

## *The Dream-Dust*

The girls had settled into a rhythm: each dawn they patrolled the thin places where human sidewalks met old roots, mending loose belief like gardeners pull weeds. Rosie loved the quiet rounds—she'd hover over a cracked playground hopscotch and hum, and the chalk would glow a second longer.

One night, mid-patrol, Rosie's wings drooped. She'd been tracing the park's perimeter so long her thoughts slipped into a dream:

She stood on a stage of moss, singing a word-less lullaby she'd never learned. As her voice rose, the trees behind her lost their green. Bark went brown, leaves curled, and the whole forest cracked like dry clay. A warm breeze—metallic, not wild—took the powder and hurled it outward: one gust north, one east, one south, one west. Rosie turned and saw tiny spires—fairy villages perched in hollows—flatten into dust under each wind.

She woke gasping on Emily's shoulder, the chime quiet for the first time.

At breakfast, she told them. Ash frowned; her hair, which usually drank negativity, felt heavy. "A warning?" Jane asked, but the animals she consulted only twitched nervously.

That afternoon the sky took on a faint sepia tone. The girls followed Rosie's instinct to the old pine grove outside town. The trunks were paler, needles brittle. When Jemima brushed one, a puff of brown powder fell. Panic rose—until Lily lifted her hands, split the light into four beams, and they saw it: the dust wasn't destruction; it was migration. The forest was shedding its old skin to seed new fairy refuges at the four cardinal winds—places the girls had never been.

The "crushing" Rosie saw was the villages' old shells collapsing, making room. It hurt, but it wasn't ending—it was moving.

Rosie's dream hadn't been a prophecy of loss; it was a map. The girls spent the next weeks following each breeze, finding seedlings of villages taking root in a desert canyon, a coastal cliff, a northern birch stand, and a city rooftop garden. Rosie's song—she hummed it aloud as they flew—seemed to coax the dust to settle gently.

She still hated being the smallest, but that night she dreamed again: same stage, same song, but this time green shoots pushed up through the brown, and she woke smiling. The job wasn't just mending—sometimes it was listening to a dream and trusting the forest to crumble so it could grow elsewhere.