

Chapter 7

I laid there, mud in my face, a log on my leg and worry in my heart.

“What happened?” said Delphi, gliding towards me.

“Leo happened,” I said darkly.

“Who?”

“Leo, the sorceresses right-hand man - or boy, in this case,” I replied.

“The sorceress has a side-kick?” Delphi asked.

“YES, I just said that! In fact she has two but one is more dangerous than the other.”

“Technically, you said she has a right-hand man, not a side-kick. Anyway, where’s the map?” Delphi said.

“He ran off with it, the cheating little . . .”

“Keep your hair on,” Delphi interrupted.

“Sorry, I’m just annoyed,” I said.

“So, what now?”

“Now, you go back to school, find him and get that map,” said Opie.

“Opie will you stop sneaking up on us!!! You frightened the life out of me,” I snapped.

“I know, I meant to.” said Opie.

“OH MY PIXIE DUST, YOU’RE ADORABLE!” said Delphi and she zoomed over to Opie and threw her tiny arms around him and kissed him on the nose.

“I think I like this pixie, Olivia,” said Opie.

“Is anybody going to take this stupid log off me, or am I just going to lay here forever?” I asked.

“Lay there forever,” said Opie.

“Oh thanks,” I said.

“I’m joking.”

And with that, Delphi flew over to me and rolled the log off my leg. “You really are weak, Olivia,” she said.

I ignored her comment and turned to Opie. “What did you say about school, Opie?” I asked.

“That’s where Leo is and I’m pretty sure that’s where he’s hiding the map.”

“So you’re saying I’ve got to go back to school?” I said.

“Yes, and the sooner the better, Olivia.”

“Use the cake in your locket,” said Delphi.

“How do you know about the cake?” I said.

“I almost ate it,” said Delphi, “but I saw the note saying ‘don’t eat unless in an emergency and you need to return through the portal.’”

So I took the cake out of my locket, closed my eyes and ate it. When I opened my eyes, I found myself laying on the ground under the willow tree where Rose had pushed me. Rose was still standing over me, cackling maniacally.

“So you *are* a witch then?” I mumbled.

“Oh shut up!” Rose said as she strutted off.

I made my way through the winding streets back to my house. I wondered how I would be able to tell who Leo was. There was the obvious, of course; his luminous green eyes, but then again, there were tons of boys in my school with bright green eyes, it was something our area was famous for. I also wondered if he’d change his name. Another thing that crossed my mind was how ordinary his name was, especially in contrast with his sister. Luna was a very magical sounding name by comparison and maybe Luna would come with him to my school and then there would be two of them to keep track of. By the time I had finished thinking over everything that had happened, I realised I was standing outside my front door. I put the key in the lock and turned it, the door opened and I walked in. Mum wasn’t home yet which was unusual. I noticed a note on the kitchen table. It said:

Olivia,

*I'm going out for coffee with a friend. I'll be back in a couple hours.
There's chicken soup in the cupboard – heat it up if you get hungry.*

Lots of love,

Mum

It was odd mum not being home. Even though she worked on a Monday afternoon, she still arrived home before me. I went upstairs, got changed and started doing my history homework. An hour and a half passed. I was beginning to get worried now. Suddenly, I heard the door open.

“Honey, I’m home. Come downstairs, there’s someone I’d like you to meet,” called mum.

“Coming,” I said.

I bolted down the stairs and tripped over an umbrella in my haste. Second time I’d hit my head in one day. That’s a record I thought miserably, although it didn’t hurt much.

I turned into the sitting room and saw mum sitting on the sofa chatting animatedly to a man. He looked to be in his early 30’s and had short spikey blonde hair. He was wearing a full suit and tie and looked like a lawyer. He stood up when I entered the room and introduced himself. “Hi Olivia,” he said as he reached out to shake my hand.

“Hello,” I said feeling confused.

“I’m John Smith.”

“Where’s Pocohontas?” I asked.

“Olivia! Don’t be lippy young lady.”

“Sorry, mum,” I said. But I wasn’t. There was something I really didn’t like about this man.

