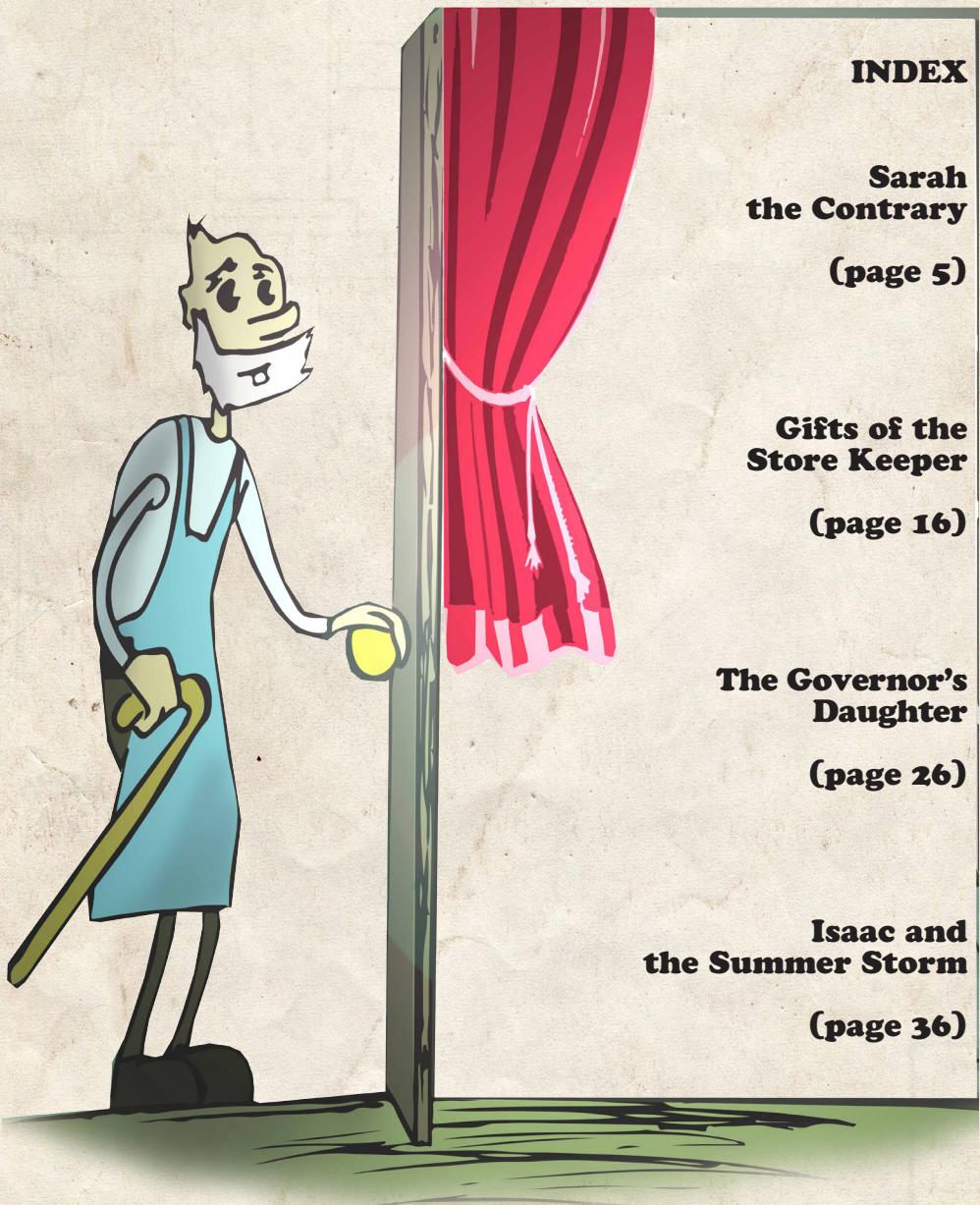


Millennial Tales

J. Lisle





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Sarah the Contrary



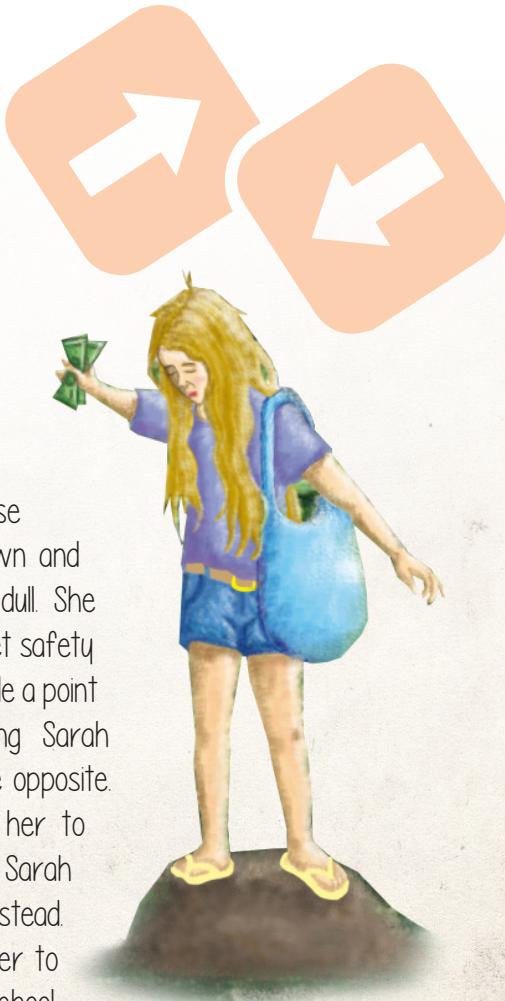
In a small, suburban town, there lived a girl named Sarah. Sarah's town was outside of a large and vibrant city. There were buses, trains, taxi cars, and thousands of people marching up and down the cityscape, coming and going like ants. Like many other cities its size, it had its share of congestion, noise, and crime.

