

## The Secret Fairy Adventure

Theodore and Harper were best friends, they were inseparable, both ten years old, lived in the same neighborhood, and shared a curious love for adventures. Every Saturday, they met at Willowbend Park, a sun-kissed oasis filled with ancient trees, grassy hills and their favorite spot: the gnarled oak by the duck pond, where they sat for a picnic of an afternoon. This particular Saturday, the air held a strange hum, like the day itself was whispering secrets. Just as the children approached the tree, they noticed something strange, it stood quiet, its twisted roots tangled in mystery. As the two friends approached, Harper gasped.

"Theo... do you see that?" she whispered. Embedded in the trunk was a small wooden door, with ornate carvings of vines and wings. They were shocked, the door wasn't there last week. Theodore leaned in. "It's got a handle. Should we...?"

Harper couldn't wait, she turned the brass knob and the door swung open. With a soft creak, they smelt a whiff of sunshine and cinnamon. Inside was a swirling golden mist, before they could reconsider, the mist pulled them forward and just like that, the two children vanished into the oak tree.

They tumbled out onto a path lined with glowing mushrooms and bright, colourful flowers. Above them, the sky shimmered purple and light pink. The cotton-candy clouds drifted lazily past twinkling stars. As the two curious children entered, they read a colourful sign:

### **Welcome to Glitterglen — Where Dreams Tiptoe!**

Tiny winged creatures darted about, tending to gardens of singing tulips and whispering ferns. Cobblestone cottages sparkled with fairy dust, and laughter echoed from somewhere nearby. "This is... unbelievable" Harper breathed. "It's like stepping into a dream," Theodore agreed.

A miniature postman fairy zipped past them and waved kindly, his satchel spilling out letters across the village. Another fairy floated down, with sparkling footsteps, carrying a tray of cookies and politely offered them one each. They couldn't say no, they tasted magical and were the most delicious cookies they had ever tasted. They felt like they were in cookie heaven.

But when Harper turned around, the wooden door was gone. The tree that they had emerged from was just an ordinary tree — no handle, no carvings. “How do we go home?” Harper asked, her voice suddenly small, slightly panicked.

A nearby colourful fairy overheard, she hovered closer, whispering “You must find Elara the Garden Gate Keybearer, she guards the Gate of Return, but she wanders... She hasn't been seen in weeks“.

“Where do we start looking?” Theodore asked scaredly and with wide eyes he began looking around where she could be. “Go wherever the wind sings and the wild things giggle. You'll know” whispered the fairy.

Harper and Theodore set off through Glitterglen, past candy-colored bridges and upside-down waterfalls. The meadows beyond the village were covered in soft rainbow grass. As the fairy had hinted, the wind truly sang here, low and harmonic like a lullaby. Even though the children were beginning to get a little worried, they couldn't help but notice how beautiful and magical their surroundings were.

Harper chased a talking ladybug, while Theodore ran after a fairy leaving a golden fairy dust trail. Eventually, a group of dancing dandelions began spinning in circles, forming words with their seeds: “Theo, do you see that, dancing dandelions, my favourite...wait, we need to read the words:

**Seek the mirror stream. The truth will be revealed. She will come out as a beam.**

And just like that, they had a new destination. “Mirror Stream, here we come!” Theo says excitedly and runs towards the sound of the stream.

They reached the stream just as the sky began glowing orange. The stream glistening, reflecting everything above like a polished gem. Theodore leaned over and suddenly gasped. From the depths of the water, a figure floated upward. She was tall with robes of silver leaves and a crown made of petals. Her wings glittered like dewdrops.

“Elara, is that you!” Harper smiled, mesmerised with disbelief. “You seek the gate, don’t you?” Elara’s voice sung harmoniously. “Yes!” Harper cried. “We need to go home!” Elara floated closer, her eyes shimmering. “Before I give you the key, you must answer me this: What did you find in Glitterglen that did not belong to you?” The two children looked at each other in panic. “We... we ate a cookie,” Theodore admitted. Elara smiled. “That’s ok, it was given to you, was there anything else?” Harper frowned. “We saw a bird trapped in a cage. We let it out!” The Garden Keybearer beamed. “Compassion. That is the true key.” From her robes, she pulled out a small acorn-shaped key that shimmered with rainbow light. “This unlocks the Gate of Return. But beware — the gate will also question you before opening.”

They raced back through the meadows, down spiral paths and through tunnels lined with whispering ivy. The Garden Gate stood tucked between two rosebushes that hummed lullabies. The gate was covered in carvings of eyes, dozens of them, closed.

“Come on Theo, watch this!” Harper placed the key through the keyhole with hope. As Elara’s key clicked into the gate’s lock, the eyes slowly opened. “We did it!” The two children both shouted. Suddenly a voice echoed from the archway “Have you learned what makes a world magical?” Harper confidently replied “Kindness, adventure and friendship.”

Theodore added, “And bravery, even when you’re scared.” There was a pause.....then with a flash of golden light, the gate opened.

As they walked through the gate, blinking in the sunlight, there stood their favourite old oak tree, no magical door, just an ordinary tree. But something within them had changed. They carried fairy dust in their hair, songs in their hearts, unimaginable memories and an unbreakable bond forged by magic.

From that day on, whenever the wind sang at Willowbend, they listened, reminiscing.

Somewhere, deep inside the bark of that ancient tree, Glitterglen waited — and kindness would always be the key!