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# Teen Novel

*Sample chapter for a teen novel based on a short summary provided to me by the publisher. All details and characteristics below were created and written by me.*

Cameron Cooper plopped down on her hard, full-sized mattress and opened her book to page fifty-four. The rustic brown, leather-bound Shakespeare anthology was thick and heavy, though the pages were as thin as tissue paper and almost as delicate. She’d snagged the edition from her parents’ library, opting not to purchase the school-chosen paperback version with some strange modern-day image of two teenagers on the cover that everyone else had. This seemed to really annoy her English teacher (which Cameron considered a perk) because she always had to sneak a look at other people’s books to figure out what page she was supposed to be on. To others, she knew using the anthology seemed unnecessary, pretentious even. But she didn’t care. She liked feeling the weight of the heavy book in her arms, and the way the crisp paper sounded when she touched it; something about it made her feel closer to the words on the page and the time in which they were written.

They were reading *Romeo & Juliet*—not exactly her favorite Shakespeare tale. Of all the twisted tragedies he’d written, of course her misguided peers had chosen to read the love story first. Sure, the lovebirds died at the end. *That* was pretty cool. Especially the way it all went down; it was a lot like life. As far as she was concerned, the hero shouldn’t *always* get the heroine, the couple usually *shouldn’t* reconcile their differences, and crossed signals *didn’t* magically untangle themselves. Life didn’t wrap up all nice and perfect at the end, like on a sitcom, and she appreciated the author’s creative license—then again, happy endings weren’t really her thing. Though she couldn’t ignore the fact that *Romeo & Juliet* wasn’t completely devoid of convention: poison was an appropriately delicate and ladylike choice for Juliet, allowing for a shocking death yet leaving the beautiful heroine’s makeup and gown completely unscathed. It was quite clever, actually. Still, Cameron definitely gave Shakespeare props for killing them off. What if *The Notebook* had ended with Allie reading Noah’s obituary in the newspaper instead of spotting his handsome picture on the real estate page? What if Andrew had actually boarded the plane, despite Sam’s teary doe-eyed profession of love, at the end of *Garden State*? Kitsch fans all across America would have thrown their seven-dollar diet cokes and vats of popcorn at the big screen in protest. The image was almost laughable.

After a few minutes of reading, Cameron’s attention began to drift away from Shakespeare and back into the twenty-first century. She rolled over onto her back, grabbed the computer remote off the nightstand, and clicked through her iTunes library until she landed on Kate Nash. As the Brit’s voice flooded Cameron’s speakers, she sat up and stared at her favorite wall in the room, silently applauding her decorating skills. When her family moved to Paradise Valley, Arizona, from Glendale a year ago, she was finally set free from the pastel-colored, polka-dotted walls of the room she was forced to share with her younger sister, Perry. When their father, Ron, was promoted to vice president of his company and transferred to Paradise Valley, her parents celebrated by buying a home that was twice the size of their old one. Normally Cameron would have questioned their need for such an excess amount of space, but this time the only words she let escape from her mouth were variations on the phrase “thank you.” For the first time in her life, she finally had her own room—and she celebrated by decorating it *her* way.

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# Opinion Article

*An article I wrote about the an NYC matchmaker.*

What could be worse than a matchmaker, we asked each other? Aside from hearing our mother tell us one more time that *we* don’t know what *our* being single does to *her.* Sure, in theory, the idea of a matchmaker is great: We pay someone to weed out all the unemployed, the fatties, the dummies, the arrogant financiers, the uneducated, the weirdoes, the lawyers (in my sister’s case), the I’m-so-into-myself-I-forgot-to-notice-you types. In essence, we could be dating only those bachelors deemed eligible by OUR own standards. Sounds perfect!

So what could go wrong?

