unsheathing and clashing against each other. Which there was a chance it could be from a group of cosplayers mimicking fight scenes, however at this time of night? very unlikely. This noise was so obviously intriguing and it bugged Tabitha so much that she'd all of a sudden tripped and lost her footing in the uneven ground. Not long after, her body came toppling down after her and towards the oncoming obstacle before her. Which in this case were a tree that so happened to be located nearby.

Tabitha tried, she really tried to catch herself before she even fell. However, it was too late and she was already on the ground. Her left hand had accidentally caught onto a tree root that sat just underneath her. While in a haste to pick herself up back to her feet, she hadn't seemed to notice how the root sunk into the grassy flooring below and in turn seemed to allow the tree's trunk to open up wide. Tabitha's gaze looked up briefly, her hazel eyes scanning the now particle-enthused opening before her. How was this possible? she had zero clue, but it was happening and it terrified her. By this time, she was almost fully standing again. Yet once again, her foot had got caught on something and she was sent tumbling down, right towards the portal that was now glowing a bright blue as she came nearer. Till eventually, she went through, head-first. The widened trunk closed in behind her, as the final part of the brunette's body disappeared, with the tree shrinking back down to its original size. The area of the park returned back to its undisturbed state, and if you hadn't been there

only moments previously, you wouldn't have even known a girl had even been there.

~~~~

Where was she? Ezra was confused, they had yet to see Tabitha. She hadn't arrived yet. It had been an hour and there was still no sign of their best friend. The recently-dyed blonde was now starting to get worried, as it had never really taken this long for the brunette to get to their home before. The shortcut between both their houses and through the park which was situated right near Ezra's street, should have only taken around fifteen minutes maximum to walk through. So where the hell was she?

Ezra irritatingly stared up at the clock that sat above their TV, their hand inching towards their phone and house keys. They watched the clock's hands tick by each number, ever-so-slowly. The blonde decided that they'd only wait a few minutes longer, and if Tabitha still refused to show her face. Then it would be best to go

find her. Surely, Tabitha wouldn't have gotten into too much trouble? Would she? Ezra would have liked to think that the brunette would at least call or text if she'd changed her mind or had to cancel their plans about coming to see them. But as Ezra checked her phone once more, there was still nothing, no texts or anything. Well, except the few messages that they had sent themselves to Tabitha's phone, only asking where she was or how much longer she'd be. Not even a small sign, that signalled she'd even read them.

Eventually, after what felt-like a painstakingly long time of waiting for nobody to show, and that had been spent with Ezra glaring up at the clock annoyed. Ezra moved, they quickly bent down and pulled on their own pair of converse, fastening the laces right after. Then they stood up tall again, tightening their grip around their phone and house keys, and almost sprinted out the front door. Their sights set on hurrying to the park in order to find Tabitha, considering it was now around 5:15pm and they definitely didn't want to spend too much time trying to

find the brunette. Hopefully, it wouldn't take that long too and they'd be able to find her easily.

Ezra made it into the park. Their blue eyes scan their surroundings carefully, paying attention to each little detail that they see. They couldn't find anything out of the ordinary though. It looked the same as it always did, same trees, same plants, same playground and pathways. The blonde tried to fight back the nervousness that began to slowly increase inside them. They hoped nothing horribly wrong had happened to Tabitha. She couldn't be dead, could she? No. Ezra shook away those worrisome thoughts from their mind. They had to be alive still, there was simply no way that something like death or kidnapping would have come to their best friend, in the past hour or so that is. Ezra needed to make sure that Tabitha was okay, and they needed to find her. Then this entire thing could be left back into the past. Maybe, when the brunette was found the both of them would laugh about this whole fiasco later on. That's what Ezra was hoping for anyway.



"Tabitha!" Ezra called, hands cupped up around their mouth in an attempt to get more volume to their voice. The worry continued to showcase their features, they were becoming desperate. Where was she? A million questions running through the blonde's mind of the whereabouts of their best friend.

Phone was clutched in the palm of their hand, fingers encasing themselves around the slightly-cracked screen. Ezra shivered, the familiar feeling of goosebumps covering both of their arms. They should have really taken the opportunity to grab a jacket at home before leaving, as it was freezing right now in this cold night air. Yet, Ezra was determined. They'd walk till their fingertips became blue if they could. In their mind, a little bit of cold was worth it so that they could potentially find the missing brunette girl.

"Tabitha! Where are you?" Ezra tried once more, a hint of desperation heard in that of their voice, when the words left their lips. It was around 5:55pm and the blonde had been out searching for almost an hour now.

Though, as they walked those now deserted pathways of the local park, only being dimly lit up by the few park lights that were situated throughout. Ezra felt like they were slowly losing hope.

If Tabitha wasn't to be found today, then would she ever be found? Ezra really hoped that their best friend wouldn't turn out like all of those previous victims of murder or kidnapping. Hopefully, she wouldn't be traumatised *when* she returned. Not *if*, as Ezra still refused to acknowledge the chances that Tabitha could be gone forever. That she could be dead. They bit their lip and attempted to suppress their sobs that threaten to exit their system. *Don't cry. Don't cry. Don't cry.* They scolded themselves mentally. *You're going to find her, she's not dead.*

Ezra stopped walking, their footsteps coming to an abrupt halt. They turned their head to the side slightly, confusion now beginning to appear on their features. Which overtook the previous sadness and hopelessness that they'd been feeling. What was that? Were they

