

A
PLANET CALLED
SMILE

A Pelicitious Fable

fabricated by

Carolyn S. Hulsey

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*With apologies to
The Pied Piper.*

There are gremlins in the Kremlin,

In Fairfax, Fairies fly.

Goblins leave us tremblin'

And sometimes make us cry.

There are Leprechauns in Liechtenstein,

Pixies in the Pentagon,

With Brownies, Elves and Gnomes so fine

I could go on and on.

There seems no end of little folk

Across the sea, and here

I'd like to know (and please don't joke)

But make this mystery clear

They had to come from somewhere

It surely has a name

So kindly tell me if you dare

The place from whence they came.



ONCE upon a time, in the land of
whip-poor-wills and katydids, a
brother and sister lived with
their parents in a little cottage
at the edge of an enchanted
forest. They often visited their grandmother,
who lived nearby.

On one particular day in the month of lilies
they were to help grandmother pick the blackberries
that grew in great clusters along the pasture fence.

Now everyone knows, even today, the best time
to pick blackberries is very early in the morning
while they are drenched with dew, and before the
heat of the sun gathers little trickles of perspiration
into salty pools.

*For these attract the tiny bees &
& that sting in protest against a squeeze
When caught in elbows or bending knees*





Grandmother was waiting at the garden gate with her berry pail, and a basket covered with a linen cloth. She wore a broad brimmed sun bonnet and a long sleeved smock with high black rubber boots. Seeing the children's bare feet, she sighed and shook her head, but said nothing.

She knew they would soon learn the age old lesson of bare toes and berry brambles.

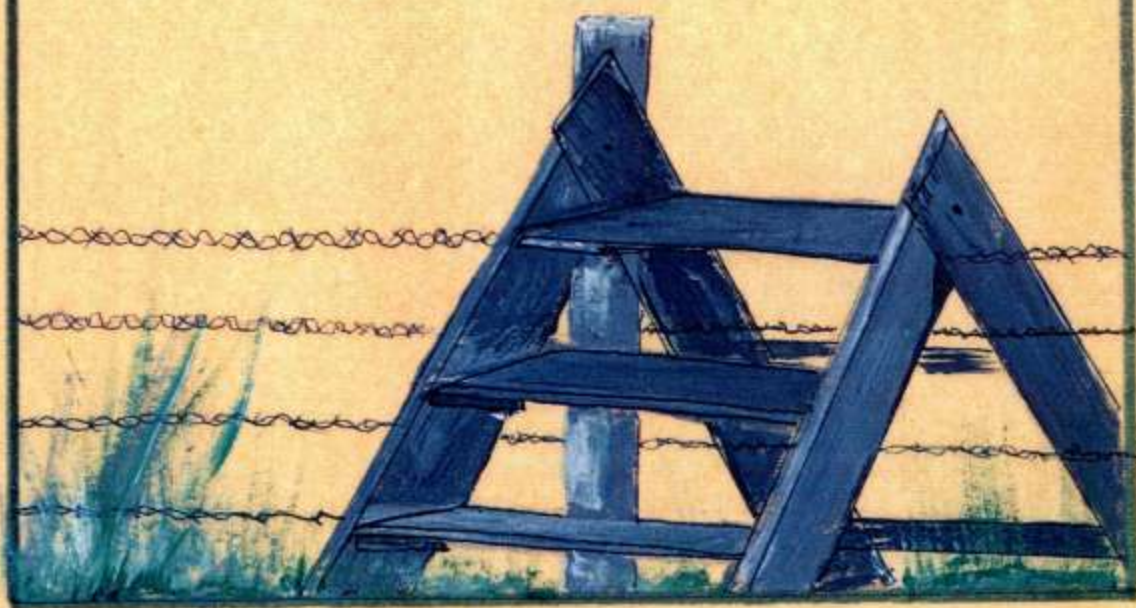
They walked along the lane beyond the barn until they came to the pasture where the berries grew.



They crossed the fence on the stile built by their grandfather years before, and set to work at once. Picking berries was a tedious task at best, and the painful thorns on every branch made it all the more unpleasant. However, the promise of blackberry cobbler and cream spurred them on.

