

THE SPROUT FAIRIES

Forever Fairies

Coco Twinkles

by Maddy Mara

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It was the middle of the night, and the stars of the Magic Forest twinkled in the dark velvety sky. Coco was snuggled in her bed. Suddenly, her nose twitched. Coco could smell something delicious. Somewhere, someone was baking!

She smiled and sat up. It was still so exciting to

remember where she was: in the Sprout Wings branch of the Forever Tree!

Coco looked over at the other three beds in the branch. Lulu, Nova, and Zali, who had sprouted on the same day as Coco, were fast asleep. The four Sprout Wings were quite different, but they had hit it off immediately. Coco just knew that they would be forever friends.

A strange noise filled the room. Coco tilted her head. *Was that thunder? An animal prowling outside?* She grinned. It was Zali, the smallest fairy, snoring!

Maybe that's what woke me up? But Coco was used to Zali's snoring.

No, it was definitely the smell of baking that had pulled her out of a deep sleep. Coco liked every inch of the Forever Tree, but the tree's kitchens were her very favorite. She loved the bustle and excitement. She loved the interesting ingredients. And, of course, she loved the tasty things that were created there.

Quietly, Coco hopped out of bed and grabbed her wand. The Sprouties had been given their wands only a few days ago. But Coco's already felt like it was a part of her.

Sprout Wings were not supposed to leave their branch during the night. But Coco just HAD to find out what that smell was!

The door creaked as she opened it. Coco froze. Hovering near the ceiling was a glow bee, casting a soft, comforting light. It might tell her to go back to bed—but just like Zali, the bee gave a buzzy snore.

Coco crept into the trunk of the tree. The delicious smell grew stronger. But where was it coming from, exactly? Coco didn't think it was the main kitchen, where most fairy meals were made.

I'll let my nose lead the way, she decided.

The tree's curved walls were lined with stairs. Coco tiptoed down, each step emitting a musical note as she descended.

Coco followed the scent for a while, then along

a long, narrow branch. The smell was almost like a hand, beckoning her closer. Finally, she stopped at a little door the color of gingerbread. It was etched with silver-white swirls. In the middle of the swirls was a silver question mark. Coco stared.

What did that mean?

Opening the door, she found herself in a kitchen. She'd seen the main kitchen a few times. It was always full of fairies from the Twinklestar pod, chatting as they baked and rolled and stirred and sprinkled. Coco loved the way their shiny silver-and-gold outfits were protected by crisp silver aprons.

This kitchen was small and completely silent—except for a low, bubbling sound coming from

a brass pot simmering gently on the stove. That must be the source of the delicious smell!

“Hello? Anyone here?” Coco called, fluttering over to the pot.

Inside was a thick mixture of swirling colors. Up close it smelled even yummier—irresistible! Coco reached to dip in her finger . . .

“I wouldn’t do that if I were you.”

Coco spun around to see a green-faced creature. A troll! Coco and her friends had met a few trolls, but this one was unfamiliar. He had bright green eyes and wavy green hair escaping from a bandanna. A tool belt was slung around his waist, dangling with kitchen implements.



“This is the test kitchen,” the troll explained. “Fairies try all kinds of new recipes in here. I wouldn’t taste that without knowing what it is. Anything could happen.”

Coco grinned. “Really? *Anything?*”

He nodded. “Not so long ago, I became the

first ever blue troll after doing what you were about to do.”

Coco clapped her hand over her mouth. “Oh no!”

“Oh yes,” said the troll. “The Twinklestars were experimenting with too-blue-berries. I took one sip of the syrup, and I still have a blue tongue.”

He stuck out his tongue. It really was blue.

Coco tried hard not to giggle—but it was impossible. “You poor thing!”

The troll shrugged. “It was tasty. I’m Pix, by the way.”

“I’m Coco,” said Coco, shaking hands. Her hand was half the size of the troll’s. “I have a lot of questions. Like, how did you get in here? And even

more importantly, *why* are you in here?”

Pix patted a curl of rope attached to his belt. “If we have rope, trolls can get just about anywhere,” he said proudly. “As for your second question, I’m here for the same reason you are: tasty things to eat. How about we whip up a snack?”