

Bonnie Brager

Writing Children's Stories

Fall Semester 2020

Fractured Fairytale 9-2020

Cinderella and the Village Boy

A Retold Version of France's "Cinderella"

"Cinderelly, Cinderelly," Princess Cinderella's evil step sisters sang. It had been ten years since her mother died and her father, the King, married her evil stepmother. Cinderella's mother was a queen with a kind heart but her step mother was wicked. Cinderella's mother always told her, "Have courage and be kind". Cinderella travelled to the village below the castle every day to practice kindness. Cinderella wanted to be a beautiful queen just like her mother was.

That day when Cinderella traveled to the village she met a handsome but dirty and poor young man. It was love at first sight but she knew her father would not let a village boy become her husband or be king. Cinderella said goodbye promising she would see him again one day.

When Cinderella went to bed that night she cried because she could not be with her one true love. She looked to her window and saw an old woman appear. "Who are you?" the princess asked.

"Why, I am your fairy godmother, child. I am here to help you marry the village boy."

"Oh! That is wonderful. But, my father will never like a village boy" Cinderella said.

"Do you like him?" Cinderella nodded answering her godmother's question, "well then this is worth a try. Bippity Boppity Boo!" Fairy Godmother waved her wand and the village boy was

there. Fairy Godmother looked at the boy and shook her head. She waved her wand once again and the village boy changed into a prince with clean clothes, a crown, and shiny shoes.

“Now, Cinderella, he will only be like this until midnight so you only have until then to prove to your family that it is what is on the inside that matters not the outside”. They thanked her as she waved her wand and disappeared.

The next day, the boy tells Cinderella he is scared to meet the King. Cinderella helps him by telling him what her mother told her, “have courage and be kind”. They both smiled and held hands as they walked into the dining room.

When the King sees them he asks, “Cinderella, who is this young man?”

Before Cinderella can answer, her step sisters notice how handsome he is and want him to like them instead. “Yeah, Cinderelly, who is this and why is he here with you?”

“Girls!” her step mother scolds, “What my *beautiful princess* daughters mean is that if you like Cinderella then you will like them even more”.

Cinderella did not look at them instead she answered her father, “Daddy, this is... Prince Charming! He is from a kingdom on the far other side of the country. I met him while walking in the village.”

“Good evening, sir,” Prince Charming bows.

“Good evening to you, too,” the King says.

They all talked and laughed night long. The King was telling Prince Charming how great he is when they heard the midnight bells chime.

“Oh no!” Princess Cinderella cried.

“What is the matter?” the King asked as Prince Charming ran away before they could see who he really was. They ran after him but they were too late. All they found was one of his shiny

shoes on the stairs. They asked why he left and Cinderella began to cry. She was scared to tell her father the truth. They heard the door opening once again and looked out to see the dirty village boy at the door. Cinderella ran to him and leaped into his arms. Prince Charming whispered in her ear, “have courage and be kind, remember?”

Cinderella nodded. “Cinderella, would you like to explain who this dirty village boy is? You know villagers are not allowed in the castle!” her evil stepmother asked.

“Eww! Yeah, Cinderelly, how did you find someone uglier than you?” the step sisters laughed at them.

“That is enough. Excuse them, son, who might you be? I do not believe we have met,” the King asks.

“Actually, Daddy, you have all met him. This is who Prince Charming really is. I wanted to show you how great he is but I knew you would all not give him a chance if he came as himself”.

“But, Prince Charming is so cute and this boy is so dirty! We do not believe you!” one of her step sisters yelled.

“I promise! I can prove it to you all,” Cinderella showed them the shoe she had been holding. “If this shoe fits him then you will all know this is really Prince Charming after all”.

The shoe fits perfectly. The King welcomes him into the family. Prince Charming and Princess Cinderella get married and become the new king and Queen. In the end, they live happily ever after.

Elementary Scene

October - 2020

“Sarah, what’s middle school like?” I ask my sister as I pick at the strings on my pillow.

“It’s like elementary school but bigger and cooler, Annie.” Sarah looked in the mirror to see me behind her, “you’ll love it”. I heard a knock on our bedroom door before I could protest.

“Good morning girls! Annie Jane, why are you not out of bed? It’s the first day of school. I want to see something on your body other than pajamas,” I know when my mom is serious so I leaped out of bed, “Sarah, you look gorgeous!” We watch her leave before we continue.