Sarah's town was different. Sarah's town only had one bus, which would come by Main Street every couple of hours, and one train, which would pass by on a schedule that no one could quite figure out. It was normally quiet, and the threat of crime was so minimal that folks kept their front doors unlocked during the day. The people in the town were happy, and they worked hard to keep their town as safe and pleasant as possible.



Sarah had lived in this town all of her life, and she believed it was safe, but she did not take the same pleasure from living there as everyone else did. Sarah thought her town and her life were boring and dull. She was not happy with the quiet safety of suburban life, so she made a point to be contrary. Everything Sarah was told to do, she did the opposite. When her teacher asked her to push in her chair at school, Sarah would pull her desk back instead. When her mother asked her to walk straight home after school, Sarah always took a shortcut through the woods on the other side of the sidewalk.

When she wanted her parents' attention, she always referred to them by their surnames, Mr. and Mrs., rather than mother and father. This was the way Sarah was.



Sarah was not rude; in fact, she was usually well behaved, but her mother always told her, "You can't always do things your way." To this, Sarah would only turn her head and respond, "Okay".

One hot and sunny afternoon, Sarah's mother thought it would be a good idea to get something to keep them cool. She decided to send Sarah to the corner store to buy a bag of ice. Sarah was old enough to walk down the street to the corner store to buy things on her own. Sarah's mother gave her a bag, along with a few dollars and some change.

"This bag will keep the ice cold. When you put the ice in the bag, make sure that it is closed and zipped tightly. Otherwise, the sun will melt it. Make sure that you wear your shoes and stay on the sidewalk."

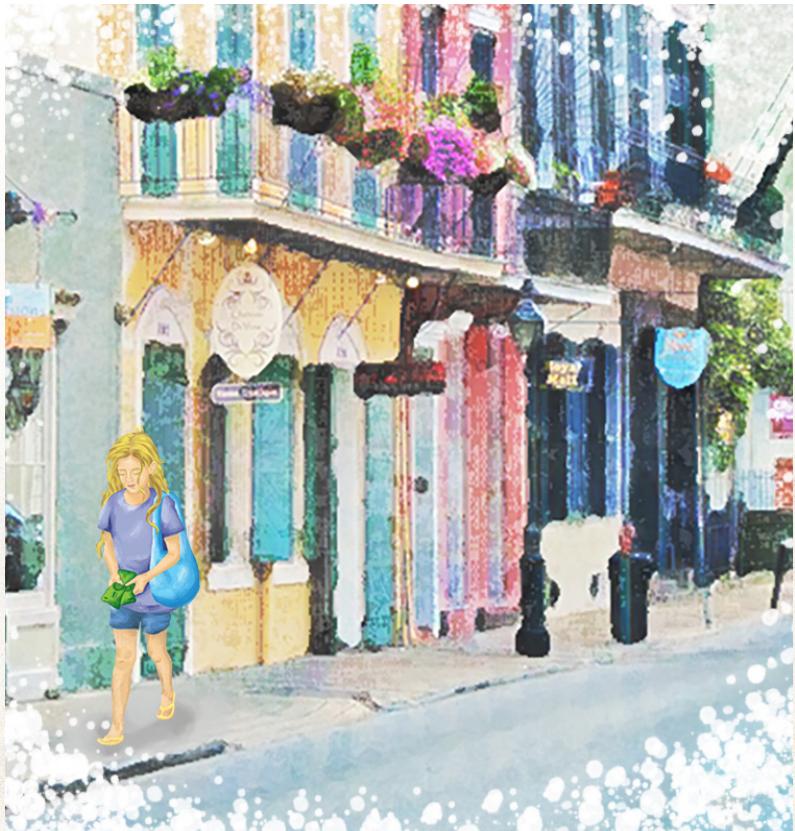


Sarah turned her head and said, "Okay." She went to the door with the bag in one hand and the money in the other. Instead of putting on her shoes, she put on her favorite sandals and left.

She walked out of the house, flipping the money that she had just gotten from her mother between her fingers. Outside, she met her father, who was sitting on the porch in the shade of an umbrella.

"Sarah, keep that money in your pocket. If you keep it in your hands, something might happen to it."





"Okay," Sarah said to her father.

She put the money in her pocket and started to walk down the street to the corner store. She waited until she was out of sight of her father, then took the money out of her pocket and continued to play with it between her fingers.



As she walked down the sidewalk, she looked beside her and saw a more interesting path through the woods. Despite her mother's words, Sarah tiptoed down a gentle slope into the brush.

She walked and walked with her bag in one hand and her money in the other. The woods were much harder to navigate than the smooth pavement. The woods liked to throw obstacles before travelers who were not wary. She had to step over rocks and leaves that troubled her feet and duck under branches of trees that stretched themselves out in front of her. Eventually, she came to a fallen log that blocked her path. Sarah believed she could jump over the log and took a running start to leap over it. She jumped high. The log noticed her and was angry; it thought it was too impressive to be jumped over. Before she landed, the log caught her sandal strap in a branch on its side. Sarah's sandal strap broke and she fell to the ground hard, scattering everywhere the money she held in her hand.

The leaves on the ground became excited at the commotion and started to dance, hiding the money that fell from Sarah's hands. Sarah immediately started to search for the money. The more she dug and sifted, the more the leaves would dance. The rustling and flaking of the leaves became laughter as they bounded to and fro. Sarah searched and searched, but she could not find all of her money. Having grown tired of searching, Sarah stood up with the money she had collected and found that she only had half of the money her mother had given her. Dirty and tired, Sarah placed her broken sandal in her pocket, hobbled out of the wooded area, and slowly walked back onto the pavement with one naked foot lifted slightly in the air.





She quickly arrived at the corner store. She hopped up to the door and opened it. A man with a graying beard stood behind the counter. He took a look at her messy clothing and her feet with only one sandal.

"You can't come in here without proper footwear."

