

Glimpses of CELTELLINA
—and the Wonder Hill Orb—

There are secrets and mysteries imbedded in these tales, that the wise hearted with alert minds just might decipher.

BOOK 2

CHILDREN OF THE WIND

The wind was swirling and flowing around Celtellina as she stood leaning against the tallest tree in the forest. It was her favourite place to hide. Her brother Roden would find her soon enough. After counting for what had seemed like an eternity, the hunt had begun. He couldn't just look till he saw her, for she was nearly invisible. The gift she was born with was being able to blend in with, and camouflage herself with her surroundings. Each of the Children of the Wind that had been born at this side of Wonder Hill had something special about them.

Roden's gift was different. He could hear the wind speaking in different tones and "voices" or so it seemed. If he was real quiet there was much to be heard. He always knew when a storm was on its way, or where a lost colt had taken off to. In this way also he had an edge on simple hide-and-seek games with his siblings, for the sound of the wind seemed to lead him to the right places. Sometimes the howl and whistle of the wind left him with an unsettled feeling about what was to come. But things always had a way of working out in the end.

There was Emilda, and she had the gift or know-how to discern thoughts and ideas that were unspoken. She wasn't one you could easily pull surprises on. Before you finished thinking something through, she was on to it. She had a tender and spontaneous way to surprise others, knowing just what would make them really happy, and would wait till the right moment to spring it on them.

Shane had the ability to change his appearance for a time, to become what was needed--or completely disappear at times, should it be for the best. He could become taller, smaller, older, younger, appear as a little child and so forth, to suit the needs. He was always handy for stage performances, for he could fill many roles, or blend in with the audience, without them catching on. He was a great travel companion.

These are just a few of the gifts given to the Children of the Wind. Each unique in their manner, and each gift given to help them fulfill some aspect of their destiny. For they were born to work together to complete the assignment that was passed on to them from their parents, who passed it on from the original explorers and settlers. The parents of these Children of the Wind—many of whom were from a clan of fairies—came from The Enchanted Dome.

Celtellina looked up at the deep green shades in the majestic tree above. She fully enjoyed the way the sun shone through the small gaps in the foliage. Her long red hair was blown back with the wind, and wrapped around the trunk. It now looked the colour of the tree's bark. Her sparkling emerald coloured dress that hung lightly and flowingly on her, also took on the shades and textured appearance of the tree it was pressed against, as she faced the wind. As soon as she moved away, she would regain her normal appearance.

"Aha! I've found you!" Roden surprised her with his speed, and the chase was on to make it back to Mountain's Crest, the designated "base" for this game.

These were no ordinary children, for they had the ability to fly. As they ran, a set of fairy wings were seen as they took flight in their race, till their feet touched the ground again. This was a gift to all young ones, though eventually faded with time and growth—unless flight was the gift given to them at birth. The young were often given an extra edge of ability to help them through childhood with a flare of delight to sparkle their life.

Though young, these "Children of Wind" or "Flow-ers" as they were called—as they could flow with the wind—had much to do to make the secrets of the Enchanted Dome known to those on Wonder Hill. Time off to play and frolic was a great "get-away" and provided ample recreation while living in the rather limited surroundings, compared to the options and opportunities available in the Enchanted Dome, where they and their parents were originally from.

Shane had just put the finishing touches on a large plaque he was constructing, to commemorate the fairly recent birth of a new "Flowette"—a new little child, born to a family that was particularly gifted in art.

They had many children, and this little one—whose gift was yet to be discovered—was their newest addition. The green eyes and jester-like smile this baby held brought a spark of joy to any who were around. The plaque read:

“The Giving of a smile, though it costs nothing, heaps great rewards.”

There were speculations that his “gift” was along the lines of having the ability to transform any situation, even the most dismal and drear, to one of laughter, praise, and cheer; that nothing would be able to dampen his spirit, as long as he radiated with the light of his radiant smile.

As she looked over her diary, Emilda realized she hadn’t done something about the needs of the Quauf family. She knew they were planning to go to another part of Wonder Hill. She’d heard their thoughts a few weeks back, and took note of them one night as she wrote in her diary book of “secrets and thoughts”.

Their children had been great friends of hers, and loved to go on hikes through the enchanted and sometimes mysterious woodland. They would always bring their musical instruments, and play them in harmony when they reached a place of rest as they hiked. And the stories Emilda would tell them—long and detailed—captivated their attention.

This family would be missed. But what to do? Things never were always the same. People came and left—new arrivals from the Enchanted Dome, and some departees back there as well. There would be new friends. But knowing that the Quauf family would be moving on some day—perhaps even in a few years—gave her a deeper appreciation to cherish her times with them even more, and enjoy their company to the full.

Shaulic, her mother, had a real knack for making people feel welcome and at home in their house. No one ever passed by without being invited to stay and enjoy a meal or to rest for a while, or even just to have someone to listen to their tales, with rapt interest. A lot was found out about happenings in other parts, this way. She liked to know who was doing what, and in what ways she could be of assistance.

Often Shaulic and her daughter Emilda would make packages of goodies to send with visitors who would be traveling to farther places, thus spreading a bit of the warmth and love from their humble home to places they never went.

COURTY THE DOG

Young Celtellina sat on a rock beside the garden stroking the soft fur of a very contented Courty.

“Did you know, sometimes I think you are like my best friend?” Celtellina whispered. Courty barely stirred and lifted his eyebrows.

He found enjoyment in just being depended on; just being there. He didn’t have a full range of emotions and plans and ideas, yet that made it easy for him to be there for those of the human sort, when they needed him.

“Come on Courty! Oh, there you are! Let’s go boy, let go boy! Come on!” Roden was calling for a companion to run with him.

Up so fast you wondered if he had actually been asleep, Courty bounded over and away with Roden, barking happily.

“Can I come too?” Celtelina called out, and was off in a flash. The three were great friends and loved being out in the fields and meadows, especially at this time of day.

It was at the time when the sun was nearly at its lowest, yet still shone brightly and warmly. Boys and girls liked to run and enjoy this time of day as it was a time when so many other bugs and beasts, great and small, winged and cloven footed and furry also liked to take their last play for the day.

