

The book sat on her window sill, the pages covered with stains, and cracking from the direct sunlight. Emma opened it, touched her pen to the page, and the black ink slid over the paper. Her hand danced as her loopy script covered the page. Today she was writing about a little lost boy far from home. The fountain pen drew solid straight lines as she constructed the forest the boy was lost in. She drew the trees, the sky, the stars, and finally, a little house. The house had a chimney and big windows. Emma filled in the doorknob and paused for a moment. She touched the tip of her pen to the now darkened doorknob and frowned. She could swear she saw something in her drawing move. Emma tapped the door with her pen again, and again the door seemed to flap open.

Emma thought she heard something coming from downstairs, so she put her pen down, opened her bedroom door, and walked out. The book lay open on her desk, and as soon as she left, the door was flung open.

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The warm sunlight crept in through the window shade and bathed Emma's face. She stretched and rubbed her eyes. Slowly she blinked, bringing the room into focus. Looking down, Emma saw a blue blanket with yellow stars on it. She was puzzled, she did not own a blanket like this one. Cautiously, Emma swung her legs over the side of the bed and stood up. Her feet made contact with a pair of fuzzy slippers much too small for her. In fact, the whole room was way too small. She was a good foot taller than the person the bed was made for, and the chair in the corner would fit someone a good five years younger. To her right was a washstand with a mirror and some pictures. Emma wandered over, and looked in the mirror. Her eyes met her back, as did her messy hair, but something was different. Emma frowned. Looking closer, she found a smudge of black ink on her cheek.

"That's strange," she thought. "How did that get there?" Try as she might, Emma could not remove the ink. She dipped a towel into the water in the basin and scrubbed, but all she did was make her cheek redder. Sighing in frustration, Emma threw the towel down and reached for the sweater sitting next to her. She pulled it on, but the sleeves only reached her elbows. She tried to tug them down, but stopped when she heard the fabric straining. Looking back in the mirror, Emma locked eyes with herself. "This is

all very strange... How did I get here? Last I remember, I was going to eat dinner..." Emma would have continued talking to herself, were it not for the small voice that interrupted.

"Hello? You must be Miss Emma! I'm so very glad you're here!" Emma looked down and was shocked to see a little boy talking to her from the floor.

"Uh. Hello. Yeah, I'm Emma. Where am I?"

The little boy looked scared. "Can you... Can you help me get home?" His voice shook.

Emma knitted her brows together. "Well, I don't know where we are, so I don't know how to get anywhere else. Where is home for you? Who are you? *Where* are we?"

The little boy concentrated hard. "Well... I'm not sure I know either. You see, my writer did not exactly finish my story or give me a full backstory. All I know is that I'm lost, and I need to get home."

Emma shook her head. "This must be some sort of wild dream." She walked over to the door and tried to open it. It would not budge. She shook it, she twisted the doorknob, she leaned all her weight against it, but still it stayed shut.

"I'm sorry Miss, but I'm afraid that won't work. Nothing can open that door."

Emma turned around, and nearly squashed the boy in the process. "That's ridiculous! Why shouldn't this door be able to be opened?"

"Well I'm not sure the writer created a way for it to be open." The little boy suggested.

"Who is this writer? I'm really starting not to like them, whoever they may be." Emma sighed.

"Look, Miss, all I know is that I'm lost, my writer is a girl named Emma, and until she finishes my story, I'm stuck here." The little boy looked up at Emma with big wide eyes. "And, I've been expecting you, but I'm not sure why."

"Emma? But that... that's me." Emma knelt down and looked closer at the boy. He could not have been more than a few centimeters tall. "By any chance is your name Christian?"

The little boy thought long and hard. "I believe my writer had something like that in mind when she created me, so, why yes!" He smiled.

Emma groaned. This was not possible. She had to be dreaming. How could she be stuck inside a story she had created? "Christian, if it's okay that I call you that, how do we get out of here?"

“Well, Miss Emma, even if we could, we’re surrounded by a huge forest full of scary animals and beasts. I don’t think you want to go out there.” He seemed genuinely worried.

“I’m not scared. I’m bigger than anything here!” Emma protested.

“I was too when I first got here.” Christian admitted.

“What happened? How’d you get so small?”

“I don’t really know... I just thought and thought and thought... a lot... And one day I woke up, and I had shrunk!”

“What did you think about?” Even if this was a dream, it would make for a good story in Emma’s journal. She was willing to play along.

“Lots of things. My home, why I had run away, why I had come here, who my writer was...”

Emma nodded. “Well where I come from, I used to write stories all the time. I guess I wrote them because they let me escape, let me explore some place new.” As Emma spoke, the sleeves on her sweater seemed to grow, or rather, she seemed to shrink. “Hey! What’s happening!?”

“You’re shrinking too! Oh goodie!” Christian jumped up and down and clapped his hands. “Keep going!”

“No! Oh my god, make it stop! What’s happening?” Emma looked at Christian, and he suddenly seemed a lot bigger.

“I believe it’s magic. The same thing happened to me. Once I started saying things, admitting things, out loud, I began to shrink.”

“Well how did you make it stop?”

“It just sort of stopped. I guess it stopped once I didn’t have anything left to say.”

“Christian, how are we supposed to open that door if I wind up as tiny as you?”

“Miss Emma, maybe that door is not supposed to be open.” The boy spoke gently.

“Nonsense. I wouldn’t have put it there if I didn’t mean for it to be opened!”

The boy’s eyes grew. “You!? You are Miss Emma, like Miss Miss Emma? Are you my writer?”

Emma shrugged. “I mean, yeah? I think. I was writing a story about a little boy in the forest and then I walked out my door, and the next thing I knew I was waking up here!” As she said this, Emma began to shrink again. “Oh my god! No not again!”