Grandmother told them stories of her childhood while they worked, and so the morning seemed to go quickly.

When her pail would not hold another berry, she said "let's rest awhile, and then I will help you finish filling your pails."



Taking the basket from the shade, she spread the blue and white checked cloth beneath a sycamore tree. Then came a plate of sugar cookies and ice cold lemonade. While they rested and enjoyed their picnic, grandmother directed their gaze in the direction of the forest beyond their little cottage. "Do you see the oak tree that stands taller than the rest?" she asked. It was indeed much taller. "When I was a little girl," continued grandmother, "we were warned never to go near this giant oak in the heart of the forest because something evil lingered there." "Did you ever go?" asked Kelley. "Never" she replied. "However, one day I borrowed my father's spyglass, and from a distance it seemed to be hollow, with a cave like opening and a scarlet carpet in front. There are stories of an unfortunate wood cutter who dared to intrude on a creature who lived in the tree, and ran screaming into the deep forest, never to be seen again by his companions."



They wanted to hear more about the oak dweller, but the sun was quite high, and so they finished their lemonade and returned to the business of berry picking. No more was said about the enchanted oak that morning, and when they returned, the children helped their grandmother wash the berries at the old wooden pump, then went home for lunch. Their mother^{and} father had errands in the village that afternoon, so they were left alone with instructions to stay out of trouble.

They soon grew restless, and tried to think of something to pass the time. "Do you suppose that oak is really dangerous?" asked Tara. "Of course not" said Kelley. That story was grandmother's way of keeping us from being lost in the woods. You know how she worries. Did you see how she looked at our bare feet this morning?"

"Well, mine are pretty sore and full of stickers, and yours look kind of scratched" said Tara.

"Nonsense," Kelley answered "What's a little scratch or two? Let's find that tree!"



So, ignoring grandmother's warning, they trudged off in the direction of the tallest tree in the forest. After what seemed to be a very long time, a patch of red appeared in the distance. Moving nearer, they found the ground covered in hundreds of poisonous amanita mushrooms. Beyond these, an ancient oak with twisted branches and gnarled roots clung to the side of a mossy hill. The base of the tree was hollow and dark. A small pool so black it gave no reflection lay a few yards from the opening, with a well worn path from the tree to its bank.