Oh, just about everything if, like my sister and I, you were seduced by the idea of actually finding an answer to this dating mystery and put your future love life (or dating life, at least) into the hands of one particularly disappointing NYC-based matchmaking service. To avoid any potential legal battles this scam-artist could possibly throw my way, I shall avoid mentioning the name of the service. However, I will say that her name sounds like \*Shoshanduh Moron, so let’s call her that, shall we? She is the face and brains (though I can’t quite endorse that side of matter) behind the NYC-based Jewish matchmaking service, \*Shoshanduh’s Matches. While I can’t speak against all matchmakers the world over, I can give you one woman’s—scratch that—two women’s opinions of \*Shoshanduh’s Matches, and a few tips that I wish we had realized before we signed on the dotted line. If ever you choose to go to any matchmaker, at any point in your lifetime, I suggest you keep these tips at the forefront of your mind:

**Rule #1:** Don’t sign anything.

**Rule #2:** Don’t be fooled by the statement, “There are no guarantees in love.”

**Rule #3:** Remember you are paying for a service. If you are not satisfied, or if the company does not actually supply you with the service they purport to offer, you deserve a refund.

**Rule #4:** Don’t sign anything. Really. At least not without a lawyer present.

**Rule #5:** If your matchmaker isn’t happily married, something’s fishy.

**Rule #6:** Ask for statistics, proof of real life matches, and hardcore numbers. No intelligent consumer purchases a product or service without knowing the facts.

**Rule #7:** Follow your gut. Don’t let Mommy guilt you into it.

**Rule #8:** Get what YOU want in writing. And if you can’t, well, something’s fishy.

**Rule #9:** Make sure you know for certain whom your customer service contact is. Ask your matchmaker specifically if *she* will be available for your needs.

**Rule #10:** If you find yourself agreeing with anything I say in this article, take our opinion and experience with \*Shoshanduh’s Matches seriously and don’t make the same mistakes we did.

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# Original Quiz

*A quiz excerpt from Make It Work!, a fashion journal aimed at tweens and teens, ages 9 and up. Published by Running Press.*

**My Instincts Say WHAT?!**

What are your fashion instincts telling you? Take the quiz to find out!

1. Which of these statements describes you and your style?
   1. I keep it simple, and draw attention to one major feature at a time.
   2. It’s all about mixing the old with the new, the vintage with the classic.
   3. It’s all about originality. I like wearing things no one else has.
   4. I’m a bit more conservative. Button-downs, polos, and cardigans are my thing.
2. As far as colors go, my philosophy is:
   1. I tend to avoid bold colors. Naturals are my thing.
   2. I love mixing different patters and colors. An outfit isn’t an outfit without it!
   3. I don’t overdo it, but if I see a pattern I like, I go for it. Then I center the rest of my outfit around that piece.
   4. I stick to balancing classics. Blue, red, white, and black are staples in my closet.
3. When I get dressed, I want to feel:
   1. confident, and a little bit mysterious.
   2. stylish, but in a free and natural way.
   3. special, like my outfit is one-of-a-kind.
   4. comfortable but classic.

(2nd page)

1. My biggest fear in fashion is:
   1. overdoing things.
   2. nothing, really. Anything goes!
   3. looking like everybody else.
   4. getting caught up in trends that don’t last.
2. My perfect handbag is:
   1. black, grey, or brown leather. BIG.
   2. something with a fun pattern, could be canvas or have patchwork.
   3. this mustard-yellow, distressed leather bag from the 70s that my mom gave me.
   4. simple, clean, and practical.
3. When it comes to accessories, I:
   1. focus on one main thing, a hat, a necklace, or a scarf.
   2. wear whatever I feel like!
   3. I like things that have been around for a while. They have more meaning.
   4. I have a few classic pieces that go with everything I own.

(3rd page)

How’d your instincts do? Find out now!

**If you chose mostly a’s:**

Your instincts are telling you that your style is **French Chic**. For you, less is more. You like an air of mystery in your outfits, but you never overdo it. You know what your best features are, and you use them well!

**If you chose mostly b’s:**

Your instincts are telling you that your style is **Bohemian**. You are all about the colors and patterns, and you like feeling free in your clothes. You don’t really shy away from anything, but instead you mix all types of styles together to create your own.

**If you chose mostly c’s:**

Your instincts are telling you that your style is **Vintage**. You like feeling unique in your style. You choose items that are one-of-a-kind, and pair them with staples for a look that mixes the past and the present. You’re not afraid of colors or patterns, but you generally choose one special item as the focal point of your outfits.

**If you chose mostly d’s:**

Your instincts are telling you that your style is **Preppy**. You like looks that are classic, timeless, and clean. You don’t really go for bold colors or patterns, but instead choose basic colors and pair them with one accent color for a clean look. You are secure in what you like and aren’t likely to get caught up in fashion trends.