Christian clapped his hands excitedly. “Wow! Oh my goodness wow! I don’t know very many characters who have met their writers! This is such an honor! Miss Emma!” He bowed to her with a big flourish.

“Christian just please! Help me stop shrinking!” Emma wailed. Her sweater was now too big for her.

“Oh! Of course! But there’s only one way. Talk. Say everything. You’ll shrink down to a small size, but then you’ll stop.” The boy nodded at her seriously.

“Ok... But what if I want to stay this size?”

“Miss Emma... I’m afraid that’s not really an option. The world you are in now was not built for big people like yourself.”

Emma began to talk. She talked and talked and talked. She said every little thing she could, she could not stop it, the words flowed out of her like water. Every negative thought she had ever had about home, ever reason for wanting to escape, it all flowed out. She began to shrink at a faster pace until finally she was the same height as Christian. The sweater had not shrunk with her, but her shoes and shirt and pants had. Finally, she looked Christian in the eye.

“Well, what now?”

Christian pulled two miniature apples out of his pocket. They were shiny and perfect, not a single mark on either. “Breakfast?” He suggested.

“Sure. Why not.” Emma grabbed one and sunk her teeth into it.

The two sat down on the floor together, leaning their backs against the wall. They talked, and discovered more about each other. Emma discovered more about what being an author means, and in the back of her mind, she tried to create a backstory for Christian.

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A few hours later, they were still sitting on the floor. “Hey, by the way, what’s that tattoo you have on your face?”

Emma reached up and patted her cheek. “You mean this? It’s not a tattoo, it’s just a smear of ink I can’t seem to get off.”

Christian looked puzzled. He gestured at it, “Can I?” Emma nodded and Christian ran his thumb over the black line. Again it did not budge, but when Christian pulled his thumb away, there was a spot of black ink on his finger pad. He rubbed furiously at it.

“Yeah, good luck with that one. It doesn't come off.” Emma chuckled.

“That’s just so weird...” Christian mumbled.

“Yeah... I know.” Emma suddenly ran out of things to say. “Hey Christian? Are we stuck here forever?”

He looked at her. “I hope not. I would really like to go back to wherever I came from.”

“Yeah. Me too. And I’m tired of being this small.”

Suddenly the light streaming in through the window lit up something on the window sill. Emma jumped to her feet and tried to see what it was. But being only a few centimeters tall, this was very hard.

“Hey Christian! Come on! Help me get over there!” Together the two of them ran over to the window sill and helped each other climb up the chair. Resting on the window sill was Emma’s fountain pen. She gasped.

“Christian! I know how to get us out of here!”

The little boy’s face lit up. “Really? How!?”

“I’ll show you. Help me get this pen over to the door.” Together they lifted the heavy metal object and brought it over to the door. They dropped it a few times, and were panting heavily at the end.

Emma unscrewed the tip of the pen and tugged it up. She maneuvered the pen and drew a lock on the door. The second the pen touched the door, Emma’s drawing came to life. She put the finishing touch on it, and sat down to rest.

“Hey! Look what’s happening!” Christian showed her his thumb. The little black smudge on his finger had turned into words and they were moving rapidly across his finger. Emma tried to read them and was surprised to discover that the words were the backstory she had been creating for Christian.

“I know, it’s my story isn’t?” He asked her quietly.

“Yeah, it is! How did you know that?” She asked.

“You’re my writer. It’s my job to know you.”

Emma nodded. She already had enough things to wrap her head around, she could let this one slide. “Come on, help me. Let’s go home.” Together they lifted the pen and slid the tip into the lock.

They could hear the tumblers groaning and soon the door flew open. The room began to spin, and everything grew blurry. Emma could feel herself growing at a rapid pace, and everything around seemed to be getting bigger too. Suddenly, everything went black.

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“Emma!” Emma woke up to the sound of a little boy’s voice running through her door. She stretched and looking down, she saw her blanket. She was back in her room.

“Emma Emma Emma! Mom said you and I could go and play today!” A little boy with a big smile jumped and landed on her bed. Emma wrapped her arms around him.

“Christian?” She asked tentatively.

“Yes Emma?” His big blue eyes looked at her expectedly. “Will you go to the park with me today?”

She smiled. “Of course I will you goofball! Wow! Look at you, you’ve grown up so fast!” He giggled.

The sound of crashing dishes came from downstairs. “Emma, mom saved breakfast for you. Come eat so we can go and play!” Christian jumped up and down excitedly.

“Ok you. Just give me a few minutes to get ready.”

Christian jumped onto the floor and Emma stood up next to him. She suddenly noticed her bedroom door was closed.

Christian noticed where she was looking. “Oh, I closed it this morning. Mom said to do so so you could keep sleeping.”

Emma nodded. “Christian, did you have any strange dreams last night?”

The little boy concentrated hard. “No, I dreamed I was Superman again!”

Emma laughed. “Ok, well I have a crazy story to tell you...”

Christian began to run. “You’ll have to catch me first!” He opened her door and slammed it behind her.

Emma stretched and moved over to her desk. The little boy’s voice came through her door. “Hey Emma?”

“Yeah?” She paused.

“Welcome home.” She could hear the sound of his little feet running down the stairs and she smiled.

Looking at her desk, she noticed her notebook was still there from the day before. But something had changed. Puzzled, she looked a little closer. The house she had drawn was still there, but this time, the door was wide open. There was a girl sitting inside the house talking to a little boy, and there was a smudge of black ink on her face.

Emma touched her own cheek, and her finger came away with a dot of black ink. She smiled. Suddenly a gust of wind blew through her window and made her bedroom door crash open. Startled she looked back at the drawing and inside the house, the girl smiled.