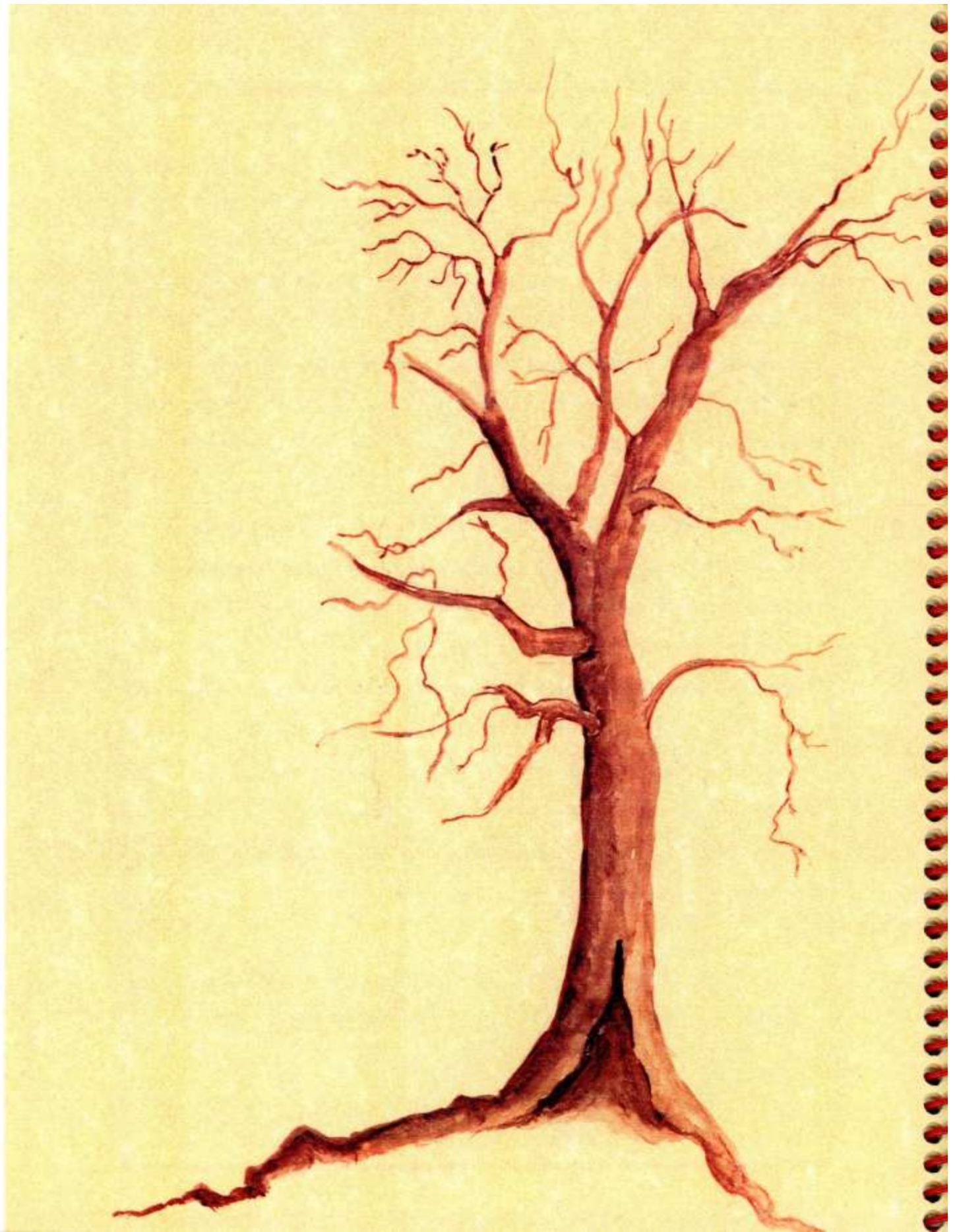
They heard a muffled sound from inside the tree. Bending down for a closer look, they peered in. The sight of two fiery red eyes looking back from the darkness made them jump back in fright. A voice that seemed to echo forever called to them mournfully pleading "wait, don't be afraid. No harm will come to you. Hear my story. I beg you."

