

## **The Fairy and the Flute (Or the Flute and the Fairy)**

**By Monica Levis**

There once was a king who was at war with another kingdom. He had only one child, the princess Máirín. He decided that only the most worthy prince should have her hand in marriage. Before the war, the princess had been in love with the prince of the kingdom that her father was at war with, but as soon as it began they could no longer see each other. The prince still loved the princess, and she loved him, but the king would not hear of it. The king decided that whichever prince rid the land of the giant moths that plagued, the citizens would win his daughter's hand. Many princes from different lands tried, failed, and were sent home in disgrace.

The princess was determined that if her father would not let her marry her prince, she would marry no one at all. So one night she traded dresses with one of her maids and slipped out of the palace.

She traveled along the main road for a few days, and bought food by selling the jewels that she had brought with her. She met an old woman on the third day who asked the princess to help her with her work. The princess was kind and took pity on the old woman when she saw her load. The princess helped the old woman and then went on her way. The next day she came upon another old woman, who asked her for help as on the previous day. The princess again obliged. The same thing happened on the next day, but when she had helped the old woman on the third day, the old woman was transformed into a fairy who said that she would grant the princess a wish. The princess said that she wished the prince would be able to rid the land of moths, so that her father would allow them to marry. The fairy said that she would help the prince with his task.

The prince meanwhile had come into the kingdom in the disguise of a farmer. He had decided to try to rid the country of the moths, but didn't know how to begin. He stayed near the main city for a while, and heard the things that many of the local people did to get rid of the moths. One day, he met the fairy, who gave him a magic flute which she said that the moths would all follow.

The prince began to play the flute, and as he played it, he traveled out of the country. It took him many months before he came to a sea, where he got on a boat, and the moths kept flying behind him, until they dropped dead from exhaustion. Once all of the moths were dead, he went back to the capital city of the country.

By this time, the two kingdoms were no longer at war. As soon as the prince got back to the capital city, he asked the king for the princesses hand in marriage. The king began to explain that the princess had not been seen since shortly after the war started, but before he could finish, the princess came into the throne room. The fairy had told her that the prince had returned, and so she rushed back to the palace. The king finally consented, and the prince and princess were married. The prince and his wife lived together long and happily, and ruled their people well.