

# THE FAERIES OF FABLE ISLAND

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## CHAPTER ONE

Secluded throughout all time as though the very nature of its existence would be in jeopardy if it was ever found, Fable Island rests, as all good islands of its kind rest, in the imaginations of those who believe in the faerie realm. This is to say that only those with imaginations of a certain aptitude know that a faerie realm exists. Without them, ordinary people like you and me would go about exploiting our natural resources, each other, and what is good. I don't think I believe in the faerie part, but I do believe we should be better stewards of our planet. So why, after over a hundred and thirty years of collective speculation and uncertainty around the globe, am I the one to see the island, long ago forgotten or dismissed as imaginary, lifting itself off the watery horizon like a rising sun?

I close my eyes and count 1-2-3. When I open them, and the island is still there, I close them again and count 1-2-3-4-5. I open them once more to see that the island is still in view and is lifting itself out of the water like a phoenix rising from the ashes. I can't help but laugh. That's a cliché. There are no phoenixes. Certainly, there are no imaginary islands that suddenly become real. These are myths. I close my eyes against the early morning sun and recite my mother's prayer. "Please heavenly angels, grant me the safety of mind and the security of the ground below my feet so that I may walk about my day without fear."

I open my eyes again, dig my toes into the coarse sand at the edge of the water, and scrutinize the horizon. The island remains. I turn to look behind me but the rocky Maine beach is empty. There is no one here to verify if what I am seeing is real. I fold my hands over my eyes like a pioneer coming across a mirage in the American West. Perhaps she sees a lone oak or an abandoned homestead that might offer a bit of shade, a respite, a glass of sherry, or a comfortable chair to sit upon as she passes through another foreboding territory on her way to someplace grand. I stare at the island still emerging from the gray waves and imagine myself as a pioneer on such a journey. I would do well as a lone traveler, I think. I have no one. I am alone.

I smile, hesitantly, as though this is all some distant memory. A tall tale. A long-told story. I would do well as a lone traveler until I would need a comforting glass of sherry. Isn't that what all fine ladies traveling across the dusty West over a hundred and fifty years ago would have wanted? I throw a pebble into the choppy water and curse my mom for telling me these stories. "I'm not some helpless woman, Mom. Geez. You weren't either. Why did you make me pretend that we were?"

I pick up a handful of small round pebbles and chuck them into the waves. "Dressing me up in your antique clothes and serving me all those glasses of lavender tea in your chipped crystal goblets. Answer me. Why were we always pretending that Fable Island was real? It's not real Mom. It never was. Ever!" I turn from the apparition. "You're gone from me, Mom. So go," I cry, stumbling on the slippery beach stones. "Stop haunting me."

The beach consists of chestnut-colored pebbles that have yet to be pulverized into sand by the endless motion of water moving them back and forth. They are still round like our planet turning itself in circles year after year. I imagine them moving in unison like a school of

minnows as the ocean waves push them about this way and then that, as our planet moves us around the sun and then around again.

The waves are angry today. They hit my shins and then my thighs until I step quickly out of the way. My blue jeans are getting soaked. I'm not an idiot. I know I shouldn't stay in the water, but I no longer feel smart as the cold burns like a fire inside of me, daring me to dive under the angry waves. It is but another one of those painful moments that come on without warning when I think about entering the water and leaving this world behind. I pull back from the waves, panicked. I would never do that! But something isn't right. I know it. I turn away from the island and curse my mother and father for putting fairy tale ideas into my head. There are no fairy tales. No imaginary islands. No Faerie Queen. No Peter Pan. But when I think about my mom, I think of Fable Island. I can't help it. I push my way over the uneven ground and trip. "Go. I don't need you, Mom. Stop getting into my head."

There must be hundreds of thousands of these granite pebbles strewn across our rugged beach, which is located much farther north than the soft sands and calm turquoise waters of the Caribbean. The stones push up against jagged granite boulders, these mottled gray and oversized angular jewels, that once escaped from a dark pine forest and tumbled down to the sea. The ground is littered with ribbons of dried ink-colored seaweed and rotting logs carried up onto the beach during the many fierce high tides. They have never been retrieved by clawing waves during the many reoccurring storms, so as a part of some forgotten land they, too, live on this beach as a lasting reminder of all that is dead.

I glance toward the island praying to some mythical god that it won't be there, but it is. It's not supposed to be there. There's no reason for it to be. We don't know for certain that Fable

Island exists for there is no proof, no confirmation, and no photograph. It doesn't appear on any map because it exists only in the imaginations of those who believe in a faerie realm. There. I have said all that I need to say. There is no island. There is no faerie realm. There is no story. "There's no going back and putting something to right, Mom," I shout. "You died and left me! Dad abandoned me! That's so wrong!"

I can just begin to make out the tall wiry spires from emerald-colored firs jutting out through the mist, but I choke back my words and grimace. I meant fog. Mist belongs in fairy tales. I pull my hands through my tangled hair and shout, "Is anyone seeing this? Hello? What is happening to me?"