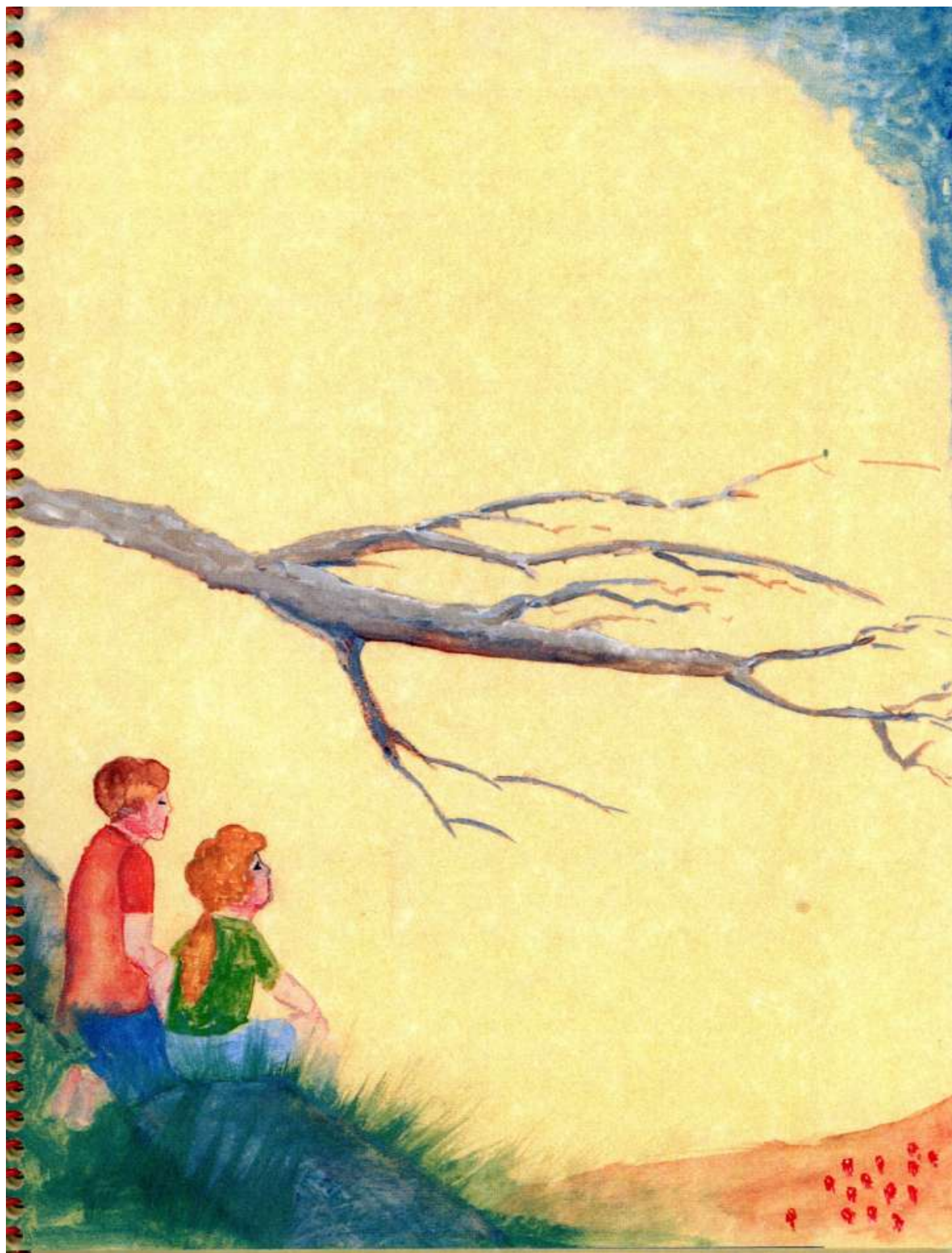
The voice was so pitiful and convincing, they were calmed, and managed to stop shaking. "We will listen," Tara said. They sat down on a fallen log, waiting at a safe distance for the owner of the voice to emerge from the tree.

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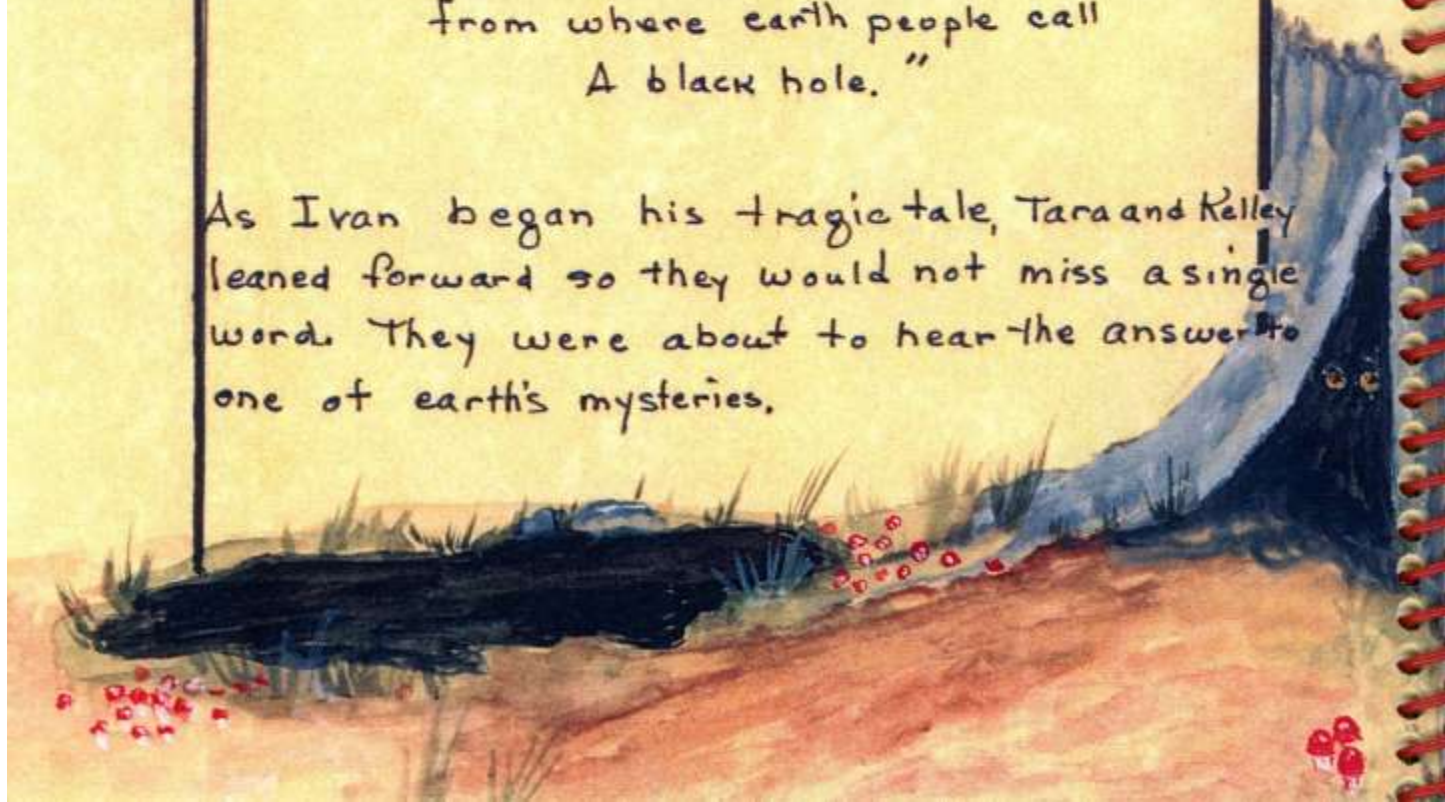


