

Beyond the Wall

Filler



There's a wall at the edge of the forest. No pony knows who built it or how it got there, but it's been there as long as any pony remembers.

I saw the wall once. Me, Mommy, Daddy, and all the other village ponies went picking berries in the forest, and that was when I saw it. It was made of stone bricks, piled one by one on top of each other, making funny staircase shapes in the wall. It went up high, almost to the sky, so that the only things that could go over it were birds and clouds. I didn't see the bottom of it because it was covered by trees. I tried going near it for a better look, but Mommy said that good little ponies don't go near the wall, so I didn't.

Mommy and Daddy are nice ponies. So are all the ponies in the village. Mommy and Daddy said that we have to be nice to each other, or else the forest monsters will eat us. I never saw a forest monster before, but the forest is really big and deep and scary, and Mommy said forest monsters would attack us if we weren't nice to each other.

I asked her how the forest monsters would know if we weren't nice to each other, but she said, they would know. They always know, and if we weren't nice to each other, they would get us.

Mommy said that's why I don't have a sister anymore, because the forest monsters ate her.

The forest monsters are why we don't go out of the village except in giant groups, like when we go berry picking. Our groups are always big, with lots of grown ups and sometimes some little ponies like me. Sometimes, there are scary noises in the forest, which all the big ponies say are the forest monsters, even though they just sound like birds and bugs to me. But the big ponies carry swords and spears with them, because they know that the forest monsters are trying to trick them. Forest monsters are smart and crafty, but we're usually okay because we have swords and spears and Gaea's love.

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My best friend was a little older than me, and her name was Fairy Dust. My name is Whisperleaf, and Daddy named me Whisperleaf because when I was a foal, I was really, really quiet, whispering like a leaf blowing in the wind. I don't know why they called her Fairy Dust, but her name was Fairy Dust, just like how my name is Whisperleaf.

They called her a pegasus. I never heard that word before I met her. It means "pony with wings." Like a bird. She was the only pegasus in the village, so she was special. No pony else in the village had wings, not even her mommy and daddy. We were called earth

ponies, and we couldn't fly. But that was okay, because we didn't need to fly. You could walk from one end of the village to the other after lunch and still come home in time for dinner. You couldn't go any further than that, because the village was surrounded by trees and monsters.

We played next to the forest a lot, and the grown ups would always let us as long as they could watch us so we were safe. We weren't allowed to go into the forest by ourselves, or else the monsters would get us, so we would usually just play next to the forest where grown ups could see us.

One day, Fairy Dust and I were playing with a ball. We were between Fungal Bloom's and Beetle Bark's houses, both made with bricks and planks. Fairy Dust sat on Fungal Bloom's roof which was only one story tall, so I could easily throw the ball up to her. It wasn't too easy, though, because the sun was almost right behind her, except covered by the tall forest trees. I had to squint my eyes real narrow to see her up there most of the time. At least Fungal Bloom's house had smoke coming out of its chimney, so the sun wasn't in my eyes too much, and I could run around to catch the ball. The dry leaves under my hooves went crunch, crunch as I stepped in the dirt.

When we were throwing the ball back and forth, she asked me, "Hey, Whisper, what do you think is on the other side of the forest?"

"What's on the other side of the forest?" I asked. "The wall, duh."

"No, no, no," she said, shaking her head. "On the other side of the forest *and* the wall. What's on the other side of the wall?"

I didn't know what was on the other side of the wall, but I knew that good ponies weren't supposed to go near it. I always thought that there were bigger, nastier forest monsters. Ones that don't sound like birds and bugs. So I told her that.

She laughed. "Silly, silly Whisper! If there are bigger, nastier forest monsters, why do birds keep coming and going?"

She jumped off the roof, flapping her wings to slowly fall to the ground. She couldn't fly, but she could fall more slowly than any other pony.

"I think the wall is for keeping the forest monsters in here," she said. "That's why birds keep coming and going. We have berries and fruit in here, but out there... Who knows? Maybe there are other pegasi."

