

21 May, a day I still remember as clearly as it was just yesterday. The last day of my summer holidays had just dawned, finding me reflecting on the fun and frolic of the past two months. I couldn't possibly have fooled myself, telling that I was really keen to go to my boarding school, firstly because I loved my house and family, and secondly because I didn't have really good friends there. I couldn't be called a lonely, homesick child either. I did have people to *call* friends, the ones who loved glory and smart friends.

Lying on the lush green grass of my magnificent garden, I was pondering about all these thoughts and facts and didn't realize how soon I felt my eyes begging me to shut them, and how soon I fulfilled their wish. However, when I woke up from my deep slumber, I found a tree branch – of a cubit's length – resting on my palm. Assuming it as the reason for the interruption of my sleep, I picked it up and started examining it.

The thicker end of the stick was a little soft, and the thinner end was twisted in the shape of a small flower, it looked like a magic wand to me. I started shaking it while chanting abracadabra under my breath – mind you, I am a highly superstitious girl believing in fairy tales. When I was a kid, I used to spend half my time waiting for the tooth-fairy at night. Probably the failures of my past – not meeting the tooth-fairy even once – had no effect on me, and I still hoped that a charm would hit me, and I would sprout wings from my back. Nevertheless there was no effect. Disappointed as I was, I threw the stick behind me and lay down again. I watched it, first getting hit by a tree, and then ricocheting back towards me with a jerk. It seemed as if the tree had punched its belly, apparently full of water, because of which sparkling clear water shot out of its end. I quickly caught it back, astonished, and took it to my room, an act I still regret but at the same time an act which brought happiness to me in school life. I went to my study table, placed in a corner of my room, pushed my books aside and sat down to examine it carefully, but as soon as I did so –

My mother's voice sounded from the kitchen, "Sara! Lunch is ready."

"Urgh..." I muttered, dashing towards the dining hall, glumly. I was definitely not tempted by the idea of eating now, most importantly interrupting my *examination of the stick*. Though I couldn't overrule my mother in any case.

I went back to my room after lunch. Listening to three-quarters of an hour of a rapid discussion by my family, I had completely forgotten about something. Of course it was the stick, which I had stuffed in my school bag, bearing my other school supplies too, so as not to attract much attention towards it, and now I myself had completely forgotten about it.

Oh! How soon the time flies. I soon found myself talking to a strange girl on 23 of May – I had realised about the stick when I opened my bag in the previous chemistry period.

"I am Maria! I saw you at our chemistry lesson yesterday. You were brilliant!" The girl had started the conversation.

“Oh... um... thanks? I am Sara by the way.” I replied, a little awkwardly, thinking she was another of the people who was sticking to me only till I was famous. Soon, I was proved wrong though. From the next day she was made to share my dormitory, the first person who ever had to. After spending a week with her I realised, all she wanted was affection from *true* friends, and didn’t crave for fame or glory at all.

Several weeks passed by, intensifying my and Maria’s friendship, and now it suddenly occurred to us that we will be facing our first term examinations in almost no time! It was high time for us to start revising.

Maria wanted to tell me something, since the day she arrived, but unfortunately, we were constantly interrupted by other students. Now was the time when people like me, the top scorers, became highly popular. Students used to visit us every now and then, and, the time Maria and I used to spend together decreased significantly. When no one was visiting us I usually went to the teachers, who gave me extra work to do.

As our exams neared, the atmosphere in the corridors, classrooms and even washrooms became tenser. Everywhere students were found discussing about their exams. And not long after that, the students had to sit their exams.

Our first examination was of English. The night earlier I opened my bag to revise once again. I might have opened the wrong chain, because what I saw took me completely by surprise. The stick which I packed back in my home *was* there, but it was acting abnormally, as if it wanted to go somewhere else - or I should say to *someone* else. I closed that chain thinking I would tell Maria about it – she was busy in some other work outside our room. I had yet not even told her that I had the stick in my bag, so thinking she might want to have a look at it I kept it in the bag I was going to carry to my exam – it was still shaking vigorously in desperation to leave my bag.

The next morning, after dressing up and having a quick last-minute revision, I set off towards the examination hall. On reaching it I saw a few students standing outside it, among them was a nervous looking Maria. I took out the stick and showed it to Maria, she took it in her hand – it stopped vibrating – and wanted to say something, but again the examiner ushered the students inside. She gave me the stick, and together we made our way in. We sat on our respective desks, and when the examiner asked us to, we opened our question papers and started solving it. Soon the test got over and we, I and Maria, went to the library and started discussing about our exam. While discussing question twenty-eight, my eyes caught something gleam brightly among other dull books. Maria accompanied me to examine it which we now realised was a cameo.

