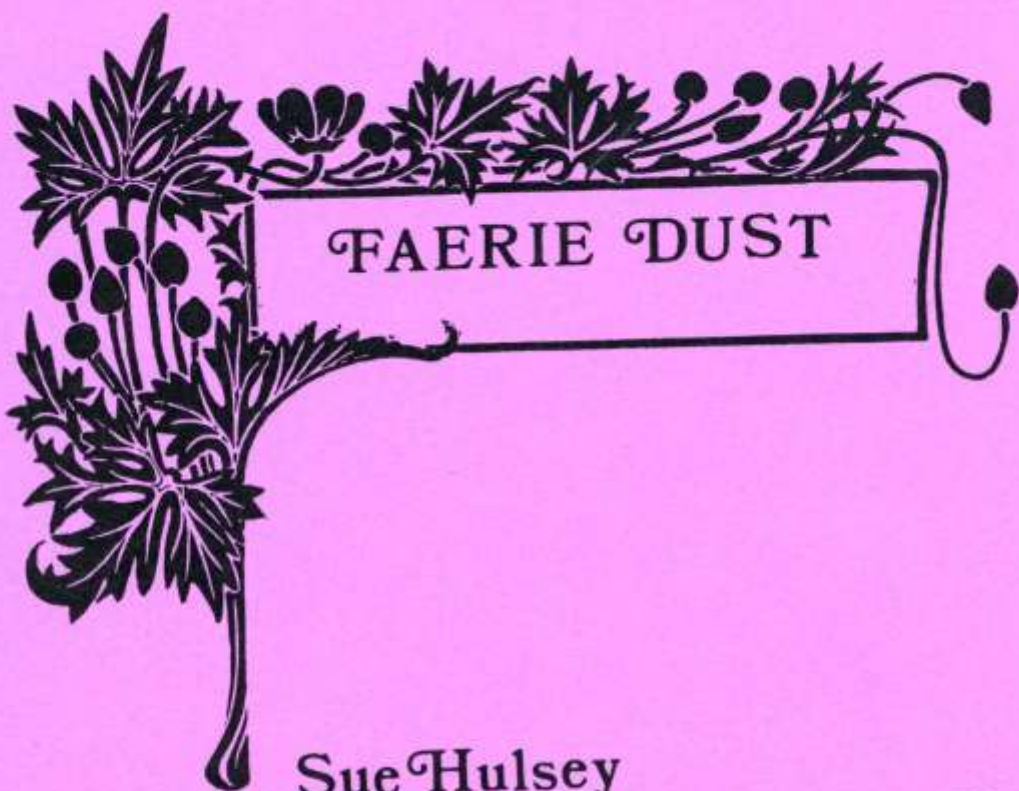
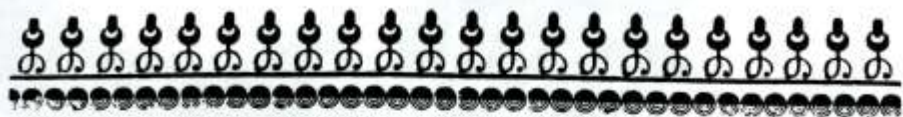




Sue Hulsey
Polly Winkler-Mitchell





Once upon a springtime, in a little moss covered cottage in the deep woods, there lived a dust fairy. Now, everyone knows that fairies do wonderfully nice things, so an unpleasant word such as dust seems out of place when describing one.

Arabel Clementine did not intend to become a dust fairy. Indeed, she came from a long and distinguished line of Rainbow Fairies. Have you ever wondered why those lovely dancing rainbows appear in the strangest places? For instance, rainbows can be anywhere on a sunny day in a house that has a chandelier with prisms of crystal. After a shower rainbows are often in puddles, in bubbles of course, and in icicles hanging from the roof early on a winter morning. These are the work of Rainbow fairies.



Arabel Clementine was expected to carry on in the tradition of her mother Phideliah, her grandmother Columbine and all the other fairies before her. She would have done so if it had not been for a strange adventure.