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# Marketing Copy

*Online sales copy and jacket copy for two books.*

**Sales Copy**

*Good Night, Little One* is Cartwheel’s entrée into poetry with a sweet, bedtime story from award-winning children’s poet, Kenn Nesbitt. This adorable poem is all about how different mommy animals say goodnight to their babies. With tons of nuzzles, cuddles, and good-night kisses, and beautiful, painterly illustrations throughout, this book is sure to be new bedtime classic. This padded board book is 8 5/8 x 8 5/8, with 6 spreads, that retails for $8.99.

**Jacket Copy for The Astronaut Who Painted the Moon**

Lights flashed. A rocket rumbled. Alan Bean’s dream was about to come true…

The Apollo 12 mission rocketed through the sky, beyond Earth’s orbit, and finally landed on the Moon. Astronaut Alan Bean placed his food on the ground and became the fourth person to walk on the Moon’s beautiful, barren surface. When he returned, Alan began to paint what he saw. He wanted the world to feel the magic and mystery that he felt out there, 240,000 miles away from home.

*The Astronaut Who Painted the Moon* is for any reader who has ever longed to know what is in outer space, for any reader who has ever created art to express how they feel, and for any reader who has ever wondered what it’s really like to walk on a new world.

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# Original Middle-Grade Pitch

*Series proposal pitch.*

**C-H-E-E-R!** Confessions of a Wanna-Be Cheerleader

**Date:** September 2, tryouts for the Varsity Titans

**Spirit Level:** Give me an S-U-C-K-S

“All I ever wanted was to be a cheerleader. But not just any cheerleader: a Port Angeles High School Varsity Titan—just like my mom. From the moment I witnessed my first Rewind Heel-Stretch Double (performed at the 2002 National Cheer Association College Nationals) my heart yearned to cheer louder than anyone has ever cheered before. Most people think cheerleading is silly, but I’d like to believe that if they knew what it was really about they’d change their minds. Some people don’t even think of cheerleading as a sport! But I’ll bet *they* don’t know that even though only 3% of all female high school athletes across the country are cheerleaders, 65% of all dangerous injuries in girls’ high school sports can be attributed to cheerleading. 65%! (It’s true, I looked it up.) To these people, I ask this: how can performing a backflip while being hoisted ten feet in the air, landing on someone’s hands, then balancing on one leg while holding the other all the way up by your ear NOT constitute sport?”

From as far back as she can remember Maddy heard stories upon stories of her mother’s days as a varsity Titan. The Port Angeles Titans are a nationally ranked, co-ed cheerleading squad, having attended the National Cheer Association championships every year since 1981. Being a member of the team was like being on a royal court; the entire student body worshipped them, not to mention most of the faculty. And let’s face it, what’s not to worship? No one combined the beauty of dance, the difficulty of gymnastics, and the art of cheering like the varsity Titans. The complexity of their formations, the height of their stunts, even the wit of their cheers far surpassed any squad in the northwest (at least!), though Maddy would venture to guess the whole country. Unfortunately for Maddy, she wasn’t exactly cut out to be a cheerleader. Coordination was never her forte, and ‘accident-prone’ might as well have been her middle name. Still, all summer long, Maddy had been eating, sleeping, and breathing only for this one defining moment—her tryout for the squad. Her form was perfect. Her timing was exquisite. Her cheers were as cheerful as humanly possible.

Or so she thought.

Rejected from the varsity Titans with a cheery, “better luck next year!” Maddy is sent off to join the junior varsity cheer squad, the Grizzlies. In a matter of minutes, she goes from being a proud, godlike Titan to a burly, hairy Grizzly bear. Though Maddy is distraught, she doesn’t lose sight of her goal: she’s going to become a varsity Titan if it’s the last thing she does. And so, she puts on her new uniform and heads off to her first practice with a smile on her face and a journal full of cheers and stunt diagrams that are sure to make her the star of the squad.

Even if it is the most challenged squad on the West coast.

