

The Fells Fairies

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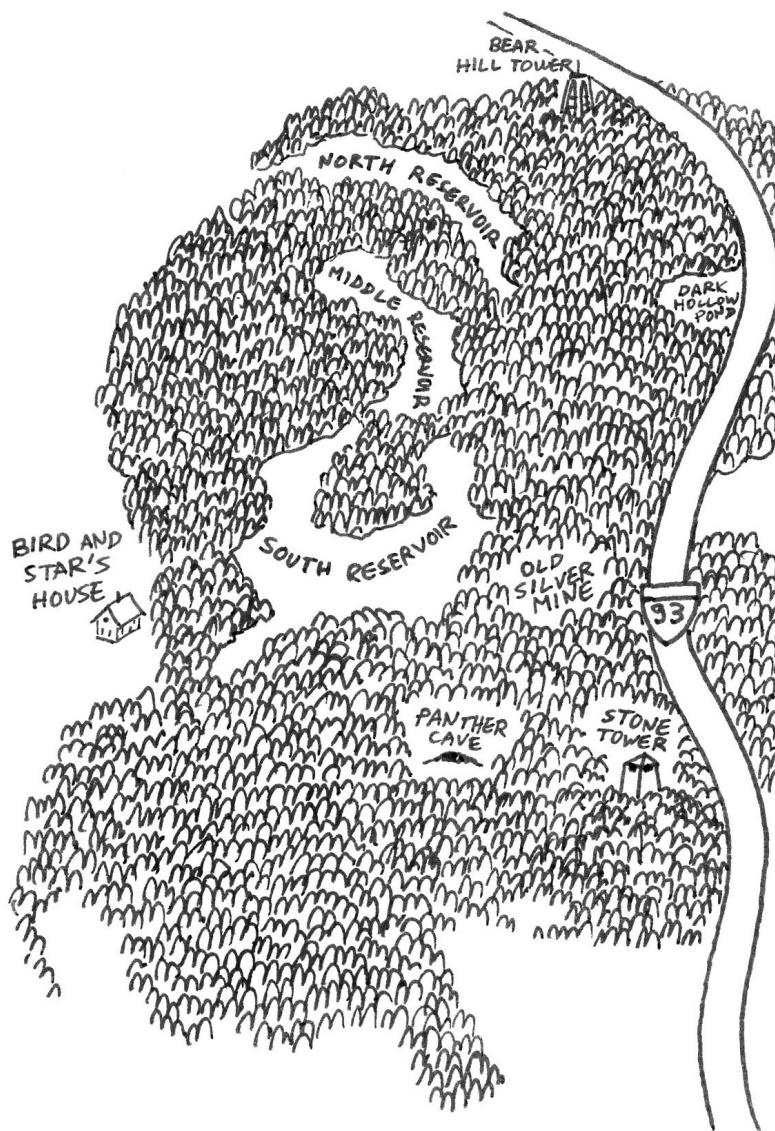
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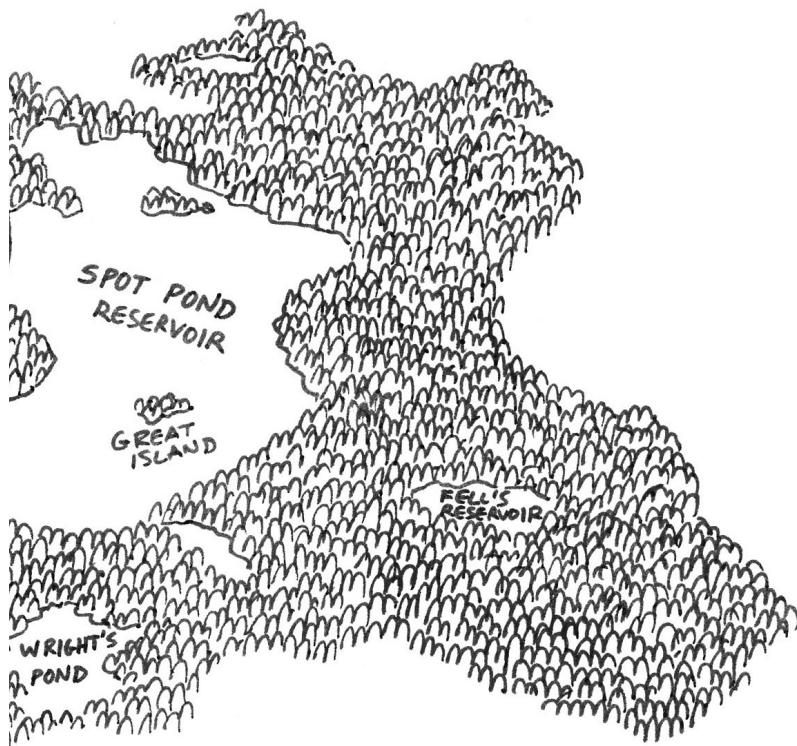
*For my mother and father, who taught me to love the
woods, and to my daughters and husband who walk in
the woods with me.*