You must cover your eyes and promise not to look at me until I give permission the creature said in a voice strained and weak as if long without use. "We promise" they both answered, and tied their bandanas over their eyes.

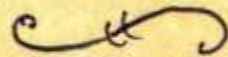
The voice continued:

"I am Ivan the terrible troll
I must live in the ground like a mole
For such is my curse
I will tell you in verse
How I came to be this wretched soul
When I fell to this place
Through time and through space
From where earth people call
A black hole."

As Ivan began his tragic tale, Tara and Kelley leaned forward so they would not miss a single word. They were about to hear the answer to one of earth's mysteries.



On a planet called Smile, a dear little star
just a twinkle from Fiddle de-de
The Felicities dwell on an amethyst isle
In the midst of a sapphire sea,
Where hummingbirds dancend butterflies sing
And symphonies play in the trees
Where autumn leaves fly and never turn brown
But lovingly rainbow the breeze,
And it doesn't take much to music the day
Just a baby's "God Bless You" sneeze.



The good King Felicitar, golden his rule
His kindness was known far and wide,
So loved by his subjects, who thought him a jewel
And all served their monarch with pride.
For the Princess Felicia
The King's pride and joy
A birthday was drawing quite near.
So a summons went out
To each girl and each boy
On this date for them all to appear.
They put up their whiffles
And shuttered their coobs
And dressed in their finest attire,
Set off for the palace
Both gentry and rubes
And at length came in sight of its spire.
From the ends of the Kingdom
North, South, East and West
To honor the princess they came
Jugglers and acrobats, none but the best
And lions and tigers to tame.
Soda pop, lollipops, cake and ice cream
Pony rides, music and mime
Presents for every one (just like a dream)
And all had a wonderful time.



But then, out of nowhere, a wizard appeared
From his head to his shoes dressed in black.
No one seemed to know him, and everyone feared
The King was quite taken aback!

"Forgive my intrusion, good people" said he
And drawing a wand from his pack,
"Twas just an illusion, please watch and you'll see."
Then he changed to a blackbird -- and back!

The little folk laughed and applauded for more
As rabbits jumped out of his hat.
For each trick was better than each one before
Who could ask for more favor than that?

The wizard then doffed his tall plumed chapeau
And gracefully made a bow, low
And to the clamoring crowd he exclaimed
"This is the end of my show."

So gleeful and grateful the King was to see
His dear daughter's sweet happy smile,
He summoned the wizard at once to his side
And bade him to rest for a while.