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# Original Brand Tie-in, Middle Grade

*Sample chapter for the series The Clique by Lisi Harrison based on specific plot points for the series. All details and text below were created and written by me.*

Cam leaned forward in his seat, raised his A&W root beer, and rested a warm hand on his girlfriend’s shoulder. “To blond Claire and the end of her movie career.”

“For now,” she giggle-warned.

Alicia, Dylan, Derrington, and Josh clinked waxy paper cups. “To blond Claire.”

While everyone toasted to the good news, Massie lowered her black Stella McCartney sunglasses and raised the rim on her olive-green army cap.

Skye was one section over, to their right, surrounded by the DSL Daters. All five girls wore identical gray stretch pants, black ballet slippers, and different-colored slouchy knit sweaters. Gold bangles, braided macramé bracelets, leather bands, and platinum link chains lined their arms like mismatched sleeves. Rumor had it they added a new bracelet ever time one of them kissed a boy. Judging from the swarm of cute high school guys buzzing around them, a visit to Tiffany was minutes away.

“I’m going to the bathroom.” Massie stood.

“Again?” Derrington asked from the row of bleachers behind her. “You’ve gone like ten times in the last hour. Besides, I have something to show you.” He pulled a tiny silver camera from the pocket of his A&F camo shorts.

“Can it wait?” Massie pushed her glasses back up, shielding her eyes from the blazing sun. Even if she hadn’t been repulsed by Derrington’s bedroom—which she so had—she would have hit pause on his little show-and-tell. She had more important things to deal with.

Claire, who was sitting in the boys’ row sharing a bag of peanuts with Came, leaned forward and whispered in Massie’s ear. “You’ve been walking by her all afternoon flashing that key. She hasn’t said a word.”

Massie sighed. Claire was right. Skye was ignoring her. What if she knew Layne found the key first? Or what if she was holding a grudge because Massie had approached her? The cold-shoulder thing was giving her serious chills. It was time to put her secret plan into effect and pray that it didn’t backfire.

“Block.” Derrington kicked her bleacher. “Check this out.” He thrust the camera in her face but Massie waved it away. “I have to go.”

She scurried past her friends’ denim-clad legs and raced up to the LBR Jr. section, five rows behind her.

“Todd, can I talk to you for a minute?”

The ten-year-old was sandwiched between Tiny Nathan and some kid wearing a floppy red-and-white-striped Cat in the Hat hat.

“It’s important.”

His friends teased him with a chorus of *woo-hoos, awww yeahhhs*, and kissy sounds.

Massie folded her arms across her chest and tapped her black suede Miu Miu clogs, letting him know this was serious business.

“I need a favor.” She dragged him to the very top row.

Todd puckered his lips.

“Ew, nawt that.” She smacked his light blue Orlando Magic cap. “This.”

Massie handed him an ah-dorable pink vellum envelope. Inside was Layne’s gold locket, complete with the picture of Tricky and a note that said:

*Skye,*

*Here is the pony you asked for. One day I hope I can get you the real thing.*

*Happy graduation,*

*xo Chris Abeley.*

*Ps. Please don’t thank me, Ever! I really mean it! Please don’t! I’m very very shy.*

“Go give this to Skye and I guarantee she’ll give you another kiss. Only this time it will be in front of everyone.”

“Really?” Todd’s face lit up.

“Yup.” Massie grabbed his scrawny shoulders and glared into his dark eyes. “But you can’t tell her it came from me. If she asks where you got it, tell her some high school guy paid you to deliver it.”

“And she’ll kiss me?”

Massie nodded. “Vigorously.”

“In front of everyone?”

“Yup, now go!” She practically kicked him down the bleachers.

“Watch this!” he shouted to his friends when he passed.

Casually, Massie returned to her seat.

“What’s *he* doing there?” Claire gasped, noticing her brother tapping Skye’s shoulder, trying to distract her from a shaggy blond clutching a gray skateboard.

“That kid is my hero,” Josh snickered.

Alicia rolled her eyes.

The Pretty Committee stood, mouths agape, as Skye broke away from the skater, took the envelope from Todd, and read the note. Seconds later, she handed the package to the DSL Daters, who fanned their faces and squealed like they were holding an invitation to Zac Efron’s birthday party. As promised, Skye threw her decorated arms around the redhead and gave him a juicy kiss on the lips. Todd turned to his friends and threw his fists in the air.