Whenever Roden and Celtellina went out to play they never knew who else might join them from the realm of the living creatures also residing in Wonder Hill.

IMPOSSIBLE TO DETECT

“Whatever are you hiding here for?” Celtellina asked Emilda, when she found her crouched up in the gap between two large boulders. Several families had come to spend the afternoon at Mountain’s Crest. Celtellina had wondered where Emilda had gone to, and now she happened upon her.

“Shhh! I don’t want your brother to find me. It’s very hard to hide from him. Either go or be completely invisible and blended in,” Emilda said in a whisper.

Celtellina never could get the reason or the game from the lips of Emilda, for she had to remain completely quiet; they both had to.

Roden could hear things in the wind, and so this place between the rocks might help to hide the sounds of where she was hiding from Roden. Or so she thought.

Yet, Roden had another helper on his side, a certain Courty.

This dog was trained, by Roden of course, to detect the scent of each of his closest friends and family. He would say the name of the person and say, “Go find,” and Courty would dash off to do that. When Roden heard the bark of his pet he’d know the person had been found.

And if he merely wanted to convey a message to a friend or relative, Roden would clip on a note to Courty’s long fur and tell him who to go find and deliver the note to. It did save time, maybe even hours, collectively in a life-time. That’s what Roden thought.

So when Courty’s bark beside the boulders started, today at Mountains Crest, the game was over.

“No!” said Emilda with a laugh. “I should have said that he wasn’t allowed to use Courty to find me!”

A moment later Roden was there, taking Emilda’s hand and lifting her up in a gentlemanly way.

“You still think there is a way you can hide and not be discovered! I’ll find you every time. You know I will eventually get you,” Roden said.

Emilda tried to hide a smile. There were a few reasons for this. One was that Roden was so pleased with being able to quickly find Emilda, and with Courty still barking happily also he hadn’t noticed the third person yet there. Celtellina remained undetected.

Another reason she smiled was because of what he had just said as he took her hand, “I’ll eventually get you.” It seemed to have more meanings than one. She wondered just what their future would hold. She did find him nice.

The last reason of course was the slight embarrassment of not being able to outwit Roden in this one thing he was so clever at, no matter how hard she tried.

When Emilda kept looking to the side and Courty continued to bark towards the rocks as they walked away, Roden thought there just might be something more that missed his view.

“Is there someone else there, someone that was impossible for me to detect at the time?” Roden said. Though as those words left his lips he knew there could only be one person.

“Celtellina, are you around?” he said.

Bing! Just like that she popped back into her fully seeable state and laughed aloud!

If Roden had been trying to find her, there was a chance he might have, but he wasn’t thinking of her at that moment, his game with Emilda was rather engaging. He always did like a challenge.

The three of them then walked and skipped or raced back to the picnic mat where their parents were. Shaulic was there chatting with Grenda, while Moustour was lying flat looking at the clouds with a long sprig of grass in his mouth.

When the joyful sounds of the young ones came closer, Moustour propped up on his arm and smiled.

“So, Roden, are you still the king of the hide-and-seek game?”

Emilda said, “Yes”, but Celtellina said, “Not entirely.”

“Hmm?” her father looked with a question in a playful way, and they told the story of how the contest turned out.

“I guess we’ll have to have a proper contest then,” Roden said to Celtellina. “I’ll count to 100, and you hide anywhere you can get to in that amount of time. Ready, set, go!”

And off Celtellina went, along with Emilda as well. She wouldn’t give the hiding place away, but help give some suggestions and coach Celtellina on how “seeable” she still was, and then run quickly back before the count was over.

Well, of course Roden found her in a shorter amount of time than they expected, and a laughing pair of brother and sister came walking back to the picnic blanket.

Father then asked again, “So, Roden, are you the king of the hide-and-seek game?”

Roden just smiled, bringing along his find, his sister, and she giggled and nodded yes.

“You can’t beat me at my best game. Maybe you can in many other things. You both are more clever in ways that I am not. But just this one specialty is just that—something that’s given special to me. And I am so glad that I can be the most professional finder. If I didn’t have that, I might wonder what else I could do that was just a bit better than you. I think it evens us out, that we each have things that gives us a bit of an advantage over others. Makes for some fun games!”

Roden said this as they settled on the mat and helped finish off the nibbles that Shaulic had baked and added to the picnic.

A TURTLE AND A TALK

“Oh! There is Beauty-Bug and her pet turtle!” Celtelina said, when approaching the little pond. Beauty-bug was a colourful striped creature with several legs and a few pairs of wings. She could walk or fly, and even swim. But her favourite place to reside was on the back of the turtle that swam around here, or came out to bathe in the setting sunlight. –Such as he was doing just now.

It seemed they could talk to one another and enjoy each other’s company. Of course, their means of speaking was far different than the human beings, and even different than each other’s ways of talking. But still, it seemed they understood what each other meant.

One day Celtellina had very quietly sat down by this pond near sundown just to observe. It was a good time to do it, as Courty their dog friend was off on a long run with Roden to a nearby town to pick up some needed fresh supplies. So on this day she was quite alone, and decided to see what other creatures did for fun at this time of day.

As soon as the turtle who lived in these parts crawled out of the water and rested on the little sandy shore, over flew Beauty-Bug (or that is what Celtellina chose to call it). Gently it landed on the curved and hard back of this turtle. Then it crawled up to where its ears were ready and listening.

Some sort of whisper with a tweeting sound, a tickle of wings, and a stroke or two with her feet, Beauty-Bug passed on some sort of message or communication.

Celtellina told her mother that night about it, “Soon after Beauty-Bug said what it did, in the way it did, the turtle then turned its head to looked right at me! It was then that I knew just what Beauty-Bug had said. It must have been talking about me. Maybe it knew I was feeling in need of company and wanted the turtle to provide some sort of entertainment for me, because right after that the two of them—the turtle, still with Beauty-Bug on its back—made its slow way over to me.”

Celtellina continued to tell of her time out in nature that late afternoon, with these new and unusual friends.