Sarah turns back to me and says, “Ann, you’ve got this. Your teacher, Mrs. Bug, loved me so I know she’ll love you, too”.

Of course, she did, everyone does, I thought but I would not say that out loud Sarah’s just trying to help. She’s right, though, middle school, here comes Annie Jane Macintosh.

Middle Grade Scene

November - 2020

Baby Steps

“Sloane, are you coming?” I nodded and waited until my mom left before I rolled my eyes. I looked in the mirror and adjusted my lavender cardigan over my white camisole top. Sloane 2 is what I call my mirror reflection and we both have the same reaction to hearing the door open. I stuck my tongue out at Sloane 2 and groaned, “Brad.”

I leave my room blowing a kiss to my dad’s picture and wishing he was here. Brad is my mom’s new boyfriend. They have been dating for two month and he’s fine I guess but nothing compared to my dad. I reach the steps and feel my younger sister push past me and run to Brad. *Figures*. I can’t blame Bella though she was three when Dad passed and this is the first guy who’s been around for more than one or two dates. My mom used to not bring her dates in but when she started to realize she wanted Brad around for real she started bringing him to the door and doing little things to introduce us to him. Until Brad, Grandpa; my mom’s dad, was the only constant male figure since my dad’s parents live in New York City. Grandpa’s perfectly fine as our male figure in my opinion but he’s getting up there in age and can’t pick up and spin Bella around the way Brad does.

“Bella girl!” There she goes up in his arms spinning around. I give a slight smile. “Hi, Sloane. You look very pretty tonight. All three of you do.” Bella squeals still in his arms, Mom blushes, and I give another small smile.

“Thank you, Brad. Where are we going to eat?” I asked. This is our first time going out to dinner with Brad, normally Grandpa and Grandma watch us when they have date night.

“Carmella’s” my heart stopped for a minute hearing this restaurant come out of Brad’s mouth. I feel my eyes get hot and I run up the steps to my room before anyone can see the tears. I hear Mom calling after me but I don’t stop. I can’t stop, the tears are flying, now.

I reach my bed and grab Paddington the Bear and cry into him. I hear footsteps and I try to wipe my tears but they keep falling. My mom looks at me and a tear rolls down her cheek and I feel even worse. She sits next to me and brushes her fingers through my hair.

“I’m sorry, Mom. I didn’t mean to,” I look at her.

“Oh, honey, it’s okay”. I wrap my arms around her tight and cry some more.

“Don’t you miss Dad?”

“I miss your father every single day. I know he wouldn’t want us to be sad though. He would want us to be happy. Carmella’s made us happy. Brad makes me happy. You girls make me happy” Mom’s eyes are kind.

”What if we start to forget him?” I haven’t ever said this out loud.

“We could never forget Daddy. Do you wanna know how I know?” I nod. “I could never forget your father because I see him every time I look in your eyes I see him and every time Bella laughs I can hear his laugh” We feel a pair of arms wrap around us and we look to see Bella smiling.

Mom gives her a tickle and Bella laughs. Mom and I exchange a knowing look and laugh, too. I notice another person at the door afraid to come in. “Brad?” I call.

“Yes?” I notice he is careful not to enter my room.

“We’re ready to go to Carmella’s” I smile and his face lights up. I want to invite him into our group hug but I am just not ready yet. I think that’s okay though. *Baby steps.*

I see the restaurant's light up sign from the car. It's just as bright as ever. I smile, I feel better than I expected. I can smell the pasta and fresh Parmesan cheese as soon as I open my door. Bella is dragging Mom and Brad's hands towards the restaurant. I feel a bounce in my step, too. This food is really good and we haven't had it in so long. *Maybe I can be excited about this. It is okay.* I have to keep reminding myself of that even now three years later.

The warm cranberry colored walls feel like a hug from an old friend. We sit at a table that we used to sit at and I try to mask my wince when Brad sits in my dad's spot. Brad stops in his tracks. "Brad, why don't you sit next to Bella? She's gonna give your tic tac toe skills a run for their money" he looked relieved and I certainly felt relieved.

"Oh, I don't know about that. I'm pretty good" he challenges and Bella giggles.

"I taught Bella everything she knows so she'll for sure beat you" I chime in. I notice the pleased glance from my mother and it feels good.

"Hmm. We'll see. Maybe then you can give it a go and we will play for the big sibling championship."

