WHEN GILLY MET DEVIN

A Fairy Tale Reform School/Royal Academy Rebels crossover.
When Gilly Met Devin

An Enchantasia Mashup

A few months before Gilly was sentenced to Fairy Tale Reform School
Come on, Gilly!” my little brother Hamish shouts as he drags me through crowded Gnome-olia Bakery. “I smell patty-cakes!”

“No patty-cakes! I want a hot cross bun,” his twin brother Han says, racing ahead of us and placing his sticky fingers right on the glass counter. A goblin employee gives Han a nasty look, but Han doesn’t see it. He’s only four.

I know my mother is like the old woman in a shoe (or, in our case, a crowded boot), but did she have to have so many kids? While Mother helps Father with a rare order of work boots from the Royal Guard, I have to watch these two because they’re not enrolled at Mother Goose’s nursery school yet. And these two are a handful.
Hamish points his finger at Han and laughs. “Ew, you want a *bum*?”

“I said bun!” Han says indignantly.

Hamish eyes him skeptically and shrugs. “Sounded like bum.”

“Bun!”

“Bum! Bum! Bum!”

Two seconds later, their hands go flying toward each other. I pull them apart, and Hamish stumbles backward, knocking over a plate of doughnuts on the counter. The platter smashes to the floor with a spectacular sound, shattering in about a million pieces and scattering all the doughnuts. The entire shop turns and stares at us.

Sierra, the manager, who is definitely the least friendly goblin I’ve ever met, stomps over and stands so closely she’s practically on my toes. “You going to buy anything today, Gilly Cobbler? Or are you just looking to make a mess and get another handout?”

My cheeks burn as I hear a few snickers from the shoppers around me. I hate that Father’s shoe business is doing so poorly that I have to beg for food sometimes. It’s so much easier to pinch a dozen rolls from this place and not have to
ask for any favors. But my younger sister Anna is worried my thieving will get me thrown into Fairy Tale Reform School, so I’m trying to be good.

**Trying.**

I hike up my brown housedress that used to be Mother’s, and try to sound older than my eleven years as I look up at Sierra defiantly. “Of course I’m buying—if the merchandise is fresh today.”

Sierra narrows her beady eyes at me. “Our bakery goods are always fresh.”

I look around at some of the patrons, who are clearly listening. “Are they?” I fold my arms across my chest. “Because last week I almost broke my tooth on a slice of bread from this place.”

“Because you probably pinched it from the garbage shoot!” Sierra thunders.

Han pulls on the bottom of my skirt. “Can I get a hot cross bun, Gilly? *Please*?”

“And me a patty-cake?” Hamish talks over him. They’re looking at me with those big brown eyes of theirs, and Hamish’s little round face is puckered up so tight, I think he might bawl if I say no.
I glance at Sierra.

She motions with her scaly green hand for me to pay up.

“Go ahead, big spender. Buy them both a treat.”

Everyone in the small shop is staring at me. I inhale sharply, breathing in the scent of heavenly cinnamon rolls, and plunge my right hand in my pocket to feel for loose change. Mother gave me whatever she had left in the money jar, which she said would hopefully be enough to buy a loaf of bread for dinner.

It’s not.

I’m a few coins short, and with the mood Sierra is in, there is no way she’s going to spot me the difference or give the boys the ruined doughnuts for free, even if she is just going to throw them out.

“Well?” Sierra asks again.

“Please, Gilly? Please?” Han begs.

How do I explain to my two brothers that I don’t have enough money to buy bread, let alone sweets for them? I hesitate.

The bell on the front door jingles, and I look over. Two royals have just walked in—an older woman and a young girl. They look way too overdressed for a day at the market in
fancy schmancy gowns and bonnets. The woman—probably the girl’s mother—starts shopping right away, ignoring the commotion happening in front of her, but the blond, who looks to be the same age as me, notices my brothers and eyes them with interest. I’m sure she thinks we’re beggars, what with Han’s two missing buttons on his shirt and Hamish’s broken overall strap. But who cares what she thinks.

“If you’re not buying anything, then get out,” Sierra says to me, louder than necessary. She points to the door, as if I don’t know where it is. “I have no time for beggars.”

“We aren’t beggars, are we, Gilly?” Han asks, his eyes filling with tears.

My face burns with humiliation. “No, we’re not. Come on,” I tell them, ushering them to the door. “We can buy bread somewhere it’s not stale.”