“Then the turtle came and rested its head on my knee! I was so surprised. It was like Beauty-Bug was telling him what to do, and he was happy to be a friend to me. It’s nice when animals can be friends with us in the times we are alone.”

Grenda, her mother smiled and stroked Celtellina’s long hair, then asked,

“But were you in your visible or ‘blend in with nature’ state?”

Celtellina thought a moment and realised that she was in her “look just like what you are sitting on” way of being; the gift she had. Yet these creatures still could see and detect her and be a friend to her. Or perhaps that was the reason why Beauty-Bug had to direct the turtle over. Maybe he could not see Celtellina, but the special colourful bug could see her.

It was then that she realised how much more she had yet to learn about her special gift. If some creatures could see her, and others could not see her well, this was something yet to be understood and discovered.

“Mommy,” Celtellina then confessed, “I wanted to say I am sorry for something I did wrong the other day. I think that is the main reason I wanted to be alone today, because I am feeling bad. I didn’t want to tell you about it, but I think I should. Remember two days ago when you came to tell me it was time to rise from bed? And you didn’t see me there as you looked in briefly from the doorway? You smiled and said, ‘What a good girl, she is up already. She must be collecting the eggs. I didn’t even need to call her. She’s getting so big and responsible now’.”

Grenda, surprised, responded, “But how did you know what I’d said? You weren’t there, at least as far as I could see, though I didn’t look very closely.”

Celtellina finished her apology, “See, I really was there, but I thought to play a game. It wasn’t right. I wanted to pretend that I was gone and so I became as invisible as I could be, so I could linger in bed longer and put off doing the chores that were needed.”

Her mother patiently listened, with a hint of hurt in her eyes but tenderness that her daughter was trusting her with knowing about this mistake she’d made. Then she said, “Go on. What happened next?”

“Well,” Celtellina said, “when I heard and saw how glad it made you to think that I had taken the initiative to get up and do what needed to be done without being told, I wanted to do just that. So I got up as fast, yet as quietly as I could, and I snuck out of the house to go and get the eggs. I did it extra fast that day, so that you’d be glad. I really liked how happily surprised you were when you finally got back to the kitchen and saw the eggs in the basket, washed and ready for use. And I wanted to be sure to do that every day from then on!”

Grenda hugged her girl and said,

“I guess sometimes we learn by doing it wrong the first time and making a few mistakes. But I’m glad you were a fast learner and it only happened once—or was it more?” she looked Celtellina in the eyes to see if she had more to admit. Then said, “I can be like that turtle, and pretty little you can be like ‘Beauty-Bug’. I’ll listen to what you want to tell me about things I can’t see or haven’t been able to see.”

Celtellina thought for a moment before going on. She did have a few more things to say and this helped to clear her heart of things that she didn’t feel right about, things that she had done or said. A long time of talking was had, not just of things she needed to admit and confess to tell her mother, but lots of other fun things too.

A very light-hearted young one went to sleep that night, for it did feel good to tell some secrets to the right person, if they weren’t meant to be kept inside. This helped her feel full joy again.

IN A DELIGHTFUL REALM OF DREAMS—Part 1

In her dreams that night Celtellina met with many new furry and feathered friends. A fun animal adventure night it was. She was very small in her dream, compared to many of her new dream animal friends—almost as small as Beauty-Bug was compared to the much larger turtle.

Celtellina saw what it was like to ride on the backs of new creatures she'd never known existed.

The one she was most fond of was Elizias the funny flying elephant. He was sort of like an elephant, but his body was not as heavy and bulky as elephants usually are. Though he looked large, he was very light and could take off through the air with much speed, aided in flight with his very large ears that worked somewhat like fins do with fish when they swim.

Through the air Elizias would go, almost like the air was as water. On they flew, or swam was it? Dreams will be dreams, and funny things happen. But since Celtellina never felt wet, she was sure it was as air that they travelled through.

Elizias took her up to the “castle clouds” and explored the very large rooms inside. These castle shaped clouds appeared just as clouds do to the ones down on the surface of the land, yet when she and Elizias entered one of them, it was altogether different inside. It really did look like the inside of a very huge castle. It would have to be pretty large to fit a creature as large as Elizias in through the doors and in the rooms.

There were so many decorations on the walls and ceilings of these castle clouds that Elizias walked or strode very slowly through each room. He knew Celtellina wanted to get a good look at each thing. It was all so new to her. Some of the designs inside the walls of the castle cloud showed other new types of creatures she had yet to learn about.

But there was one thing that did surprise her the most of all. When Elizias walked into the largest room in the castle, that took her by surprise. She wasn't expecting what she saw in there! It had been a nice quiet trip with just her and Elizias for much of the time, no other creatures were seen in the castles. However, when they entered the largest room it was filled, filled to capacity with all sorts of creatures of all sorts of colours and types, sizes and shapes. And making all types of sounds to greet them as they entered!

Celtellina nearly fell off the back of Elizias she was taken so by surprise, for that is what was planned. But then she laughed! It is fun to be surprised, for good, once in a while.

When she was ready, each of the creatures walked up to Elizias to say hello to both him and to his rider, a very small little girl in comparison. She got to find out each of their names and a bit about them. Many of them offered to take her for future rides to yet other distant places of wonder in the sky, where they lived for the most part. Each of them had their own dwelling places of magnificence that they could take her to see, if and when she was ready to do so.

It all was a bit overwhelming for such a little girl. She had no idea such amazing places of wonder, too numerous to count, existed, and she had a feeling that this was just a tiny part of all there was yet to know.

“I would sure like to come and see where each of you live. It might take some time to get around to each of your living quarters, but it sounds like a lot of fun!” she said to Elizias, who trumped out her message to all who were in the room, using his extra loud trunk.

“Yea!” they all cheered, and would look forward to the day when it was their turn to have a special visit. Perhaps they would start preparing things now for the future event.

When Elizias and Celtellina turned to leave and flew away from the castle clouds it seemed they changed in size. For no longer did the ground and trees seem the same to them. This too was something special that Elizias could do. He could change in appearance and dimensions, and any rider could do so along with him.

When he landed on what seemed like tall trees, but were in reality blades of grass reaching up high above them both, that is when he knelt down for Celtellina to slide off.

