



*Aoife and the tale of the missing
Memory of Lillybell*

By Gerri Hennessy

Aoife was excited. Her Mummy was bringing her to see her best friend Caoimhe today and she loved playing with her. Though it usually took her mummy ages to get ready to go she decided to help her to see if they could get going sooner. She tidied her room and had her jacket and shoes on so that she was ready to go. She also had collected all her Brother Sean's things and had them by the door. At last, they were ready to go and her mummy was delighted at all Aoife's help. They all bundled into the car and were off.

Caoimhe's mother greeted them at the door with a big smile when they arrived. Aoife thought it was lovely that her best friend mummy was also best friends with her even though they were so old! Caoimhe came out from the kitchen and they were soon off to the garden to play. As Aoife looked back, she laughed to see Sean sitting between the two mummies smiling happily. He loved to be the centre of attention.

They had been playing happily in the garden when Caoimhe went upstairs to get another doll for their game. Aoife was sitting on the garden chair swinging her legs happily, when she heard a sniffing noise. She was not as startled as some may have been as she has been through a few lovely adventures met fairies and even spoken to animals in the last few days. She did not think much could surprise her anymore. She quickly hopped off the chair and getting on her knees, she looked around. "Hello", she called quietly.

"Is anyone there?" She listened for a minute and hearing nothing, she wondered if she had imagined it. Just then, she heard another little sob. "Please don't be afraid", she said again in the same gentle voice. "If you are upset maybe I can help you".

"I'm over here", a tiny voice came from the hedge.

Aoife walked to the hedge where she heard the voice coming from, and, peering in saw a tiny creature dressed in bright yellow with multicolored wings stretching above her head looking up at her with a tear stained face.

Just then Caoimhe came dancing out of the house waving the dolls over her head.

"Are you ok", Aoife asked the fairy quickly glancing up at Caoimhe who was looking at her curiously.

"Are you Aoife?" she replied looking up at her hopefully.

"Yes that is my name", she whispered.

Caoimhe walk up behind to where Aoife was kneeling.

"Who are you talking to Aoife?" Asked Caoimhe she asked peering into the hedge.

"Eh, no one", stuttered Aoife going red, as she knew telling lies was wrong. Hearing this, the little fairy burst into tears.

"Oh no", she wailed. "I was hoping you could help me. They all told me to find you and you would. As the fairy buried her head in her hand and sobbed loudly Aoife looked from her to Caoimhe and wondered what on earth she would do.

"Can you wait her for a minute", she asked quickly hoping that they would both think that they were talking to them "I'll be back in just a minute".

"Ok", they both said together though Caoimhe continued to look at her strangely.

Aoife scampered around to the side of the house searching in her pockets for the little bell that her friend Amber the tooth fairy had given her a few days before. Amber had said that if she needed

her to ring this bell and she would come to her. Aoife was hoping that the tooth fairy would hear her. She shook the bell and heard just a tiny tinkling noise.

"Amber will never hear that sound". Aoife thought to herself in dismay. Just then she heard a giggling sound in a bright flurry of glitter Amber was there fluttering in front of her face smiling delightedly.

"Aoife", she sang kissing her all over the face. "I'm so glad to see you, I have missed you".

"I saw you last night silly", Aoife giggled. "How could you miss me already?" Amber flew up to sit on Aoife shoulder.

"Time is different in fairyland remember", she replied. "And we always miss people we love when we are not with them". Aoife knew that was true.

"Oh Amber", she said hurriedly. "I'm here with my friend Caoimhe and while we were playing I have met a fairy that says she needs my help." Amber looked at her human proudly.

"That is great honey", She replied. "So why have you called me, do you need my help?"

Aoife explained that she was with Caoimhe and as her friend could not see or hear the fairy she wouldn't be able to help straight away and this new fairy looked so upset that she didn't want to ask her to wait until later.

"Well", said Amber slowly. "If we gave fairy dust to your friend, we would solve one problem at least.

"I would love that", said Aoife happily. "I have wanted to tell her about you, but will you get into trouble?"

