

By Thistle By Thimble

All Story Descriptions by Season

Find magic in nooks and crooks, in baskets and burrows, and on seemingly ordinary back roads and side streets. Listen to the quiet whisperings of the heart. Attend to what nature teaches. Discover the secrets sung on the wind. This series of original adventure tales will open your eyes to new places and characters from around the world and times gone by.



Autumn Season:

This is a collection of 13 autumn stories, for the 13 weeks of autumn.

The Sweetgrass Basket

A hard-working family is given a vacation on an island along the Carolina coast.

Despite the fact that their small business is having hard times, they decide to take a risk and go. On the way there, they are gifted a sweet grass basket that, they are told, 'will give back whatever you put in it.' They are encouraged to put a wish inside, and when the family agrees on their wish — they are all amazed at the true magic that the sweet grass basket offers.

The Tin Cup

Aman's father is a respected carpenter who says yes to every request. This provides him with lots of work, but he is often rushed and delivers an adequate product rather than his best. When a traveling tin craftsman presents his tin cups to the town, Aman is introduced to an entirely new and unusual way of making things — and he sees his own future.

The Goldsmith Who Knew How to Fish

Wren has a happy life in the city with the exception that he doesn't have time for his favorite activity: fishing. When his work as a goldsmith starts to suffer, his wife and his boss encourage him to take a week off and go fishing. He agrees and brings his little daughter to a nearby fishing river — and remembers why fishing is so important to him and his work as a jewelry maker.

The Carousel Painter

Brigit Miller and her brother have been hired by a famous carousel maker in Pennsylvania. They leave their native Germany and start work immediately, carving and painting the many beautiful carousel horses they make every day. Brigit is at first in charge of painting saddles, but when she is granted the

responsibility of painting an entire horse, she discovers a final touch that changes carousels and their colorful horses forever.

The Gentle Woodsman and the Final Fall Phoebe

At an early age, Tobias knew he would never marry. His love of the natural world gave him the sense of connection and dedication that he perceived marriage to be. Not until he is an old man and a late-to-migrate phoebe bird leads him to Dorothea, an expert forager who lives on the other side of the forest — only then does Tobias realize that there is a special kind of magic that comes from spending regular time with a particular friend.

Mrs. Hartwig and the Golden Talons

Mrs. Hartwig amazes her students and colleagues alike with her wealth of stories from around the world. "Where do you find them?" they ask. She gives them simple answers but the truth is a secret she keeps until her death. Her favorite niece discovers the secret when she is sorting through Mrs. Hartwig's things, and it lies in thousands and thousands of pages of her aunt's writing. It is a story unlike any other — and one that changes her life forever.

The Wizard's Words

A silent old man appears in a quiet, simple land in the mountains. The people care for him and soon learn that he has knowledge of herbs and healing. He stays with them for many years as their silent healer, never uttering a word — until one day, he stands on a table in the market square and begins to speak. He warns the villagers: a power-hungry wizard is expanding his domain in this direction. Life will be very different if this wizard takes over the land. But fear not, he tells them, for he himself is also a powerful wizard and is dedicated to protecting them all. However, he surprises the entire village with his means of preparing to meet the warring wizard.

The Thimble, the Stein, and the Lantern

Pavla is one of many tailors in the great city-state of Ragusa. He lives alone and generally keeps to himself. But he wasn't always that way. Long ago, he fell in love with a mysterious girl who came to the town, danced three times, and then disappeared without a trace. Several years later, the most curious things started to happen to the humble tailor — including strange gifts left at his door...

The Milkweed Lady and the Monarch Marble Man

Wilson is retired and spends his days at home with his wife in their nice house. He is also quite ill, and his doctors don't know how to help him. Then he meets the "Milkweed Lady" who reminds him of some magic he once held in his hand — his set of marbles. These marbles truly had magical powers, and when he unpacks them from a box in his attic, he begins to transform into the "Monarch Marble Man."

Anne of the Long Window*

Anne and her parents live in a tight little house in the far, far north where her parents work in a research facility. Anne has a great deal of time by herself. But she is never bored, as she has a great imagination

- and an imaginary friend she calls Gilbert, who lives in the reflection of the long window in their living room. Gilbert is inspired by a character in her favorite book "Anne of Green Gables" and she fancies herself to be the Anne of the story. Her dear Gilbert remains in her imagination until the day she meets a real-life boy named Gilbert who confides that he has an imaginary friend named Anne!