To you my dear stranger, my deep gratitude
Some how you seemed never to tire.
Entertaining so nicely our charmed multitude
For this name your heart's deep desire.

Perhaps a great ship, with sails of pure silk,
A castle on yon crystal coast;
A land overflowing with honey and milk;
Or what ever else you'd like most.



"Anything sire?" the great wizard asked
"My fondest wish at your command."
Then surely I must claim the loveliest rose
That grows in this magical land.
The Princess Felicia shall ever be mine
And even as these words he spoke,
A hideous cackle arose in his throat
At this, his own cruel joke.

The King, by all of this very confused
Said "Surely my friend, you do jest?
My daughter, the Princess can not be your prize,
Please choose from among all the rest."

The wizard, so clever a fellow was he
Pretended it all was in fun.
And said, "let me ponder the prize it shall be,
Now children, let's go for a run!"

To the edge of the town where the wild
thistles grow. I'll teach you a game you
can play in remembrance of me when I go
Come let us be on our way!



So Felicity's children, every last one
To the thistle field marched in a row
In time to the wizard's tune played in the sun,
The danger ahead could not know.

With thistle down parasols, faster they danced
With a skip and a twist and a twirl
Unmindful of danger --- by music entranced
Each boy hypnotized, and each girl.

With a stamp of his foot, the ground opened up
And the children fell in, one by one
This happened so quickly, not one would suspect
The horrible deed till 't was done.

When the last child was gone, the wizard peered in
Their ultimate fate to espy;
And losing his balance, fell after them all
Tumbling into the sky.

Meanwhile, when the children had failed to return
A messenger sent from the town
Came running and shouting "The Children are gone!"
No where is one to be found.

All that is left where they danced and they played
Is a cavernous hole in the ground."
The plan of the wizard at once became clear
Upon him the King placed a curse
To be lonely and shunned for one thousand years
By all of the vast universe.

And so, to their thistle down chutes clinging fast
like hundreds of seeds being sown
Gently to earth they all settled at last
Each one to a land of his own.

On this day began all of Earth's fairy tales
When Felicity's children were lost
To become all the Leprechauns, Brownies^{and} Gnomes,
water sprites, Elves, and Jack Frost,
The Sandman of course, and the Tooth Fairy too!
Bringing Joy to the children of Earth
While the Wizard forever in sadness to dwell
Never again to know mirth."



There was a long, quiet pause. Tara and Kelley wandered why Ivan had stopped speaking, and were about to remove their blindfolds when he said — "wait! I'm sure you have figured out by now that I am the villainous wizard of this story. It is no accident that you chose this day of all days to find me, for it is exactly one thousand years since I came to earth as a result of my evil deed. I was transformed into a hideous creature and doomed to spend my days beneath the roots of this tree, next to the bottomless pool, never to hear another voice until this day. Only children, like the ones I wronged so long ago can choose to show the compassion that will set me free. If not, my fate will be sealed forever. I assure you, nothing can match the punishment of being alone and unloved. For centuries, with only my thoughts for company, I have actually felt the pain I caused the mothers and fathers of Felicity. If allowed, I vow to spend the remainder of my days bringing aid and comfort to those in need to the best of my ability. My fate is in your hands. Now you may look at me if you dare.



With apprehension, they slowly untied their bandannas to gaze upon a thoroughly horrifying figure, covered in lichens and moss from head to toe.

They drew back in fear. Ivan spoke softly.