“Beautiful! Isn’t it? And see it’s got you on the front!” I exclaimed pointing towards a photo of Maria engraved on it shabbily. “Were your ancestors some kind of emperors?” I asked hopefully.

“Nah, my ancestors were as plain as yours. Turn it over it’s got you too. *The other side.*” She added hastily as I turned the locket upside down, expecting it to display my picture next. My picture *was* on the other side of the locket, however weirder than Maria’s. Probably whoever made the locket, knew Maria better than the person knew

me. I passed it on to Maria, but she never got it. When both our hands touched the locket at the same time, we felt a sort of force acting upon us from all directions, as if we were being forced into a small rubber tube. All of a sudden, we fell into complete darkness, and then, slowly again felt the cold ground beneath us. A sort of eerie sensation fell over me. We had unknowingly and unwillingly been transported to a different world. A world which, by its looks, didn't welcome us at all. There were tall trees and bushes all over the place. Creepy noises filled the whole place. I heard Maria let out a cry of surprise, "Oh! No, no, no, no! This can't be! NO!"

I walked towards Maria— I had been transported two feet away from her. "Sara!" she cried when I got near to her. "I... I... I am really sorry to have landed you in this trouble. Plea... Please f... f... forgive me." She pleaded.

"I can't understand, why are you saying sorry?"

"Oh you'll soon see, just give me my wand, fast!"

"What? Your wand?"

"Of course you won't know about it. I am an enchantress. The stick you showed me this morning is my wand, I want it. Please? And hide behind the bush – I will explain everything later." She added reading the confused look on my face. I could not see any reason in keeping the stick with me, and if she really was a fairy or something, I thought, she might help us out of this paranormal world. I quickly handed the stick over to her, and waited for what was kept in store for us. Suddenly, a tall woman in black cloak came over to her.

"Ah dear! This is not a plaything, Maria; you ought to understand what happens to the people who defy me." She said in a ridiculing child voice, not noticing the bush at all.

"You dare not do anything to me, I warn you Lisa." Maria said pointing her wand towards Lisa threateningly, who started laughing like a maniac, but Maria continued her speech, "How come are you alive?"

"Oh, when you thought I was killed I actually stored my soul in the locket, which I used to summon you here today, leaving your filthy little friend with her memory totally lost. I can only die if the locket is destroyed, surely you knew how that kind of magic works?" At these words, spoken by Lisa, my heart started thumping louder. *I had the locket she was talking about.* She hadn't noticed me till now. I hinted Maria, about having the locket with me, and she merely gave me a thumbs-up. I couldn't understand anything, although mustering up the courage I slid swiftly past Lisa and grabbed up a sharp stone. I could see both Maria and Lisa fighting, not physically of course, tirelessly. I had to destroy the locket before Maria destroyed Lisa, otherwise her soul would again enter it. So, I tried opening the locket – which to my relief opened immediately – and then I hit it with the sharp stone I had brought. After a few painful seconds, it broke. I came out of the bush and gave Maria a thumbs-up, and she immediately finished off an exhausted Lisa. As Lisa's corpse fell onto the ground, the sensation of being fitted into a rubber tube started again, and soon we were back in the library.

“Well done Sara!” Maria said excitedly.

“Are you really...?”

“Yes I am a fairy.”

“What was all that about?” I asked.

“My parents fought witches like her, like Lisa. They died doing this and... well... I chose the same path. Lisa did a very poor demonstration of transportation spell along with memory spell. It just had to touch you, and you would forget about me while only I was to be transported. However, luckily you and the locket transported here with me, which meant that her plan did not work at all.”

“If you *are* a fairy why are you in this school? You could have taken your wand and gone.”

“When a fairy loses her wand, like I did, she ought to have the permission of the person who took her wand, if she wants it back. My wand sensed that I was near it, and so it was shaking so vigorously, in desperation. You see I have been looking for opportunities to ask about it to you, but I am so mesmerised with this world, and I wanted to see how things work here too... I... I don't know what was in my mind. I'm sorry.”

“It's alright, but how did you know I am the one with your wand?”

“I knew where I had dropped my wand, I then saw you take it out of your bag in the chemistry period... so... um.... I thought I'll just take it.”

“Will you still meet me, now that you've found your wand?” This was a question which remains unanswered till now, although Maria smiled politely.

“Sara! WAKE UP!” I was lying on my bed. My mother, who was shouting loud enough to wake the dead, seemed to burst out any moment. It was 22 May, I had to go to my boarding school in five hours.