*This story was inspired by a lovely song and real-life story from two different subscribers.

In the Woods

Lanny lives at the edge of the woods where he used to spend nearly every day with his father: tracking, cutting trees, cleaning the trails and, of course, hunting. When his father grows old and is no longer able to go into the woods, Lanny wonders if he should give up hunting. His father insists that he continue the tradition and that he consider using some more modern tools, like a "trail camera" to track the activity of the woodland animals. Lanny tries it and discovers that there is a lot more happening in his woods than he had ever imagined!

The Gift that Traveled Around the World

In a small factory in Erie, Ohio, nearly a hundred years ago, a small cast iron bulldog bank with sad brown eyes was painted. The bank was purchased by a wealthy father of two boys who wanted to give the bank to his eldest son. This sets the bulldog bank on a magical journey around the world, in which he has many remarkable owners and lives in several different homes, a junk shop and a museum. Amazingly, the bulldog bank lands back in Erie, Ohio, and we find that marvelous journey has transformed the now-valuable little bulldog bank in delightful ways.

The Middle of the Night

Willow Fielding loves to camp — but she hasn't always loved it. She was once afraid of the woods and then, when she was eight years old, her grandfather introduced her to a barred owl named Lucy. "Like the girl in the stories who brought light during dark times," said her grandfather. After that point, the woods became a magical place for her — and years later, when she was caught in a storm, that magic returned and brought a special light to a very dark night.

Winter Season:



This is a collection of 13 winter stories, for the 13 weeks of winter.

The Oath of Brothers

Bo Corsi has been elected president of his country. During the busy days before his inauguration, he receives a surprising note from his long-lost brother Hanzi. The note reminds him of an oath they took when they were young — an oath that pledged their lives to the poor. This note brings mixed emotions; he is happy to hear from his beloved brother but bothered by the

reminder about the oath. As soon as he sees his brother's face after twenty years, he knows exactly what to do.

The Lambs Wool Blessing

Between the bugs, blight, and bad weather, apples have a difficult time growing in certain parts of the world — but Mr. Dorsett has enjoyed abundant harvest year after year! Journeyman fruit growers flock to him to discover his secret, but no one finds anything unusual about his orchard. What they do not know is that Mr. Dorsett performs a single blessing on a single special winter's night — a blessing that was taught long ago by an apple tree elf who resides in the orchard still.

The School House

An architect, a builder and a lumberman all share the same dream — to build a beautiful schoolhouse for their children. The town, however, does not have the money to build it and the wealthy family that does have the money doesn't need a schoolhouse. They need a carriage house. So the three men are hired to build the carriage house while they secretly wish to be building a school. What they don't know is that their wish will be granted — only one hundred years later.

The Road to the Old Stone Chapel

Mr. Shields has just bought the prominent Wentworth manor, which includes a barn, a guesthouse, and an old stone chapel. He decides to renovate each structure back to its original splendor but runs into a unique challenge with the chapel: the road has been destroyed by years of flooding by the beaver pond nearby. He thinks the solution is easy — move the beavers to another pond. But he soon finds he doesn't need beaver traps, but rather the wisdom of a magic man who teaches the ways of the surrounding wilderness.

Birdland

Maati lives in the far north where it is very cold and very dark much of the year. But after the ice breaks in the late spring, everything changes: flowers cover the earth and creatures of all shapes and sizes arrive from the south. Of all her seasonal friends, Maati looks forward to seeing a pair of northern chickadees most of all. And then, one spring, only one of the two returns and she learns where the other has gone ... to Birdland.

The Cellar in the Woods

Micah and his older brother discover a curious tree, the remains of an old car and an intact cellar hole in the woods. The cellar is shallow and constructed of big stones, and within it, the boys find small treasures: old bottles, bits of rusted metal car parts and an unusual piece of glass crystal. Later that night, Micah learns from a magical little man in a dream that the crystal is something very special indeed.