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The Fells Fairies





THE FELLS



TO
BOSTON

CHAPTER ONE

The Fells

Star and Bird lived in a small white house with a steep roof that reached up for the sky and out toward the trees. The house was all angles and triangles with a few rectangles and a circular window at the top. If you looked in the window, you would see a purple, yellow, and blue room with two white beds, two white dressers, and two little girls jumping on the beds. When Star and Bird grew tired of jumping on the beds and looked out the window, they saw a giant park: The Fells. The Fells was 53 steps away from Bird and Star's front door (their parents had counted before buying the house). It was an old park with narrow paths that twisted over streams, dark mossy spots with ferns and pools, high dry spots with glimmering granite, and perfect places that smelled of pine and were covered in low-growing blueberries. Best of all,

the Fells had rocks, not ordinary rocks, but giant craggy boulders that appeared where you least expected them, mammoths that leaned against each other to form caves and mountains and ledges perfect for the adventures of little girls. Every Sunday, Star and Bird would walk in this park with their parents. In the fall, they collected acorn tops and leaves; in the winter, they skated on the frozen ponds; in the spring, they walked the paths looking for lady slippers, and in the summer, they hiked to the park's old stone tower and looked out over the woods and city. They did not know they were being watched.

The trees watched them pick up their leaves, the frozen pond observed them gliding silently across it, the lady slippers whispered to each other as the girls walked by, and when the girls climbed the tower, its old stones opened heavy eyes. Slowly, with each passing season, each part of the park began to think the same hopeful thought ... *Maybe*. The Fells was beautiful, and it was special. It had survived for hundreds of years. It watched as the nearby city swallowed the fields, cliffs, pools, and pines. Thirty years ago (not long at all if you are an oak tree) men had visited with maps and instruments and had cut a giant six-lane highway right through its center. Now, thousands of cars rushed by, sending exhaust into the air and killing any delicate flower that dared grow along the side. The Fells knew that the thousands of peo-

ple who used its paths each year loved it, but the old forest also knew that they loved something else more. More than lightning or fire, the forest feared men with plans and bulldozers.

Maybe, the Fells thought as it watched the girls. Maybe they will help.

CHAPTER TWO

The Blueberries

“Put on your sneakers! Where is the bug spray?” Star and Bird’s mom rushed around the house, shouting orders. “Where are the buckets? Star, have you been using them again to make concoctions? Wear socks. It’s tick season.” Like well-trained cadets, her daughters and husband arrived at the front door, bug spray in hand and socks on their feet. She looked them over and pushed them out the door. “Berries! Girls, we must go gather those blueberries.”

“Hurry up, girls,” their father smiled. “If the chipmunks eat them all, your mother will not be happy.”

“Not fair,” Star said, “The chipmunks didn’t have to find their sneakers.”

“If you’d put them in the hall,” Bird started, but before she could finish Star shot her a look that made her swallow the rest of the sentence.

The family walked the 53 steps and entered the Fells. The forest hung over them, cool and damp, a few sun rays slipped through the leaves creating pale paths in the air. They walked along a stream and up a rocky hill past oaks and maples until they reached a pine grove. There, on top of a hill, the lowbush blueberries grew. The bushes covered a space the size of a large playground and one glance at their mother’s face let them know that the bushes were covered with perfectly small, ripe wild berries. They had beaten the chipmunks.

“We’ll start in the middle and pick toward the edges,” their mother said. “Your father and I will go to the right. You head off to the left.”

The girls rushed to the far side of the berry patch and began picking. Bird glanced up occasionally to check on her parents who were crouched low concentrating on the berries. Each time she glanced up, her parents were farther and farther away from her. She moved through her own patch searching, picking, and dropping berries into her bucket. She glanced up again, and just as her parents disappeared behind a slope of small pines, Bird felt a breeze move through the woods. She looked up to find her parents. They were gone. Every part of the for-