Amber smiled cheekily "Trouble shmouble", she laughed. "Let's do it".

Amber came back around the corner with a huge smile on her face.

“What is going on Aoife”, Caoimhe asked her frowning. “Who are you talking to?”

Aoife grabbed her friends hand pulled her over to the garden table that was hidden from the kitchen window so they wouldn't be seen.

“I have a huge secret that I have been dying to tell you. I didn't because I thought you might not believe me”, she said excitedly. “But I can tell you now. I would like you to meet my new friend Aoife the tooth fairy”.

“Is this a new game”, Caoimhe was asking doubtfully as Amber blew a tiny handful of fairy dust right at her nose.

“Achoo achoo”, She sneezed. “Oh gosh, what was that?” She lifted her head and blinked twice. When she had stopped sneezing and blinking Amber flew up to have right in front of her face and winked at her cheekily. Caoimhe let out a yelp of fright and leaned back so far in her chair that the chair toppled backwards, knocked the table and they all landed in a heap on the floor.

“What was that?” screeched Caoimhe trying to disentangle herself from the plastic legs of the table and chairs. “Is it a spider, a big bug? Get it away from me!”

Aoife grabbed her hand.

“Wait Caoimhe”, she implored. “It's ok, I promise. There is no need to be afraid. This is my friend Amber; she is a fairy not a bug”.

Caoimhe, who had just managed to stand up, sat down again heavily.

“Did you say a fairy?” Caoimhe said excitedly. “Where, where is it?”

Just then her eyes settled on the little fairy who was sitting on Aoife's shoulder swinging her legs and whistling a sweet little tune.

"Ah, so you are back with us then", said the cheeky little fairy grinning at her. "Shall we introduce ourselves?"

Caoimhe's mouth was a perfect little o as she stared at Amber.

"Ohh", she cried. "You are so beautiful". Amber laughed with delight.

"I can see I'm going like her ", she said winking at Aoife as she flew to Caoimhe and planted kisses all over her face.

The next few minutes were taken up with excited chatter and explanations. Then Aoife, remembering the little crying fairy decided that they would need to go back to her before she thought they had forgotten about her.

"Come on girls", she cried. "We have a new friend to help.

When they had made their way to the bottom of the garden to where the fairy had last been Aoife got down on her hunkers and peered into the hedge.

"Hello there again", she called gently. "It's me, Aoife, I'm back and I have two friends with me, but you can trust them I promise."

The three of them held their breath to see if the timid little fairy would come out. After what seemed a long minute they saw a tiny tear streaked face peering out from between some wildflowers. Amber fluttered down from Caoimhe's shoulder, where she had been perched.

"Hello", she said walking towards the fairy slowly. "My name is Amber, I a tooth fairy. What's your name?"

At that, the newcomers' bottom lip started to wobble.

"Th-that is the p-problem", she wailed. "I can't remember my name, where I live or even my mother's name".

Amber immediately put her arms around the sobbing fairy and patted her back soothingly.

"Shhh", she murmured gently. "You are with friends now and we will help you".

Aoife and Caoimhe nodded their heads in agreement.

"Of course we will", they said together both thinking how terrible it would be not to remember their mummies name.

First, a tissue had to be torn into small enough pieces for the little fairy to wipe her face and blow her nose. Caoimhe ran upstairs to open her bedroom window. They decided that this was the best place to make a plan that the grownups would not overhear.

When she signalled from the kitchen, Aoife told the fairies which window to go through so they could all meet there. Armed with snacks and juice Aoife and Caoimhe scampered upstairs where they found the two fairies sitting cross-legged on her bed. Amber was sitting close to her new friend who was eating something.

"It is called Lambas", Amber told the girls. "Elven bread, besides filling you up it gives a feeling of comfort and just makes you feel better, and I think that's just what this young fairy needs."

They spent the next little while munching their snacks and drinking their juice. The juice was very popular with the fairies and they both drank it in big mouthfuls from the thimble that Caoimhe found for them. When they had all eaten their fill, Amber leaned back against the pillow and prepared to get down to business.