I caught the ball, but I didn't throw it back. I told her that good little ponies weren't supposed to go near the wall. We were supposed to be good little ponies, or else the forest monsters would get us.

She looked sad. "Oh, right."

We didn't play ball much after that. When the sun went down, Fairy Dust took the ball with her and went home.

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I went home for dinner, and Mommy was waiting for me in front of the door, wearing the scarf over her head like she always does. Usually, when she waits in front of the door, it means I'm in trouble. But when I'm in trouble, she always has an angry look on her face, like when I spill my food on the ground or get mud inside the house. Today, she had a big smile, like she was happy to see me. That was good, because I was happy to see her, too.

"How was your day?" she asked me. I walked up to her through the gate in our wooden fence, and I gave her a great big hug.

"It was really fun," I said. "Me and Fairy Dust went playing ball again. I think I can throw the ball really high now."

She laughed, covering her mouth with a hoof. "That sounds like fun. I'm sure you two had a lot to talk about while you were playing."

I nodded my head up and down. "Mhm! We talked about how Greenstalks was being lazy and not doing his chores, and how yesterday's berries were super, super fresh."

Mommy walked into the house, and I followed her.

"Anything else, sweetie?" she asked. "Fungal Bloom's mother told me you and Fairy Dust had a really interesting conversation, and I'd like to hear it, too."

I looked around the house. Two bowls with steaming hot soup sat on top of the table in the middle of the room, and over the fireplace was a giant black pot, held up by a stick above a small fire. The fire didn't have much wood in it and the table only had two bowls, so I knew Daddy was out getting more firewood for us with a lot of other ponies.

I sat down at the table at my small spot, next to Daddy's big spot where he always sits. "I also talked to her about the wall."

Mommy sat down opposite of the table from me in her medium spot. "Oh?"

She stayed quiet for a little bit, staring into her soup. I stared at her while I started to slurp my own soup.

"Did she say anything else?" she finally said. Her smile didn't look as happy now.

"She asked me what was on the other side of the wall. I told her that I didn't even think about it because good little ponies don't go near the wall."

That made her smile happy again. "And you're a good little pony."

"What about Fairy Dust? Is she a good pony?"

"Well, sweetie, do you think she's a good pony?"

I looked down in my soup. There were two carrot pieces floating in the clear soup next to a celery stalk sticking out of the bowl. "I don't know, Mommy," I said. "I think she is. She never fights with anypony and she's always nice, like you and Mr. Ingot and Mrs. Oven and all the other ponies."

"But she was talking about the wall, wasn't she?"

"Yeah."

"And good little ponies don't go near the wall."

"Yeah."

Mommy finished the rest of her soup, then put her bowl down. It went thunk against the wooden table. "Do you still think she's a good pony?"

"Not really."

Mommy didn't say anything after that. She just smiled as I slowly slurped up the rest of my soup.

"Mommy?"

"Yes, sweetie?"

"Do you know what's on the other side of the wall?"

She stood up and went to stir the giant spoon around the pot in the fireplace. "Most of us think that Gaea put the wall there to keep out the nasty, evil things of the outside."

Daddy once told me that Gaea was the earth itself. Now I know that everypony knows that. Gaea was why we could grow food and why we could go out into the forest to pick berries. Gaea was why the forest monsters never came into our village, because Gaea loved the village and all the ponies in it. Gaea loved us as long as we were good, nice ponies.

"Gaea loves the village and everypony in it," I said.

"That's right, sweetie."

"But Gaea doesn't love anypony or anything outside of the village."

"Mhm."

"So the wall is to protect us from all the mean things that Gaea doesn't love."

Mommy chuckled. "You're a smart one, aren't you?"

I smiled too. I love it when ponies say nice things about me, especially when it's Mommy or Daddy.

"So am I still a good pony?"

"Good ponies stay away from the wall, both in body and in mind. As long as you don't think about the wall, you're a good pony. But if Fairy Dust makes you think about the wall..." Mommy took out a big bowl for Daddy and poured two big spoons of soup into it, then put it on the table. "Then you need to stay away from her, too."