“Maybe I'll see you some other time in some other dream,” Elizias said, and with a wave of his trunk and ears, he was off, and growing in size as he went.

IN A DELIGHTFUL REALM OF DREAMS—Part 2

What was to happen next in her dream? Celtellina wondered, then she heard a song above her head.

She looked up to see a ring of cute little yellow flowers all joining in a song, spinning as if they were holding hands together.

“Come dance with us!” the flowers then said to her as she gazed at them.

Then up and away, as if she too had wings, went a very small Celtellina. She stood in the midst of this ring of dancing yellow flowers that looked like miniature daffodils. The flowers changed formation, somewhat, to form as if it was a skirt that spun out all around Celtellina. “I’m wearing a dress of dancing flowers!” she said with delight.

The flowers then dispersed and let Celtellina join hand-in-hand with in them, as they wove this way and that way in a long line, like a ribbon, flying here and there around the little garden. But as they swooped down around lovely little flowers, they would invite any other flower to rise and dance through the air along with them. They could return to their place soon enough.

In time, as the music and song played through the air, this ribbon of flowers became more and more colourful as new flowers joined and held on here and there. Celtellina too had taken on the appearance of a flower, any kind she chose to be at any time as they flew around in a long line through the garden; a line that was only getting longer by the minute.

Eventually, this large chain of flowers settled upon the head of a maiden sitting on the porch of a very large house. This maiden seemed so very big when Celtellina looked at her, yet in reality she was just the size that Celtellina would have been, were she to have resumed her usual size.

The maiden smiled and laughed seeing the ring of dancing flowers circling just above her head, a little like a crown. It was the song of tranquillity that was sung by these cheerful flowers that calmed a soul when they circled and adorned them.

Before too long the dancing flowers were off again, to find another soul to cheer.

When at last the flowers dispersed and gently descended, each one to their particular place in the garden, so did Celtellina descend. Yet as she touched the ground she became just as she normally was, a large and pretty girl. Yet more than that, for she not only transformed into her most regular state, but her clothes took on a radiance that they normally never had—that is when she was living in Wonder Hill.

Yet, as soon as she thought of that and thought, “Oh, Wonder Hill! I wonder when I will return?” at that very moment she awoke from her very delightful dreams, and found she was nestled comfortably in her bed.

What was she dressed in? Whatever she went to sleep in. And it didn’t glow and shine like the garment of her dreams, but she was glad it didn’t. It wouldn’t be suitable for the day-to-day living she had here. Yet, somehow she knew, if she ever did return to that lovely and delightful place she visited in her dream, that her shiny garment would be on her again. She knew it would be.

“I’m glad it’s waiting for me there,” she thought. For the jobs she must do today would have only soiled up such a rare and spectacular dress.

“It’s better I do the dirty jobs here and now with what I have on today—tasks like the washing, or gardening, or tending to the animals, or even climbing up a tree—so it won’t ruin my lovely dream clothes. But maybe tonight I will get to meet with my friends up yonder—wherever they are. I do hope so.”

With this thought she jumped out of bed to begin another day of growing up and learning in Wonder Hill.

MANLY-LANE

Sitting on a rock overlooking the whole surrounding area, Manly-Lane was pensive. The years had passed, and still there was no sign of a certain special person for him.

“Maybe that’s because I really am meant to be living in the Alpantine Village, as we have planned,” he said aloud. He felt he was getting on in years, though in reality he was still fairly young. It’s just that some others younger than him seemed to have friends they were getting to know, who just might one day be their bride. There was hope.

Manly-Lane kept himself responsibly busy from the early hours of the day until the last parts of the day had been spent. With a large family, and he being the eldest, there was plenty to help out with if he wanted things to go smoothly. His father was a great example of what it meant to “care for a woman and children”.

Manly-Lane was getting the best training he could get, to one day be a great father of a family. But he lacked having the hope of just who it might be that he could look forward to one day joining with.

Sadly and slowly he made his way down the mountain, yet not all the way, for there on the path someone was there to greet him.

“Your dad said I just might find you up here,” said the rider of the horse that stood in front of Manly-Lane.

Bernardo was the man, and Manly-Lane was invited to hop on up and ride on this large steed.

“I have something to present to you,” Bernardo said to a most curious teen.

“I know you have been wishing to attend the camp for young ones, yet you have given your time to help your family. If there was a way for your family to have what they needed while you attended the camp for some months, would you be interested at this time? I know your family is planning to leave before the year is up, to move to the Alpantine village, so you’d probably like the chance to attend before that. Is that what you feel?”

This came as a total surprise. Manly-Lane’s thoughts had been further in the future that he had stopped thinking about the present and his training needs for now.

“Oh. Ah. Yes. That really is unexpected. You have talked to my parents?” Manly-Lane assumed, as Bernardo had been to their house looking for him.

Bernardo replied,

“I’ll tell you the idea that I presented to them—and that they were in favour of; yet of course it’s up to you.”

Bernardo went on to say how the teens who had good training and were scheduled to return to their families, could, on a rotational basis, fill in for Manly-Lane at his home. They’d get to put their new skills right in to practice in a real way. They would help out for a week or two at a time, and do all the home care and family responsibilities that Manly-Lane would be doing, if he were there.

The idea sounded wonderful, and certainly perked him up. It gave him something new to think about. It would be a huge change, and that would indeed help keep his mind busy.

“I think you have proven to be a very responsible man, Manly-Lane. So the purpose of your attending the camp would be more for enjoyment, than for teaching you how to ‘grow up’, for that you certainly already are, in many ways. I think you’ll enjoy getting to work with the horses and learn new skills,” Bernardo explained.

“I shall have a good think about it and ask my family their honest thoughts, and will reply by the morning,” Manly-Lane said, sliding off the horse. He was at the edge of his family’s property now.

“Very well, then. I’ll show up at 6:00am to hear your reply, for it is then that I must be off. They are waiting for me at the camp. And if you are to go, I’ll be back in three weeks to take you and the next team of trainees,” Bernardo informed, and was swiftly off and away to have the last night with his family before being gone for some weeks.