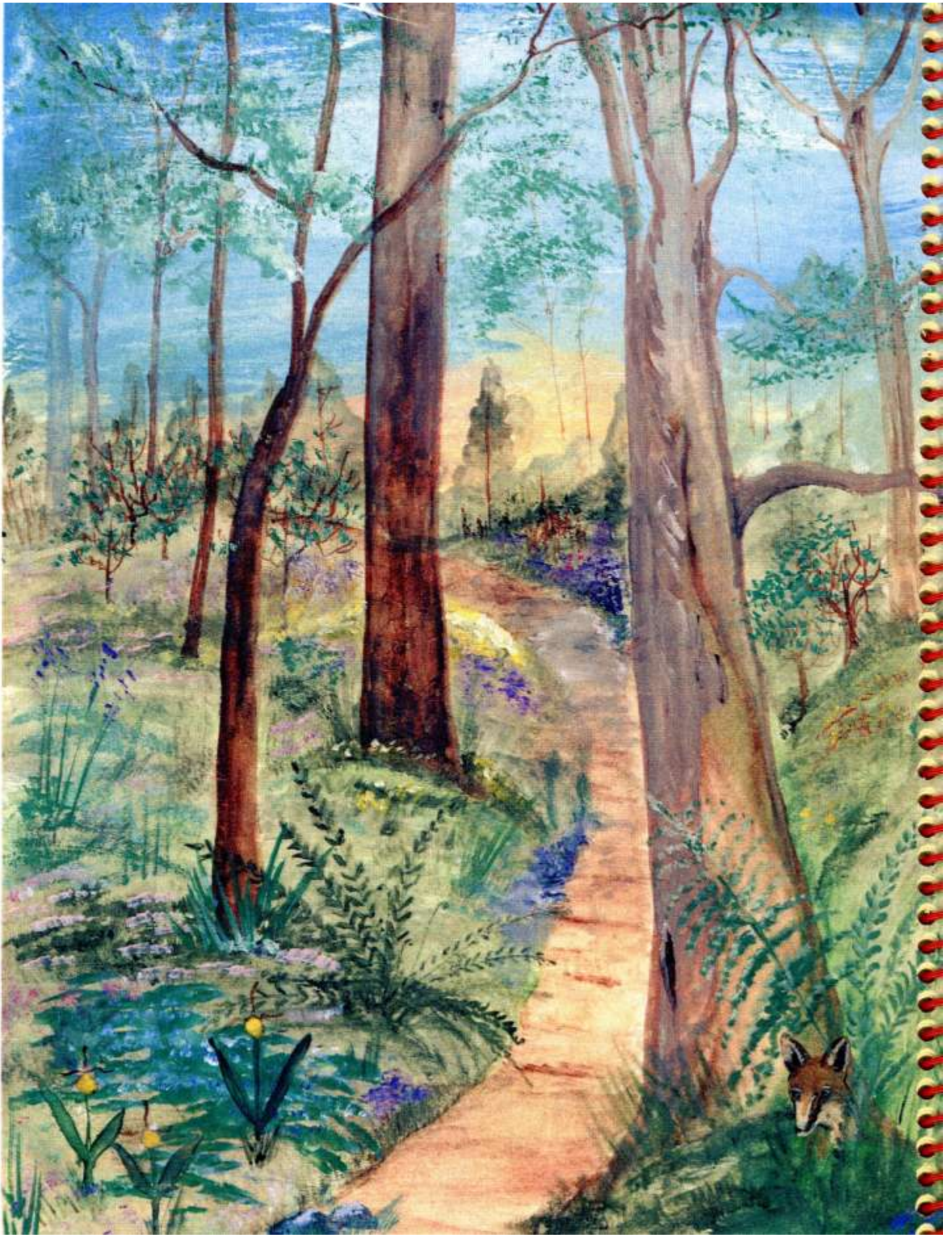
"I will not harm you. Innocence alone can break the spell that binds me.