That was when Daddy came home with lots of firewood on his back, chopped up into nice logs to put in the fireplace. I jumped up to him and shouted "Daddy" over and over, and I told him about how I played with Fairy Dust. But I didn't say anything about how I talked to Fairy Dust or Mommy about the wall, because I'm a good pony.

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The next day, after I finished planting vegetables in the garden, I walked to Fairy Dust's house so we could play with her ball again. On the way, I walked past the village elder's house. I could hear him and Mommy talk inside, but they sounded angry. I wanted to hear what Mommy had to say, so I crawled under a window and made sure no pony could see me. It was okay, because most grown up ponies were out harvesting herbs that only grew in the forest.

I heard Mommy talk first. "...Going to be nothing but trouble," she said. "I feel it in my skin, seeping into my bones."

The elder said, "It's too early to pass judgment, Blackberry. She has expressed curiosity about the wall, and that is only natural. Were you not once curious as to what lies beyond the wall?"

"Yes, but this – this is different!"

"How is it different? Fairy Dust is like any other child. She was born in this village and has never seen what lies beyond the wall. For her to want to know is only natural, but as long as she stays within the village, she has Gaea's blessings."

"She's a pegasus. One day, she'll fly away from us, away from Gaea."

"Just because she has wings does not mean that she shall leave us. Tell me, Blackberry – do you have a knife in your home?"

"I do, elder. I use it to cut vegetables. What of it?"

"Have you ever turned it upon another pony, like you would a sword?"

"Of course not!"

"But you have the ability to do so, much like how Fairy Dust may one day have the ability to spread her wings and leave us. You have, of course, not done so because you bear Gaea's love in your heart. And if Fairy Dust has Gaea's love in hers, she shall stay with us forever."

"But Whisperleaf has no friend like Fairy Dust! If she does leave, then Whisperleaf might..."

Mommy didn't finish her sentence. The elder and Mommy didn't say anything for a little bit, but I could hear the elder walk up to Mommy.

Then, the elder said, "The loss of your first daughter was hard on you. It was hard on Strongoak, and it was hard on all of us. But, Blackberry, you have been blessed with a second daughter. Whispersilk did not love Gaea, and so Gaea did not love her back. As long as Whisperleaf loves Gaea, all shall be right."

I thought I heard Mommy cry a little.

"Now, be calm and kind with Fairy Dust. We must be good to one another, and not only because we need to for Gaea's love, but because it is through kindness that our village stands strong."

Whispersilk wasn't a name I heard before that, but it sounded like she was my sister who the forest monsters ate. Maybe that was why Mommy didn't like Fairy Dust. She was scared that if Fairy Dust went away, I would follow her. But that was silly, because I couldn't fly, and neither could she.

I heard some birds chirp loudly, and that made me remember that I was going to play with Fairy Dust and her ball. I got up from under the window and walked towards Fairy Dust's house on the other side of the village.

To get to Fairy Dust's house from my house, I had to walk between the elder's and the potter's houses, then cross the burbling creek that cuts our village in half. It's not a big creek, though. It has a few round rocks sticking out of the water, making wavy triangles flow out from them. It's only about six little ponies across, and me and my friends play in it a lot. There's a bridge that goes over it, but we like to walk through it because it gets our hooves wet. That's where I saw Fairy Dust waiting for me.

She was standing in the middle of creek without her ball, letting the water splash against her. Next to her was small wooden board. Her eyes were big and round, and she was smiling really widely, like she was excited to tell me something.

"Where were you?" she asked me. "I've been waiting all day for you, and boy, do I have something to show you!"

"You can fly now?!" Right after I said that, I thought about the elder's words.

"Nope, still can't," she said. "But what I can do is this!"

She put the board on the creek, which was deep enough for the board to float on. Then, she stood on the board, balancing herself on top of it.

"Watch closely," she said.

She started flapping her wings really fast, like a hummingbird, and that blew her around in the creek. She took the board in a circle around me faster than a grown up pony could run. The grown up ponies working in their gardens around us stopped their gardening to look at her, too. They were all amazed, with their eyes wide and mouths open.