There was a time in the life of each and every little fairy, when she must prove herself to be worthy of her noble fairy heritage. Until this happens, she is only an apprentice, looked upon with some humor and lack of respect by her elders. When the day arrives, she must set out into the world with only a little wooden wand, a tiny flask of morning dew and a few sugared violet petals, to search for a deed in need of doing.

Apprentice fairies are not completely alone on their quest, but are always accompanied by an ancient dragonfly who serves as their guide and protector, and also as transportation because they have not yet earned their fairy wings.





Everyone was anxious for Arabel to succeed, especially old Granny Spider, who lived in a little home underground with a round door hinged to open like a teapot lid. She had woven cloth for fairy garments as long as anyone in the neighborhood could remember, and she considered all the fairy children her special responsibility. She had known Arabel Clementine since the day she was born, and knew it was almost time for her journey. Granny sent word by her neighbor, Miss Ratydid, for Arabel to come to her house for tea before leaving. After wild strawberry tea with sweet cicely cakes, Granny politely excused herself and went into her little sewing room. She returned presently with a package neatly wrapped in sassafras leaves and tied with passion vine tendrils, and handed it to Arabel. Inside, she found a cloak of shimmering silk web, lined in Thistle down.





Polly Windsor-Mitchell

"This is an enchanted cloak," said Granny.
"It will keep you warm of course, but if at
anytime you feel that you are in danger, put
it on inside out, and you will become invisible."

Arabel thanked Granny for her thoughtful gift and returned home to prepare for her journey.

Leaving very early in the morning, with only the stars to light the way, she set out astride the dragonfly, and straight on into spring to find a deed in need of doing. She waved to her mother standing at the door of the tiny house at the foot of the old oak tree, one wondered if she would ever see home again.

Wrapping her magic cloak tightly around her shoulders against the chill of the spring morning, soon her mind was filled with thoughts of the adventures that lay before her.



Away they flew over the mossy woods, over the rushing brook, over the misty hills, until at last a lovely little village came into view. Down below, ladies with parasols and gentlemen in top hats with canes were walking to and fro, going about the business of the day.

Horses clip-clopped along the streets, pulling carriages and wagons.

"This seems a likely place," said Arabel. For a closer look, taking care not to be seen, the dragonfly Flavius, landed on a pink hollyhock by the back door of one of the lovely houses on a shady street. Arabel Clementine stepped down on a window ledge. With training wand in hand, she was just about to try her skill at directing a sunbeam through a lamp prism on a table by the window, when the back door opened. A young girl, carrying a carpet bag and umbrella came out, sat down on the top step, and began to cry.



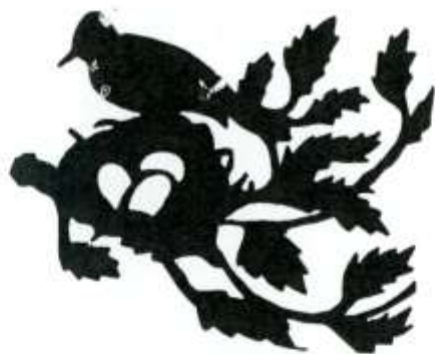


Polly Winkler-Mitchell

Arabel moved cautiously nearer until she was on the bottom step looking up at the girl, taking care to avoid the puddle of tears. "Whatever is the matter" she asked in her tiny bell-like voice. "Why are you crying so?"

"Who are you?" asked the startled girl in mid sob. Why, "I am an apprentice-er-ah!" She stood up straight and tried to sound important. "I am a fairy, in search of a deed in need of doing."

"Are you a fairy godmother, like the one who helped Cinderella?" asked the girl. At this, Flavius snorted and almost fell from his holly-hock perch. He was a very old dragonfly with grey antennae and a little rheumatism in all of his six knees. He had watched over hundreds of apprentice fairies during his lifetime, including Arabel's mother, Phideliah.



"I had my own little room in the attic with a sunny window, and a fir tree just outside with a nest of robins near enough to touch. Now where will I go?" she sobbed.

"Monday when I opened the curtains the sun shone through the windows and bounced back from the polished wood into the mirror.