“It’s not stale!” Sierra yells as we walk out the door.

We are barely past Pinocchio’s Puppet Theatre when the bell on the door behind us rings again.

“Wait!” someone cries.

I turn around. It’s the blond royal, and she’s headed our way.
Today started out a perfectly good day.

I set a blue jay’s right wing with a tiny splint I made myself. I had my first-ever conversation with a fox (I’ve been studying fox speak for months). *And* Father said when he returns from his next tour with the Royal Guard he’ll make me a tree house in the woods behind the house, which means I won’t have to keep storing my magical creature care kit I made in a hollow tree stump. I’ll have a proper medical facility where animals from as near as the Hollow Woods and as far as the North Star Sea can come to get care! You know, once I’m good enough at my creature care skills to offer such services.

I just need to find a suitable teacher.
I was all set to ask my friends in the forest who they worked with before me when Mother interrupted. (She’s not a fan of my obsession with helping animals.)

“Devinaria!” she called, scaring away the pigeons that had been sleeping on a nearby log. “Come in this house this instant!”

I ran toward home, remembering to put my skirt back on this time (Mother hates when I run around in my bloomers, but skirts are so unwieldy in the forest). “What is it, Mother?”

“That’s enough fresh air for today,” she said, looking skeptically at the afternoon sunshine and the bright-green trees I had been standing among. “It’s time for you to start accompanying me to the village.”

I groaned. “Mother, no!”

“Yes,” she insisted. “Your father has let all this outdoor time go to your head! In a short year’s time, you’ll be headed to Royal Academy and will be expected to behave like a proper young lady. And proper young ladies do not swing from tree branches or have tree houses.” She shot me a look.

_Drooping dragons._ She knew about the tree house.

Mother shooed me toward the house. “Now go put on something suitable. And by suitable, I mean a dress.”
I groaned again. “Yes, Mother.”
I’ve learned there is no point arguing with her—at least about the village. I will, however, be arguing about Royal Academy. I am not going to waste time learning how to rule a kingdom when I already know that I’m going to be a creature caretaker. But that’s a conversation for another day.

But today, I am village-bound, so I put on a way-too-heavy-for-this-weather blue dress and one of those annoying hats Mother fancies because they keep your hair tame. In this case, I have a lot of twigs in mine from being outside, so it does do the trick, but I look ridiculous. Does everyone dress this way to go shopping?

Apparently not. Because when we finally make it to Gnome-olia Bakery, where Mother promises I can buy an extra loaf of bread to feed to the ducks in our pond, I see a girl my own age, and she’s not wearing some stupid fancy dress. She has on a simple brown one that has pockets and an apron, two useful things for carrying stuff through the woods. I was about to ask Mother about making me one just like it (she’d probably say no) when the girl stormed out and the two little boys with her left the shop crying.

“Excuse me, what was that about?” I asked the goblin in
charge, who had eyes as black as coal and looked none too pleased at my question.

“That kid is a beggar, and I’m tired of giving her handouts!” the goblin said. “If her father made better shoes, maybe she wouldn’t always be lurking around looking for freebies.”

I pointed to the garbage bin, which was piled high with the ends of loaves of bread and squished doughnuts. “But it seems so wasteful to throw out perfectly good food when there are people in need.”

Mother put a hand on my shoulder and looked like she might shed a tear. “Spoken like true royalty.”

I rolled my eyes. “Mother, it’s simply common sense. Why, even the animals in the forest could feast on some of those doughnuts.”

Mother cleared her throat. She hated when I talked about the animals as if they were my friends (which they are—my only friends, really). “Why don’t you go outside and offer that girl and those little boys something to eat? We can buy them anything they like.”

I perked up. “Really? Okay!” I rushed out of the shop and scanned the lunchtime crowd. The village was bustling with street carts and peddlers, and the teakettle-shaped shop nearby
started to blow its noontime whistle. I finally spotted the girl near Pinocchio’s Puppet Theatre. “Wait!” I yelled to them.

The girl turned around, saw me, and her face hardened. “We didn’t take anything, if that’s what you’re about to say,” she said tartly as I struggled to catch up with them. My dress was so heavy! “We’re not beggars.”

I stopped short in front of her and tried not to sound surprised by her hostility. “I didn’t think you did.” I smiled down at the two boys. They were obviously twins and as cute as buttons. “Hello! I wanted to know if you all wanted to come back into the bakery and pick out some sweets to take home. My treat.”

