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SARAH MLYNOWSKI

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GOOD aS GOLD

SARAH MLYNOWSKI



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for archer wolf maxwell sheinmel
(and courtney sheinmel, his amazing mom)

chapter one



That Did Not Work Out as Planned

Five. Four. Three. Two. One.
Ding!
The timer goes off. Yes! The cupcakes are ready!
“Mom! Dad! The cupcakes are done! Can I take them out of the oven?” I call from the kitchen.

It’s 7:30 P.M. and I am making chocolate cupcakes for the fifth-grade bake sale tomorrow. We’re raising money to buy books for kids in need. My best friend Frankie is making chocolate chip cookies, my other best friend Robin is making brownies, and my *sometimes* friend Penny

is making meringues, which sounds really fancy and also really hard.

“Yes, you can!” my dad calls back from upstairs, where he and my mom are watching the news.

“Carefully!” Mom adds.

I turn off the oven, put on my oven mitts, and oh-so-carefully take out the three trays one by one and set them on the counter.

Ooooooh. They smell good. And they look great!

While the cupcakes cool, I’m going to make the icing, and then they’ll be perfect. Like, one hundred percent perfect. I’m following a recipe I found online that’s called The Perfect Chocolate Cupcake.

I’m stirring all the icing ingredients together when Jonah, my seven-year-old brother, zooms into the kitchen. He immediately tries to stick his finger in the bowl. Prince, our adorable brown-and-white dog, runs in after Jonah and starts begging for scraps.

“Sorry, Prince, no chocolate for you,” I say. “Jonah, don’t use your fingers. I’ll set aside a cupcake for you when it’s ready, okay? And are you on your skateboard in the house?”

“Um, no?” Jonah says. He is literally standing on his skateboard, inching back and forth. I roll my eyes.

Jonah is obsessed with his new skateboard. It’s blue and white with silver wheels. The high schooler who lives next door gave it to him after getting a new one, and my brother could not be more excited. My parents said he must wear a helmet when he takes it outside, but I guess they didn’t specify that he must wear a helmet inside. Because he’s obviously not supposed to be *on* the skateboard inside.

I lower my voice. “Jonah, Mom and Dad will not be happy if they catch you riding that in the kitchen. Go outside.”

“They said it’s too late to go outside.”

“Then at least go down to the basement,” I say. “And wear your helmet!”

The basement is a good place for Jonah to practice because there isn’t much furniture down there. Except for the magic mirror.

Yup. We have a magic mirror in our basement.

For real.

Let me explain. It *looks* like a normal mirror, but a fairy named Maryrose is trapped inside it. And if Jonah and I knock on the mirror three times at midnight, Maryrose

sends us into a fairy tale. We've been to thirteen fairy tales, from *Cinderella* to *Hansel and Gretel* to *Jack and the Beanstalk*. I've even been into two books — *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. We always somehow mess the stories up — sometimes on purpose, but usually by accident. We make sure to find the characters new happy endings, though.

“I'll wear it, I'll wear it,” Jonah says. He grabs a spoon from the drawer and scoops up some icing to taste. “Not bad! Missing something, though.”

“What?”

He smiles. “Ketchup, maybe?” My brother is also obsessed with ketchup.

“Gross. No. And anyway, it's perfect. I followed the recipe exactly.”

“Okay, then,” Jonah says. He picks up his skateboard and runs downstairs.

“Be careful!” I call after him. Prince trots out of the kitchen, too, and I turn back to my cupcakes. They've cooled by now. I just have to take them out of the muffin pan and then I can put the icing on.

But when I try to take the first cupcake out, it's *stuck* to the inside of the pan. Hmm. Why did that happen . . . ?

Oh, no. I forgot to put the liners in.

I forgot to put the liners in!

Or to grease the pan. I was supposed to do one or the other!

My stomach sinks. I thought I'd followed the recipe perfectly, but I totally missed that step. What am I going to do? All the cupcakes are stuck! I try to use a knife to get another cupcake out of the pan but that just rips chunks out of the cupcake. This is going from bad to worse.

I glance at the clock above the microwave. It's already eight. The bake sale is tomorrow! I don't have time to make something new. We don't even have any ingredients left! I close my eyes and squeeze my hands into fists. I am not going to be able to bring anything to sell. And I really wanted to help. But I messed up everything.

Clunk, clunk, THUNK!

I open my eyes and frown. That noise came from the basement. What *was* that?

"Jonah?" I call, running out of the kitchen and down

the stairs. In the basement, Jonah is lying on his back and his skateboard is resting against the mirror.

“Are you okay?” I ask him.

“I’m fine,” he says, sitting up and rubbing his elbow. At least he’s wearing his helmet. “I just fell and my skateboard kind of . . . ran into the mirror.”