"Please!" Sarah said. "I need to buy some ice for my mother. It took me so long to get here." Sarah told him the story of how she came to the corner store and how much her mother wanted a large bag of ice.

The man looked at Sarah for a while and saw how earnest she was. He walked over to the freezer and pulled out a large bag of ice. Sarah handed the man her money. He looked at it and gave the money right back to her. "This is not enough. You should go home and ask your mother for more money to pay for the ice."

Sarah refused and instead asked the man for a smaller bag to bring home. Sarah gave the man her money. He opened her bag and placed the small bag of ice inside.

"Make it home quick. That small bag of ice will not last long in this hot sun."



Sarah left the store feeling good. She began to walk home, this time using the sidewalk. She did not make it far before she became distressed over the feeling she got when placing her bare foot on the pavement. Instead of walking, Sarah began to slowly hop down the path on one foot.

Although Sarah had put the ice in the bag her mother had given her to keep it cool, she had not zipped the bag up. The sun peered into Sarah's open bag and noticed the ice. The sun was proud and hot, so when he saw the frozen ice, he took it as a challenge of his strength. He shined brighter and brighter on Sarah and her bag of ice. Sarah was so busy taking care that her bare foot did not touch the ground that she didn't notice the ice in her bag was melting.

Eventually, Sarah made her way back to her house. She opened the front door to see her mother and father setting the table for dinner.

"What took you so long? What happened to your clothes and feet?" her mother said.

"I wore sandals and they broke on a branch, but I have the ice." Sarah pulled out the bag of ice. To her dismay, the bag of ice had turned to water, and only a couple slivers of ice were left. Sarah began to tear up.



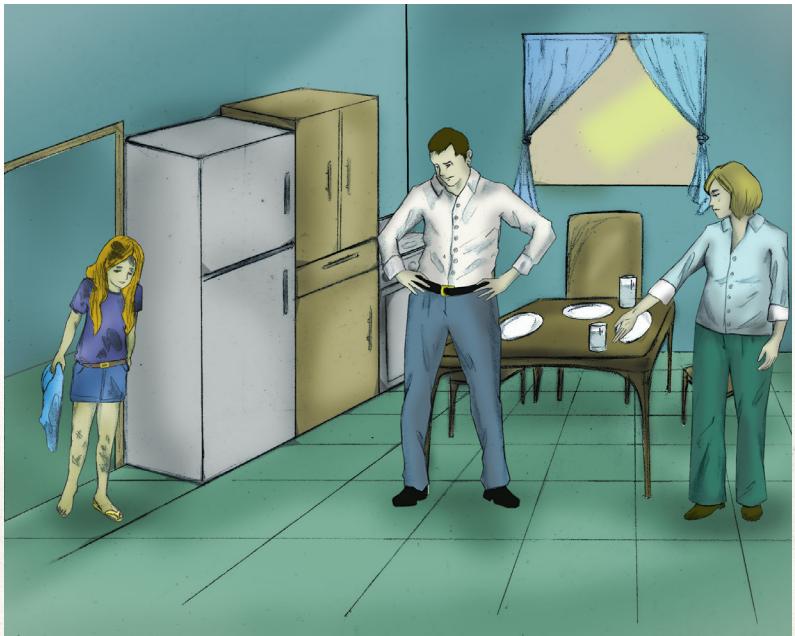
"Why is the bag so small?" Her father asked.

"When I tore my sandals, the money fell out of my hand. I had to buy a smaller bag with the money I had left," said Sarah.

Sarah's mother scolded her, "You wore your sandals even though you were asked to wear shoes, you lost your money even though you were told to put it in your pocket, and you did not zip the bag closed so the ice melted. Now, your sandals are broken, you have lost our money, and there is no ice left."

Sarah's mother and father sent her upstairs to clean up before dinner. Sarah cried as she threw away her favorite pair of sandals and cleaned herself up. When she got downstairs, Sarah sat down to a plate of steamed broccoli and potatoes, with a glass of warm tea without ice. When she finished her meal, Sarah's parents sent her straight up to her room for bed. That night, Sarah sweated from the heat. She got up once for water, but with no ice, it was not enough to cool her. Sarah sweated all night.





The next morning, Sarah got ready for school. She put on her clothes neatly, ate her breakfast, and went to the door to put on her shoes. Before she left, her mother told her, "Sarah, walk straight to school."

Instead of "Okay" Sarah said, "Yes, Ma'am." Sarah walked out the door and took the sidewalk. She did walk straight to school, and after school, she walked straight back.



Gifts of the Store Keeper



In a small city, there lived a man and a woman. They were deeply in love. Eventually, they got married and lived happily together. The husband went to work, and the wife worked, as well. After a while, the couple wanted to start a family, and soon the couple welcomed a baby girl into their home. The mother decided to stay home to take care of her baby. The baby was healthy and happy, but their family was not finished growing. The couple had a child each of the next two years, as well. The second child was a boy, and the one after that was another boy. The children were healthy, and the couple was happy.

The family lived well for a long time.

The father would work during the day, while the mother took care of their three children. One day, though, the father lost his job, and the couple fell on hard times. The father could not find a job right away, so the family had to move into a small apartment. When the father finally found a job, he did not make as much money as he used to, so he had to work many more hours. The father could not pay for his wife and three children by himself any longer, so the mother had to go back to work to help pay for things. The children were old enough now to stay at home by themselves while their parents worked.



The eldest child took most of the responsibility while their parents were away. She made sure the boys were clean, finished their homework, and got along. She would also find things to do for the boys. The couple did not have much money to spend on their children, so the children did not have very nice things to wear or play with, yet they were healthy and had what they needed.

That winter, the couple told their children that they would only be able to get one gift for each of them since the family did not have much money to spend. They went to the mall to purchase their gifts. They brought the three children to a toy store and gave them thirty dollars.

"I want you to spend this money on three gifts for yourselves," the father said.