Tibby and the Fifth Virtue

Tibby loves books. All day long he reads books about knights and warriors. He especially loves the stories about the code of chivalry, or the noble virtues of knights. One day he is surprised to find a book in his school locker called *The Fifth Virtue*. Where did the book come from? And could it be that this book — about a knight named “Sir Timothy” — is really about himself?

The Fool's Son

The Princess can have anything she wants — toys, delicacies, music, and fine clothes. But none of it makes her happy. What she enjoys is the company of Jalphi, the Fool’s son, and the magical stories he tells her. When the king and queen announce that it is time for her to marry, she realizes that he is the only one she could ever love. However, her father refuses their marriage. “My daughter will never marry a Fool’s son!” When war breaks out, Jalphi proves that he has learned more as “The Fool's Son” than anyone could possibly imagine. Enough to save a kingdom!

Horse at Play

A young racehorse seems destined for greatness — and boy is she fast! But as soon as she hits the racetrack, her force of motion dwindles. It takes an enlightened trainer, a surprising jockey, and a magic ingredient for this young horse to show her gifts in the ultra-competitive world of horse racing. And that magic ingredient? Play.

Sister's Sword

A blacksmith and his son are surprised one day to find a young girl whose father was lost in a recent battle for the King. The blacksmith takes her in and raises her as his own, but soon finds that her true father’s courage and sense of adventure is alive and well in the girl — and is strong enough to transform a kingdom.

The Baker's True Home

Angus Burnhope is a baker to the Parliament. He bakes pies and tarts for those important gentlemen who help make the laws of the country. Angus enjoys his work well enough, but he feels lost and alone in the city. But when he is invited up into the chambers of the Lord Chancellor of the Parliament, his simple life takes a surprising turn!

Riches or Wishes

Renzelman the Great is an old magician who travels with a horse-drawn circus from town to town. He is not a very good magician, but he does have one remarkable trick up his sleeve — he can change a little stone into a tiny dancing man and then back again. What his audience doesn’t know is that it is not a trick at all.

Set in Stone

Nani Sasso lives with his family on a small rocky island in the Mediterranean. One day, Nani has a falling out with his brother and decides to leave his family. But the grudge he develops doesn't last just a short

while — it goes on for many, many years. It is not until he is an old man that his granddaughter Modesta shows him what he has lost in the name of being set in stone.

Spring Season:



This is a collection of 13 spring stories, for the 13 weeks of spring.

What's So

Thomas is a squire who hopes to become a brave and famous knight. The only problem is that the knight he serves seems only to care for the poor and needy. He has no adventures, no glory and no riches serving this humble man. But when he is finally knighted and learns what is truly “so” in the world, his picture of his former master changes to one of deep respect.

The Thief

Three figures are walking along the road. The sun is shining and there is a slight breeze — a perfect day for a walk. But these three are hardly carefree and joyful. A determined tavern keeper, an angry blacksmith, and a confused farmhand are all looking for the one thing that binds them together. They are looking for the thief.

The Secret of the Redwings

A small town once boasted a pristine and vibrant downtown, as well as acres of manicured and magical parks. Over the years, however, the downtown has lost its luster, and the parks have become overgrown and unmaintained. There are some secrets, however, that still live in the park. When a little girl named Marianne begins to discover the wonders within, the park begins to transform.

The Barber King

Every town has its center — and it is not always a town hall or square, but a person. At the center of the western town Elkhorn is its barber — an aging man that the locals call Old Fisher. Old Fisher is always ready to offer up one of his barbershop chairs along with some friendly wisdom, but the folks of Elkhorn give him little more than the occasional bit of business. It takes a newcomer from the City to help the old man — and in helping the old man, he helps the entire town.

The Royal Burden

An adventurous King and Queen set sail to explore a new land across the sea, leaving a small crew of servants behind. When they don't return as planned, the servants fear the worst and are forced to make some decisions as to what to do. Most of them leave the castle and find new positions in neighboring kingdoms, but two remain — the Fool and the Cook. They have the inspired idea to pretend to be the King and Queen of that land and live the life of their dreams. What follows surprises them both.

Lady Jovial

An old woman known only as “the pigeon lady” spends nearly every day tending the downtown green of a fine old town on the river. No one knows her real name or where she came from; they only know they always feel better after talking with her and seeing her smiling face. Then one day, she does not come to the green and people wonder what has become of her. A young girl named Olive accidentally finds out who the pigeon lady truly is, and this discovery changes her life.