"Hop on!" she said.

So I did, and we went up and down the creek. Her wings pushed us around the water, so I had to hold her by the legs to stay on the board. The wind pushed through our manes and the water splashed at our hooves as Fairy Dust zig-zagged through the creek.

We played in the creek until the sun went down and the evening birds cried. She never brought up the wall that day, but she kept looking up the stream into the forest whenever we got close.

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One week later, a lot of grown up ponies took us into the forest to show us little ponies what mushrooms were safe to eat and what mushrooms were bad. Since we had me and Fairy Dust and every other little pony out in the forest, there were more big ponies than there normally were. Fungal Bloom's mommy and daddy, Mr. Morel and Mrs. Truffle, were in charge of teaching everypony how to pick mushrooms the right way.

We were pretty far away from the village. Out here, I could hear birds chirp high and loud, and I saw lots of colorful bugs of all sorts of shapes and sizes. The sun was right above us, shining through the tops of the trees, and below us was lots of dirt that felt cool as it ran under my hooves.

"Come, children!" said Mrs. Truffle. She stood next to a bunch of dotted red mushrooms under a tree. "These are crimson caps. If you're ever lost in the forest, you can eat these for food. However, they taste really bad, so you should only eat them if you're really hungry."

Tinderspark ran up straight to the mushrooms and took a big bite out of one, but then he scrunched up his face and spit it out. We all laughed while he brushed the red chunks off his tongue.

Fairy Dust stood right next to me. "Haha! How'd it taste, Tinderspark?"

"Feh! Awful!" shouted Tinderspark. "It's almost as bad as my dad's cooking!"

We all laughed a little more, until something made some crashing sounds a little further away, like a really big bird flying into the top of a tree and hitting lots of branches while falling down.

All the grown up ponies with spears pointed them at the sound, and the grown up ponies with swords pulled them out, then slowly walked forwards. The rest of the grown up ponies gathered us little ponies together where they could see us.

We were all scared, because we knew that it was a forest monster who wanted to eat us. All except for Fairy Dust, who wanted to see the monster for herself.

When the sword and spear ponies ran deeper into the forest, she ran out and followed them. So I followed her. None of the other ponies saw us because they were too scared to look up.

She followed the ponies, and I followed her, and I ran into her when she suddenly stopped. "Get down, Whisper!" she said quietly, and she pushed my head down behind a fallen tree. "Look!"

I looked. I saw all the sword and spear ponies creeping towards another pony lying on the ground. She was lying on her side, rubbing her head.

She also had wings, like Fairy Dust. She was a pegasus.

"Of all the rotten..." was what she said before Mr. Amber pointed his spear in her face.

"Foul beast!" he said, and the other ponies surrounded her, too.

"Whoa, whoa!" The pegasus held up her hooves. "Easy, there! I didn't mean to crash in your forest! I just wasn't watching where I was flying, one thing led to another, and I, uh, kinda landed here." She lifted one of her wings, then put it down. "Ah, Celestia, I think it's broken."

"We know what you are, monster!" shouted Miss Pebble. "You will do no harm as long as long as we remain vigilant!"

"Monster?!" shouted the pegasus. "I'm just a weather pony, just checking some things out around here!"

Mr. Amber said, "You are from beyond the wall, are you not?"

"Well, I did fly over a giant wall just now. Just wanted to see what was in here. This place is kinda off the edge of the map."

"So you are from beyond the wall, and thus, you do not love Gaea, nor does Gaea love you." He closed his eyes. "We release you from your tortured existence."

Mr. Amber pulled back his spear and the pegasus's eyes went wide like dinner plates, but Fairy Dust put a hoof over my eyes before I could see what happened next. But I know what happened next, because the pegasus's scream echoed through the forest and scared away the birds.

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The next day, they buried the pegasus where they killed her. No pony was there, except for the ponies who killed her. Fairy Dust told me about it after she heard it from Beetle Bark, who heard it from some pony else. When she told me about it, she was really quiet and serious, always looking at the ground, never looking up.