As Manly-Lane walked to the house he realised something. "He goes away from his family for weeks at a time. They must miss him. I suppose, even if it's hard for me to go away from them, at least it's only this once, and not repeatedly. He really must care about the young ones of Wonder Hill. And I wonder if I have ever thanked his wife and children for what they do to help us all. I shall make sure I do. And I know just the way to do it."

These thoughts Manly-Lane contemplated. But more than that, he acted on them.

Since Bernardo would be gone for the next three weeks, he would see to it that he and some of the older ones of his siblings would visit Lully and the twins at least a few times a week, to see if they had any need, or just to keep them company. They would bring some food, or wood, play with the boys, and eat a meal or two with them when it was their day to visit and help out.

When Lully told of the kind deeds of the Quauf children, to her husband on his arrival some weeks later, he was very pleased to hear this.

"It will be a loss to see them go, for they do make this place all that much cheerier. But I guess that is why they are moving to a place that has many more needs than we do. It's in their bones and soul to help others. We can't stop them from doing that, just because it feels great to be on the receiving end of their kindness. Perhaps it will just inspire more to help fill in and do the same, in their absence," Bernardo expressed.

And as you can guess, when Bernardo had showed up at the property edge of the Quauf family that morning before leaving, Manly-Lane, who had already been up for an hour or two, was there to give his answer.

Manly-Lane had seen the wisdom in his going. It would inspire him, no doubt, but more than that, it would create a need; a need that young growing men would benefit from filling. It would, in a way, be an extension of their training at the camp. It would be good in many ways; and so all involved whole heartedly agreed it was a plan to be enacted. And thus it was.

JOYFUL REUNION--Part 1

"Celtellia! Celtellina!" Emilda called. "Oh, there you are!" Emilda hadn't noticed her at first, as her dress blended in with the soft grass she was sitting on, and her long red hair cascaded down near the rust-coloured dog that was sitting beside her.

"Emilda!" Celtellia called out, and leapt up with joy. The friends embraced. "It's sooo good to see you again!" Celtellina exclaimed. They grasped hands and spun around, smiling and laughing in the sunshine.

"It's so good to see YOU!" Emilda responded. They placed their arms around each other and began walking back to the house a short distance away.

"Come on, Courty, come on," Celtellina called out to her furry canine friend who had invited himself along for the fun in the sun. He wagged his tail and barked a few cheerful greetings. Leaping and yapping near the happy girls was his way to say, "It's a great day! More friends means more pats and play!"

A moment later they reached the house, where Grenda, Celtellina's mother stood watching as the girls approached.

"I told you you'd find her in out there," Grenda told Emilda, who was smiling and running her fingers through the long curls of her dear friend.

"I've missed you so much!" Emilda said, giving Celtellina another warm embrace. "This one is for the time I missed you yesterday, and the day before, and the day before... and well, I don't know if I can catch up."

Celtellina was quiet for a moment, then shyly confessed, "I actually thought you were having more fun without me. Why would you even think about me while you were off on your trip? I was sure you'd find too many new friends to even remember me on your special-people list; that I'd get pushed off the bottom of the list to make room for all your new 'top of the list' friends."

Emilda put on a playful scowl, wrinkled her brow and shook her finger, “Now, that’s naughty. I would never, ever, have you off my list. You must not think these things when I have to go away.” Then she smoothed her expression to a tender smile, “You’ll always be a very special friend to me.”

Celtellina felt relieved—relieved to have gotten something off of her heart, and glad that her worries were unfounded. Love, in this land, didn’t need to be stretched thin, or given sparingly as if there was only a limited amount. Love here became more abundant the more people there were to love. It never had to be taken away from one to have enough for another. Each new person came along with a new batch of love given out fresh into the hearts of those around, so each one would have their fill of love and joy given to them by those they lived around.

The only time when it seemed love would run low was if someone chose to focus on possessions rather than people. This seemed to dry up their supply of kindness and love for others, as things and temporary concerns soaked it up. It was easy to see if this happened to someone. They were spotted fast by those whose love-detectors and happiness-sensors were strong and keen.

The only remedy was a love-fest and soul purge. They would be requested to attend a three day love-a-thon at someone’s lovely home in the countryside. Here they would be allowed few possessions and plenty of friendship time with those they had been neglecting to notice and care about. People from all over would bring tasty treats, bouquets of flowers, friendship cards (which is an invitation to a special fun activity in the near future), and more, to fill up the dryness of spirit the person felt.

Games that were particularly enjoyable for this person would be played with them by those who equally enjoyed them. Long walks in the countryside to enjoy the pleasant things that no one owned, but all could freely enjoy as much as they wanted—the sky, the trees, the flowers, the fresh breeze, the sunshine.

By the time a love-a-thon participant was ready to go home, it was usually with a heap more smiles stocked up in their heart than they had felt for a long time; their heart felt lighter, as smiles weigh much less than worries, in fact smiles that have been placed in someone’s heart by a caring friend help to bouy up the heart and make it lighter than it would be if it was merely empty.

“Thanks,” Celtellina said looking at her friend, and then to her mother who smiled warmly. Grenda knew how it wasn’t easy for her daughter over this past half a year to miss her dearest friend, and think of the fun she also might be missing out on. This moment helped to wash the sadness away.

“I think you’ve both grown!” Mother Grenda commented.

The two girls then stood back to back to see—even if they had both grown—who was the tallest now.

Celtellina was still in the lead, though they were both taller than they were last time they were together.

“I’ve prepared our part of the feast, that all three of our families have helped with, to welcome home you, Emilda, and your mother,” Mother Grenda said. “Why not come in and nibble and see if it suits you both. If not, then you can add your special touches to the food, and make it just what you think would taste the best.”

The girls giggled at the fun suggestion and slipped into the kitchen, tasting this and that dish, as well as other things from the pantry, cupboard, and shelves.

Mother Grenda laughed. “That’s not part of the feast!”

“Oh, oops!” the girls playfully giggled, as they had a fun game of snacking.

Then they got serious. “We need to make a serious decision now, does or does not this food meet the culinary standards of our company?”

“Let’s make an official decision.”