The children walked into the toy store while their parents had a seat outside. The children were amazed at all of the wonderful toys they saw. The store was filled with thousands of toys on shelves and racks, as if it were a library. There were toys for girls and toys for boys. There were the popular dolls, bikes, and games that the children had seen on television. There were gadgets and devices that filled the children with excitement and wonder.

The children had only been looking for a short while when they noticed a middle-aged man standing behind the counter. He was dressed like a carpenter and seemed to be the only other person in the store. He wore faded overalls with a white button-up shirt. His hair was unkempt, and on his face was a thick, pepper-gray mustache.
"Hello children. How can I help you today?" said the store keeper.



"Our parents gave us thirty dollars to spend on three gifts for ourselves this holiday," said the oldest child. She handed the man the money that her parents had given her. They turned and began to spread out around the store in search of toys to buy.

The children looked high and low for the perfect gift for each of them. It took a while, but finally all of the children found their own, perfect gift. They brought the man their gifts for him to add up the prices.

The man at the desk took a quick look at the toys and their prices.
"No, no. These toys are much too expensive for you. You have to put them back and choose less expensive toys," the man said.

The man saw the children's sad faces and was moved because, looking at them, he knew that the children did not have much.

"Here is what I'll do. I'll take your thirty dollars, and in exchange I will allow you to borrow one gift each."

The man pulled aside a curtain next to his desk. Behind it was an extra aisle of toys.

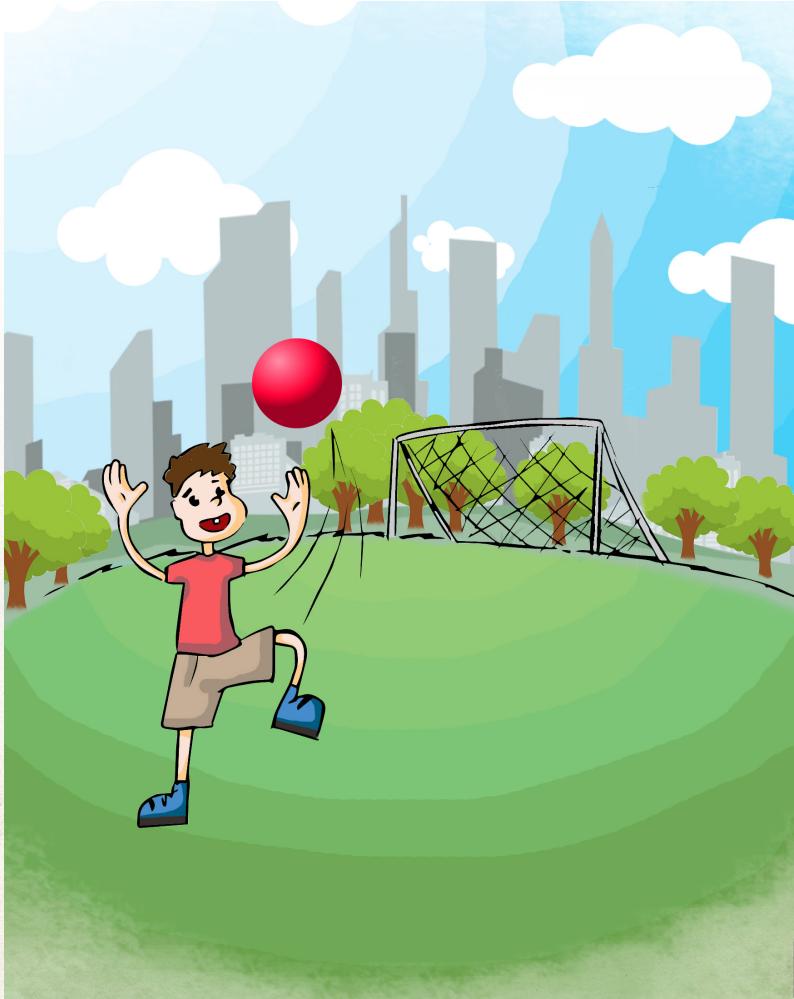
"These toys are very special. They will not break or become dull. You may keep the toy you pick for as long as you want, so long as you play with it every day. The day that you forget to play with the toy, it will disappear and return to my shop."





The children agreed to the man's deal. They each looked up and down the aisle for a long time, trying to find the best toys. The shelves were filled with beautiful toys and trinkets, and many of them were more wonderful than the toys that they first chose.





The middle child chose his toy first. He was energetic and a bit hasty, so he knew what his choice would be the moment he saw it. He chose a ball from a high shelf. The ball was blue with stripes and was unlike any the boy had seen before. When the boy bounced the ball, it dribbled just like a basketball. When the boy kicked the ball, it felt just like a soccer ball. He could use the ball for nearly any sport he wished. The boy brought the ball to the man and thanked him, then stepped outside the shop to join his parents.





The oldest child was the next to find a toy. She looked up and down, over and over again, to see which toy was best for her. She was cautious and serious when it came to her choices, so when she came to the best toy for her, she had ruled out all the others. The girl chose a glistening pair of silver ballet slippers. When she tried the slippers on, they fit her perfectly. She turned in the slippers and soon found herself dancing. She felt as light and graceful as a butterfly floating on air. She knew that this was the right choice. She took the slippers off, brought them to the man, and thanked him. Then she stepped outside the shop to join her family.





The youngest child was the last to choose his toy. He looked and looked, but could not decide on a toy from the man's secret aisle. The youngest child was the most selfish and spoiled of the three children, and he decided that he should be able to choose the toy that he really wanted, not a toy from the special aisle. He walked up to the man at the counter.

"I don't want the toys that you showed me. I want to keep the toy that I chose first," said the youngest child.

The store keeper hesitated for a moment, and then said, "I understand. Since you want it so much, I will allow you to keep the toy that you chose first, and like the other toys, it will not break. However, if you forget to play with it for one day, it will disappear and return to my store."