Chapter 8

“So Olivia, I think you know my daughter?” said Mr Smith. “She’s in your class, I believe.”

“Really? What’s her name?” I said, taking a sip of lemonade.

“Rose. She’s very popular, you must know her.”

I coughed and lemonade squirted out of my nose and landed on Mr Smith’s designer suit. I laughed. He looked utterly horrified and made for the bathroom. When he returned he was holding some tissue and began rubbing vigorously at the stain.

“Olivia! Apologise to him, please.”

“Sorry, Mr Smith,” I said.

“Yes, I do know who your daughter is as a matter of fact, she’s a brat!” I said, running up the stairs to my bedroom and slamming the door. I was in shock. Why on earth would my mother bring the father of Rose Smith

here after everything Rose had done to me. What did she expect? That I'm going to randomly make friends with her father and then everything would suddenly be alright? As if! I needed to calm down. I wasn't going to find Leo if I didn't focus. I decided I was going to go into school the next day. Hopefully Leo would be there. If he was there, I would need to work out who he was and where to find him. Then again, if I didn't know what he looked like, how would I know if he was there or not?

The next morning, I was sitting at the table eating breakfast with my mum.

"Olivia, honey, about last night . . ."

"I'm listening," I said.

"I may agree with what you said about Rose but that doesn't mean your behaviour was acceptable."

"I know. Sorry mum," I said.

"There's something I need to tell you, Olivia," mum said.

"What is it?" I asked curiously.

"John and I are getting married."

"You're WHAT? How long have you been seeing him? How long has this been going on?"

"I've only been seeing him for a month," replied mum.

"Only a month? Seriously?" I said.

“Seriously,” mum said.

“Don’t you think you are rushing things a bit mum?”

“I like him and I just know he’s the one. I thought you’d be ok with it,” said mum.

“You always said Dad was the only man for you, and besides, you expect me to be ok with having Rose as a step-sister for the rest of my life? What kind of mother are you?”

“Your Dad is dead. It’s about time you moved on. I am,” said my mum.

“Don’t bother driving me to school, I’d rather walk,” I said, grabbing my bag as I ran out of the door, tears stinging my eyes.

“Olivia, you didn’t eat your breakfast,” mum called out as I ran.

“I’m not hungry,” I said.

Mum sighed and shut the door.

I was miserable all the way to school. I was trying not to cry. I felt betrayed. How could mum forget dad so quickly, it was only a year since he died? How could she do this to me? What if after the wedding we had to move in with John? What if I had to share a bedroom with Rose? What if mum and John had a baby? I bet if they did it would be as ugly as the father. By the time I got to school, I could no longer hold the tears back. I sat on a bench and started sobbing.

“Excuse me, Miss.”

“Don’t call me ‘Miss’! I’m not a teacher,” I said, looking up. There was a boy with emerald green eyes and messy auburn hair gazing down at me.

“I know that, it’s just manners. What’s *is* the matter anyway?”

“Nunya,” I snapped.

“Pardon?”

“Nunya,” I repeated.

“What does that mean?”

“It means – it’s none of your business. Haven’t you read *Nevermoor*?” I said.

“As a matter of fact, I haven’t. Is it worth reading?” he asked.

“Yes, it’s a very good book,” I said.

“Why were you crying?” he asked again.

“No reason,” I said.

“People don’t cry for nothing,” he said. “I might be able to help if you tell me. Did you fall over? Did you hurt yourself?”

“You can’t help me with this,” I said.

“You’d be surprised, I can be quite helpful,” said the boy.

“Can you prevent a wedding and bring someone back from the dead?” I asked.

“My father’s a lawyer, he might know how to help with the wedding part but I think it’s beyond my capability to resurrect the dead. Sorry.”

“I was joking,” I said. “Who are you anyway?”

“My name is Thomas,” he said, “And you.”

“I’m Olivia.”

“Nice to meet you,” he said and reached out to shake my hand.

“You don’t need to be so formal,” I said. “It’s not the 18th century!”

“I know,” said Thomas.

