

SPECIAL EDITION #2

# Whatever After

ABBY IN OZ

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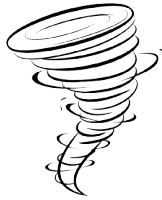
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# chapter one



## There Are No Tornadoes in Smithville

The sun is shining and it's a beautiful spring afternoon, but I am not feeling my one hundred percent best. I think I'm getting a cold. My nose is all stuffed up. Also, I'm standing on a rickety ladder outside a tree house, holding my dog, Prince, in my arms, which is not the most comfortable position. Sure, Prince is adorable, but he's starting to get heavy.

I knock on the tree house door. "Robin? Frankie? Penny?" I call. "Are you guys in there?"

The tree house is in my friend Robin's backyard. Robin's

parents built it for her a few years ago. It has a roof and a door and a window like a real little house, and it's always fun to hang out in.

Not so long ago, I got to visit another tree house inside the fairy tale of *Little Red Riding Hood*. But I'll explain that later.

“Coming!” Robin calls, and I hear her footsteps inside.

Frankie, Robin, me (Abby), and Penny — otherwise known as FRAP — are getting together today to work on our group project for school. I have a great idea for it. It involves dogs.

Robin and Frankie are my two best friends. Penny is my sometimes friend. Meaning sometimes I want to hang out with her, sometimes I wish she'd transfer to another school.

We had a half day today, so Penny and Frankie came straight to Robin's after school. But Robin asked me if I could go home first and get Prince, which I did. Robin wants a dog of her own, but her parents say she should spend some time with actual dogs before they get one.

“Abby!” Robin cries, flinging open the tree house door

with a grin. She just got braces, which make her look like a teenager. Her reddish hair is up in a loose bun, with a few curls framing her freckled face. “Yay, you really brought Prince. You have the *cutest* dog.” She takes him from my arms as I bend my way through the door. “You look like a teddy bear,” Robin coos to Prince, “yes you do.”

Prince barks happily, as if to say *Thank you*.

Penny scowls from her perch on a cushion on the floor. “I don’t see why you want a dog,” she tells Robin, flicking her long blonde ponytail over her shoulder. “You have to take them for walks even when it rains. And they drool. And they’re messy. And they smell.”

Hello to you, too, Penny. “They don’t smell,” I say, sitting down on the cushion next to Frankie, who is curled up on her own cushion.

“They *sometimes* smell,” Frankie says.

I look at her in surprise. Frankie is supposed to be on *my* side.

“Well, sometimes,” I admit. “But not if you give them regular baths. Prince doesn’t smell.” At least not today.

“Wanting a horse, I understand,” Penny says. “I love horses. But a dog? No thanks.”

“Abby,” Robin says, plopping down on the cushion next to Penny, “where did you get Prince? An animal shelter or a breeder?”

Nope and nope. “We got him as a present,” I say. Which is kind of true. But Robin would never believe the real truth.

I got Prince when my brother and I went into a fairy tale.

I know it sounds totally bonkers, but there’s a magic mirror in the basement of my house. And a fairy, Maryrose, is trapped inside it. She takes me and my younger brother, Jonah, through the mirror into different fairy tales. Like *Little Red Riding Hood*. *Cinderella*. *Beauty and the Beast*. I think one day she’s planning to bring us into the story that trapped her so that we can help set her free.

Anyway, when Jonah and I fell into the story of *Sleeping Beauty*, we got Prince as a gift. And then we took him home with us, because he is adorable.

Of course, we had to make up a whole story for our

parents because they don't know about Maryrose, the mirror, or the whole traveling-to-fairy-tales thing. My nana does, though. She actually went into *Little Red Riding Hood* with us.

Guess who else knows about my magic mirror?

You're not going to believe it.

It's very unfortunate.

It's . . . Penny.

Yeah. Penny.

Penny, my sometimes friend, knows about Maryrose and the fairy tales and everything.

Why?

Because one time, Frankie, Robin, Penny, and I all fell into the story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Maryrose had nothing to do with taking us into *Alice*. That was all Gluck. Gluck is an evil fairy who's trying to stop me from freeing Maryrose. He lured me and my friends into the book, and we almost got trapped there forever. Luckily, we escaped. As we were leaving the story, Frankie and Robin got sprinkled with a magical powder that made them lose their memories of the

whole experience. But Penny and I did *not* get sprinkled.

Which means that, ever since then, Penny keeps asking if she can sleep over at my house so she can go into a fairy tale with me. But I don't think that's the best idea. Fairy tales can be dangerous. Penny would never listen to me if we went into one, and who knows how she would mess the story up. Never mind that every time she and I are with Frankie and Robin, I worry Penny's going to blow my secret.

"Can we get started on our project?" Frankie asks, snapping me back to reality. She adjusts her red-framed glasses and pushes her dark-brown hair out of her eyes. "We don't have all day."

Whoa. What is up with Frankie? Sure, she likes to get good grades in school, but she's never testy like this. I hope everything's okay. I'm about to ask her what's going on when my nose itches and I sneeze.

*Achoo!*

"Bless you," Robin and Frankie say at the same time.

"Ew, are you sick?" Penny asks, scooting away from me. "You better not get me sick."