"You have a little sister?" I ask.

"Yes. Actually a little sister and a little brother. They are pretty cool. For little siblings, I mean." I give him a knowing nod and look at Bella. She's crazy but she's pretty great to have around. I'd be really bored if it was just Sloane 2 and I.

"Hey!" Bella squeals.

"Hey yourself. It's your turn."

Brad and Bella keep playing and I start people watch. I notice a particularly awesome emerald green jumpsuit on the lady two tables over and a white dress with the prettiest lace detailing across from a guy with a sky blue and white gingham button up. *I can't wait to sketch*

these when I get home. Hey, I know this song. My fingers start to move without even thinking about what the notes are.

Brad notices and my hands stop moving immediately. He sinks a little in his seat and I shift in mine. “I love this song. The chord progression is perfect. My band used to play this at our gigs” he doesn’t sound like he’s bragging. Normally, other people I know don’t know this song. I am curious but remain cautious.

“You played in a band? Like the Wiggles? Bella’s jaw has dropped and her eyes have grown even wider. I think they might pop out of her head. Mom’s beaming.

“Just like the Wiggles. Only without the cool outfits, sadly. We usually wore leather jackets”

“What brand?” I raise my eyebrow.

“AllSaints” he replies unsure if I’ll know the brand is. *I do.*

“They have the coolest stuff. I see them in the magazines my Grandma sends me from New York City.” I can tell he’s impressed.

“Talk music and fashion with Sloane and she’ll never let you stop” I know she’s right but I don’t say anything. *I just can’t bring myself fully there yet.*

As we finish our meals I look at my little sister and laugh as my mom scolds her for licking her plate. I can’t blame her, though, I want to do it, too.

“Brad!” I laugh out loud and my sister squeals. Brad is licking his plate in Bella’s defense. Brad gives her a puppy look and she wrinkled her nose at him before laughing, too. By the time our check comes, Bella’s big laugh is out, Mom’s wiping her tears, and the whole restaurant is looking. *Good. It’s been awhile since we had someone stare while we are making a scene laughing.*

When we get home, Bella is asleep in her car seat and it surprises me when I see Brad unbuckling her and carrying her inside. I get a flashback to when my Dad used to carry me inside after a long and fun night. I feel my eyes get hot again but this time I don't want to run away. I grab my mom's hand and whisper to her, "I like him." She looks at me and her eyes start to well up as she wraps her around me.

"Me too." We laugh as we see him struggling to open the door with Bella in his arms. My mom rushes up to help him but I hang back to look at the stars. I see the North Star twinkle just a little brighter just like it always does when I need it. I mouth "Love you, Daddy" and run inside.

Bella's already in her bed by the time I get inside and Brad is getting ready to leave. I haven't seen Mom smile like this in so long and it makes me smile. I walk up to them and give my mom a hug and a kiss on the cheek. I go to Brad and he puts out his hand for a high five like usual. Normally, I give him a slight tap but this time I go straight past his hand. I wrap both arms around him and I feel his body startle and then relax. He gives me a tight squeeze back and I look up at him. I don't think Brad cries or at least I've never seen him cry but this seems pretty close. I don't turn around. I know my mom is probably tearing up and I have to admit I'm pretty close, too.

"Thank you for tonight. I had fun."

"Thank you for coming with us. I had fun, too. I hope we can do dinner again soon." I lean into his chest one last time before pulling away. I nod looking up at him.

"Maybe, we can go to Bahama Breeze" *Baby steps.*

Young Adult Story

November - 2020

AfterParty Pitch

Emma's life has been taken by storm this year. Her mother passed and her dad is adjusting to single parenting, not well might she add. Emma has also landed her dream guy, Nate, the quarterback of their high school football team. There's just one problem: her strict and nervous father won't let her stay out past 10:30. Emma fears that her perfect new guy might forget about her until her dad finally lets her go out after the game to the coveted, football AfterParty. It's not exactly what she thinks and secrets are exposed, were all her fears right? And, if she says something will she look like the villain? Maybe Emma should just stay silent about it all

After Party

1:00 PM

"Emma, party at my house tonight after the game. Can you come?" Nate's eyes sparkle so bright I think I see the future every time I look at him. We've been dating for three months now and I still haven't been able to go to his weekly football after parties. He's so nice and pretends like he doesn't care but I know he does. He slips his hands around my waist as I reach up for my books. I love the smell of his Everest scented cologne.