The youngest child happily agreed and ran to the first toy that he had chosen. It was a tablet-like game system. It was shiny and new, with internet, music, and all of the newest games. When he came to this toy, he picked it up, ran past the store keeper, and joined his family.

The children went home with their parents to enjoy their gifts. The children were very happy and played with their toys all night. They played so long that they fell asleep with their gifts in their arms. When they woke up, they played with their toys some more. The three children remembered the rule that the store keeper told them, and they played with their toys every single day, lest they disappear.

Months and months went by, and the children still played with their toys every day. The oldest child loved her ballet slippers and danced in them every day. She shared her dances with her family and friends. She grew better and better at her dances. Eventually, she joined a ballet group, where she quickly became popular.

The middle child loved his ball, too. He played many sports with it outside as he practiced his skills. When he became bored or lonely, he would invite his brother and sister to play a game with the store keeper's ball. When he went to the park, playing with his ball would help him make new friends.

The youngest child loved his toy. He played game after game on his device. He played even longer than both of his siblings played with their gifts. However, when his brother and sister asked to play with him, he refused. The youngest child told them that his device was just for him to enjoy, and if he gave it to them, he would not be able to play. He spent most of his time alone and rarely played with the other children.



Months went by and the children kept their gifts by playing with them each day, until the eldest grew too big for her ballet slippers. She put her shoes away for the last time. The next day, she did not put on the slippers because they were too small, and the day after that, they disappeared. On the day the slippers disappeared, all of the grace and talent they gave her remained, and she woke up to find that her body had grown long and beautiful. She became the most talented and graceful dancer her family and friends had ever seen.

Soon after, the middle child put his gift down for the last time, too. He had played many games with his ball and gained many new friends playing in the park. He joined a football team for children his age. Because the football wasn't perfectly round, he couldn't use his special ball to play with the others. He decided that he did not have time to play with a ball he could not use with his friends, so he set his ball aside for the last time. The next day, the boy did not play with his ball. The following day, the ball disappeared. On the day his ball disappeared, the middle child woke up and found that he had grown stronger and taller than he was the day before. The boy went on to be a great athlete and an important part of his team.

The youngest child was different from his brother and sister. He never stopped playing with his toy. The toy never became worn or broke, just as the store keeper had promised. Yet, as time went by, the boy noticed that newer devices and games came and went, and he began to want them too.

One day, while his family was preoccupied with shopping and eating, the youngest child returned to the toy store in the mall. He found the shop keeper still standing behind the counter.



"Old man, I still have my toy, but I want a new device."

The shopkeeper said, "What hasn't this toy given you? Why are you asking for a new one when this one won't break?"

"It is too old I want the new games. It is not fair that I have to play with this old system."

The shopkeeper listened to the boy go on and on. Without a word, he snatched the boy's unbroken gift from him. He went to the shelf and found the latest model of the boy's handheld device. He shoved it into the boy's hands.

"Keep it," the shopkeeper said. He showed the boy to the exit. With a smile on his face, the youngest child rejoined his family in the mall.

That evening he played and played with his new device, game after game. It was everything he had expected. He placed it on his night stand before bed and went to sleep. When he woke up, he reached for his toy, but knocked it off the night stand and onto the floor. Unlike his old game, this game system was not enchanted. When it hit the floor, it was instantly destroyed. The screen cracked and the plastic broke, revealing all kinds of wires. When the youngest child stood up, he found that his body had changed, becoming round and soft. He had nothing to play with on his own now that his game system was broken. From that day on, his only choice was to play with his siblings.



The Governor's Daughter

There once was a wealthy and prosperous state. In the state, the people were happy with the laws and society they lived in. They had clean water, plenty of healthy food, and jobs to spare. The people lived peacefully there. They were very thankful, especially to their Governor. The Governor was a kind and smart man. He reasoned with a sound mind and ruled fairly. The people respected him greatly for this, but loved him for his heart. The Governor had a daughter, whom the people loved as greatly as the Governor himself. The Governor's daughter was named Alyssa.



One of the reasons the people of the state loved Alyssa so dearly was her sweet nature. Alyssa was kind and gentle to others. She was polite and giving, too. When her father would meet with his administration or foreign officials, she would introduce herself to them quite politely and offer them a flower from her garden.



Another reason the people loved her was because of her talent. Alyssa was a graceful athlete and a wonderful musician. She was able to learn all manner of new games and instruments in very little time. Alyssa attributed this gift to her curious mind. She loved to see new things, meet new people, and be dazzled. She loved people and the things she could learn from them, and so she called everyone her friend.



Lastly, the people of the republic loved Alyssa because of her beauty. Alyssa had long, chestnut-colored curls and rich, golden skin. Her eyes were the color of honey.

Alyssa loved her gifts as well. However, Alyssa valued the love of people more than anything else.

Many years passed from her childhood, and Alyssa grew into a beautiful young woman. She remained just as beautiful, kind, and graceful as she was as a child. However, now she was not as carefree because it was time for her to start her own life, away from her loving parents.



In Alyssa's life, she had learned many things, went many places, and met many different people. So, it came to pass that she had five male suitors. The five suitors were all men of status. Some of the men were sons of businessmen and public officials. Some of the men were scholars and artists. All of them were impressive in their own way.