Right after they killed her, Miss Pebble came up to us, with some blood still on her side. Fairy Dust was lying in the dirt on her side, crying into her hooves. I turned around with my back against the tree trunk so I didn't see what Fairy Dust didn't want me to see.

Miss Pebble told us that forest monsters come in all shapes and sizes and forms, including other ponies. She told us that it didn't matter what they looked like, because they didn't love Gaea and Gaea didn't love them back.

Fairy Dust asked her with tears in her eyes why they had to kill her, why they couldn't just let her fly away like she flew in.

Miss Pebble said it was because that there was no way they could have been sure that the pegasus wasn't a forest monster. If it was a forest monster, they had to kill it, because forest monsters were evil and wanted to harm us.

Fairy Dust said that she might have been just a normal pony. She was like a bird that made its nests high in the forest's trees. They weren't monsters. She didn't have to be a monster.

Miss Pebble said that it didn't matter. If it was a forest monster who changed herself to look like a pony, then it needed to be purged. If it wasn't a forest monster, it still came

from beyond the wall, where Gaea's love didn't reach. So then it was worse than a forest monster.

Because that's what happens to ponies without Gaea's love. They turn into forest monsters. The forest monsters didn't eat their bodies, but their minds and souls.

If it was a pony once, then they didn't kill it. They rescued it from having to be a forest monster.

We sat against the walls of a house, watching gardeners carry their flowers and cabbages around in baskets. The sun sat still in the sky, and the only sounds we heard were the rustling of the leaves in the wind and the water running through the creek.

"She was just like me," said Fairy Dust.

She took a rock off the ground, and threw it into the creek. It splashed with a sploonk.

"She was just like us. She was a pony."

"She looked like us," I said, "but she wasn't a pony. Didn't you hear Miss Pebble? She was a forest monster pretending to be a pony. If it was only us two and her, she would eat us right up."

"But I don't believe that!"

She jumped up and landed right next to the creek, then stomped her hooves in the water, making big splashes.

"You saw her!"

Splash.

"She was harmless!"

Splash.

"She was hurt!"

Splash, splash.

"She didn't have Gaea's love," I said. I walked up to her. "She was either a forest monster or a monster from outside the wall. A monster."

"And why didn't Gaea love her? Why does Gaea not love ponies outside the village? Isn't loving her good enough for her to love them back?"

I didn't know what to say.

She picked up another rock and threw it further into the creek. "My mother talked to me last night."

"What did she say?"

"She asked me if I was alright, if I saw anything that I shouldn't have seen. I told her that I did, that I saw the other pegasus, and Mr. Amber, and the spear –"

She sniffled. "I can still see it. The way she just hung there, pinned to the... No, I shouldn't be telling you this."

"Anyways, she gave me a hug, but then I asked her why there was another pegasus from beyond the wall. She couldn't tell me. I asked her why Gaea didn't love anypony outside of the village. She couldn't tell me. I asked her why ponies turned into forest monsters. She couldn't tell me that, but she told me something else."

She sat down, and she patted the creekside next to her. I sat down next to her.

"Do you know what happened to your sister?"

I shook my head slowly.

She breathed in deep and puffed out her chest, then let it out. "Your sister's name was Whispersilk. She disappeared one night, before you were born. The entire village went looking for her, but no pony found her. Five days later, they found something written on the wall with berry juice: 'I'm gone. Signed, Whispersilk.'

"They thought maybe she'd gone up the creek and out the wall, but the creek pours out of a hole in the wall that no pony can climb or swim up. Now, they say that whenever you go near that place, you can feel like something's always watching you. And when you do, the air around you feels thicker, like you're caught in a spider web. That's what Whispersilk is now, so says my mother."

She threw another rock into the creek. "Oh, why am I telling you this? If they didn't want you to know, it was probably for a good reason."

"Fairy Dust?"

"Yeah, Whisper?"

"You won't go away, will you?"

She looked surprised. "Of course not! I could never leave you."

"Do you have Gaea's love in your heart?"

"I guess. I mean, don't we all?"

"And are you a good pony?"

She kept quiet for a second. "Well, do you think I'm a good pony?"