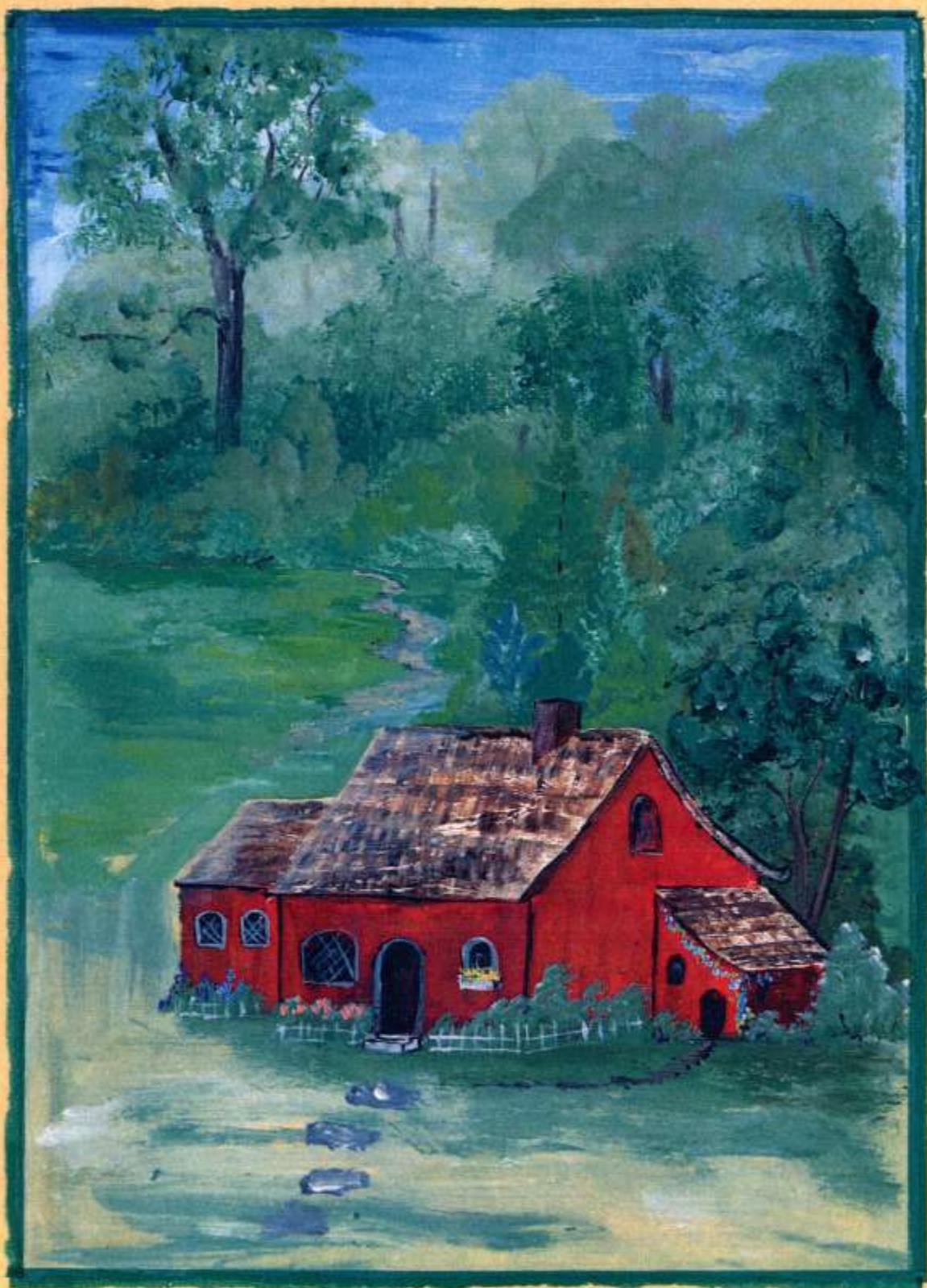
There was something in his voice that took away their fear, and in its stead made them feel pity.

Tara asked, "what ever can we do?" - At that very moment, the creature that had been Ivan disappeared in a whirlwind of green smoke. In his place stood a tall man with a long white beard. He was dressed in a blue robe and carried an intricately carved staff. His pleasant smile and kindly manner put the children at ease. "Your compassion has set me free," he said. "May your act of kindness be returned to you a hundredfold." With this, he disappeared into the forest.

The children, still puzzled and shaken by their experience started back through the forest in the direction of home.







What shall we tell Grandmother?" Kelley asked anxiously. "Why, the truth of course" answered his sister. "But, she'll never believe us, she'll think it's a fairy tale," he argued.

Tara thought for a moment, then replied "It is a fairy tale; perhaps the most remarkable one of all. Grandmother will know that even our imagination could not stretch that far!"

Grandmother's house soon came into view, and the aroma of freshly baked blackberry pie from the open kitchen window quickened their steps.

Before Grandmother could utter a word, Tara asked "Have you ever heard of a place called Felicity?" "Well, no, I don't believe I have. I know the word means a source of happiness. Why do you ask, and where have you been?"

Kelley and Tara looked at one another and smiled. "We have something to tell you," they began--
"On a planet called Smile ----"



