

A Sprinkle of magic

In a small corner of New York, there is an old store, the sign so rusty you could not see what they sold there. But it was not a normal store. Inside was a secret passageway to an underground city. A magic city.

Everyone who lived there had a magic talent. Some could make shooting stars. Some could talk to animals. Imagination was the limit. There was only one problem: you had to believe.

* * *

“Looser.”

“Nerd.”

Insults followed me the second I had gotten within reach of the school.

“Looks like someone still can’t believe in herself.” One kid jeered at me, laughing with his friend. I continued what I was doing, trying not to let it get to me.

“Ava, Ava, still can’t find her magic. Even though it’s basic logic!” Even though it barely rhymed, Brandon Simpson and his I gang laughed as if it was the funniest thing they had ever heard. I walked away as fast as I could, trying to get away from them. Suddenly one of Brandon’s friends leaped out in my path, tripping me with his foot. I rolled over and got up, trying to walk it off. As I was almost out of the locker bay, I heard a few groups of girls and boys laughing around me. I looked down, and on my leg was a little post it note saying: Kick me! I knew that all they wanted was to get me angry, but I had already felt the heat and adrenaline rushing towards my face.

I slowly walked back to where Brandon was standing.

“Why did you do that?” I asked, putting my binder slowly on the ground.

“Ooooooh! Never thought you would push back!” Brandon taunted.

“What’s she going to do? Is she going to run back home to mommy?”

Brandon was in a headlock faster than anyone could blink an eye. “You watch what you say Brandon Simpson. You do not know who you are dealing with.” I let go, watching the blood rush back to his pale face. He said some sort of insult in an unsure voice, but I didn’t catch it. I was running. Down the steps and out of the school.

I walked fast, but didn’t have a clue where I was going. Somewhere where people wouldn’t make fun of me. Home? No. My parents would just bring me

back to school to “fix my mistakes.” I needed somewhere where it didn’t matter that I didn’t have magic. Then it hit me. The other world. The one called New York. Supposedly people there did not have magic.

Looking around, I realized that I didn’t know where I was. That was for the better, I decided. Then no one could find me. I hurried my pace to an old store that I could ask for directions to the other world.

As I glanced up at the sign, I realized I would have to go inside to see what they sold there. The sign looked as if it had been there for centuries. Rust covered the letters, as long, spiny vines crawled up the store, curling onto the bottom of the sign. I opened the door which rang a bell, and set off some other contraption, ended up revealing a hidden staircase in the wall.

“Hello, Hello, Hello.” An old man, who looked at least 80 years old said, smiling down from the top of the stairs. He had a long grey beard, speckled with thin strands of grey. With thin rimmed glasses, and his eyes seemed to almost welcome you into his shop. I could feel magic brewing, and I knew that I wouldn’t have to ask for directions, because I had come to the exact spot.

“Um, hi.” I stammered, lost for words.

“You must be... ah!” He said as if he had just remembered the name of an old friend.

“Ava... Ava Shay.” He said, smiling. I tried to mimic his excitement, but failed, only allowing myself to smile awkwardly.

“Yea. That’s my name.” I mumbled. As soon as I had spoken, his bright eyes turned suddenly cloudy.

“But I am afraid I cannot help you. I can see the future, and if I let you do this, I am laying you in great danger. The world is full of things we do not know about, and even though you think you are more alike to these outsiders, you have a home here, with family that is more like you than you realize.” His eyes seemed to snap back to reality, and with it, what he had said.

“Can I help you?” He asked, no realization of what he had just said.

“Um. Yes.” I said, uncertain still from what he had just said.

Suddenly, a worry filled me up, making me more uncertain of what I was doing. No. I would do this. I had to.

“I’m taking a class in... science... where we have to do an experiment... about the wall that takes us to the other world? Can I see it please?” I grabbed a pencil and my science notebook from my bag, and flipped to a page in the front where last year I had taken some notes about the wall.

“Ahh yes. Of course! Can’t say no to someone learning!” He said, smiling. I felt bad about lying to him, but it was the only way I could see the passageway.

