

🌲 Fairy Outpost: Cottonwood Grove

The Guardians of the Land

(Magic Word: Guard)

✧ Chapter One — The Fairy Origins

I am **Eldewyn**, and this is the story of the **Cottonwood Guardians**, protectors of trees and keepers of time.

Long ago, before people gave names to the lakes and rivers, the Cottonwood Fairies lived in the endless northern forests. They were taller than most fairies, their wings wide and feathery, their laughter deep as thunder. Each summer, they sent their soft white seeds drifting through the air — tiny parachutes carrying life to every corner of the land.

They wandered for centuries, carried on winds and dreams, until they reached this place. The cottonwoods here stood proud and straight, their leaves shimmering like coins in the sunlight, whispering to one another even when the air was still. The fairies made their homes in the hollows of those great trunks, and this grove became their fortress — a living cathedral built by time.

Every year, when the air fills with drifting cotton that looks like snow in summer, it is their way of saying: *We are still here. We still guard this land.*

✧ Chapter Two — The Story of the Land

Long before any fairy or human came, this land lay under an ocean of ice — a glacier thicker than mountains. Slowly, over thousands of years, it scraped and carved the earth, leaving behind rolling hills, deep basins, and the hundreds of glittering lakes we know today as **Lake Country**.

When the ice finally melted, it left behind soil rich and dark, perfect for trees and crops alike. Cottonwoods rooted first, followed by oaks, maples, and birches. The land healed itself, turning from cold silence to green song.

Centuries later, humans came with axes and saws. They cleared fields for farming and built cabins and barns from the forest's gifts. **Nearly 200 years ago**, settlers like **Asa Clark** used the water of Pewaukee Lake to power mills and saws, turning trees into the boards that built their new homes.

But even as forests fell, the tall cottonwoods at the edges of fields were spared. They gave shade, marked boundaries, and watched over the prairie farms. To the fairies, these were the chosen ones — the **sentinels of change**.

By the late 1800s, the lakes formed by the glaciers had become famous for their beauty. Families from Milwaukee and Chicago came here for summer retreats, boating on Pewaukee and Oconomowoc Lakes, resting beneath the cool shelter of the same cottonwoods that have stood for generations.

✧✧ Chapter Three — The Guardian's Promise

The Cottonwood Fairies are patient watchers. They have seen centuries pass — storms, droughts, settlers, and cities — yet still they stand. Their roots hold the soil when floods rise, and their branches shelter owls, raccoons, and countless songbirds.

But the Guardians know this truth: even the strongest tree cannot protect itself forever. New saplings must be planted, old giants must be honored, and fallen branches must return to the soil to give life again.

So, traveler, as you rest beneath their leaves, Eldewyn asks:

Will you honor the trees?

Will you plant, protect, and cherish them, so new guardians may rise to watch over this land?

If you will, then follow the winding trail toward the wetlands beyond. There, in the quiet chorus of frogs and reeds, waits the final fairy outpost — the Marsh that Protects. ✧✧