imagining things? The blonde shook their head quickly. No way! Ezra was sure that they were the only one visiting the park at this hour of night.

Ezra turned their head to the other side now, still pretty unsure about whether or not they were just hearing things. They slowly moved their feet in the direction in which they had thought they'd heard noises. Their grip that was still held around their phone, tightened slightly as they brought it up towards their ear. Maybe, if they tried calling Tabitha's phone again, she would answer. Maybe, she *was* just busy and that Ezra was just overreacting for no reason.

The blonde waited as their phone continued to ring, Tabitha's contact displayed across the front of the screen in bold letters. *Come on, pick up. Please.* They mumbled under their breath in desperation.

"Hey, you've reached Tabitha. I'm busy right now, call again later thanks." The voicemail suddenly sounded out

loudly, signalling that the brunette was definitely not there still.

Ezra felt like their heart had plummeted straight into their chest. The realisation that this whole situation wasn't a dream, or a nightmare finally kicked in. This mess was reality.

## Two

The kingdom of Flora was located deep within the Dark Woods. In an entire realm that was separate from the humans. A realm known for their *currently* unstable magic, and that continues to house various species of fae, faeries, and elven folk.

A large lake spread out over acres of land, with the castle standing tall and proud a little further from this lake and amidst the kingdom's town square. The grounds were practically littered with dozens of faeries and elves, bustling in and out from between mediaeval market

stalls. Wings glistened and sparkled in the beaming sunlight of the formers' backs. The commoners focussed on their daily tasks, which included purchasing or selling of bare necessities.

Amongst this lively crowd, a young woman sat with her legs in a cross-legged position against the stone rim of a nearby fountain. That of which this fountain sat just out front of the staircase which led to the royal castle. Her wings were shimmering and transparent in a beautiful shade of light purple, situated in the middle of her back. She had short, chin-length hair in a shade of ebony black, that was tucked neatly back behind her ears.

A leather-bound book resting gently between the palms of her hands, with a small label of 'Magical Plants & Creatures' was scrawled across the front of it.. The girl, Maeve, allowed a smile to rest on her tanned features as she engrossed herself in the different species of nature contained. She always loved how at peace she felt when reading. She knew she could rely on her books, to distract herself from the outside world.

"Maeve!"

The young woman's head lifted in sudden confusion, her gaze locked onto what had caught her attention. Her head also turned slightly to the left, as she spotted a small figure emerging from the townsfolk, after being careful not to shove into anyone going about their day. This figure was the one who had previously called Maeve's name. Quickly standing to her feet, the book Maeve had been reading, now sat long forgotten and discarded upon the ground beside her.

"What's wrong Lilah?" The older girl questioned, her concern was evident on her features. She bent down, adjusting her positioning so that she now stood at her younger sister, Lilah's height. Or close to it.

Maeve watched as Lilah's face became more tearful with every word that would soon slip out from her lips, her smaller hands coming up to wipe away any stray tears that had fallen. Something bad must have happened if it brought her sister close to tears. As she knew that Lilah

rarely cries, not even when she hurts herself. Maeve can't seem to remember the last time that the younger one even shed a tear, if she were to be honest.

"Cyrus and Milo are fighting again. With swords and everything." Lilah choked out, her green eyes only becoming puffier. Her eyes which matched both her older sister & mother's, in colour.

*Shit. That was never a good sign.* It was a common occurrence for the two boys, they'd been frenemies ever since they had known each other. Always finding little things to fight over. But it never led to drawing weapons or swords in particular. Maeve did know how close Lilah was to both Cyrus *and* Milo, she knew how much it bothered the younger girl when the two fought. And she knew that the brunette saw the boys as older brother figures, it was quite obvious that she did. Hell, Maeve used to think that her sister wanted her to end up with one of them. She didn't plan to though, Maeve loved them both platonically.

"Take me to them." The older girl didn't even hesitate to say. Lilah nodding slowly in response, she took Maeve's larger hand in her own. Maeve followed shortly after, as the younger girl spun on her heel to head back the way she had come at a fast pace. The ebony-haired girl thought she'd trip and fall face first with the speed that they ran, but she managed to keep herself upright to prevent that from happening.

Both Lilah and Maeve, their hands still interlocked tightly so they didn't lose each other in the bustling crowd, kept running till they reached just outside the kingdom's entrance. The tall metal gates that were there to keep out intruders, now sat behind them. The few fae that were stationed at their posts outside, were too busy to even notice the two girls exiting and rushing past them. The two soon slowed down, although only for a brief moment. Which allowed for Maeve an attempt at trying to figure out where they were headed.

She turned her head to her sister, who was taking a quick minute in order to catch her breath. Though, the brunette



eventually caught and returned her sister's stare. Lilah didn't speak then, she hadn't needed to. As she could hear the faint sounds of rough clashing metal-upon-metal. A sword fight. The shorter girl tugged harshly onto their intertwined hands which kept the taller one's gaze locked to her. Lilah gestured with her free hand, towards the direction of where the noises were coming from. Maeve nodding, with understanding and the two girls breaking back out into a run.

The sandals which sat comfortably upon their feet collided with the cobblestoned path that dragged onwards through the forest, which consisted of both tall and thick trunked oak trees. A fresh earthy scent lingered in the air, as the two girls' steps continued. The sword fighting became louder as they entered further.