“Right this way....I didn’t ask. What is your name?” He said, still smiling.

“Ava. Um... Ava Shay.” I said for the second time.

“Ava.... Ava.... Seems familiar. Have you been here before?” I didn’t answer, because we had now come to the room.

The floor transformed from stone, to a kind of smooth crystal. But that wasn’t the most amazing thing. In the middle, a carved wooden doorway stood. It was normal, except for tiny carvings that reached every corner.

“How does it work?” I said casually, hoping not to seem too obvious.

“Now that is secret information, but I suppose I could let a little secret out. Not like you would ever want to actually want to use it, right?” He said with a quick wink. I gulped.

“Nope. Never would ever want to use it!” I smiled, hoping to sound sincere.

“Ahh. That’s good. Well, the trick is you have to imagine the other side. It will appear just as you imagined it. The outside for the non-magic folk will stay the same, but the inside will change just how you think of it. Are you writing this down?” He said, looking at me over the rims of his glasses.

“Oh yes, notes...” I said, scribbling down some random things that I could throw away soon enough.

Now that I know how simple it was to get in, I needed a distraction.

“Hey, umm, do you have any examples of things from this world?” I asked pretending to be very intrigued in the doorway.

“Oh Yes!” A grin spread across his face.

“I’ll go get them! Might be a little bit of time, I’m not sure exactly where I put them... Don’t touch anything while I’m gone!” As soon as I heard his footsteps fade away, I tried. I tried to imagine. Creamy white walls, desks, and tables full of odd objects. Everything there is old, or broken, or covered in dust. But yet, a sense of happiness. A musty smell, almost like a library. I breathed in, and could almost smell it. Then I realized I was smelling it. I walked forward, and my eyes opened. It was just like I had imagined.

I walked by a table wiping dust off of a snow globe. Then I looked around. The room looked oddly familiar, and I realized it was the same shape as the shop I was just in. I walked forward and out the door. My breath was pulled away, as if by magic fingers had pulled deep inside of me. This world looked so different than my small little town! Tall towers loomed against the setting sun, and big

billboards littered the sky. Most odd of all were these little screens that everyone had. About the size of your hand, everyone had similar ones, but yet they were all different colors. One guy walking next to me seemed to not have one, so I started talking to him.

“Excuse me. Can you please tell me if this is the world of New York?”

“Call it what you want, kid.” He said, chuckling.

“Um, is there any magic here?” I replied, hoping his answer would be of confusion.

“Magic? None here. Where are your parents anyway? New York is a dangerous place, especially at night.” He said looking closer at me.

“Why are you out here any way? A kid like you shouldn’t be out on the streets...”

I quickly walked away, not knowing what he meant by “dangerous.” Back at home there was nothing dangerous about night. Home. A sudden wave of homesickness hit me. Despite everything, back there was my home. Why did I have to leave? Then I remembered the reason. Everyone would be so disappointed in me. My parents. Anyone who was related to me. And Brandon. He would have new reasons to laugh at me. The thought of him taunting me sent lurching thoughts shooting to to my stomach. I couldn’t go back. Not now.

“Excuse me. Pardon me.” New York wasn’t all as amazing as I had thought. The crowds were endless. Going one way was hard, but with all these streets with cars honking and releasing steam into the air, it was almost impossible. And the noise. The talking. Beeping. Honking. It was too much. I squeezed to the side where there was a building I could take a break.

I must have closed my eyes, because when I opened them, it was night. I heard the man I had been talking to ring in my head. *New York is a dangerous place, especially at night.* It didn’t look too bad. Only a few older boys playing basketball in the court over. I closed my eyes again.

Bong! Bong! Bong! Bong! The clock tower struck 4 o’clock in the morning. I slowly opened my eyes. A few cars drove by, including one black car, driving close to the curb, sending droplets of murky, brown water spraying onto the bottom of my jeans. Abruptly it stopped, feet from where I was. I got up, getting ready to leave. The man in the car opened up his car door, and got out, and closed the door. Then without warning, he called out:

“Hey, girly! you wanna ride?”

