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ABBY in OZ



SARAH MLYNOWSKI

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ABBY IN OZ

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ABBY IN

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for my mom, elissa harris ambrose,
because she made me believe in magic,
and watched the wizard of oz with me
at least a hundred times

chapter one



There Are No Tornadoes in Smithville

The sun is shining and it's a beautiful spring afternoon, but I am not feeling my one hundred percent best. I think I'm getting a cold. My nose is all stuffed up. Also, I'm standing on a rickety ladder outside a tree house, holding my dog, Prince, in my arms, which is not the most comfortable position. Sure, Prince is adorable, but he's starting to get heavy.

I knock on the tree house door. "Robin? Frankie? Penny?" I call. "Are you guys in there?"

The tree house is in my friend Robin's backyard. Robin's

parents built it for her a few years ago. It has a roof and a door and a window like a real little house, and it's always fun to hang out in.

Not so long ago, I got to visit another tree house inside the fairy tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. But I'll explain that later.

"Coming!" Robin calls, and I hear her footsteps inside.

Frankie, Robin, me (Abby), and Penny — otherwise known as FRAP — are getting together today to work on our group project for school. I have a great idea for it. It involves dogs.

Robin and Frankie are my two best friends. Penny is my sometimes friend. Meaning sometimes I want to hang out with her, sometimes I wish she'd transfer to another school.

We had a half day today, so Penny and Frankie came straight to Robin's after school. But Robin asked me if I could go home first and get Prince, which I did. Robin wants a dog of her own, but her parents say she should spend some time with actual dogs before they get one.

"Abby!" Robin cries, flinging open the tree house door

with a grin. She just got braces, which make her look like a teenager. Her reddish hair is up in a loose bun, with a few curls framing her freckled face. “Yay, you really brought Prince. You have the *cutest* dog.” She takes him from my arms as I bend my way through the door. “You look like a teddy bear,” Robin coos to Prince, “yes you do.”

Prince barks happily, as if to say *Thank you*.

Penny scowls from her perch on a cushion on the floor. “I don’t see why you want a dog,” she tells Robin, flicking her long blonde ponytail over her shoulder. “You have to take them for walks even when it rains. And they drool. And they’re messy. And they smell.”

Hello to you, too, Penny. “They don’t smell,” I say, sitting down on the cushion next to Frankie, who is curled up on her own cushion.

“They *sometimes* smell,” Frankie says.

I look at her in surprise. Frankie is supposed to be on *my* side.

“Well, sometimes,” I admit. “But not if you give them regular baths. Prince doesn’t smell.” At least not today.

“Wanting a horse, I understand,” Penny says. “I love horses. But a dog? No thanks.”

“Abby,” Robin says, plopping down on the cushion next to Penny, “where did you get Prince? An animal shelter or a breeder?”

Nope and nope. “We got him as a present,” I say. Which is kind of true. But Robin would never believe the real truth.

I got Prince when my brother and I went into a fairy tale.

I know it sounds totally bonkers, but there’s a magic mirror in the basement of my house. And a fairy, Maryrose, is trapped inside it. She takes me and my younger brother, Jonah, through the mirror into different fairy tales. Like *Little Red Riding Hood*. *Cinderella*. *Beauty and the Beast*. I think one day she’s planning to bring us into the story that trapped her so that we can help set her free.

Anyway, when Jonah and I fell into the story of *Sleeping Beauty*, we got Prince as a gift. And then we took him home with us, because he is adorable.

Of course, we had to make up a whole story for our

parents because they don't know about Maryrose, the mirror, or the whole traveling-to-fairy-tales thing. My nana does, though. She actually went into *Little Red Riding Hood* with us.

Guess who else knows about my magic mirror?

You're not going to believe it.

It's very unfortunate.

It's . . . Penny.

Yeah. Penny.

Penny, my sometimes friend, knows about Maryrose and the fairy tales and everything.

Why?

Because one time, Frankie, Robin, Penny, and I all fell into the story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Maryrose had nothing to do with taking us into *Alice*. That was all Gluck. Gluck is an evil fairy who's trying to stop me from freeing Maryrose. He lured me and my friends into the book, and we almost got trapped there forever. Luckily, we escaped. As we were leaving the story, Frankie and Robin got sprinkled with a magical powder that made them lose their memories of the

whole experience. But Penny and I did *not* get sprinkled.

