



Fever Dream

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Retold Fairy Tales

1.

Amy lay upon the soft grass and the daisies. She stared up at the clouds and tried not to panic. Having just woken up she could not remember a thing, not her family, not what she was doing last night, nor how she had gotten there in the first place. Really she was lucky to know that her name was Amy.

“Things could be a lot worse,” she reasoned, rolling over so that she was nose to nose with the flowers. She sighed as she inhaled their sweet fragrance. Forgetting her alarm, she focused upon the loveliness of the daisies and smiled.

Suddenly covered by a shadow, Amy looked up. Never had she seen a more beautiful girl looking down at her. About ten years old, she had curly black hair, warm brown eyes and rosy lips set into the most welcoming smile.

“I am so happy that you are awake, Amy. Are you ready to get going?”

Amy was at a loss. Who was this girl? Where were they supposed to be going?

“I’m sorry, but I don’t know you. I don’t even know where here is. It’s probably better that I stay here.”

The stranger’s smile slipped. Then her lip began to quiver.

“It’s me, Amy. It’s Marigold. Are you..are you saying that you have forgotten me? Amy, we have been best friends since we were four years old.”

“Marigold, I’m so sorry.”

At that point, Amy did not feel any suspicion, only guilt. Marigold knew her name, after all. Who was to say that she wasn’t telling the truth? Amy’s head was too foggy to think clearly

“Marigold, I don’t suppose you would still be willing to help me out? If we really are best friends then I am sure that you can sort me out in no time. Will you, please?”

Marigold grinned and held out her hand. Amy took it gladly, relieved that somebody knew what was going on.

As the two of them walked down the forest trail, Marigold started to hum under her breath. When she suddenly turned back to Amy there was a sparkle in her eyes.

“Say, A-my?” she sang. “We have all day to get you home so why don’t we make the most of today. If you could choose to do anything you liked or go anywhere you wished what would you pick?”

Something tells me you won’t be happy with the answer find my way home.

Amy tried to think. It was hard when she had zero clues about anything except for her name, but then she retrieved a glimmer of a memory.

“I’d love to spend time playing with Trixie. She always knows how to make me smile”.

Without understanding why Amy started pining for her cat. Everything was just fine and yet she desperately wanted to hold her more than ever.

It was Marigold’s turn to experience a touch of memory loss.

“Trixie?”

Suddenly recognition dawned upon her.

“Oh, your kitten. Can’t you see her any time? Oh well, I guess the heart wants what it wants”.

Mew.

Amy turned around and gasped. Her gorgeous black and tan furbaby was running straight towards Amy, calling for her.

“Trixie?”

Amy did not care how she was here; she was just pleased that she could have a cuddle.

For a lovely moment, she was lost in soft fur and kitty love. Marigold may well have been staring at them for the whole time for all that she knew. When the two girls finally locked eyes, Marigold gave her a shy smile.

“Would I be able to hold her? I’ve never seen such a tiny kitten up close before.”

Have I never shown you Trixie before? It’s not like me not to share her with my friends, is it?

Again, Amy could not say for certain. Who was to say what kind of girl she was? For all that she knew she was a mean and selfish brat.

For the moment at least, Amy was feeling generous.

“Of course you can hold her.”

When Amy passed over her kitten, she could see that Marigold had been telling the truth. Her eyes widened as she realised how soft Trixie’s fur really was. At first the two of them were awkward together, but then they got

to know each other. Marigold giggled with delight.

“I can see why you would want to cuddle her all day. She is a little sweetheart”.

Marigold passed Trixie back and then asked what was next.

“If you were given a perfect day to spend what would you like to do now? Trixie can come too if that is what you would like”.

“Hypothetically right?”

By the way Amy was being swept up in her enthusiasm it was like she had the power to grant Amy’s every wish.

Once again, Amy decided to humour her.

“ I would probably head out to the library next. I could spend all day there, sitting in the comfy chairs and reading every book I can get my hands on. I love a good story”.

Marigold nodded and replied that she did too.

Once upon a time a Queen gazed upon the snow falling outside of her ebony windowsill. Distracted by the snowflakes, she pricked her finger on her sewing needle and watched three drops of blood fall to the ground. Desperately, she wished for a daughter to call her own.

2.

What on Earth?

For a brief moment Amy lost all sense of herself. The voice of a small boy had rung out in her head. It sounded like he was reading her a fairy tale from a storybook.

“I think that we should think bigger,” Marigold announced. Was it Amy’s imagination or did the girl suddenly look flustered?

“If you could go anywhere at all, where would you go? Think, Amy. Make it somewhere exciting and fun.”