They put on a sober face, that was close to cracking into a smile any second.

“Hmm. I think it needs a few more herbs,” Celtellina offered, and off they went to pick a few small leaves from the garden—her favourite flavours—and added them into one of the dishes.

“This delightful dish has been approved,” she said in an official way to her mother.

“Marvellous!” Mother Grenda said, and proceeded to prepare it for transportation to the Quauf family’s house where the meal was to take place.

“And what about you, Emilda,” Mother Grenda inquired, in a dignified way. “Have you anything to add or suggest. “Mmm...” Emilda let out a delightful approval. “There’s a lot of love added to this one, I can taste it. Yes, it meets the required conditions, and is cleared to go!”

The three of them laughed, and gathered all the needed cutlery, dishes, pans, and so forth, for the welcome home feast.

Mother Grenda stepped outside again, as her eyes scanned the surrounding fields. “Where are those good hard working fellows?” she wondered. Her husband and son had been out with the draught horses, helping to plough a neighbour’s field. Their team of horses were some of the best ones around.

“If we all team up to help one another, no one will be overworked, over stressed, and best of all, fathers and families will have plenty of time together,” Moustour, Celtellina’s father, would say. And he lived what he said, and did as he believed.

Mother Grenda needn’t have been concerned, for just as the clock chimed the hour, when they were to leave for the Quauf family’s house, her husband and son were seen making their way home. They’d taken the back road.

Courty, the family pet was the first to spot them, and ran eagerly to their side, as if the wagging of his tail would hurry them in faster. Roden, Celtellina’s brother, then challenged Courty to a race to the house. It was a tie, as they both were very fast on their feet. “We’ve had lots of practice in that, haven’t we, good old buddy?” Roden said as he panted at the door and gave Courty a pat, then filled the dog’s bowl with drinking water.

Father Moustour took the horses to the stable. He saw that they had sufficient food and water, hung up the gear they’d used, and promised to return to check on them later that evening.

Mother Grenda walked in to the stables and handed her husband a fresh set of clothes to put on and a towel to use for a quick wash up. In the stables there was a small room for washing and freshening up after a long day of work in the field. Not only did Moustour work hard, but he liked to enter the house feeling, smelling and looking fresh and clean. He could greet his family with hugs, and be pleasant for company.

Roden, went upstairs to wash and change into his favourite set of clothes. This was a special event. Although he heard Emilda’s voice in the house, he slipped past as quickly and unnoticeably as he could. He wanted to be freshened up first before greeting friends. It had been a long while since he, too, had seen her.

Mother Grenda had told both her husband and son Roden that she and the girls were going to go ahead and walk over to the Quaufs house, to help set things up. This gave time for Roden and his father to relax a moment, and dress for the event. They were both happy for time to do so.

Emilda’s mother, Shaulic, was at the Quauf’s home already, and had been helping with their little ones, so their mother could prepare their portion of the feast. Mother Shaulic made something simple as her contribution, giving time instead for her daughter to visit with Celtellina, and to use her own time to help out with the children of the Quauf family.

She often was there to teach and play with the children, or just help out with the household tasks, but over the past six months had been gone and missed this time with them. She wondered if the littlest one would remember her.

But as she entered the Quauf's house, that thought was left aside. The children were so glad to see her, and ran up to hug her and kiss her hand.

"You came back!" they said, while all seeming to talk at the same time. There was so much to say and tell her about. So Mother Shaulic sat down on the big couch and welcomed them all, big and small to 'come and sit with Mama Shaulic'. They all piled together and took turns speaking and showing her this and that. Time went by fast in this way, and the children were delighted to have her visiting again.

Then they eagerly listened as Mother Shaulic and Emilda told them simple and interesting stories about the place they had just come from, the place and people they had gone to help.

Mother Shaulic was just that, very motherly, and was there during the evening celebration to help out wherever the children had a need or a sweet wish to be fulfilled. Then one girl, after hearing the stories, came to her with a special request, while her mother was finishing up the cooking. Mother Shaulic was happy to oblige.

"I want to write a note to go to the family you met in the Alpantine village," Daffodil said. She was already wanting to do her part to spread a bit of cheer around, after hearing about those that Emilda and Mother Shaulic had gone to help.

"That's a wonderful idea! And I know just the one who can take it up there!" Mother Shaulic was thinking of Daffodil's older brother. He was due in a week to go on a horse riding training trip. He would start at the camp for young men run by Father Baufin, and gain training from Bernardo's horse ride-flying classes. When the young men were confident enough, they would go on a trip. There was news that they were planning to go somewhere near the Alpantine area.

And they set right to it, to write a letter on the piece of paper Daffodil had brought. "Delightful!" Mother Shaulic exclaimed to young Daffodil, who did her best to trace over the note with her pen. Mother Shaulic was assisting her, teaching her in such pleasant ways, how to do it.

Any child would be able to learn quickly anything they were interested in learning, when with her. She had such a kind heart and cheery voice, and made everything seem a joy. There was no weariness to her voice, no criticism or irritability. Calm as a placid lake, bright as the sun sparkling off a drop of dew on a fresh morning, yet warm as a kitten snuggled next to its mother.

JOYFUL REUNION--Part 2

Mrs. Quauf was good at making quick work in the kitchen. With so many children to feed each day, and little time to make things fancy, cooking fast meals was her speciality.

When hardly an hour was done, and Mother Shaulic popped into the kitchen to see how Mrs. Quauf was getting on, she was amazed. "You did all this, in so little time! You are amazing!"

Mrs. Quauf just smiled as she finished up the last touches on several dishes that she had been working on. "We've got the most hungry tummies to feed, so we should add the most food to the event—after all, it is a feast, is it not?"

"Yea! It's a feast!" some of the young ones were cheering and anticipating it.

The older ones asked their mother what they could do to help. They were given plates and cups, napkins, and silverware to set out on the extra long table that Mr. Quauf had rigged together, using all sorts of furniture. Covered with some cloths, it looked like any great banqueting table. Chairs and stools, crates and whatnot, were rounded up and set around the table to provide the necessary seating for all those attending.