The boys’ eyes widened. “Really?” said the one on the left. “Really, really? For free?”

I laughed. “Of course! Get as much as you like! I must say, the doughnuts look delicious. Even the smooshed ones.” The boys started to squeal with delight.

“No.”

I looked up, confused. The girl was glaring at me with her big brown eyes. She pushed a stray brown strand of hair off her forehead. “No?”

“No,” she repeated. “We don’t need your handouts.”
“But Gilly,” the boy on the right started to say, and she shot him the same harsh look.

“We don’t accept handouts,” she said slowly, and the boys grew quiet. “Thank you, but we’re fine on our own.”

The boys looked devastated. I couldn’t believe she was being so prickly. “It’s just a few doughnuts. Won’t you please let me buy some for them?”

The girl folded her arms across her chest. “Did you not hear me? I said we don’t need your help. We can buy our own food, thank you.”

“No, we can’t,” the boy on the left mumbled.

She ignored him. “Did you ever think I didn’t want them having sweets this early in the day? Or that they had a few sweets with me already?”

“We didn’t,” the boy on the left piped up, and the girl shot him another look.

“I didn’t think of that,” I said. “But even so, why don’t you let me buy them for you to take home for later?” The boys looked at the girl again pleadingly.

She grabbed both boys’ hands and tugged them along. “We have to be going, but thank you for the offer. Enjoy your day of shopping.” She smirked. “I’m sure you’ll get a
bunch of lovely things.” She began to walk away and my mouth hung open.

Why was she being so stubborn? I was only trying to help. *She’s prideful, that one.*

I whipped around, searching for the source of the voice, but none of the bustling shoppers were looking my way.

*Down here.*

I looked down and saw a small black rat, covered with grime, eating a piece of bread. It was squeaking at me. I bent down to hear better.

“Hello! You were saying?”

The rat started to chitter. *That’s the Cobbler girl. Her family makes shoes. No one seems to be buying them, so they don’t have much. The kids are always hungry. She usually steals a loaf of bread or two, but today she seemed to have money. Not enough, though. The owner was making fun, so she left. The rat nibbled at its piece of bread. If you want to help her, you’re better off letting her find some money on the ground or maybe letting her steal something from you. She does that a lot.*

I scratched my chin. “Steal something, huh?” I stared down at my wrist and noticed the black pearl bracelet I was wearing. I hated bracelets. They always snagged on a branch
in the forest. I had so many, Mother would never know this one was even missing. It was made out of real pearls and probably cost a fortune. The girl could buy bread for a month with it. “Thanks,” I told the rat. I looked around and spotted a garbage can. Someone had just dropped a bagel into it. Using my handkerchief, I plucked it out and placed it on the ground. “Happy snacking!” The rat grabbed it with its teeth and skittered into the alleyway.

I stood up and searched the busy street for the girl and her brothers again. Thankfully, they had stopped in front of Red’s Ready-for-Anything Shoppe, where the girl was eyeing a red invisibility jacket. I rushed to catch up, making sure to loosen the bracelet on my wrist so it would come off at the right moment.
The nerve of that girl trying to offer the boys a handout! Who does she think she is? The Royal Court? I cannot stand royals. They’re so righteous. As if we need her help to buy food.

My stomach rumbled.

Okay, so maybe I was hungry, which meant the boys were too.

“I’m sorry, guys,” I said with a sigh. “I just don’t want these fancy schmancy royals thinking they own us.”

“She didn’t want to buy us, Gilly,” Han said, crossing his arms and staring at a smoke bomb device in the window of Red’s Ready-for-Anything Shoppe. “She just wanted to give us some food. And I’m hungry!”
“So hungry!” Hamish agreed.

I sighed. So was I. I didn’t want to come home from the market empty-handed and have Mother realize we didn’t have enough to buy bread. And I didn’t want the boys to starve. I looked around and scanned the crowd. There had to be a young royal around here who wouldn’t notice a piece of jewelry missing. I could steal something and sell it to buy some lunch. My eyes landed on Combing the Sea. No—I’d already been caught in there once already. I should stay out in the open. Especially since the boys were with me.

That’s when I noticed that girl heading our way again, but this time, she wasn’t looking for me. She was window-shopping. Window-shopping was the best time to lift something because people got so distracted. She had on numerous bracelets. Just one could feed us for a week. It was settled. I had my mark. Now to move in and do the snatch-and-grab.

