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Brindella is standing in a meadow looking up at two birds. The birds are frozen mid-flight and of a yellow so bright it looks manufactured. The grass smells of paint, as does the fairy godmother whose mouth is open but not making any sound. None of this surprises Brindella, of course, for she knows she is in a storybook. They are on page 4 and the fairy godmother has just granted her a wish. Brindella hopes on page 5 to find out what she wishes for. She has already imagined all sorts of things—a library with a tutor to teach her to read and write, or maybe a horse with wings that could take her to England or even China! *If I could just turn the page and see what's next*, she thinks.

Brindella looks around and sees that the book is in a large room on a table next to some pens and paint brushes. She walks to the edge of the book and jumps down onto the table. *Perhaps I could just take a quick peek*. In her tiny hands she takes the corner of page four and raises it enough to see the page underneath, but there is only a big white space with some black lines and swirls at the top. No pictures. She sighs, knowing she will have to wait.

Soon the door swings open, and a man in a T-shirt and jeans holding a paintbrush, walks in. He must be the one who drew her, who made the forest green and the birds yellow. Surely *he* knows the rest of the story. She puts her hands back on the book and pushes herself up, hoping to get close enough for him to hear.

“Hello up there! Excuse me, please!” she hollers up at him. The man, named Mark, turns and smiles at her.

“Oh, good afternoon, Brindella,” he says. “You’re looking lovely today, if I do say so myself.”

“Excuse me, but could you please tell me what happens next in the story? I’m extremely curious to find out what I wish for.”

“You’ll find out soon, that is, as soon I paint it. Can’t you wait just a little longer?”

“No, I really can’t! Please tell me now!”

“Well, you could probably guess on your own, I mean, it’s not difficult, as stories like this go. But if you really want to know, you wish for true love. Then your wicked stepmother gives you a poisonous apple, and you eat it and fall into a long sleep. After that the prince finds you and wakes you up by kissing you.”

“Uh-huh,” she says, nodding her head and waiting.

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“Yes?” Mark says.

“What else happens?” Brindella waits again, looking up at Mark, her eyes pleading.

“Oh, I know!” Brindella says. “Let’s say I wish for a journey to Transylvania where I slay a vampire!”

“No, no,” Mark says. “It’s a dragon, not a vampire, and the prince does that. But don’t worry; we’re not going to make much of the dragon-slaying part. *You’re* the star of this story.”

“But what do I get to *do*?”

“Do? You’re the whole reason the prince slays the dragon and travels miles and miles to grant you a magical kiss.”

“Well, what happens after that?” she asks.

“You and the prince get married and the story ends.”

“Ends? I don’t like that ending.”

“Sorry, but the story’s already been written.”

“You should rewrite it.”

“I’m just the illustrator.”

“Then *I’ll* rewrite it,” Brindella says.

“You’re not even big enough to hold a pen!”

Brindella looks at the pen on the table, as big as a tree trunk. Maybe if she stood it on end and held it with both hands . . . Then she remembers that she doesn’t know how to write.

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