“I was too sick to go to the fair last weekend,” Amy admitted unconsciously. “I cried for an hour when I heard that I had missed out. They travel from town to town so there was no chance of me getting to go another time. Who knows when I will get the chance to go again?”

Amy gasped as she registered what she had just said. Did she just say sick? Amy felt just fine and she certainly didn’t remember being sick. Why had she just said that? Could it be that she wasn’t okay at all?

“Brilliant suggestion, Amy. Let’s get going then.”

A second later Amy found that she had been transported.

Looking around her, Amy’s senses went into overload. She looked at the sparkling lights, the stalls of delicious

food and all of the children running around having so much fun. Hearing the sound of joy filled screams, Amy looked up in time to see a roller coaster carriage zip past her head. She spotted a carousel, some boats, and a mountain where a log full of people had started plummeting down. Then she laid eyes upon that unmistakable castle.

“Disneyland! How are we in Disneyland? I don’t live anywhere near Disneyland!”

“We walked here, silly. How else? Boy your head is really mixed up today, isn’t it?”

Completely ignoring the logic of the situation, Marigold grabbed Amy’s hand and started running.

Amy forgot her fear and confusion as more and more wonderful things to see and do caught her eye. Marigold dragged her into a line and before she knew what was happening, Amy was spinning around in teacups having a marvellous time.

“I’m sorry, Trixie. Was that too much for you?”

Amy’s only regret was her poor kitty. Trixie’s green eyes continued to spin long after exiting the ride.

Marigold settled Trixie with a rub behind the ears before turning back to Amy.

“Did you have fun? Are you happy that we came here?”

Amy noticed the eagerness behind Marigold’s eyes. She felt like her friend’s entire happiness depended upon this answer. Amy nodded, for it was the truth. She loved it here and couldn’t wait to keep exploring the park.

Marigold grinned and then gave her an excited hug.

“I’m so glad. Where shall we go next then? The Haunted Mansion? Tomorrowland? We could always stop and watch the parade?”

Once again, Amy was overwhelmed.

“Do I have to choose?”

Marigold shook her head. If Amy wished it she would give her all of the time in the world to explore.

The two girls and a very stunned kitten ran around the park, making the most of their time together. Amy might very well have stayed swept up in blissful happiness if they had not walked past a beautiful young woman, greeting the guests as a very famous princess.

The girl grew into a beauty, with lips red as blood, skin as white as snow and hair as black as ebony; everything that her mother had wished for. Sadly the Queen had died and the Princess was raised by her father and her wicked stepmother the Evil Queen. The Evil Queen became jealous, for in everybody's eyes, including the King, Snow White was the fairest of them all.

Once again, Amy had vanished, lost in the narration of a fairy tale. This time it had been read aloud by a young girl with an English accent.

"I don't feel too good", Marigold moaned. Was it Amy's imagination or had she just blinked away a couple of tears.

"Sure you do", Amy argued. She was enjoying her time with the brightly spirited girl. It was now her time to give Marigold some happiness back in return.

"You can choose next, Marigold. Where are we going to next?"

Marigold shook her head. This wasn't how this was supposed to work.

"Fine then, I'll choose."

Amy considered her options. An idea struck her but it wasn't something that they could do in this park.

"Do you know what I wish for the most. Our holiday cabin by the beach. I love swimming in the ocean so much that Dad calls me his little minnow. I wish that you could see it, Marigold. You have never seen a prettier spot."

Marigold smiled.

"Done."

3.

The roar of the ocean echoed across the beach. Sitting on her favourite striped towel, Amy looked out upon the white sand and the sea crashing upon the shore.

"How?"

Marigold squealed with delight.

"You are so right, Amy. It's gorgeous here. What do you say? Are you ready for a swim?"

A swim? How could Marigold be thinking of a swim when they had just one set of clothes? Amy looked down, debating whether to jump in anyway when she noticed how she was dressed. She was all set to go swimming, already dressed in her yellow polka dot swimmers and rashie.

Impossible.

Amy's poor brain couldn't take anymore. There was no way for them to have travelled so far and for her to have

gotten changed without any memory of it whatsoever. The only conclusion that Amy could come to was that this wasn't really happening at all. Was this a dream then, or something else?

Mew!

Dream or not, Amy panicked as she noticed Trixie was already halfway down the beach, heading towards the surf. Trust her contrary cat. Trixie was the only furball in existence who actually enjoyed bath time.

"Come back here, Trixie!"

Amy ran towards the water. Trixie continued on her merry way, leading her mistress down towards the ocean. As soon as Amy felt the first splash of the salty water between her toes, it all came flooding back.

4.