They cheered like he’d just scored the winning goal.

“What was that all about?” Alicia asked in shock.

“I dunno, but it looks like someone’s getting a new bracelet,” Massie whisper-smiled to herself.

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# Introduction (ghostwritten), Adult Cookbook

*Excerpt from ghostwritten introduction and front matter for Orwashers Artisan Bread cookbook.*

When I taste at a loaf of bread hot out of the oven, I sometimes ponder how this commonplace item on the dinner table has been a prodigious part of our world for centuries, shaping not only our bodies, but also our history. Over the years bread has symbolized many things to many different cultures: it has been a means of survival, a purveyor of comfort, an ambassador of peace, and the embodiment of heritage and tradition.

Did I choose bread, or did bread choose me? I’m not really sure. Like many college graduates before me, I was uncertain of what path I would take. In school I worked as a line cook, which sparked my interest in the culinary world. In need of a job, I began to wait tables in Brooklyn Heights to pay the bills while I figured out what to do next. As luck would have it, I knew someone at an employment agency who felt I would be a good fit for a sales job at a small, artisanal wholesale bakery in Manhattan. One day in 1994, I went in for an interview and was hired on the spot. That job was my first and last job working for someone else. I stayed there for fourteen years, learning all sides of the business. I worked in sales, product development, quality control, operations—you name it, I did it! When there was a blizzard, I was the person outside digging snow out from under the trucks that were buried in the mounds to make sure the deliveries were made. In order to help boost sales, I began to get more involved in the production side of the business.

A successful business must have happy customers. Customers are happy when there’s a quality product. I began noticing there were some quality control issues, so I worked with the production team to troubleshoot these. Small changes can make a big difference, and this part of the job thrilled me. Troubleshooting comes naturally to me because I’m an analytical person. I quickly began to see patterns that could help us improve the bread and create a more consistent product.

After fourteen years, the direction of the bakery shifted, and I was faced with the decision to either join another artisanal bakery or venture out on my own. I heard through word of mouth that Orwashers was for sale. Its rich history and longevity in an ever-changing city was a huge draw for me. Orwashers has survived seventeen United States presidents, several economic upturns and downturns, and both world wars. Its history is unmatchable, and I felt compelled to become a part of it.

When Orwashers Bakery first opened its doors in 1916, it continued the long, rich history of European bakeries that had come before it, serving up old world breads like traditional seeded rye, Challah, and pumpernickel to the European immigrants who lived on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. They shopped more or less daily, buying freshly baked bread by the pound for their families. After taking over the ownership of the almost one-hundred-year-old bakery in 2007, I am proud to say that Orwashers still continues this long-standing tradition of serving its neighbors on the Upper East Side.

Unlike many other artisanal bakeries that work hard to be the freshest, trendiest, most unique store on the block, at Orwashers, our benchmark is not something modern or of the future, it is of the past. We have reached with flour-covered fingers even further into the past in order to preserve the traditional breads from one hundred years ago while procuring the future of artisanal bread-making. In order to do that, we had to ask ourselves a few very important questions: How *did* our ancestors bake these robust, long-lasting, airy loaves of bread? Furthermore, how do we take what we know of the past and improve it for the customers we are serving today?

Our inspiration is our past. We rely on people rather than machines—just as they did hundreds of years ago. Our bakers are passionate craftsmen who follow our slow, proven ritual. We follow traditional rules of bread-making—hand shaping, cutting, and baking—for breads that give just the right amount of resistance when held and fill the air with a memorable, timeless scent, which says fresh baked, right here, right now . . . because it is. We pay attention to our **preferments**—our **starters**, **levains**, and **bigas**, which are alive, growing, and in need of constant care and nurturing. We blend ancient, classic techniques with more modern thinking, ideas, and local ingredients. We believe in long fermentation times to extract complex, delicious flavors, just as they did over one hundred years ago. And we always, always, always eat what we bake. Today. One hundred years ago. Forever.