"You know I have a curfew. Game ends at 10 pm so you will be home by 10:30, young lady," I do my best impression of my father. My dad means well but since mom passed away last year he hasn't really known how to handle the whole girl in high school thing.

"Can't you just sneak out?" Nate asks this every time knowing I can't

“My dad would have a heart attack if he woke up and I wasn’t there. You know that,” I can barely get the words out because I am mesmerized by the feeling of his chin leaning on my head. I lean back and let it sink in. The bell rings and I start to untangle myself from his arms but he pulls me back in and I squeal as his soft lips press against my cheek. *I love this boy.*

“I’ll see what I can do but I doubt he’ll say yes,” Nate gives me that boyish grin that could make the whole world stop just by looking at him.

“Great! People are gonna start to talk if the quarterback doesn’t have his girl by his side at another party,” Nate grins and I know he’s joking. I love the way he calls me his girl, it’s like I never want to hear anyone say anything else to me ever. 3:00 PM

“Hi, daddy,” I set my backpack on the floor. He’s still in his nursing scrubs from his early shift this morning. “You look tired, you should get some rest before tonight.”

“What’s tonight?”

“Daddy, you know it’s Nate’s football game. We play Northridge High and we are both undefeated. It’s gonna be a really big game.”

“Oh, right. Yeah, honey, I don’t think I can go tonight. I have another 6 am shift tomorrow morning at the hospital,” I can tell he feels bad but I was secretly hoping this might happen. Maybe, I could get five minutes alone with Nate before he drops me off.

“Oh, that’s okay. Nate can drive me home,” I try hard not to sound too eager. “And, maybe since he’s dropping me off I could go to his house afterward? I’d be sure not to stay out too late.” I give him my best puppy dog eyes.

“I don’t think so. Not tonight. I’d stay up too late worrying about you.”

“Okay,” I want to say but I’m sixteen and I’m old enough to stay out for an extra hour or two but I don’t. That would break his heart. I couldn’t watch his heart break again.

10:00 PM

I scream at the top of my lungs and so does everyone around me. We just beat the best country in the state and Nate threw the winning touchdown in the final seconds. I run to the field as fast as humanly possible. Our lips meet and my whole body dissolves into a pile of mush. I pull my head back to look at him. "I'm so proud of you!" I exclaim. I let him go reluctantly and watch his adoring fans congratulate him on his win. I go back to wait until he comes back from the locker room. I can smell him coming, fresh pine. I wave to him and say goodbye to Sara who is dating a tight end. Nat and I walk to his car, he opens my door and I climb in. *I love this boy.*

"So what did your dad say about the party?" I am snapped out of my daydream.

"I told you he said no. I tried. I wish more than anything I could be there celebrating with you," Nate's eyes fall and I feel my soul crush inside of me.

10:30 PM

"10:30, on the dot," Nate says, still sounding disappointed. *Wow, I hate to disappoint this boy.* I kiss his cheek and don't say anything. I can't or else who knows what crazy teenage love story declaration would come out of my mouth. "I'll see you tomorrow. I'm taking my girl out for breakfast," I smile wide and nod. Nate walks me to the front porch and leans in as we hear my door open.

"Hello, Nathan," I can't believe it.

"Hello, sir," I wish I could save him, my dad can be scary if he wants to be. "Did we win tonight?"

"Yes, sir," Nate says. I nod and walk inside knowing we missed any PDA window we had. I wave goodbye and after my dad turns away, I blow him a kiss and Nate grins that boyish grin. *I love this boy.*

11:00 PM

My dad rolls up to Nathan's house. I can't believe what just happened. My dad went upstairs to bed and then he came right back downstairs. He said "Your mom would want you to go and have fun."

"Really?" My eyes almost popped out of my head.

"I'll be back at exactly 12:30. You will be outside and ready, okay?" I nod and take a deep breath before I get out. I thank him and set out to surprise Nate. He's going to be so surprised. I see Sara and her boyfriend, Charlie, I go over to ask them if they've seen Nate. They tell me he's in the living room on the make-shift dance floor.