There wasn't any dust! I rubbed the clean dust cloth over the banisters, and found not one speck of dust. The same with the window sills and bed posts, no dust!

"When I went down to the kitchen, the Cook asked "What are you doing here so early? It isn't nearly time for tea." I don't think she believed me when I told her there was no dust.

Tuesday the same thing happened, and Wednesday the mistress called me into the study, and told me I was no longer needed. Hermione, the downstairs maid could take care of my other duties, and so I was fired with only the wages due me, barely enough for a night's lodging.



Billy Winkler-Mitchell

Here was clearly a deed in need of doing, thought Arabel. We must have dust. Now where does one find dust? She had noticed chickens in a pen behind the house, perhaps they might help.

Being mindful to keep a safe distance, so as not to be mistaken for a bite to eat, Arabel cautiously approached a bantam hen.

The hen had all of her feathers fluffed up and was rolling around in a little depression in the ground, enjoying her daily dust bath.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Hen, but may I trouble you for some of the dust in your yard?" asked Arabel.



"Indeed you may not," snapped the indignant hen. "I need all of the dust for my bath. Now be gone with you before I have you for my lunch!" She flapped her wings and squawked. "On second thought, I've worked up quite an appetite, and you look like a very tasty morsel." She lunged forward. In a wink, Arabel turned her magic cloak inside out, becoming invisible, and not a moment too soon, for the hen just missed her and ran headlong into the wire fence. Looking very surprised and puzzled, she returned to her dust bath.

On the front porch of a house across the street, a great shaggy dog was awakened from his third nap of the day by all of the squawking. Being naturally curious, he lumbered over to see what all the racket was about.

Arabel was well out of the hen's reach by this time, and became visible again, just as the dog, Cicero appeared. "What's going on" he asked. Arabel explained the situation with a quiver in her voice.



"Perhaps I can help," he said. "If its dust you need, I have a great deal to get rid of before my master decides I need a bath. I hate baths, ugh! I was in the alley behind the hardware store this morning, looking for a cat to chase, when the cellar door opened, and before I could get out of the way, the janitor threw a dust bin of ashes right on top of me. I did shake off quite a bit, but there's plenty left. If I can get inside the house, I can run upstairs and scatter dust everywhere."

"What a marvelous idea" said Arabel.
"It might work." "The cook treats me very kindly," said Cicero. "She leaves table scraps at the back stoop for me about this time each day, as there are no pets in this house. When she opens the screen door, I'll hurry past her, and before you know it... dust!"

Sure enough, it wasn't long before the screen door opened, and the cook set a pan of gravy on the porch. Cicero dashed for the opening, but the cook, who had years of experience in dealing with dogs who thought themselves to be clever, was too quick for him, and bang! slammed the door on poor Cicero's nose. He yelped in pain, and ran back across the street to the safety of his own porch and the humiliation of a bath, backing apologies over his shoulder to Arabel. "I'm sorry about your nose, Cicero, thank you for trying" Arabel shouted back.