“Boys, hang out here,” I told my brothers. “Go in Red’s Ready-for-Anything Shoppe and look around, but don’t touch anything. I’ll be back in one minute.”

The boys grunted—they were still pretty mad at me—and headed inside.
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That’s when I started to do what I was best at. Who needed an invisibility cloak? I was already good at disappearing in a crowd.
She saw me. *Perfect!*

Any second now, the girl would move in, and I could drop my bracelet.

This was kind of exciting! I'd never been part of a heist before.

I stuck close to the shop window and stayed still. It wasn’t hard. The sweets shop was one of my favorite places to visit when I was in the village. The window was full of candy dishes overflowing with giant lollipops, licorice, and bubble-gum that blew bubbles large enough that you could fit inside them. (And possibly fly—or so the rumor goes. Apparently, it’s a fairy godmother thing.) I touched the glass with my right hand, putting my pearl bracelet in perfect view of the
girl, who was now just a few feet away, pretending to watch a Patty Cakes cart strolling by.

I quickly undid the clasp on the bracelet, then carefully lowered my arm, and felt the pearl bracelet slide off my wrist and hit the ground. Yes! Now the girl just had to see it and pick it up.

I turned to walk away and bumped into two burly goblins that had to be half ogre. Or giant. I barely came up to their waists.

“Going somewhere, girlie?” the first said with breath so foul I instantly covered my nose and mouth. I attempted to move around them, but they stepped in my path again.

“She looks like she’s got money to burn,” said the second, and he reached for my small purse.

“Hey! Let go!” I shouted, but it was so loud on the street, no one seemed to hear me.

The first guy grabbed for my arm while the second yanked harder on my purse.

Whoosh!

A sack of flour came flying between us, hitting the first goblin in the face and sending flour shooting into the sky. It rained down on the three of us like snow. We all looked up in surprise.
It was that girl! And she was standing right beside us, looking angrier than a mad hatter.

The girl’s bracelet was right there for the taking. Right there on the ground, just waiting to be picked up!

It was almost too good to be true. When did things like that ever happen?

But then Brody and Bernard showed up. The gruesome twosome gave thieves like me a bad name. They pinched for the sake of pinching, taking way too much and getting a thrill from intimidating their marks. I did it because I had to. Not sure there’s truly a difference in the Dwarf Police Squad’s book, but I never hurt anyone. And these two were clearly hurting this royal.

I grabbed the nearest thing I could find—a sack of flour on the patty-cake cart, picked it up, and threw it at the brutes.
Flour poofed everywhere, making people on the street stop and stare. It also covered Brody and Bernard with flour. The blond girl looked like she had been in a sudden summer snowstorm, but she appeared more shocked than upset.

Brody wiped one of his eyes clear and glared at me. “Did you just throw something at me, Gilly Cobbler?”

“Yeah,” I said, stepping up to the three of them. “I did. Now let the girl go.”

“Sure thing,” said Brody, and he shoved the girl as hard as he could, knocking her to the ground.

“Hey!” I shouted. “Get your hands off her, now! And her purse too. One whistle, and Pete will be here in seconds. And you know what that means, because you guys definitely have two strikes against you.”

Brody’s eyes widened and he whispered: “Fairy Tale Reform School.”

“I hear the Wicked Stepmother runs that place,” I added. “I wouldn’t want to go there, would you?”

“No way,” added Bernard. He threw the girl’s purse at her.

“Uh-uh,” I tsked. “I changed my mind: Help the girl up, and hand it to her. NOW.”

Brody sighed and did as he was asked.
But as he did, she did something unexpected: she stomped on his foot.

“Ow! My bad toe!” Brody shouted, hopping up and down and making the ground shake.

The girl and I started to laugh.

“Serves you right!” she told him. “That’s no way to treat a lady…or anyone else, for that matter. Now go, before the two of us team up and throw a bunch of flour sacks at you!”

Both of the guys took off running as fast as they could away from us.

And that’s when I remembered: the bracelet!

I turned around and looked at the spot where it had just been. It was gone.

All thoughts of bread and feeding Han and Hamish were gone with it.

“Thank you,” I heard her say, and I spun around to face her.

That foot stomp was stellar, aided by the heels she had on, which I’d never be caught dead in, but they did seem useful in a situation like this. “I’m glad I was here to help.”