All of a sudden, Rose appeared.

“Tom, I haven’t seen you in ages. How are you? I didn’t know you were coming to my school. When did you arrive? And what on earth are you doing with *her*?” Rose exclaimed.

“Don’t tell her,” I mouthed at Thomas.

Thomas looked in my direction and gave me a subtle wink. “I won’t,” he mouthed.

I don’t know why, but I trusted him.

Chapter 9

“Morning class,” said Miss Sheridan as she ushered us into our seats.

“Today we have a new student joining us. His name is Thomas. Please make him feel very welcome. Would anyone like to show him around?”

“Miss, Miss, Miss,” said Rose, waving her arms wildly in the air, “I will!”

“Rose dear, you showed the last new student around. How about giving someone else a turn?”

“Oh, ok Miss,” said Rose, looking disappointed.

“Olivia, how about you?” asked Miss Sheridan.

“Me?” I replied. “But Miss, I . . .”

Miss Sheridan interrupted me saying, “No ‘buts’, you’ll do a great job, besides it’ll keep you out of trouble!”

“Speak of the devil and he shall appear,” said Miss Sheridan, gesturing towards the classroom door where Thomas was standing. She turned to Thomas and said, “Thomas, go and sit next to Olivia. She will show you around the school today.”

“Of course, Miss,” Thomas replied, a smile lighting up his face as he slid into the seat next to me.

Rose looked murderous.

I ignored her.

“Hi,” I said.

“Hi,” Thomas replied, smiling at me. “I’m glad to see you’re not crying anymore.”

“Ha ha,” I replied sarcastically.

“I’m serious,” said Thomas, “I don’t like to see people upset, it makes me feel bad. Why were you crying?”

“No reason,” I said. “So why did you move schools?” I asked, quickly changing the subject.

“I didn’t have many friends at my old school and I was being bullied.” Thomas’s face flushed with embarrassment.

“Really? Who on earth would bully you? I mean you’re so polite and respectful and I expect your pretty well off because your Dad’s a lawyer and on top of that you’re not too ugly,” I said.

Thomas laughed and blushed even harder. “You’d be surprised, there are some evil people out there,” he said.

I was shocked. I couldn’t believe anyone would bully a boy like Thomas. He seemed to have everything going for him. He wasn’t like me, he was good looking, well-off and had a father who was alive and clearly proud of him, whereas my Dad died a year ago. I can remember him clearly. All I have left is a photo of him with his arm around me at Disneyland standing with Minnie Mouse on the other side of me. It’s on my dressing table in a gold frame. It’s the first thing I look at every morning when I wake up.

“Why did they bully you?”

“They were jealous,” said Thomas.

“Jealous of what?” I asked.

“What do you think?”

“I don’t know.” I said, “You don’t seem the type to be bullied.”

“Who *is* the type?” he asked.

“People like me,” I said, staring at my shoes.

“What? Is that true? I never would have guessed. You seem really confident and outgoing, not the type to take any nonsense from anyone!”

“You’d be surprised Thomas.”

“Call me Tom,” he said smiling.

“Ok Tom, seems like we’ve got something in common after all,” I said reaching in my bag to grab one of my mum’s homemade chocolate brownies and handing it to him under the desk. “Here, have this as a token of our friendship.”

“Thanks, you can have half of my chocolate bar if you want. Then our friendship is truly sealed.”

I accepted his offer gratefully and smuggled the large chunk of chocolate, he generously broke off, into my rucksack by my feet.

Soon it was lunchtime and I made my way to the toilet but when I got there, there was a sign on the door saying **Out of Order. Please use the boy’s toilets**. So I did, but when I tried to flush the toilet, nothing

happened. I tried again, harder but with the same result. So I decided to have a look in the cistern to see what was going on. I was not expecting to find what was inside . . .