"So sweetie", she said gently. "Can you tell us what you do remember?"

Tears welled up in her huge eyes, which she tried to blink away.

"That's just it", she replied in a wobbly voice. "I don't remember much at all. I woke up this morning beside a pond not knowing how I got there. Then I realised I didn't even know my name."

Amber moved to take the sad little fairy's hand in her own and pressed it encouragingly.

"I was crying for a while", she continued in a slightly stronger voice. "A squirrel heard me, she didn't know how to help, but she told me of a human girl that has been helping forest creatures and helped me to find you".

She had turned to Aoife and was looking at her with eyes bright with hope.

"Wow", exclaimed Caoimhe looking at her friend proudly. "You are a hero". Aoife shook her curly head.

"I am not," she laughed. "I wouldn't have been able to do any of this without Amber, she is the hero".
Amber flew up to land on Aoife shoulder.

"We are here to help each other", she declared. "And if that makes us hero's that is great. But Caoimhe I think we need another hero to join us on this adventure, what so you think?"

Caoimhe looked from the tooth fairy to her friend.

"Oh yes", she cried eagerly. "What do I have to do?" At that, that they all turned and looked expectantly at Amber. "Ok then. We need a plan", she said.

"I think the first thing is a temporary name for our new friend, any ideas?" Amber asked.

"Aoife 2?" asked Aoife quickly giggling.

"Oh that would be lovely", the lost little fairy said happily.

“Well, I think we could do better than that”, said Amber carefully not wanting to upset her friend. “From your wings I would say you are a butterfly fairy. How would you like to be called Butterfly for the time being?”

The little fairy stretched her wings up and high above her back and looked back at them stretching high above her head. All the colours of the rainbow swirled around them indeed looking very like the colours of all the different butterflies in the world.

“I think that would be a lovely name”, she replied with a smile. “Until I remember my own, that is”.

Aoife nodded in agreement.

“Now, I need to think”, she said, “Caoimhe, Do you have any more of that delicious drink?”

Caoimhe smiled, taking the thimble to re fill it.

“I have all you need”, she replied.

While Amber was thinking, the girls took the time to chat and giggle with their new friend.

It was not long before they heard sounds from downstairs that sounded like the grownups getting ready to leave.

“Amber”, cried Aoife. “We will have to hurry or my mummy will take me home.”

Amber jumped slightly, a bit startled.

“Well I have a plan”, she said. “We need to travel to the land of the elves.

” The two friends looked at each other delightedly.

"I usually go through water", continued Amber thoughtfully. "Through a lake or river, but we have no time for that."

She looked quickly around the room and her eyes fell on the large mirror resting against the wall.

"Hmm", she said to herself. "It could work."

She hopped off the bed and reaching into her pocket got a handful of fairy dust and flung it directly at the mirror. Immediately it began to shimmer.

"Ok, we need to go quickly", she said as they heard Aoife's name being called.

"Quickly girls, all hold hands and come with me."

"I'm scared Aoife", said Caoimhe uncertainly.

"Don't worry", soothed Aoife. As she took her friends hand in her own. "Amber is my friend too and I know we can trust her".

With that, they all followed Amber through the mirror.

There seemed to be a few seconds of complete silence.

Gradually the girls became aware of huge green trees looming high above them, they heard the sounds of sweet birdsong, the buzzing of bees and the sound of a stream gurgling, and bubbling over rocks as it meandered on its way.

They looked around them in astonishment they also saw flowers scattered between the huge trees with brightly coloured butterflies dancing among them and bees collecting their honey. Caoimhe's eyes were wide with wonder and happiness as she turned about her.

"Oh", she whispered. "This is the most beautiful place I have ever seen". Aoife's face mirrored her friends.

"Oh look", she cried pointing to Butterfly who had swooped up to join the butterflies who had gathered around her and were all dancing in the air above them in the dappled sunlight.

"I thought I could not remember anything", she cried happily. "But I do remember this".