"Hang in there, my little minnow. Please open your eyes."

Everything had gone wrong so quickly. One moment Amy had been splashing upon her boogie board having fun. The next moment, caught in a rip, she felt herself being pulled down by the current. Amy remembered waking up in her father's arms upon the sand and learning that he had saved her life with CPR. He had sent her back to the cabin to rest but this wasn't the last of her problems. Her chill turned into a cold. Her cold turned into pneumonia with a dangerously high fever to go along with it. Amy remembered holding her father's hand, the sound of the ambulance sirens and then nothing.

"Oh God. I am sick. I have to get out of here."

Amy turned to run back towards Marigold. The dream girl was already behind her.

"Marigold, I don't know how much you have to do with this but if you are somehow holding me here you have to let go. I need to wake up. My father, my sisters, Isabella. They all must be so worried about me."

Marigold closed her eyes for a second. Recognition hit her eyes.

"Isabella. So you already have a best friend, then?"

Amy nodded. How had she been able to forget about Issy for so long?"

"I do. Please, Marigold, if it is in your power, let me go".

"Amy, I can't do that..."

"What do you mean you can't. This is my body, my life and my dream. If I want you out that is exactly what is going to happen. Get out of my head!"

Marigold looked crushed.

"Of course I will leave if that is what you want. All that I meant is that you were never a prisoner, Amy. I would have loved nothing more than to keep dreaming with you. I cannot begin to tell you how lonely I am. What I

would never, ever do is hold you here against your will. Believe me, the only thing that I ever wanted was your happiness.”

“Run away, you poor child.” Snow White ran away from the huntsman and the Evil Queen, disappearing into the deep, dark forest. To cover her tracks, the Huntsman came up with a plan. Later, he gave the Queen what she most desired, Snow White’s heart in a box.

Though it was, in fact, the heart of a young boar, Snow White felt like her own heart had been ripped out instead. She could never return home again.

Amy was distracted by an older girl with a very soft voice. When she awoke from the narration this time, Marigold was gone. Left only with little Trixie to comfort her, Amy held her kitten tightly and willed herself to wake up.

5.

“What a sweet little cottage,” Snow White remarked. Desperate for shelter, the princess opened the front door and let herself in. When she saw the seven little chairs set around such a tiny table, she gasped. “Oh my! This must be the home of seven little children!”

This time Amy was aware of her surroundings. She didn’t see any dwarfs. Instead she saw seven children in hospital robes gathered around the bedside of a sleeping girl. They were reading to her out of a large, gold embossed book of fairytales. Amy moved closer and gasped as she recognised the girl in the bed.

“Marigold!”

Amy was afraid, for Marigold as well as for herself. It was just dawning upon Amy that she was watching this scene floating from the roof of a hospital ward.

“Marigold! Marigold, where are you?”

Amy roamed the halls and the wards, desperate to find her. At last, Amy found everybody that she had been looking for in the same room. Next to her unconscious body was a doctor, her father and her little sister Stella. On the floor next to her bed, Marigold’s spirit was crying.

“Thank goodness, I’ve found you”.

Amy offered out her hand.

“I’ve found your body. Come on. It is time to bring you back and wake you up.

Marigold gave her a look of distrust”.

“Why would you want to help me? I imprisoned you, remember?”

Amy apologised. She had been so frightened that she had jumped to the wrong conclusion.

“You helped me to stay strong and to not be scared. I cannot begin to thank you. Let me return the favour and help you back?”

Marigold shook her head and curled into a ball.

“Those kids that you saw started reading me that story because I am so fair skinned. What they don’t understand is how much that story hurts me. Evil stepmothers are real, Amy. My stepmother made my father choose between us so often. I know that she was jealous of me. After we all moved into her house together, she made it perfectly clear that I wasn’t welcome. I had been out of home for almost a year before my accident and I did not hear one mention on the news or by the police that my father was trying to find me. I’m unwanted, Amy.”

Marigold sighed. Somehow she found the strength to smile bravely.

“At least while I am here I have the power to visit the other children in their dreams and cheer them up. I stop them from being alone and scared. Even when people like you come and break my heart, I still would not trade these moments for anything. I am exactly where I want to be, Ames. What we should be doing is sending you home.”

That isn’t right, Amy thought. How can you pretend that this is alright when earlier you were telling me how lonely you are?

Before Amy could question her again, Marigold grabbed Amy’s hand and placed it on top of the flesh and blood hands under the blankets. Amy’s vision went hazy and then she was staring up at the hospital ceiling.

Amy’s father grabbed onto her hand like a lifeline.

“Daddy? Stella? Am I going to be alright?”

Amy’s father cried out tears of relief.