Which means that, ever since then, Penny keeps asking if she can sleep over at my house so she can go into a fairy tale with me. But I don't think that's the best idea. Fairy tales can be dangerous. Penny would never listen to me if we went into one, and who knows how she would mess the story up. Never mind that every time she and I are with Frankie and Robin, I worry Penny's going to blow my secret.

"Can we get started on our project?" Frankie asks, snapping me back to reality. She adjusts her red-framed glasses and pushes her dark-brown hair out of her eyes. "We don't have all day."

Whoa. What is up with Frankie? Sure, she likes to get good grades in school, but she's never testy like this. I hope everything's okay. I'm about to ask her what's going on when my nose itches and I sneeze.

Achoo!

"Bless you," Robin and Frankie say at the same time.

"Ew, are you sick?" Penny asks, scooting away from me. "You better not get me sick."

“I’m not sick,” I say quickly. No one wants to be around a sick person. And I really don’t want to be a sick person. If I pretend I’m not getting sick, maybe my body will believe it? “I’m just a little . . . stuffed up. It might be allergies.” I do sometimes get sneezy in the springtime. I glance out the window. It’s strange . . . but the sky is not as blue as it was just a few minutes ago. And the sun seems to have disappeared. Dark gray clouds are gathering, and the wind is picking up.

“Abby, you’re not allergic to Prince, are you?” Robin asks. She lets go of Prince, who trots into the middle of the tree house and curls up on the purple shag rug to take a snooze. Prince can nap anywhere.

Frankie groans. “Robin! Of course Abby isn’t allergic to her *own* dog. Then she’d be sneezing every day, not just today.”

Robin blushes, and I frown. Frankie might be right but she doesn’t have to be mean about it.

“Listen,” Penny pipes up. “I have the *best* idea for our project.”

“I have a great idea, too,” I add quickly, just in case Penny thinks she’s in charge of this thing.

Our assignment is to start our own small business — one that will help the community. The project is due in two weeks, so today we are supposed to settle on an idea.

“I’ll start,” says Penny. She puts a piece of grape bubble gum in her mouth without offering us any, and then pulls a new red notebook and sparkly pen out of her backpack.

I wish I had brought a sparkly pen. And a new red notebook. And bubble gum.

Penny turns the notebook to the first page and begins reading from a paragraph she clearly wrote earlier. “Our new business will help the community by teaching kids in our class to up their style game. For a small fee, we’ll give them new hairstyle suggestions, or tell them that the headband they’re wearing makes them look like they’re seven.”

My mouth drops open. “You want us to give the kids in our class hair advice?”

Penny blows a big bubble with her gum, then sucks it back

in. “Not *just* hair advice. Clothing advice, too. Everyone needs help with how they look. For example, Abby, did you know your T-shirt has a stain on it?”

Wait, what?

“No, it doesn’t!” Frankie protests.

“Yes, it does. Frankie, maybe your glasses aren’t strong enough. But look on her right side, near her armpit.” Penny points at my armpit. “Under the blue stripe. There’s a little blue dot. A pen dot perhaps. Not sure how that got there, or why, but it’s obviously not supposed to be on your shirt.”

I look down my armpit. At first I don’t see anything, but then I do. A teeny tiny blue dot. How did Penny even see that? It’s the size of a piece of dust. “No one’s going to notice that,” I say.

Penny smirks. “I noticed it. If I can see, so will other people. So unless you can get that stain out in the wash, which I bet you can’t, you need to retire the shirt. Stripes are out this season anyway.”

But I love this shirt!

“Penny,” Frankie says. “I don’t think being critical of people counts as helping the community.”

“I agree,” Robin adds.

“Thanks,” I tell my friends.

“But my being critical will *help* people,” Penny says. “I have an eye for fashion. Have you seen my new shoes? Aren’t they cute?”