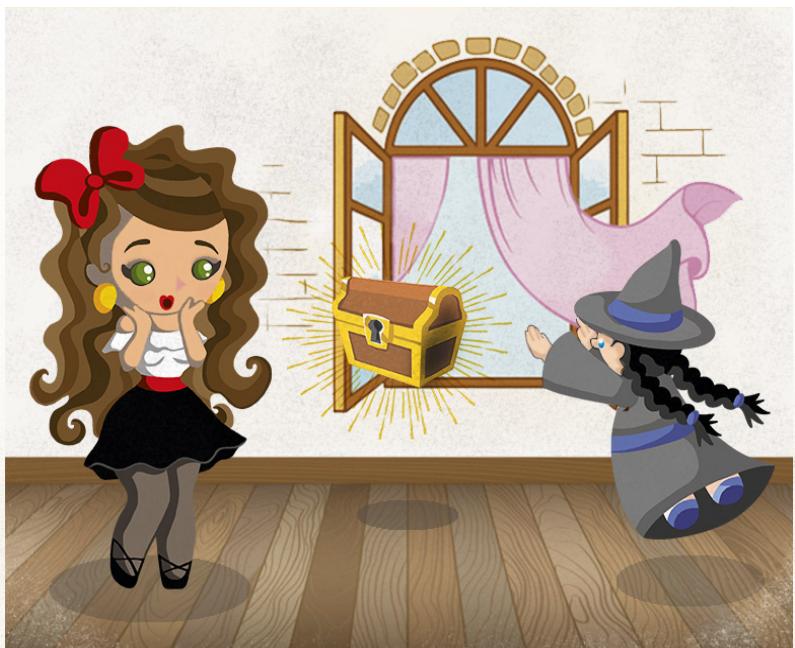
Each of the men tried to court Alyssa. They each spoke to her father and mother, who were very impressed with Alyssa's choices. Yet, Alyssa was unhappy because she could not make a decision. She was dazzled by her suitors and called them all friends, but did not know which one she truly loved.

One evening, as Alyssa was dressing herself for a gala event to which all of her suitors were invited, she began to cry in a nervous fit. She cared dearly for each of her suitors but knew they wanted more than friendship. She did not know who she favored most.
"I don't know what to do," cried Alyssa. "I wish someone could help me make up my mind."

Just then, a chilling breeze entered her room from an open window, and a little girl appeared, standing just on the inside of her window. The little girl was plain and pale. She wore a gray, formless dress that came to the floor and a pointed hat, which covered up two braids.

"Who are you, and how did you get in here?" said Alyssa.
"Don't worry. I heard you cry, and I want to help you. I am a witch," said the little girl. Although she looked young, the little witch did not seem like a child at all, but an older and wiser woman.
"How can you help? I have five suitors, and I am not sure which is best for me. I am afraid of choosing who to love," said Alyssa.





The little witch clapped her hands twice, and a small box appeared in the witch's hands. She gave the box to Alyssa and said, "This gift will help you find your answer. Before you go out tonight, open the box." With those words, the little witch disappeared.

That evening, Alyssa opened the box to find nothing in it but a fine layer of dust at the bottom. She breathed some of it in and sneezed, blowing the dust into the air. She fell to the floor. She thought her box was useless, but after opening it, she felt a strange, confusing sensation of being unbalanced. When she arrived at the gala that evening, she realized that the feeling had never left. She had become clumsy to the point of being an oaf. Her suitors noticed this as well.



All night Alyssa stepped on toes and spilled drinks. She couldn't even dance with a partner. She had lost all of her social graces. Alyssa was very embarrassed, but she swallowed her pride and somehow found the courage to stay at the gala. She tried her best to apologize for her lack of grace by engaging her suitors in interesting conversation.

"Please, forgive my clumsiness. I hope you don't think any less of me," Alyssa said to her suitors.

All of her suitors responded with a smile telling her that her clumsiness was not important to them. All of her suitors said this, but one. She continued with her awkwardness throughout the night and it was not long before her most well-dressed suitor was tired of her clumsiness. He thought a girl without grace wasn't worth pursuing. The gentleman left the party without even saying good night. Now Alyssa had four suitors left.

A couple days passed, and Alyssa became troubled again with the task of sorting through her possible suitors. She began to cry. Then, the little witch returned before Alyssa. This time, she was not in a plain gray dress, but in a beautiful, shimmering, white one. Her hat had a gorgeous sheen like velvet, which Alyssa had never seen before.

"Why have you returned, little witch? I don't think your box was very helpful, since my most well-dressed suitor left. I'm so clumsy now," said Alyssa.

"Have you chosen your suitor yet?" asked the little witch.

"No," replied Alyssa.



"Then you are no worse off than when I came," said the little witch. The little witch clapped her hands twice, and again there appeared a box that was larger than the first.

"Take this box. The next time you go to meet your suitors, open it. It should help you choose," said the little witch. Alyssa took the box, trusting the witch's words. Then the witch disappeared.

The next day, Alyssa prepared to go to the town festival to meet her suitors. Before she left, she walked over to the box the witch had left and picked it up. She opened the box, and out of it jumped a toad. Alyssa dropped the box in fright, and the toad hopped out of the room and out of sight.

Alyssa went to the sink to wash her face after the ordeal. When she looked into her mirror, she saw that her beautiful looks had faded. Her face and skin were dry and patchy with blemishes. Her curls were now frizzy and knotted.

Before she left for the festival, she tried to do what she could with her hair and makeup, but nothing helped. Still, Alyssa was modest. She knew she still needed to go to the festival so she swallowed her pride and found the courage to go anyway.





Her suitors smiled and told her than she was beautiful the way that she was. All of her suitors told her this, but two. Two of her suitors were upset at her appearance, but they still followed her through the festival. Alyssa and her suitors walked about as Alyssa continued to stumble and show her clumsiness. There were many people at the festival. However, none of them recognized Alyssa as the Governor's daughter without her glowing skin and shiny hair. She never received a compliment on her looks either. Even though Alyssa was used to receiving compliments and even though she still dressed neatly and cleanly not one person noted how pretty she was. Two of the suitors took noticed of this. They were upset that Alyssa chose to go out without looking her best. They decided that they would rather go out with a beautiful girl, who could impress others, than someone no one knew. So, without a goodbye, two of Alyssa's suitors disappeared before the end of the evening.



Now Alyssa was faced with choosing between the two suitors she had left. Before she left the carnival that evening, Alyssa received two invitations to go on a private date, one from each of her suitors. She accepted the dates. They would occur in two days: one during the day, and one during the evening.