"I think so."

But that was a lie. I didn't like to lie, especially to my best friend.

That was the last time I heard anything about my sister, since when I asked Mommy and Daddy about it later, they told me not to ask anymore questions about her. Whispersilk wasn't a good pony anymore, and they wanted me to still be a good pony.

Mommy asked me why I brought it up. I told her that Fairy Dust told me that her mommy told her about Whispersilk and that I wasn't sure if Fairy Dust was still a good pony. Mommy told me that she would talk to Fairy Dust's mommy tomorrow.

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I woke up in the middle of the night. Mommy and Daddy were still sleeping, but Fairy Dust came into our house and nudged me awake. Her nose and coat were wet, and when she nudged me, I got wet, too.

She put a hoof over her lips and said, "Shhh," and had me follow her outside. The moon was high in the sky. Owls hooted and crickets chirped while the wind rustled the leaves.

"What are we doing?" I asked her.

"I have to show you something," she said as she pulled me along by the hoof to the creek. "You need to see this."

At the creek was her board, floating around in the current. We got on it and she pushed us to the start of the forest, but then I told her to stop, and she did. No pony saw us because every pony was asleep. Forest monsters weren't supposed to attack the village if we were nice ponies, which we were.

"What's wrong, Whisper? If I'm going to show you what you need to see, then we're going to need to go into the forest."

"But there are forest monsters in there! They'll eat us!"

She sighed quietly. "Whisper?"

"What?"

"There are no forest monsters."

I blinked. "No... forest monsters?"

"There were no forest monsters when I went into the forest myself yesterday. After you went home, I went up the creek to check out the hole in the wall. My mother was right. The hole might be big enough for a couple big ponies to squeeze through, but it's way too high for us to climb. I can't fly up there or get up there with my board, either.

"But I found a hole in a hollowed out tree, and there, I found a tunnel. A tunnel going under the wall and out into beyond the wall. It's not very deep, but it goes straight under the wall, where even the wall doesn't reach. It leads outside, Whisper. Haven't you ever wondered what's outside?"

I shook my head no. I told her that I never thought about it because good ponies don't think about the wall or what's beyond it.

"It's beautiful, Whisper. It's like some pony took a giant quilt and spread it out over the land. Rippling hills of tall, lush grass, flowery fields as far as the eye can see, and a star-lit sky uncovered by trees. The creek – this creek – is part of a bigger creek. A river. And there are all sorts of fish living in it, not just the same small ones we get in our creek."

I told her that I didn't care. Beyond the wall was outside of the reach of Gaea's love. Anything out there was a monster.

"No, Whisper," she said. "You need to see for yourself. Once you see, you'll understand."

I shook my head again. I told her that it didn't matter.

She grabbed my hooves and looked into my eyes, like she was staring into my soul. "You won't get it if you don't see it for yourself! You have to see it! You have to!"

I called her name.

"Yeah?"

I asked her if she still thought she was a good pony.

"I think so. Why?"

I asked her if she still loved Gaea.

"I do, but I get the feeling that Gaea doesn't love me back."

That was when I jumped off the board and waded through to the edge of the creek.

She shouted, "Whisper, wait!" But I didn't.

I ran straight to the elder's house, since I thought he knew what to do. As I ran, I heard Fairy Dust's wings flap, pushing her up the creek and into the forest.

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They buried Fairy Dust in the village so that Gaea could still love her. She's a little mound of dirt with a twig sticking out of it now. They rescued her before she stopped loving Gaea, so she's still a good pony. That's what her mommy and daddy told me.

They found her trying to dig up a patch of dirt in the forest next to the creek and the wall. She kept saying something about a way out, but the ponies couldn't find anything. She said that if the ponies of the village really cared for each other like they said they did to ward off forest monsters, they'd care for her, too. They told her that's why they went to rescue her, because they cared for her.

But whenever I think about her now, I think about the wall. About my sister's message and where the creek starts. About the tunnel and the flowery fields and grassy hills beyond it.

I don't think about her anymore because I'm a good pony, and good ponies don't think about the wall.