She smiled. “I am too.” She held out her flour-covered hand. “I’m Devin Nile, by the way.”

I shook her hand. “Gilly Cobbler.”
“Gilly,” she repeated. “It’s nice to meet you.”

She looked down at our hands, and her eyes widened in surprise. She glanced from her wrist to the ground and I realized she must have noticed her bracelet was missing. Still, she didn’t say anything or start sobbing like I’d expect a fancy schmancy like her to do. Maybe she wasn’t that bad—for a royal.

“It’s nice to meet you too, Devin,” I said. And then I remembered Han and Hamish were waiting. I’d have to find them something to eat, somehow. “Well, I should get back to my brothers.” With a nod, she disappeared back into the crowd, and so did I.
Where have you been?” Mother demanded when I finally made my way back to Gnome-olia Bakery. She was standing out front, her arms loaded with bags. She must have been waiting for a servant to take them to our carriage.

I smiled to myself. “I was with a friend,” I said.

Could I call Gilly my friend? I wasn’t sure, but it felt like we could be friends if we were given the chance to spend time together.

I wondered if that would ever happen.

“You never came back to order food for that peasant girl,” Mother said.

The word peasant sounded harsh on Mother’s tongue. It
still pained me that Gilly wouldn’t take my offer to buy the small boys anything. They seemed so hungry, and the rat said the family never had enough to eat.

“Mother,” I said, forming an idea. “Is there time for me to still go back inside and order them something?”

“Yes,” Mother said, looking befuddled as she passed over her money satchel for me to use. “But where is the girl?”

“It doesn’t matter,” I said cryptically. I rushed back inside the shop and went straight to that mean goblin. When I told her what I wanted to do, she looked like she might fall over.

It was priceless.

I really wish Gilly had been there to see it. I had a feeling she’d appreciate it.
They had no fresh bread?” Mother asked as she stirred the huge pot of chicken noodle soup she was making for dinner. “How can that be? They’re a bakery.”

“They ran out of yeast because the whole kingdom is having a yeast shortage,” I said, keeping a straight face. “I don’t think they’ll get another shipment till tomorrow or the weekend. Right, boys?” I looked at my brothers.

“Right, Gilly,” they said, their voices a perfect sing-song harmony. They looked like cherubs and sounded like them too.

That’s what happens when your big sister gets you out of a jam in Red’s Ready-for-Anything Shoppe because you broke a Big Bad Wolf Alarm Kit. I agreed to sweep the shop
every day next week to pay off their damage. In exchange, my brothers had to do everything I said.

We’ll see how long that lasts.

I put Mother’s change on the counter. “I guess we’ll have to do without bread for supper.”

Mother sighed. “It’s not like we haven’t done without it before.”

There was a knock at the door and the boys ran for it. My little sisters, Anna and Trixie, were due back from the fairy garden soon, so I assumed it was them. But when Han opened the door, no one was there. Instead, there was a large sack. Hamish lugged it inside.

Mother frowned. “I didn’t order any deliveries. I better see if your Father did.” She rushed out the backdoor of the kitchen and into the part of the boot that was our shop.

Mother was barely out the door when the boys opened the bag.

“Look!” Hamish shouted. “It’s rolls and patty-cakes!”

“And hot cross buns!” Han added.

The aroma wafted into the room.

“But how?” I wondered. There was no way Sierra had a change of heart. I walked over to see.
“There’s a note,” Han said. “I can’t read it. Can you?”
I opened up the cream-colored paper and noticed the handwriting, impeccably neat and formal.

Thanks for your help today. I know you said you didn’t need any help, but friends thank friends when they do something nice for them. Hope you don’t mind the rolls and sweets. Sierra will be expecting to see you the rest of the week to collect more. You have a tab to burn through. (You should have seen her face when I told her!) Until we meet again.

—Your friend, Devin

“Was that the girl at the bakery?” Hamish asked, his mouth covered in thick, white cream from a patty-cake.
“She was really nice,” Han agreed, taking a bite of a hot cross bun.
I picked up a warm roll and held it in my hand.

*Your friend, Devin.*

It might be nice to have a friend outside the boot sometimes. Even if she was a royal. I doubt we’d cross paths again, but you never know, I guess.

Enchantasia, I was quickly learning, was full of surprises.
Learn more about Jen Calonita's Fairy Tale Reform School and Royal Academy Rebels series:

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