Baking is a passionate discipline that presents me with a daily challenge—a challenge I love: to achieve that magical crust-to-crumb ratio. I didn’t wake up one morning and say to myself, “I want to be a bread baker,” but one morning I woke up and realized I wanted to be the very best at what I do, and baking is what I do. What makes baking such a unique discipline? It calls upon so many different skills and areas of curiosity; it requires creativity, analysis, and troubleshooting. There is a history to the art of bread-making, and a science to understanding that history of events, why they occurred, what their significance is, and that they are bound to repeat themselves. Baking requires the perfect mix of understanding history, chemistry, and physics, and an intense curiosity to discover how things work, which is something that has been with me since I was a child. Baking gives me the ability to be incredibly creative, while satisfying my mechanical intuitions and thirst for science; tweaking the recipes has a huge effect on the product, so the kitchen becomes a laboratory. Almost in reverse of cooking, where you kill an animal or pick a vegetable from its roots to make your meal, baking actually requires you to creating a living organism with live bacteria and cultures in order to achieve your finished product—an astounding and magical ability. Honestly, aside from the obvious, of course, how many times in life does a person actually get to create a living thing?

My hope in writing this book is to be able to offer you at home a taste of this intensely passionate discipline that for centuries, could only be found behind the closed doors of your corner bakery.

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# Excerpt from Happily Ever Afterlife: Ghostcoming!, Original middle-grade

*An excerpt from my original middle-grade book series published by Scholastic.*

Limbo Central

Middle School

Attention: Lucy Chadwick

Your counselor is: Ms. Keaner

Your dormitory is: Jane Austen Cottage, Southampton Hall,

Room 312

Welcome to your afterlife education at Limbo Central Middle School!

We hope your crossover journey was a pleasant one, and that you’re as excited to be here as we are to have you! The first thing you will notice upon your arrival is that you are mostly see-through. Don’t fret. After all, you’re a ghost! You aren’t a living being anymore, but you still have a body made of energy, and the ability to control energy and manipulate it. We’re here to show you how! Just follow all of the rules of Limbo, and we can assure you that in no time, you’ll be living your very own happily ever afterlife!

Good luck!

The Limbo Central Administration

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The Limbo Central Rules:

Rule #1: You will be able to remember what your life was like and the important people who were in it. Enjoy those good memories as often as you can. However, try as you might, you won’t ever be able to remember how or why you became a ghost. So, it’s best not to try! Start your afterlife with a fresh, clean slate!

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Chapter One: Mr. Perfect Ghost Boy

It’s taken me a while to believe it, but the truth of the matter is that I’m dead and there’s absolutely nothing I can do about it.

That’s right, I’m dead.

Done-zo.

Goner.

A ghost of my former living, breathing self. LITERALLY. It’s not like a woe-is-me thing, I promise. I’m not going to get all sappy and start crying about how much I miss my life, mainly because:

1. I can’t actually produce tears anymore. (I’ve tried, believe me.)

2. According to the first Rule of Limbo, I won’t ever be able to remember what happened to me, so why bother getting all worked up.

And . . .

3. Because there’s no use in crying over spilled blood.

Ha-ha, get it? Blood . . . you know, ’cause I’m dead? Sorry, just trying out a little ghostly humor. “Have a seat, Lucy. I’ll be right with you,” the Limbo Central guidance counselor, Ms. Keaner, says, poking her head out of her office in the administration building of my new middle school.

“Okay, thanks,” I say, and head over to the waiting area.

Anyway, I don’t mean to be grim (oops, I did it again), justthe opposite, actually. I mean, what’s funnier than finding out you’re a ghost AND that you’re stuck repeating your first day of middle school at the same time? Looks like NOTHING will get me out of middle school—not even being dead. I plop down in one of the comfy armchairs, but instead of plopping, I fall completely THROUGH the chair and crashland with a big THUD. That’s right, through the chair. This day is the worst.

“Chin up, doll. You’ll get the hang of it sooner or later,” the secretary at the front desk squeaks, looking up from the chart she’s reading. She has curly blond hair, red lips, and cat’s-eye reading glasses with a silver chain that lets the glasses rest around her neck when she’s not wearing them. She looks like she just stepped out of an old movie. “You can’t sit because, well, look at you! Right now, you’re basically a hologram.”

“Yeah,” I say, looking down and through myself. She’s completely right. I am basically a hologram. A mist in the shape of my old self. What it would look like if the idea of me got up and started walking around. “It’s not as cool as I always thought it would be,” I say. “Being a hologram, I mean.”