Grit and the Glover

When Finnian Carmichael goes with his uncle to visit the big city of London, he discovers what he wants to do with his life: he wishes to become a glover, or a maker of gloves. The challenge, he realizes upon his return to Ireland, is that there are no glovers in his town to teach him how. This would be the end of the dream for most people, but not for Finnian. Uncle Michael knows that his nephew will find a way — because he sees the young man has grit. "Grit," he says, "will always get you through."

The Woman Who Moved a Mountain

Jeanine Norton, mother, grandmother and crossing guard for the intersection of Main and School Street, has a secret she has kept for 50 years: she is moving a mountain. “Why?” you may ask. The answer is simple and yet, not so simple. She is moving a mountain so that she can have a view of something very important to her, something that is emblematic of the love she has for her home town, as well as a reminder of the day she first met her husband.

The Navigator

A village builds a ship according to the instructions from their leader, The Captain. The Captain has left them to voyage to uncharted territory, and, once the ship is completed, they are to follow. However, the people decide they do not wish to leave their homes and risk their comfortable lives. Only Sophia, the weaver’s daughter, is bold enough to remind them all of their promise to The Captain. The people choose to ignore her words; however, they find that fate has a bigger plan for Sophia — one that they cannot ignore.

A Bird in the Airport

David has spent the last week with his grandparents and he is nervous about flying home. He is not nervous about flying — he likes flying — but he is nervous about being home again. You see, his father has moved to a different house and David isn’t sure what it will be like. As he sits in the airport, he sees something surprising. It is a bird sitting on a television monitor. He marvels at the sight and is about to show his grandfather when he hears a message — seemingly just for him. (This is a good story to help prepare for a separation.)

Good Morning Magic

Stephan is a very busy man, but he and his daughter Pippy have two special times they always spend together. They are together every morning when Pippy wakes, and every evening when Pippy goes to bed. These times are special for not only them but for the fairies that regularly gather in the city apartment where they live. This is a good story to help with separation anxiety.

The Blanket

This story was inspired by something my young friend Eden said: “There once was a blanket with smudges all about the town”. The story follows Leah and her blanket, that indeed has smudges from all about the town. The blanket is dear to her because it reminds her of all that she loves about her town. Her parents, however, believe the blanket needs to be washed. It is not until an unexpected turn of events, that Leah finally exchanges her blanket for something else even more wonderful, and smudgy.

Times Gone By

Michael teaches history and has a particular love for the Old American West. His daughter Linny is in third grade and is not happy at school. A colleague of Michael’s suggests they take a vacation to a place in the mountains that is set up like the olden days of the Colorado Gold Rush. At first, they are surprised that their accommodations have no modern conveniences at all — but it doesn’t take long for them to find the magic that lives in the simple peace and quiet of ‘times gone by’.

Summer Season:



This is a collection of 13 summer stories, for the 13 weeks of summer.

The Cello Maker

Ilana, an exceedingly talented twelve-year-old cellist, is now old enough to receive her first full-sized cello, and so her parents make the investment in a very expensive and very old instrument. When she plays it, however, it sounds wrong. She keeps trying and trying until she eventually starts to hate playing. Her teacher believes that it might be the cello and takes her to visit a famous cello maker who has a secret — and a very unorthodox way of building his instruments.

The Sickleman's Riddle

Alwin is a Sickleman who travels from farm to farm to mow their fields of hay. He is a strong worker and though he is often hired by farmers across the land, he does have the reputation for never speaking. People often wonder if he can speak at all, but the truth is - he is listening and learning. You see, he has a plan: his aim is to one day enter into a riddling competition with the fairies... and to win.

The Log Dancer

Shaddock has a difficult job. He has to 'dance' logs along the Kennebec River so they don't get stuck and create a log jam. He has done it his whole life because he wanted to be just like his father who was also a log dancer. He has had some difficult times but nothing was as hard as what he had to face — when he became a father.

The Dollmaker

Max is normally a quiet gentle boy who lately has been behaving rather strangely. His parents try to discover the source of the change and finally discover that he has accidentally broken a beloved porcelain doll that has been in the family for generations. Max's mother decides to bring the doll to a master doll maker in the city where they learn that the doll has actually been broken before...