Mrs. Quauf smiled approvingly at his clever set-up, noticing a few empty places around the house—such as the table that usually held the fish tank—the tank being carefully placed elsewhere. The dresser where she kept her clothes had the drawers removed and stacked up, and the frame of it was also nicely under the cloth.

It would be a fine and friendly meal.

The oldest son of the Quauf family was still nowhere to be seen. He and his grandmother were out for a long stroll. She needed this time daily to keep up her good health. Manly-Lane, who was 16 years old, was a good companion for her. He could support her weight if she would happen to stumble, and he had a good sense of direction.

"They'll show up, dear," Mr. Quauf said to his wife, imagining what was on her mind. Her face showed a smile that she wasn't going to be troubled about it then.

"Ding-a-ling" the doorbell rang just then—the kind that jingled whenever someone entered. It was placed there whenever guests were expected. In popped Granny Leighlea with a handful of freshly picked flowers. "Here's a little something for the table," she offered, adding her spark of joy to the festive event.

Manly-Lane hugged his younger twin sister and brother who ran up to greet him. Picking them up, one in each of his arms, he spun around and then plopped himself, with them, down on the couch. They laughed and soon scurried off to continue playing hiding games under the "tent" that was otherwise known as the dinner table covered with long table cloths.

It wasn't too long afterwards when Mother Grenda, Celtellina and Emilda also walked in that door. A lot of hugs and greetings were exchanged, food was set on the table, and the din of chattering was heard all around.

Moustour and Roden surprised everyone, as they didn't take long at all to wash and change and make their way quickly over to the Quauf's home. Only ten minutes had passed from the time the ladies walked in until they were joined by the rest of their family.

"Good to see you! Thanks for having us over," Moustour said, giving Mr. Quauf a hearty hug. Roden greeted Manly-Lane with a friendship high-five slap, before disappearing for a while into a nearby room. Manly-Lane wanted to show Roden his latest inventions and creations that were displayed on a high shelf, high above the reach of little curious hands. Soon they returned, however, to join in the merriment, and most of all the food they were eager for.

Just as they walked out, Emilda was seen walking past.

"There you two are!" she said with a smile. "I imagine you have plenty to talk about, as usual."

Each young man gave her a friendly kiss on her cheek, as they then made their way to the dinner table.

When at last all the friends and family members had all arrived and were seated, Mr. Quauf at the head of the table led everyone—such a wide range of ages—in a prayer of thanks for the feast that was set before them. He ended the prayer, as usual, with kissing his wife's hand that he always held tenderly as they asked for a blessing on their meal.

It was about half-way through the evening meal when an unexpected visitor arrived to greet and welcome Mother Shaulic and her daughter.

"Mr. Aucklane, please do come in," Mr. Quauf said when answering the door.

"You must be so tired. How long have you walked?"

"Too long," came the reply, as he was shown to a chair at the table that was quickly made available. Mrs. Quauf, who had been sitting next to her husband, moved over to share the seat next to her where her littlest one was sitting. She placed the child on her lap. The little one was happy enough, and loved being held by his mother.

"I'm only here for a short while, as I have other work to attend to, but I thank you kindly for letting me join you all for a bit," Mr. Aucklane expressed. He continued, "I have here a little gift that was put together by friends of mine, and those who wished to thank Mrs. Shaulic and dear Emilda, for what they did to better things in their village. Since I live in the half-way mark between here and that village, and was coming to town here anyway, the people there brought it to me to pass on."

Mr. Aucklane handed Mother Shaulic a small flower-painted box. She took it gratefully, thanked him, and tucked it into the large pocket on the front of her apron.

After Mr. Aucklane enjoyed a polite small portion of the meal and a glass a water, he said a word of farewell was off to attend to other things. Mother Shaulic showed him to the door, shook his hand and thanked him for taking his time to come.

“I was coming here anyway, and it really is a lovely thing you have been doing for our neighbouring village. Things are brightening up so much more,” he said.

Mother Shaulic smiled. It was good to hear that she and her daughter’s time away had been beneficial to those they were trying to help.

All eyes of course were on her when she approached the table. The children especially all wondered what was in the box. But as it was impolite to ask, they turned their attention to other things. Also, because it was impolite to open it just then too—as she and her daughter were the only ones with a gift, she would wait until later on to peek inside.

A pleasant and entertaining evening was enjoyed by all. Several hours passed before the visiting families felt ready to leave, and the hosts were more than happy to have their company for as long as they wished; the children were having such a great time.

The stars were shining brightly when at last Mother Shaulic and her daughter Emilda walked back to their home.

“Oh! Did you see that?” Mother Shaulic said, startled. Emilda turned to look. They both gave out a delightful laugh. A soft and small ball of light surrounded a fluttering fairy with delicate wings that was lighting upon this and that, zooming here and there.

Mother and daughter stopped to watch this delightful heavenly visitor going ahead of them now up the pathway that led to their home. They had a warm feeling, like they were being watched over by the unseen guardians and caretakers.

Then before these two ladies took a step further, footsteps were heard coming up on either of their sides. A gentlemanly arm was offered to each of them.

“We came to escort you back, do you mind?” said the familiar manly voices. Mr. Quauf walked on Mother Shaulic’s side, while his son walked as a guardian angel on Emilda’s side.

“Why, thank you! Thank you to both of you. How very thoughtful of you to see that us ladies made it safely to our abode,” Mother Shaulic gave her consent and appreciation.

“Thank you kindly,” Emilda added.

The walk was short, though with the brightness of the stars, the team saw a lovely display of one of the biggest shooting stars they’d seen in a long while. It seemed even the stars of the heavens wanted to add their special touch to say thank you to this kind-hearted mother-and-daughter team who made it their life’s focus to do all they could to help others around.

When Mother Shaulic and Emilda reached the door of their cottage, the father and son team bid them goodnight and swiftly made their way to see that their own family’s needs were met.

Once inside, Emilda began to set up a fire in the hearth, while her mother went to write a few notes to those who had written to them while they were gone. She didn’t want the writers to have to wait any longer than necessary to receive a reply.