"We need to go and find the lake", Urged Amber.

"Can't we stay a while", begged Caoimhe and Aoife who were happily splashing each other at the stream laughing uproariously.

Amber came to stand beside them, her tiny face serious.

"Girls, humans are not allowed in this forest", she explained. "And while it's not dangerous, I don't know what kind of trouble I would get in to if we are found here".

The girls nodded and got out of the stream, the last thing they wanted to do was get her into trouble.

"Sorry Amber", Aoife said looking downcast. "I didn't think".

"Don't worry honey", Soothed Amber. "I know the effect these woods have on everybody on their first visit".

Looking up at the dozens of butterflies it was difficult to pick out the butterfly fairy, but having heard her new friends calling to her the fairy known simply as Butterfly swooped to and beside them.

"Sorry", she said grinning sheepishly. "I was just so happy there for those few minutes I forgot while why we are here."

Amber guided them to a nearby tree to talk about what to do next. The breeze had picked up and was causing a whispering noise through the leaves.

"Listen", said Aoife delightedly. "It sounds like the trees are talking."

Amber looked at her sharply.

"I know that this is going to be difficult", she said urgently placing a hand gently on Aoife's arm. "You have to try very hard not to listen too closely to them or you will fall asleep and will not awaken until the elves find you. This is the way they keep humans out of their forest that find themselves here accidentally".

Aoife shook her head to clear the sleepiness that has already started to take hold of her and noticed for the first time that they were all now the same size.

"Caoimhe", she asked. "Did you even notice that we are now the same size?" Amber took each of the girl's hands in her own

"We are the same size because we are in the land of the fairies." She explained. "Now we need to find the lake and to do that we will need the help of a friend so we must get going to find her first". Around them were the sounds of birds singing happily and bees buzzing busily. The

They set off following a path only Amber seemed to be able to see. The soft forest floor was carpeted in flowers in colours of every hue, some of the colours the girls had never even seen before, and they cushioned the sound of the four passing through.

Amber and Caoimhe were chatting quietly as they walked trying to decide what caused the magical atmosphere. They couldn't decide if it was the unusual colours or the birds singing so happily. It was a sound they had never heard so clearly before. Amber smiled at them.

"This place is the home of the elves", she told them in a soft voice. "The elves use their magic to help protect the forests and rivers of your world; it is at its strongest here.

Butterfly, walking happily between them turned to Amber.

"Why are we going to this lake Amber?" she asked.

"The lake has magic restorative powers", Amber replied. "I'm sure it will be able to restore your memory. My friend Sula will be able to bring us there. The elves are very protective of it, so we need an elf with us to find it. They walked further into the forest until they came to a clearing.

"Can you to wait here?" Amber asked them. "I will get Sula and explain to her why I brought humans to the forest. I'm sure when she knows the story she will help us."

The three friends sat down on the soft grass to wait and watched as Aoife disappeared off into the trees.

The two little girls and the fairy were snoozing in the warm sunshine when Aoife felt a poke in her side.

"Aoife", whispered Caoimhe. "Please don't think I am crazy, but I think there is a bird trying to talk to us".

Aoife sat up quickly.

"Where is it?" she asked.

"Over there by that tree", Caoimhe replied pointing at a nearby tree. "I think it called your name".

Aoife looked to where her friend was pointing and there sat a little bird looking at them with its little head to one side.

"Are you Aoife", the little bird asked nervously.

"Yes", Aoife replied gently. "What is your name?"

"Oh, this is so great", it said excitedly hopping closer. "My name is Petie. The others will be so jealous that I have met you.

"Caoimhe looked at her friend in amazement.

"Do you know birds as well?" she asked. "And how long have you been able to speak to them?"

Aoife grinned at her.

"Only since I met Amber and she gave me the fairy dust". She said. Turning to Petie, she smiled.

"Hi Petie, how did you know my name?"

Petie flew the short distance to where the girls sat and landed on Aoife's knee.