Camp Over the Hills and Far Away

Frances has a particular camp that she wishes to attend — the only problem is that everyone tells her that it doesn't exist. But one morning at the library, she finds a flier on the floor; it is for a camp named "Over the Hills and Far Away". She soon learns that it is not only the perfect camp but a place that sees her for who she truly is.

Onatah's Table

The Duke's son is very ill, and none of a long line of doctors seems to be of much help to the boy. One doctor, however, suggests they visit an unusual Inn called Onatah's Table where he has heard miraculous recoveries take place. The Duke is suspicious at first of their simple philosophy — but soon discovers that it not only helps his son — but himself as well.

The Secret of Schuyler Springs

Schuyler Springs was once a favorite travel destination due to its famous natural springs. Over the years more and more people moved to the small town and turned it into a wealthy resort village. But then something unexpected happened: the springs dried up. That would have been the end of Schuyler Springs had it not been for the secret held by three girls, and the clues they left behind for the one person who could help save it.

To Be a Catcher

Joshua is considered one of the best baseball players of all time, with his face forever represented in the Baseball Hall of Fame. But his co-workers at the Cooperstown Dreams Park would never believe it. All they see is a nice old man who mops floors and serves lunch to the thousands of 11-year-old boys and girls who come to the park to play baseball every year. But Joshua likes it that way — for it is in his anonymity that he can teach a select few young players the most important skill in baseball.

Fit for the King

In a kingdom long ago and far away, there was a king who wanted everyone to look and behave a certain way. Those who did not meet that standard were treated like misfits, and many of them left to live elsewhere. Three of these outcasts combined their unique gifts to create a new life of happiness and authenticity. Their revelation inspired the future prince of that land to make changes in the kingdom as a whole, from one of judgment to one of celebration.

The Council of Fools

Once there was a land that was ruled by a Council of Fools. And in this land, to be a Fool was a position of honor and respect – that is, until the Fools began to forget how to juggle, dance, sing and perform

magic. Luckily, a new Fool from a distant province arrives to transform the dry and serious members of the council back into being true Fools – rather than simply being foolish.

Purple

Lydia is a wealthy merchant who dyes and sells purple cloth to those who can afford it. She lives a life of luxury but has a single regret - she hasn't heard from her son in years. He turned his back on "serving the rich" and has become a teacher to the poor. When she, at last, receives a letter telling her where he now lives, she resolves to travel to him - though she doesn't realize how difficult and transformative the journey will be.

Message in the Sand

Enrico Montifresco travels to an exclusive island resort to clear his mind. He needs to make an important decision as to whether to remain at the head of his successful business or to let someone else take the helm. As soon as he arrives, he can tell this is no ordinary island and the staff is no ordinary staff. Over the course of a day and a half, he seems to get gentle advice from everywhere: from the food, from a kite flying overhead and then ultimately from a message in the sand.

The Fort Keeper

The Fort Keeper is the only enlisted man left at an abandoned and obsolete fort. He has his daily routine and he loyally serves without fail. And then one day he discovers a boy. The boy is technically an intruder and should be apprehended or at least chased away, but the Fort Keeper feels pity for him. Over the next few weeks, he leaves the boy food and clothing without ever actually meeting him. But on the day he introduces himself, everything changes...

Sample Pack:



Jack Tar's Brave Day

Jack Tar is a tall figure in sea lore known for his bravery on the high seas. His bravest day, however, occurred on land when he was a boy: on his second day of school when he admitted what he really did know how to do. . . and what he did not.

The Invisible Red Thread

There is a very old saying in the world: "An invisible red thread connects those who are destined to meet regardless of time, place or circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle but it will never break." This story is about how a husband and wife in St. Louis follow an invisible red thread all the way to northern India, to find their daughter.

Slops and the Princess

No one knows Slops's real name. All they know is that she is the Garbage Maiden, the one who carries off what no one wants, to burn or bury forever. But Slops has a secret - in fact she has several, for the

people of the castle don't realize that she often keeps what they throw away. One day, Slops finds something that is more valuable than anything she has ever found before, something that can only belong to the Princess.