The next day, Alyssa sat in her room and thought about her upcoming dates. She was not sure which of her two suitors she truly cared for. She was nervous and resented that she was forced to choose. Just then, the little witch appeared again in her room.

The little witch had changed yet again. She now stood in front of Alyssa with beautiful, glowing skin and shining curls, which fell to her back under her pointed hat.

"Little witch, why are you here? The box you gave me took away my beauty. Two more of my suitors have left," Alyssa proclaimed.

"Have you chosen your suitor?" asked the little witch.

"No," replied Alyssa.

"Then you are no worse off than when we met. I've come here to help you one last time," the little witch said. Again she clapped her hands twice, and a great big box appeared before Alyssa. It was taller, deeper, and wider than Alyssa; it could barely fit inside her bedroom. "This is my final gift to you. To choose your suitor, open the box before you see them again."

Alyssa agreed again, putting her trust in the witch. Without another word, the little witch disappeared.



The next day, Alyssa got ready for her first date. When she was dressed and prepared, she went to the box and decided to open it. The box was so large that she could hardly remove the lid. When it was uncovered, she peered over the side of the box to see what was inside. The box was dark and deep; she could not see the bottom, so Alyssa stuck her head deeper into the box. Still, all she saw was darkness. Giving up, she pulled herself out of the box, but to her horror, she still only saw darkness. The box had made her blind.

Alyssa immediately burst into tears, for all of the beauty she had enjoyed with her eyes was gone. Her cries were so loud that her father and mother rushed into the room to see what the matter was. Alyssa told her parents everything about the little witch and the boxes. The Governor called his security and had them search high and low for the little witch who had taken all of his daughter's precious gifts, yet no one could find the witch.

Alyssa was distraught over all that had happened. Although, she knew it would be hard, she swallowed her pride once more and found the courage to go out on her date anyway. Her first date was with a handsome, young businessman. It surprised Alyssa, but the man was gracious and did not take note of her changes at all. He guided her by the hand through the park. Alyssa was sad that she could not see the sights of the park or her suitor's face, so she decided to listen instead.

She listened to the voice of the young businessman, and although his voice was warm, his words upset Alyssa to her very core. Everything the man said was about money and fame. He spoke about how he loved Alyssa's status and how good a match they would be together.



When Alyssa would try to speak, he ignored her questions and attempts to change the subject. Soon, Alyssa decided to end the date and asked the young businessman to escort her back home.

A couple hours later, her second date arrived. He arrived in modest dress and appearance. Alyssa was embarrassed that, in her blindness, she could not remember his face very well.

When the two were on their date, they found themselves sitting and talking. Again, Alyssa decided to listen to his words, because she could not see. As he spoke to her, Alyssa found herself falling in love. He told her about his interests, and he told her stories in vivid colorful words about things he been through; together they talked about their families and their goals.

Alyssa apologized for all that had happened and asked him, "How can you still care about me now when I'm not myself?"

The man replied, "I care because you are the same as I've always known you."

With this Alyssa knew that he was the one she would pursue. When their evening was over, Alyssa asked him to go out again, and with her choice, all of the witch's spells were broken. Alyssa had her beauty, her grace, and her sight back. When she finally looked at the man again, she noticed the he was not the most handsome or flashy of her suitors, but she knew he was the best for her. They were so excited that they ran home together.

When they returned to Alyssa's home, she told her parents the good news. There was a big celebration for her. She and the man enjoyed a long and happy romance. They married and lived happily ever after.



Isaac and the Summer Storm

It was the height of summer, and the people of New Turtle Island were enjoying the sun. The weather was hot and dry, and people across the entire state enjoyed going outside to relax and play. Weather in this state was very predictable, and just as the year before and the year before that, the summer heat lasted too long and became too much for the people's liking and they would get mad. The plants would turn brown, and the ground would become hard because there was no rain. One year, the people of the state finally decided that enough was enough, so when the sun became too much for them they called up to the clouds and asked for rain.

Once the first voice rang out, thousands more followed. The people screamed to the sky and murmured to each other in anger for many days. Finally, the clouds came bringing forth rain and the people were happy again. Yet, the people didn't know that the clouds would keep raining and raining and would not stop. The rain turned into a storm that lasted all day and night without end. It lasted for days, and instead of settling down it would only blow to another part of the state and in another city.

The people were very tired of the rain and became upset once again. They decided to yell at the storm to stop, but the clouds would not listen to them. In an effort to stop the storm, the people would watch the news for the weather report, and when the storm was coming their way, they would march to the border of their city. They would go on foot and in cars, yelling and making noise, to tell the storm to stop. However, the storm would not listen, and the people would be washed away by the winds and rain water.