Assuming he wasn't talking to me, I quickened my pace. Then he called out again.

"Why you walking away from me? I asked you if you wanted a ride?" I looked back. He was pointing at me. Even though I knew nothing about this world, it just didn't seem right. I slowly turned forward, and then ran. I ran through green lights, and red lights. I ran until I could no longer hear the angry shouts and honking coming from that man's car. Slowly and unsurely I slowed down. Soon after I caught my breath, I realized how lost I was. Every building looked different. The billboards all had different advertisements. I slid down to sit on a wooden bench. Abruptly, a little boy sat down next to me. He wore ripped jeans that looked speckled with mud. His T-shirt was ripped and looked to big for him. Looking at me I could see his hair was a muddy blond, dropping down into his face.

"Do you live out here too?" He asked, with a small smile. At first I was taken aback by the question. Then I realized he was right. I looked like someone that lived on the street. My thin jacket had gotten snagged and ripped, and my left shoe was covered in mud.

"Um... not really. I have a family, it just...." My voice faded away. I couldn't tell him the real reason. He would think I was crazy.

"Your lucky. I wish I had a family." He pushed his bangs back and I could see his deep, blue eyes. Looking closer, I realized that he wasn't looking at me. He was blind.

"I'm so sorry." I replied, realizing how selfish I sounded. I had a family, and all he had was the streets.

"Why don't you live with your parents then?" He said, looking more in my direction.

"Well, where I'm from, I don't really fit in." I tried to explain, but there was no way he would understand. As if by reading my thoughts he said, "it's ok. You don't have to reply."

We sat in silence for over an hour, until the moon went so far down that you couldn't see it, and the sun's rays peeked over the horizon. The boy didn't seem to notice a difference, but must have heard me move because he said "you can see it, can't you?"

"See what?" I replied, although I knew.

"The sunrise. I know it's beautiful today because I could hear you gasp when the rays came up. I know it's beautiful because every day it is beautiful.

Sometimes you just get used to the beauty in life that it does seem beautiful anymore. Until you can't see it, then you just have to remember." He smiled sadly, but said something else that made my heart stop.

"Your not of this world are you?"

"How... How....." I stuttered

"When you saw the sunrise you gasped. Anyone living on this planet has seen a sunset, and has just believed it to be part of life. Not you. You saw something more to it than that. You saw the inner beauty of it."

I was taken for words. Somehow this boy had taught me something I hadn't heard all of my life. A chance. A chance to be me.

"I have to go now!" I said quickly, grabbing my jacket and swinging it on. I had to go back. Racing back in the direction that I thought I had came, a thought kept nagging me. What if that really was it? What if it worked?

"Finally, after a few stops along the way, I reached my destination. Panting hard, I looked up. The sign had rusted slightly more, and the windows looked a little bit more grimy, but besides that, it looked the same. Slowly, I pushed open the door.

Cobwebs were everywhere. Pushing them away I noticed something was wrong. No, it was all wrong. The musty smell was gone, creating a hot, sickly feeling. The creamy white walls were now a dirty gray, with graffiti marks. Looking around, I realized with a thud, that I had been in such a hurry to get out, I hadn't asked how to get in! Someone must have noticed the difference and ruined the inside! This was all my fault! Walking to where the portal used to be, a big crack ran down the side of the door, and a hole the size of a fist had punched through it. Tears ran down my face. This was the only way home. And I had ruined it! I should have stayed home. Why did I let my emotions get ahold of me? Then I remembered the thing the boy had said to me earlier. You saw the *inner* beauty of it. I could practically hear his voice saying "You don't need magic to be kind." Reaching a shaking hand out, I touched the edge of the portal. Nothing happened. I sighed, and cried harder. There was no way home. Suddenly, the carvings on the door lit up, growing brighter and brighter. In a bright flash, I looked up. The door was whole again. As the lights faded, the door opened. I knew this time would be different. This time, I believed in myself. I took a deep breath and walked through.

The End