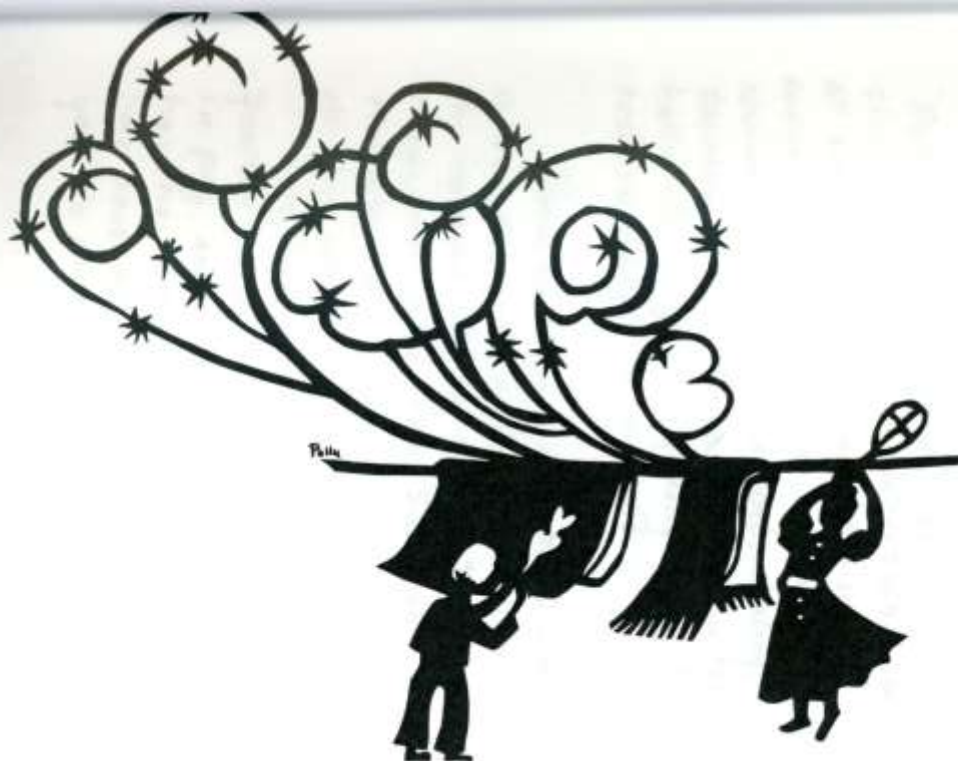


By this time it was late morning, and Susannah Huckleberry, although very grateful to Arabel for all of her efforts, knew she must soon be on her way.

Arabel sat down beside her, and they held their chins in their hands, sighing.

Flavius had witnessed everything and was quite concerned, but could not interfere, because Arabel must succeed or fail on her own. He could, however, offer words of encouragement. "It's always darkest before the dawn, Don't give up the ship-- If at first you don't succeed, try, try again, the show must go on--". He was just about to run out of things to say when suddenly a great thunderous wack! from the neighbor's yard brought Arabel and Susannah both to their feet. Wack! There it was again-- and again!

Spring cleaning was underway, and all of the carpets had been carried outside and hung over the clothes line -- one by one. The younger children of the family, each with a wire carpet beater in hand, were hitting the carpets as hard as they could, knocking out great clouds of winter's dust. A sudden puff of wind caught the dust and carried it up, up over the fence, and would have blown clear away, if not for Arabel's quick thinking.



"After all, I am a fairy," she said.
"Fairies can make things happen." She closed her eyes tightly, concentrated with all her might, pointed her little wooden wand and sent the dust into the open window upstairs. On it went, whirling, swirling through the doors and down the hall, into every room, finally coming to rest on everything in sight.

Hermione, the downstairs maid was in the midst of her upstairs chores when this happened. She ran shouting "dust, dust everywhere! Quick--catch Susannah Huckleberry before she leaves, I can't do all this work by myself!"

So, Susannah returned to her position as upstairs maid with a raise in pay, and the promise she would have her little room as long as she wished. She bent down and whispered "Thank you" to Arabel, and blew her a kiss.

Having done the deed in need of doing,
the proud and happy little fairy waved to
Susanna, climbed on Flavius' back and
started for her little home in the woods.
Suddenly, little bumps appeared on her
back and grew, and grew until out popped
the most beautiful Rainbow Fairy wings
ever imagined. Her little wand was transformed
into one of gold - covered with precious
jewels.

She said to her friend, the old dragon-
fly, "I think I'll fly home beside you," and
she did.

Her mother, and grandmother, and old
Granny Spider, and all the other fairies
and friends were anxiously waiting to hear
of her adventure.





Polly



Polly Winkler-Mitchell

Having proven herself a most noble member of the Fairy Clan. Arabel still carries on in the family tradition of bringing little bits of happiness when its least expected. So, the next time a tiny rainbow finds its way into your life just when you need it most, more than likely its the work of a little fairy affectionately called "Dusty" by her friends.

*Composed by Sue Hulsey
Art by Polly Winkler-Mitchell
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