Her new shoes *are* cute. They’re black-and-white-checkered slip-on sneakers. Her whole outfit looks great, actually. She’s wearing shiny black jeans and an off-the-shoulder pink top. The top is pen-stain free, obviously.

I’m just wearing jeans and my stained striped T-shirt. Robin is wearing a cute blue dress and a green hoodie, and Frankie is wearing polka-dot leggings and a T-shirt with the NASA logo.

“I still think we should try an idea that doesn’t insult anyone,” I say. “Like mine.”

Penny rolls her eyes. “Fine. Let’s hear it.”

I sit up straight. “Well,” I begin, “a lot of people in Smithville have dogs.” I nod at a still sleeping Prince. “My idea is that we start a dog-walking service for people who can’t leave their homes for some reason. Maybe they have a sprained ankle. Or are sick.” I sneeze again.

“You better not sneeze on me,” Penny warns. “And your idea isn’t as good as mine. Because not everyone has a dog. I don’t. Frankie doesn’t. And even Robin doesn’t.”

“Yet,” Robin says.

“Whatever,” Penny says. “Our idea should help *everyone*.”

“What if we start a tutoring service?” Frankie suggests.

“What would we tutor?” Penny asks.

“Science,” Frankie says. “Math. English.”

“Boring,” Penny says. She smacks her gum. Loudly.

“You could tutor art,” Frankie points out.

“True,” Penny says, nodding. “I *am* an extremely talented artist. Best in our grade, for sure.”

I roll my eyes. Although she’s not wrong.

“I don’t know,” Robin says with a frown. “I need to *be* tutored, not to be a tutor. So I’m not sure that would work.”

“Do you have any ideas?” Frankie asks her.

Robin shakes her head. “Not really.”

“So what are we going to do?” Frankie asks. “We have to choose something.”

“I like my idea,” I say.

“Well, I like mine,” Penny says.

“And I like mine,” Frankie says.

We all look at Robin, but she shrugs, refusing to pick a side.

Sigh. Group projects are the worst.

Achoo! I sneeze again.

“What was that?” Penny asks.

“It was just a sneeze, Penny,” I say. “And I covered my nose!”

“Not *that*.” She pauses. “That.”

I listen hard. And suddenly I *do* hear something.

Whirrr. Whirrrrrr.

“It sounds kind of like a blender,” I say.

“Maybe my dad is making us smoothies,” Robin says.

“I don’t think we’d hear the blender all the way out here,” Frankie says.

Whirr-whirr! WHIRRRRR!

It’s getting louder. And louder. And louder. Now it’s like a *roaring* blender.

Prince wakes up with a start and lets out a low growl.

The gray sky outside is getting even darker. It almost looks like nighttime! And the wind is howling.

“Ugh,” Penny says. “Is it going to rain? I don’t want my new shoes to get ruined!”

Prince suddenly bolts toward the window and starts barking wildly, like five doorbells just went off at the same time.

What is going on?

The blender sound intensifies.

WHIRRRRRR! WHIRRRRRRRRRRRRR!

“Guys?” Robin says. “This is kind of scary.”

I shiver. It totally is! Suddenly, the group project is the last thing on anyone’s mind — I can tell.

I push myself off the pillow and follow Prince to the window.

And what I see makes me freeze.

Whoa. Whoa. WHOA.

There is a huge, gray, funnel-shaped spinning thing in the sky! It's the size of a tall building. As it spins, it tilts on its side.

Ahhhh!

"What. Is. That?" Penny shrieks.

"I think it's a tornado," Frankie says in a trembling voice.

That's impossible, right? There are no tornadoes in Smithville!

"Um, guys?" Robin calls over the *WHIRRing* noise and the sound of Prince's barks. "It's coming straight for us."

I gasp. The spinning funnel shape definitely seems to be moving closer. My heart jumps and I grab Prince. This is bad.

"We need to get out of the tree house!" Penny yells in a panic.

"I don't think there's time," Frankie cries. "We don't want to be outside when it hits!"

OMG. The tornado is now IN Robin's yard. I watch as it sucks up an orange flowerpot like juice with a straw.

I hug Prince tighter and crouch down. "It's about to hit us!" I cry.

We all scream as the tornado crashes right into the tree house.

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