"Oh we all know about you", he replied. "You are the human girl that helps the forest folk, the way you helped find Maurice. We should have known that you would be the one to find Lillybel. We should have come to you first."

Aoife and Caoimhe looked at each other in confusion.

"Who is Lillybel?" they asked together.

"Lillybel", he laughed looking at the little fairy that they had been calling Butterfly. "Where have you been? Everybody has been looking for you.

"The fairy came quickly to where Petie was still sitting on Aoife's knee.

"You know me?" she asked hopefully.

“Yes, of course I know you”, he replied looking confused. “I know your Mummy and your sister and they have been so worried since you went missing.”

Lillybel looked at Aoife in distress.

“Oh no”, she cried. “I was so upset that I could not remember who I was, I didn’t even think about anyone being worried about me”.

“What do you mean you don’t remember your name?” He asked surprised. “And what are you all doing here? Do the elves know there are humans in their forest?”

The girls and the fairy looked at each other in concern.

“Well we don’t think they do actually”, Amber said slowly. “But we are here to help Lillybel, so you can’t tell them. I promise we are not here to do any harm.

Aoife quickly told the little bird about all that had happened.

“But how did you lose your memory?” the little bird asked doubtfully.

“I honestly don’t know”, Lillybel said earnestly. “I didn’t even know my name until you just told me”.

They all looked pleadingly at him.

“Please don’t say anything yet”, begged Aoife. “We need to get her to the lake where the water will restore her memory. Or at least that what Amber hopes it will do”.

“Is that Amber the tooth fairy”, Petie asked.

“Yes”, Caoimhe answered. “It was she that brought us here”.

The little starling’s eyes blinked quickly at this news.

"Did she get permission from Queen Coral?" he asked.

The two friends shook their heads.

"I don't think she asked permission from anyone", Aoife told him. "Who is Queen Coral?" Petie looked from one to another.

"Gosh, you really don't know do you?" he asked looking surprised. "She is the queen of the elves and rules here in the land of the elves. Nobody should do anything here without her permission, and certainly not bring visitors."

The girls looked very worried at this and both were asking themselves if they had done the right thing coming to the forest.

"Will we get in trouble", Caoimhe asked in a frightened voice, beginning to wish that she had not gotten involved at all.

"Oh little girl, I didn't mean to scare you", Petie reassured her. "The queen is not evil; she would never hurt you or your friend. Though, Amber will get a telling off for breaking the rules. Where is she?"

The girls looked greatly relieved at this.

"Amber has gone to find a friend to help us", Answered Aoife. "She is called Sula I think Amber said."

Petie nodded his head at this news.

"Sula, is the queens' niece", he told them. "She is a steady girl, and very close to the queen, which means she will listen to her".

He cocked his head to one side and looked at the two girls and fairy thoughtfully.

"I will go back to the others and tell them that there is no sign of Lillybel here", he declared.

"That should give you some more time, but as I don't know where this lake is either I won't be able to help there".

"Oh thank you so much", said Lillybel gratefully. "But I hope it won't get you into trouble. I seem to be getting all my new friends into trouble for helping me".

"Don't worry about me", he said cheerfully as with a flutter of his little wings and rising into the air above them. "I laugh in the face of trouble". And with that he disappeared over the tops of the trees and was gone.

The three sat back down on the soft grass to wait once more.

"I wonder what's keeping Amber", said Aoife worriedly. "I hope she hasn't been seen."

Caoimhe patted her on the shoulder.

"Don't worry honey", she said comfortingly. "I'm sure she knows what she is doing".

Not long later, they heard voices. Both girls stood up and looked in the direction they were coming from.

"Why are you being so secretive Amber?" said one voice.

"You will see in a minute", Amber could be heard saying soothingly. "You'll have a great surprise, I promise".

Just then, they both came into the clearing across from where Aoife, Caoimhe and Lillybel were waiting.

"Hello there", said the newcomer cheerfully walking towards them. "Are you Amber's surprise?"

When she got within a few feet, she came to a complete stop, her eyes wide in shock.

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