“Thanks to you, my little minnow. For you to be awake means that the antibiotics have started to work. You are going to be just fine.”

“Sissy, sissy.”

Four year old Stella leapt onto Amy’s lap.

“Ima taking care of Trixie for you. Daddy said that she couldn’t come but next time I will sneak her in for you.”

Amy laughed. Secrecy was a skill that young Stella had yet to master. She sat up to hug her sister and nearly jumped when her eyes saw the foot of her bed. Though she was faint, growing fainter all of the time, Marigold was here too, smiling and watching.

“What’s your name?”, Amy mouthed to the friendly spirit. “I want to thank you properly.”

Marigold looked very surprised to be asked.

‘Marigold?’

Amy shook her head.

“Your full name, please.”

Marigold shrugged.

‘Promise that you won’t laugh.’

Amy promised.

‘My name is Marigold Primrose Snow.’

Amy managed one last thank you before Marigold faded away. Then she pressed her buzzer and called for a nurse.

6.

Amy recovered in hospital for the next three days. She was so sleepy that most of it passed by in a blur. On her fourth and last morning, a nurse came in with what she had been praying for; a phone number. After she had finished talking on the phone, Amy’s energy was restored. About to leap out of bed to deliver the good news, she was interrupted by a knock on the door.

“I was hoping you would stop by”, Amy exclaimed. “Come in.”

The seven storybook children were a diverse bunch. The eldest was around fifteen and looked to be of an Indian background. The youngest was a boy the same age as little Stella. As they crowded around Amy, she felt like royalty.

“Is it okay for me to say that you remind me of the seven dwarfs?”

The children nodded and laughed. The littlest boy made a correction.

“We’re the eight dwarfs now. We’re all friends of Snow White. Where did she take you? Was there ice cream?”

“We’re all friends of Marigold; he means,” added the English girl, Acacia.

“Amy, you’re not going mad,” promised Maraide, the oldest ‘dwarf’. “Marigold has visited all of our dreams at one time or another. I heard that she has been brightening up the ward for months now, ever since she was brought in. My old ward mate, Toby, handed me the storybook on his last day here. He told me it was our job to take care of Snow White, just like she has been taking care of us. What Alex, what all of us want to know was where did she take you? If we cannot get Marigold to wake up then sharing stories about her is the next best thing, don’t you think?”

Amy nodded. She shared her adventures with the children and assured little Alex that there was ice cream in Disneyland. In turn the other children shared their dreams with Amy.

Marigold had given them so much happiness. She had tried her best to grant every wish, to travel to the zoo with Nicholas, the basketball game with Ned and to the ice cream parlour with Alex. She had taken Maraide back to India, gone scuba diving with Bradley, skipped with Acacia for hours and even flown to fairyland with Lilybeth.

“Thank you”, Amy smiled after they had all finished. Then she let them in on her little secret; that she was about to try and wake ‘Snow White’.

“Will you all come with me? I think that you would all be a tremendous help.”

“Heigh ho”, Alex confirmed. Amy took that as a yes.

Maraide and the other shook their heads before adding to the chorus of Heigh Hos. Of course they would help.

7.

Amy sat next to Marigold’s bed. The storybook children gathered around them as well.

“Marigold.”

Amy gently shook Snow’s shoulder.

“I’m going home today, Marigold so I have lots to tell you. I don’t want to say goodbye. I want you to wake up. So do the other children.”

Each of the seven took it in turns to hold Marigold’s hand and tell her how much they had enjoyed spending time with her. By the end, Amy prayed that Marigold had come to realise how mistaken she had been.

“You’ve made us so happy, Marigold. Don’t you understand? We don’t think of you as Snow White because of your fair skin. You remind everyone of Snow White because you are our Princess. Marigold Primrose Snow, you are so loved and so wanted. Come back to us. We could do wonderful things in real life. We might even make it to Disneyland for real one of these days. You’ll never know unless you try. Please Marigold, how can the two of us start being best friends if you don’t open your eyes?”

How could that possibly work?

The whisper was so faint that Amy could not be sure if she had heard it at all. She answered the question anyway.

“We would make it work. Isabella won’t mind if we become friends. Knowing her she will want to be your friend as well. All of us do.”

Then Amy delivered her news.

“Your father is coming to the hospital, Marigold. She was a very evil stepmother. The only reason why your father never searched for you was that she told him that you were already dead. She told him that you had drowned. Your father was furious when he found out he had been tricked and lied to and he never wants anything to do with your stepmother ever again. He chose you, Marigold. We all choose you. Please choose us back.”

Awakened from her curse at long last, the sleeping Princess opened her eyes.

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