There’s a momentary pause, but she says nothing, so I continue. “So . . . do I just have to stand up for the rest of my life—I mean, death?”

“Afterlife, dear. It’s less drab.”

“Okay . . . so, do I just have to stand up for the rest of my afterlife?”

“You can pretend to sit until you get the hang of it,” she remarks, but it’s clear from her tone that it’s all pretty much just for show. “People find pretending less awkward, you know, in public.”

“Excellent. Less awkward is definitely what I’m going for. Thank you,” I say, and I situate myself about an inch over the cushion of the chair in a seated position. I look down at the table next to me and see a handful of magazines fanned out. Celebrity Ghosts, HEALTH & SHAPEshifting, Paranormal

Style. I notice Medium magazine’s headline —“Limbo’s Top Ten Most Wanted Apparitions”—and reach for it. I want to take my mind off of what is happening right now and pretend for a moment that things are normal. Then I remember that I can reach all I want but I can’t touch. I’m distracted by the creaking sound of the main door as two loud girl ghosts walk into the administration office. They are both categorically less invisible than I am, and as they waltz in, the scent of trouble fills the room like a bag of burnt microwave popcorn. They look completely normal and are touching the ground with their feet. I’m immediately envious. I lose my concentration and before I know it . . . SPLAT! I fall straight through the chair again.

“I thought ballerinas were supposed to be graceful,” the prettier girl remarks, looking right at me. She has long black hair with bangs cut straight across her forehead, cherry- red lips, and blue eyes. “But she’s even sadder than I expected—tights, tutu, and all!” she continues, laughing to her friend.

Did I forget to mention that I look like I just broke out of a Russian music box? Yeah. One minute I’m practicing for my ballet recital—that much I remember—and the next thing I know, here I am stuck permanently in a black leotard, pink tights, pointe shoes, and a white tutu.

“Little miss goodie toe shoes,” the blue-eyed mean girl concludes.

“I know I can’t sit as well as I used to,” I call out, “but I can still hear just fine.”

I may be new to Limbo Central and the way of afterlife and everything, but I’m not new to the first day of middle school, and I’m not new to the phenomenon of the Mean Girl. Alive or dead. Well, that’s not entirely true; I am new to dead mean girls. But they’re basically the same thing as live ones,

right? Give or take a breath.

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# Excerpt from Licensed Project

*An excerpt from my manuscript adaptation for a Disney Fairies project.*

Just past the Second Star to the right, deep in the heart of Never Land, hundreds of fairies gathered around the Pixie Dust Tree to greet the new fairy. After a dose of Pixie Dust, she stretched her tiny limbs and shook her fluffy blond head of hair.

“Welcome to Pixie Hollow,” Queen Clarion greeted her kindly.

Then the Queen waved her hand, and fairies of all talents flew forward. Each of them placed a glowing item on a toadstool before her.

“These will help you find your talent, little one,” the Queen said.

First the fairy picked up a flower, then a water droplet, but they both lost their glow immediately. Next she passed by a wooden hammer - and it started glowing furiously! The second she touched it, explosions of light burst out in all directions!

“Never seen one glow that much before,” said Silvermist, a water fairy. “Even for Vidia!”

“Lil’ daisy-top might be a very rare talent indeed!” her friend Rosetta, a garden fairy, replied.

Vidia let out a huff. She didn’t like the idea of *anyone* being more talented than her!

“Come forward, tinker fairies,” the Queen announced. “And meet Tinker Bell!”

Clank and Bobble, two sweet but goofy tinker fairies pushed their way to the front of the crowd to greet Tinker Bell. Then they whisked her away on a flying tour of Pixie Hollow. Their tour ended in Tinker’s Nook, where all the tinker fairies lived. When they showed Tinker Bell her new house, she was couldn’t believe her eyes! The house was just perfect!

There was just one problem. When Tinker Bell took a green leafy dress out of her closet, she couldn’t help but frown. It was at least three times her size! But then Tinker Bell had an idea – she could fix it so it fit perfectly! Soshe began cutting the dress, measuring pieces, and sewing them together. First she cut out the bodice, and then she attached the skirt, which had a lovely pointed trim. *This is so much fun*, Tinker Bell thought to herself, as she tinkered away.