When the fire was blazing and welcoming, mother and daughter sat nearby to at last open the precious gift that was sent to them. Mother Shaulic opened it and found two golden necklaces with sparkling pendants on them, along with a note of simple thanks. The ladies each choose one and put them on.

“What a precious way to say their gratitude,” Mother Shaulic thought.

Emilda, being the very perceptive one, knew however that there was something more to this gift than met the eye. “May I have a look at the box, please, mother?” she requested.

Looking at it all around, inside and out, she was almost sure that was all there was, though her thoughts seemed to say differently. It would have been lovely and fine for it to have been all there was to the gift—for it was a beautiful gift and way to say thank you. However, something inside her said, “There is more.”

One last look at the bottom of the box showed that there was a piece of removable wood, and underneath that was a key to turn—like a music box can be wound up and played.

Emilda began looking around the cottage for something that could be used to turn it—as it was too small for fingers to do so. At last a small piece of wire was located, and threading it through the hole in the key top she was able to wind it around and around.

Mother Shaulic looked on, until the sound that then played from this box caught her emotions by surprise.

“Oh, my!” she said, and tears started forming in her eyes.

The song that played was the last one that she and her late husband, Mr. Errand Mackallen, had listened to, while they danced in the moonlight. He had then taken his last trip that ended up leading him to live once again in the Enchanted dome. There were many from his side of the family that with joy awaited his arrival “home”.

“Sometimes I’ve felt the presence of your father, over these years,” Mother Shaulic said to Emilda, stroking her hair, as the song now slowed and faded. “Perhaps this is a message from the realm unseen, that we are noticed, cared about, and loved. It seems the more we use our time to help others, the less troubled we are about our own emotional upsets. I’m glad that we have each other, and that we make a splendid team.”

Emilda was so young when it happened, and had never really known her father, but that didn’t stop her from enjoying as much of life as she could—alongside her mother, who had more than enough love to give her, sufficient for both parents’ portions.

LITTLE PRINCESS

“Ashlee darling,” Mrs. Quaaf called out to her “little princess” as she was also endearingly called.

“Yes, Mama, I’m coming,” responded Ashlee, placing the kitten back in its soft bed.

When Ashlee came to the stairwell to see what her mother needed, it was clear right away.

Mother Quaaf had been carrying a bundle of clothing to put away, but it had toppled out of her hands. She didn’t want any other scurrying feet to trample them. So Ashlee to the rescue it was. Picking up a basket from beside the stairs she picked up all that had fallen, while her mother carried the remaining items up the stairs. When the basket was ready, mother returned to get it and bring it up stairs with a certain Ashlee along with her.

“What would I do without you? You are always so quick to respond when I need help,” her mother said, placing a kiss on her forehead and embracing her.

“Guess what I have for you?” she said to an eager Ashlee May.

“Here’s a new book I just got from the little library down the road. It’s got all your favourite types of pictures in it, and the stories that go along with them are most cute.”

“Oh, thank you so much Mama!” Ashlee May exclaimed, reaching for it. She’d sit down right then to see what it was about.

“It’s about a little fairy princess by the name of Eileena, and what she does to make her little fairy world all cheery and bright,” her mother said, leaving her daughter to enjoy some time to read in quietness.

Ashlee May opened the first page and began to read:

Once in a forest not too far from here lived a Fairy Princess. She wasn't just any ordinary type of princess, for she had special abilities to change things just with the wave of her wand. –This was the special, golden rod she carried with her. And when it was used, wonderful things were created where old things had once been.

“Darling little angel!” Eileena’s fairy mother called out to her one afternoon, “Do you have a minute to help me? The flies are taking over this part of our garden. We must rid ourselves of them right away.”

Eileena didn't wait to be asked more than once, for she knew when her mother called it was always for a very good reason, and something that needed tending to right away. Up with her fairy wings she flew to where her mother was, and with a swoosh of her wand she showed those pesky, dirty and ugly little flying creatures, that they were most unwelcome to be around here.

Once they were gone, a new kind of light shone and sparkled all around. It was a lovely place to be, and many more little tiny fairy friends came to flutter and fly in the garden.

“Thank you fairy princess,” one of them called out, after seeing Eileena in action with her wand.

“You’re welcome, little friend. I do want our garden to be sparkling with light and have nothing that in anyway resembles the dark side. Enjoy your frolic. I’ll see you later,” Eileena said before flying up and away to help out somewhere else.

Together with her mother, queen of the Fairy Garden, they brightened up few more corners before settling on a large flower to splash their faces and take a drink from the drops of dew. This kept them as shiny as they could be. They didn't need to worry about being cold, for in the Fairy Garden their sparkling clothing would dry very quickly. There was always lots of sunlight shining down wherever they flew to. It seemed the light followed them like a magnet. It was always shining wherever they were.

One day, however, it seemed the sun hadn't woken up, or at least not all the way, for it was clothed and covered in grey clouds. “Where have you gone today,” Eileena said, as if the sun could hear her question.

Her mother came softly to her side, hovering in the air as Eileena sat up on the blossom she had rested on for the night. “Perhaps the sun is teaching us to enjoy things even when they aren't as sparkly as we are accustomed to,” her fairy queen mother suggested.

Just then Eileena got an idea. Her wand! It could make light when it was moved in a certain way. Sparks would come out of it and it could make the gloomiest corner of any garden come to life in a splendid way.

And so that is just what she did, all day! She created sparkles of light all around the garden. Even though the sun never did shine properly all that day, still Eileena the fairy princess brought joyful light all around. She just found new ways to do it. (The End of the book.)

When Ashlee May finished reading the first story, she smiled. It was indeed a book she enjoyed reading. And the pictures were so very nice. She hoped she would dream about in that night, for seeing it in living action, such as a dream might do, was a pleasant thing to hope for.

She'd keep the book right by her bed, to look at the pictures before sleeping. This would help her thoughts to be on the lovely things, and it would make it easy for her to dream about the Fairy Garden and little Eileena, and the sparkling light she brought to all around.

“I hope I can be like her,” Ashlee May thought aloud.

“I think you are a bit like her,” mother responded, reminding her how she had helped with the fallen clothing.

“That made my heart sparkle with appreciation! You do brighten things up, my little princess.”