

Kassie and the Fairy Ring

By Kathryn Gailey

The hall rumbled and the domed ceiling cracked, the sound echoed down the hallways. Kassie and Harmonia shared a look.

"Was that—" Kassie started.

The glass ceiling shattered and the pair were knocked back at the force of the blast. Harmonia scrambled to Kassie's side covering them both with her cloak as the colorful glass rained down.

A foggy darkness oozed through the skeletal ceiling and the civilians scattered. The blackness settled on the opposite side of the circular room in a shadowy human-like form.

Harmonia stood, keeping Kassie behind her and out of sight. "You have no place here."

The darkness expanded ever so slightly. "My place," a voice rippled through the shadows "is everywhere. You know my task, and what I've come to collect, don't stand in my way." The wiard's voice was smooth and without worry, no fear, just action.

Harmonia's hand found Kassie's and the leaf scroll was placed in hers. Kassie took it with a sweaty palm.

"You told me this before and I gave you my answer then, it hasn't changed," Harmonia said, keeping an eye on the ever growing blackness. They would be trapped soon.

"Of course not, you fairies are so stuck in your ways."

"Harmonia grabbed Kassie's jacket sleeve and yanked it harshly in the direction of the nearest tunnel. The room was full of these passageways all leading to different parts of the fairy city, but now with the shadows growing there were only a few left accessible.

Harmonia must want her to make a run for it, but how? What would the signal be, how would she-

"I think of it as tradition," said Harmonia.

"Traditions are a dying fad you should really try to keep up to date, oh wait you can't." That voice projected from the center of the fog, Kassie could slip out if she had a distraction to cover her movement from behind Harmonia's back.

"Traditions will stand as long as there are people who believe in them."

The wooden skeleton of the ceiling was still intact, like a solid web with a chandelier hanging from the center ring, it was dangling by a single chord. The other ropes must have been damaged in the explosion.

"Belif is a dying art," the wizard said. "What was once beautiful will now wither away like flowers in a vase. Everything has an expiration date."

"Including you!" Harmonia threw her dagger into the rigging rope of the chandelier, and Kassie ran in the opposite direction.

She ran down the dark passage and didn't slow down not even for a second. The hallway was lit by candles but there was no end in sight. All the same Kassie trusted Harmonia, she had to. What choice did she have?

Man, Kassie had never run this fast before not even in gym. She sucked at gym, but adrenaline is a funny thing, it makes even the scraggliest of people capable of the inhuman.

A deep laugh bounced off the passage walls and a strong wind followed it causing the candles to be snuffed out. Kassie was consumed by darkness.

"Give me the map human," the smooth voice called, it taunted and teased as if this were a game.

And when her knees were starting to wobble and feel unhinged, a dot appeared. Just a tiny dot of light, the end of the tunnel was in sight. (As if Kassie didn't have enough incentive to keep running.) The dot grew incredibly fast, whether it was because of some trippy fairy magic or just that it was a deceivingly short hallway, Kassie didn't know. But when she got close to the exit with its bright piercing sunlight the wizard had caught up and his oozing darkness surrounded her blocking her path.

"There's nowhere to--"

Kassie didn't have time to slow down, she couldn't seem to stop her legs in time. They just kept moving on their own, all numb and unaware of their stupidity. Kassie's stupid legs sent her straight through the wall of black.

"-run," the wizard finished.

But Kassie wasn't listening she kept running and ducked into a nearby building. It was a barn of some sort and she peaked through the cracked doors and watched as the Wizard's shadowy form searched in the wrong direction.

Kassie let out a huff of air and turned around and looked over the area before her.

She was in the rabbit stables. From what Harmonia had told her, Kassie gathered rabbits were a preferred form of transportation for larger groups. Fairies often had trouble staying together when traveling with three or more, some fly faster than others and some aren't as good at dodging branches.

Kassie secured the leaf scroll in her pocket and grabbed a wooden pitch fork from beside the door.

She ventured farther into the barn, pitch fork at the ready. Kassie had no experience with pointy objects but she was determined, regardless of the fact that she didn't know what she was doing.

Her feet crunched softly on the hay as she tiptoed and peaked around each stall but all she saw was either rabbits or nothing. No fairies seem to be here and no surprise wizards either.

Kassie sat down on a bale of hay and finally took the time to think. About what? She didn't know yet.

So much had happened in the last hour alone. And yet she hadn't died and for that Kassie would tip her hat to herself.

But what would she do now? Before her laid an epic quest to save The Fairy's Ring and stop hate from consuming the fairy world. She had the map and everything! Well, except for her guide. Kassie didn't want to think about the state Harmonia was probably in, but even so Kassie was worried for the Guardian.

But there's no use in stressing. Not when an evil wizard could find her at any moment.

Kassie stood up and looked around the barn. She had some rope, three rabbits and a pitch fork.

Oh interesting. Kassie had a plan, a good one at that.

Distract and evade was the name of the game and Kassie was ready to play it.