~~~

Maeve pushed through the bushes and tree branches that obscured her view from the clearing, that of which both Cyrus and Milo both fought in. She turned her head back

briefly, her gaze locked onto and watching as Lilah made it through after her. The afternoon sun is still shining down upon them from the sky. With brightened rays acting as spotlights as if on a stage, lighting up the darkened clearing. The black-haired girl moving closer now to the source of the clashing, her feet almost stumbling over a fairly large tree log which lay along the grassy field. Luckily, she had managed to steady herself in order to stop herself from actually falling.

"Cyrus!"

"Milo!"

Maeve tried her very best to gain the attention of the two boys, with a basic call or more-like yell of their names. Although, with no such luck. Both Cyrus and Milo were too engrossed into their fierce movements. Cyrus, who was a fairly tall elf that stood at around approximately six feet, his blonde hair was short atop his head with the front strands falling upon his forehead. And Milo, who only stood at about five feet eight so not that much taller

than Maeve herself, his own hair was also a similar length to the other boy but it was a shade of black, though the end tips dyed a deep red. The two boys failed to notice the two girls now joining them nearby. Audible grunts of anger could be heard loudly exiting their lips. They were looking to kill, to physically and seriously harm one another at least. Maeve was certainly correct with her thoughts before, this was pretty bad.

Truthfully, Maeve had zero clue on what to do. How to catch the attention of the young men engulfed in their own fury, and sparring only a few feet away from her sister and herself. She had thought at first that they would respond by Maeve calling their names. That usually worked all the previous, and less-harmful times that they fought. But the black-haired girl knew this was going to be a lot trickier and more difficult. She picked at the ends of her fingernails, the dark-green colour she had painted them a few days previously now chipping a bit. Her gaze switched to that of the sandals that still remained on her feet. Why did today have to be the day that the boys tried to kill each other?

Maeve peeked up again, her eyes suddenly widening largely at the sight of her younger sister rushing forward as if she were on a mission. Noticing how she was heading right into the direction of Cyrus and Milo. Maeve took a step forward herself, extending out her left arm to hopefully grab a hold of her Lilah to stop her. Yet, Lilah was just out of reach of her older sister's grip, her shorter figure now having reached the two boys.

Maeve inhaled deeply, shutting her eyes tightly and braced for the oncoming impact which was to suddenly become of her sister. She waited for the sudden scream of pain, of her sister being stabbed. Although, nothing had followed. No noise was heard. It was so eerily silent, too silent. Until, a loud high-pitched yell echoed through the entirety of the clearing or possibly throughout the entire woods. The birds which had previously taken up residence upon the tree branches, now flying off in a hurry from the sudden disturbance of noise.

Maeve's eyes snapped back open, her heart practically falling into her chest as she had assumed that it had belonged to Lilah. Despite the sudden yell not sounding anything like her at all. She ran, almost sprinted over to the source of the screams. Her green eyes landed on where she had expected a crumpled version of her sister, with a sword situated right through her stomach and blood seeping through the shirt she was wearing. But in reality, there was no blood. No impaled sword through Lilah. Instead, Maeve allowed the surprise to overtake her features alongside a mix of confusion.

As there on the ground, right at the feet of the four was a figure, who now lay in a state of unconsciousness. A young woman that Maeve notices appears to be around the same age as her. A wave of realisation suddenly and briefly washed over, once she realised that both Cyrus and Milo had stopped fighting. Their swords having been hurriedly dropped and discarded in the grass behind them. The two alongside Lilah, now held identical faces of bewilderment at the sight of the girl. Maeve adjusted

her footing, continuing to look down at the girl below them.

"Who the hell is that?" Cyrus asked suddenly, to cut through the thick silence that had once lingered in the clearing.

To be continued...

A young woman must figure out how to return back home after being found rather abruptly in another realm by faeries and elves.