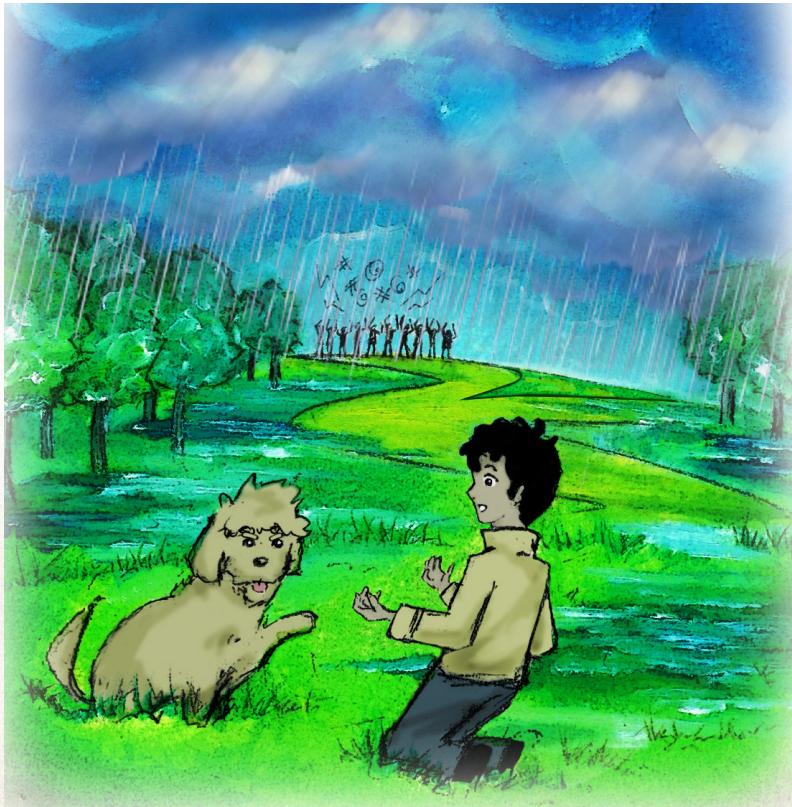


After days and days of the storm traveling throughout the state, a little boy named Isaac decided to go to the border of his city to ask the storm to stop before it reached them. Isaac was a quiet boy, who was also very confident and polite. He was somewhat short for his age, with short, dark hair.

Isaac saw a group of people from his street marching quickly and noisily down the road to head off the storm and decided to follow. Because Isaac was small, he lagged far behind, but still remained in sight of the group.

The group walked for some time always picking up speed until they were too far away for Isaac to see. Isaac ran to catch up with the group, but it was difficult for him because he was so small. He ran until he saw a fork in the road. At the fork was a small dog, who was trying to find a comfortable spot to lie down in some grass beside it.





"Excuse me, please," said Isaac. The dog stopped turning and sat up to look at him. "Did you see a group of people walk by here? Where did they go?"

"Of course I did!" the dog yapped angrily. "I was just minding my own business when this loud group of people stamped by me. They woke me up from my sleep and one of them stepped on me! They went that way."

The dog pointed the boy down the path the group had gone.

"Thank you! I'm sorry they woke you up," said Isaac. Before he left, Isaac kneeled down and fluffed up a bed of grass next to the dog for it to sleep on. Then he waved good-bye to the dog and went on his way.



Soon, Isaac was able to see the group again. They had slowed some, but as soon as he saw them, they started to speed up and disappeared. Isaac ran some more and then saw why they had slowed. He saw a giant puddle of mud, so big it almost looked like a swamp. A child in a rain coat and boots was sitting unhappily in the middle of it, his arms crossed in front of his chest.



"Hello, are you hurt? Why do you look upset?" Isaac asked the boy in the mud.

"A group of people just passed me. They made fun of me for being dirty. But I'm not dirty! My mother gave me this rain coat so that I could stay clean while I played," said the boy in the mud.

"I'm sorry they said that. May I help you up?" Isaac tiptoed through the mud, over to the boy, to help him up. "Can you tell me where they went? I am following them so I can ask the storm to stop raining."

"They went straight ahead. Thank you for helping me up," said the boy in the mud. "When you meet the storm, you might need this."

The boy with the mud took off his rain coat and gave it to Isaac.

Isaac thanked the boy and said good-bye, then headed off down the road to meet the rest of the group.

As Isaac walked, the sky began to grow dark and the wind picked up. Isaac knew that he was getting close to the storm. Eventually, Isaac came to the end of the street, which had been blocked off by barricades and cars.

He saw people from the group walking towards him. They were dripping wet and looked defeated.

"Go back, kid! The storm is too loud to listen. If it can't hear us, it won't listen to you," said one lady as she walked past Isaac.



Isaac decided he would keep on going anyway. As more and more people passed, Isaac continued to walk forward. When he came to the barricade, he saw a tall guard standing in all black in front of it. The guard looked intimidating, but Isaac thought he must be brave to be standing out there by himself.

"Turn around and go home," the guard stated, staring straight ahead.
"The storm is coming, and you can't pass."

"Please sir, I want to speak with the storm," said Isaac.

"You're too small, and the storm will just wash you away. Go home!" the guard insisted, without even glancing Isaac's way.

"Excuse me, but please. If I'm too small, could you help me? I want to protect my city," said Isaac.

The guard looked down at Isaac for the first time. He saw Isaac's borrowed rain coat and stared into his eyes. He had never seen someone so respectful. When other people tried to pass the guard, they would yell and scream at him, but this boy was different.

"Since you asked so politely, I will help you and take you closer to the storm," said the guard.

The guard walked Isaac over to his motorcycle. Isaac hopped in the seat of the bike's sidecar, and together they headed off past the barricade. They came to an empty field; right before them was the storm. It was big, dark, and very loud. As they got closer, the wind picked up, and rain started to fall heavier and heavier.



So much rain came down that it made a river. They stopped as the river got closer. Isaac thought it might sweep him all the way back to the barricade.

Before the water could reach them, the dog that had been trying to sleep on the road ran up in front of them. He quickly dug a big hole in front of Isaac and the guard. It was so wide and deep that, as the river came in their direction, the water fell right into the hole, and they were not swept away.

Isaac looked up. The storm was right above them, thundering just as loud as ever. Isaac stood up on the bike and then hopped up on the guard's tall shoulders. He waited until after a stroke of thunder, and then spoke firmly.

"Please, Storm, thank you for the rain, but we have had enough water and would like you to stop raining," said Isaac. He spoke clearly and politely, during the quietest moment of the storm.

Just a moment later, the rain stopped coming and the wind died away. The storm shriveled up and disappeared.

Isaac and the guard were very happy that the storm was finally over. The guard offered to give Isaac a ride all the way home. Isaac picked up the dog and rode back toward his street. They saw the little boy in the mud and returned his rain coat. They waved goodbye and continued back to Isaac's home.

When they finally returned, the guard told Isaac's parents about the wonderful thing he had done in getting the storm to stop. They were so happy that they made Isaac dinner with all of his favorite foods.





The little state was happy again. Isaac now had a new dog and two new friends. From then on, when the people of Isaac's town wanted something, they followed Isaac's example by being respectful and polite.



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