“Is the *mirror* okay?” I ask. The magic mirror is tall, with a beautiful stone frame carved with fairies. I move the skateboard out of the way and bend down to inspect the glass. It looks fine. Phew.

Oh. Wait. Oh, no. I spot a tiny hairline fracture in the glass.

“There’s a crack!” I cry.

“Oops,” Jonah says, scrunching his face and kneeling beside me. “Any chance it was there before?”

“I doubt it,” I say with a sigh. “Wouldn’t we have noticed?”

“We never sit this close to it,” he says.

“Maryrose?” I call to the fairy who lives in the mirror. “You there? We’re sorry we cracked your mirror! Say you’re sorry, Jonah.”

“Sorry,” Jonah mumbles.

There's no answer.

"Maryrose?" I try again.

Still no answer.

Jonah bites his lip. "Maybe she'll talk to us at midnight," he says. "That's when she answers our knocks."

"True," I say.

I can't help but give my brother a dirty look. I told him to be careful! Why didn't he listen?

"I shouldn't have let you go down to the basement with your skateboard," I say.

"Let me?" he cries. "You *told* me to!"

"Oh. Right." Still. I'm not the one who cracked the mirror. What if Maryrose is mad at us? What if we broke the magic? What if she won't let us back into fairy tales ever again? What if she *can't* let us back into fairy tales ever again?

Did I seriously ruin the cupcakes *and* the mirror in one night?

I take a deep breath.

The cupcakes are definitely ruined. As for the mirror . . . we'll know more at midnight.

* * *

My alarm goes off at 11:50 P.M. and I sneak into Jonah's room. He's snoring. Loudly. I'm surprised he doesn't wake himself. Or Prince, who's sleeping at the foot of his bed.

"Jonah!" I whisper-yell. "Move it!"

Prince wakes up first, and then Jonah bolts out of bed. His curly brown hair is its usual mess. He's wearing a T-shirt, jeans, and green sweatshirt. He even has his sneakers on in bed, which is gross.

"Um, Jonah, why are you all dressed?" I ask. "We're not going into a story tonight. We're just making sure Maryrose is okay."

"But what if she wants to send us somewhere?" he asks. "You never know."

Hmm. Good point.

"Gimme a sec," I say, and race back into my room. Better to be prepared, I guess. If Maryrose wants us to go into a story, we'll go into a story. Maybe visiting a fairy tale will cheer me up after the cupcake disaster tonight. I think of the ruined cupcakes, still sitting on the kitchen counter, and let out a sad sigh.

I dress quickly — white T-shirt, jeans, yellow hoodie,

socks, and sneakers. Plus, I put on my watch, which keeps track of the time at home. Fairy tale time is completely different from the time in Smithville. Sometimes two hours in a fairy tale is an hour at home. Sometimes a *day* in a fairy tale is an hour at home. We never find out until we get there, and my watch is the only way to know how long we have in the fairy tale. Jonah and I have to be in our beds before our parents wake up, and their alarm goes off at 6:45 A.M. They hit snooze once and then get to our rooms by 7:00.

I meet Jonah at the top of the stairs, and we quietly tiptoe to the basement so our parents don't hear us. Our parents don't know about Maryrose and the mirror's magic. Only my nana and Penny (long story) know, and they've been sworn to secrecy.

Prince hurries downstairs beside me and Jonah. He never lets us go into a fairy tale without him.

When we reach the basement, I glance at my watch. We only have a minute until midnight.

I knock on the mirror once to get Maryrose's attention.

"Maryrose?" I call out.

She doesn't answer. Crumbs. Is she mad that we — I mean, Jonah — broke her mirror? I glance down and see

that the small crack in the glass is still there. I hope it didn't hurt her.

I knock again. "Maryrose, are you okay?" I ask.

No response.

Jonah rushes up to the mirror and knocks a third time.

"Maryrose, I'm really sorry about the crack!" he cries.

Three knocks at midnight. Will the portal open?

The mirror starts hissing! And turning purple. And swirling! Maryrose is sending us into a story! Hurrah!

This must mean she's okay. And not mad at us! Right?

"Let's go!" I exclaim. Prince barks happily.

As we're about to step through, Jonah picks up his skateboard.

"No," I say.

"Why not?" Jonah asks.

"Hasn't it done enough damage?"

"But we might need it!"

"We've never needed a skateboard in a fairy tale before," I say.

"We've never *had* a skateboard before," he says. "And we definitely could have used one."

“But your helmet is upstairs!” I protest.

The mirror hisses again. We have to go this second!

Jonah does *not* put down his skateboard.

The three of us jump right into the mirror.

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