Chapter 10

It was the map! At least, I thought it was the map. I wasn't sure because it was blank. It might have been just a bit of old paper. But, I could just tell it was the map. I could sense the magic pulsing through it. I reached out to grab it but as I did so, I was thrown across the room and landed in the sink banging my head against the mirror. "Owwwwwwwwww!" I shrieked. When I got my senses back, I picked up the toilet brush and started prodding the map. Instantly, the brush flew out of my hand, crashed to floor, snapping the handle in two. I snatched the toilet roll from the holder and aimed it at the map, standing back and covering my head in case I was bombed by a flying loo roll. I ducked as the loo roll came hurtling towards me through space. There was definitely something funny going on. I decided I'd better consult Opie at this point before I was attacked again by a vicious loo roll, if I could find him.

I left the toilet and went to find Thomas. I was supposed to show him around after all. So that's what I did.

"Mum, I'm home."

"Hello Olivia. How's your day been?"

“Ok,” I said huffily, still seething from the fact that I was going to have to put up with having Rose as a stepsister for the rest of my life. Not only that but my mother hadn’t even told me she was seeing Mr Smith, let alone going to marry him. I couldn’t believe it. It was so unlike her. It was as if she’d had her brain taken over by an alien. Mum always told me that she didn’t need a new husband, she had me. And on top of that, she lied to me. It wasn’t fair. I was hurt.

Later that night I was lying in bed when I heard a faint tap at the window. I saw a peculiar pair of eyes staring at me through the glass, one yellow and one blue. It was Opie, the hetrochromiac cat.

“Good timing, I needed to speak to you,” I said as I opened the window to let him in. “I found the map but I can’t get near it, there’s some kind of invisible barrier protecting it and every time I go to touch it, it repels me. I was nearly murdered by a flying toilet roll.”

“Nearly? The toilet roll should try harder next time,” said Opie laughing.

“Hey, if I weren’t here, those portal keepers would be imprisoned forever.”

“Fair point.”

“So, clever clogs, how do I break through the barrier and get the map?”

“I don’t know do I? I’m just a pussy cat with mismatched eyes.”

“You *must* know; you seem to know everything else!”

“Wait here, I’ll be back in a minute,” said Opie.

“Where are you going?” I said.

“You’ll see!”

It took Opie at least half an hour to return, by which time I had fallen fast asleep on my bed and was having a strange nightmare in which Rose was somehow mixed up with the sorceress. I woke up to find a green and purple blur jumping up and down on the end of my bed. I was confused.

“Delphi?” I mumbled sleepily.

“Surprise!” said Delphi.

“What are you doing here?” I asked.

“Helping you, silly! What do you think I’m doing here?”

“Delphi has an idea of how we get through that barrier and get the map,” said Opie.

“Tell me then,” I said excitedly.

“The only person who knows how to get through the barrier properly is the person who created it, but pixie dust reverses enchantments. It doesn’t get rid of them forever but it gives us a window of opportunity and I’m a pixie so I can help you. It’ll only give us a few minutes though, so you will have to be very quick,” said Delphi.

“Perfect,” I replied, “I just hope the toilet is still out of order.”

The next morning, I snuck Delphi into the front pocket of my school bag. She moaned and wriggled a little, but after a while, settled down. I told

her to keep quiet. I didn't want Miss Sheridan or anyone else, for that matter, discovering her whereabouts and asking awkward questions. We made our way to the front door. Mum poked her head out of the kitchen when she heard the stair creaking.

"You're leaving early Olivia, what's the rush?"

"I've got to help Miss Sheridan set up the classroom," I lied, thinking quickly.

"Oh, ok, just don't be home late from school. Don't forget we're going shopping for you and Rose's bridesmaid's dresses tonight. Rose and John are going to meet us there."

Of course they are, I thought to myself. "Great, just amazing," I said unenthusiastically.

"Don't be sarcastic, Olivia," said mum. "It doesn't suit you."

I slammed the door with such force that the windows rattled in their frames and Opie's fur stood on end. He'd crept out behind me, thankfully unnoticed and slunk off down the street back to who knows where.

"Olivia, you really shouldn't talk to your mum like that," said Delphi, poking her head out of my bag.

"And you really shouldn't butt in where you're not wanted," I said huffily, but deep down I knew she was right.