My jaw drops. Nate's twirling a girl who I've never seen before and they are both laughing. I feel my eyes getting hot and everyone turns. Nate smiles and waves. I can't even look at him. I run out the door. No wonder he was fine with me not coming, he had a million other groupies lining up to hang out with him. *I hate this boy.*

"Emma, you made it!" I hear Nate's voice and I don't turn my head. The familiar scent of fresh pine makes me want to but I don't. "Hello? Emma? Did you seriously come all this way not to say hi to me?"

"Not to say hi to you!" I scream, not caring I am making a scene at his party. "I came to your stupid party to find you dancing with some stupid girl who can probably stay out all hours of the night and you want to know why I didn't say hi to you?! Well, hi Nate! Oh and another thing, bye Nate!"

"Woah, woah, woah! What are you talking about?" I turn away and he grabs me and I almost forgive him until I see that girl walk outside. I pull my hands away.

"Her! Your little party girl!"

“Nate, is everything okay? Oh, hi! You must be Emma. I’m Anna,” Anna holds her hand out for me to shake. Is this girl serious? She’s dancing with MY boyfriend and she thinks I’ll shake her hand. I don’t, obviously.

“Yeah, everything is fine, Anna,” *Oh yeah, I bet it is buddy* I scoff as he continues, “we’ll be in in a second, okay?” *We???* *Yeah, as if!*

“I’m not going anywhere with you.”

“Emma, could you just give me a minute to explain?” I don’t know if it’s the shock or mesmerizing pine needle scent but for some reason I nod and let him speak. “Anna is Tommy’s boyfriend. You know the defensive back?” I nod, again. “Well, ex- boyfriend now. She showed up to the party tonight and she saw him making out with Clara. I found her crying on the steps. Tommy’s an ass and has been since the third grade.” That’s true. He once put gum in my hair and I had to cut my hair into a bob.

“Oh.”

“Yeah, Anna’s mom plays Bunco every week with my mom and she would kill me if she found out I didn’t help her. Emma,” Nate gives me a look that makes my heart stop, “I could never cheat on you, ever. I love you. I’m so stupidly in love with you that I sit like a doof at my own party just waiting for it to be over so I can call you.”

“I’m such an idiot,” I say.

“Hey, don’t call my girl an idiot,” Nate holds my face and kisses me. “Don’t you want to say something to me?”

“I love you. I’m in love with you, Nathan Harper,” Oh, sweet boy, I mean that. *I love this boy.*

Young Adult Story Continued

December 2020

“Hey Emma!” I don’t turn around, “Hey! Hey!” I feel an arm grab me and I try to wriggle away from him.

“Nate, I’m not in the mood,” I finally get free. I am startled as he picks up the pace and gets in front of me. He grabs my shoulders and I look around our high school hallway. Everyone’s staring at us, oh great! First, I’m the idiot who didn’t realize her hot quarterback jerk boyfriend was cheating on her and now, I’m also causing a scene by ignoring the most popular guy in school. I stop and decide not to say anything about the girl at the party.

“Finally, I caught you! I showed up at your house on Saturday and no one answered the door so I figured something was wrong but then you wouldn’t answer my calls,” this was true I avoided all his calls and texts this weekend: 20 texts and 6 calls to be exact. It would be cute if he wasn’t a two- timing liar.

“Oh, yeah, I decided to go to my grandma’s for the weekend. I must have forgot to tell you and there’s absolutely no service at her house in upstate Pennsylvania,” I pray Nate buys this answer and we can talk about the real problem later.

“Oh... okay. Well, how was it?” Crap, I look around to see if anyone can distract him for me so I can sneak away. I see Sophia who showed me where Nate was last night, nope, can’t ask her. I notice our English teacher standing at his door.

“It was good,” I quickly pivot and wave to our English teacher, “Hey! Mr. Shultz, Nate was just asking me what resources we should use for our papers due this week and I said we should ask.”

I see Nate's confused look but I ignore and keep smiling. I don't hear what Mr. Shultz says because I'm too busy trying to think of an exit strategy. Nate shoots me a look because Mr. Shultz is known for droning on but I give him my most innocent face back. This is about the least I could do to you compared to me finding you on the dance floor with some random senior girl I think. Nate's still holding my hand and I hope he cannot feel my palm sweating.

"Well, this was very helpful! Thank you, Mr. Shultz! I will be sure to look up those websites for my paper. Anyways, we have history to get to so we should be going!" Mr. Shultz smiles and nods. Nate pulls my hand down the hall and I have to move quickly to keep up with him. When we get out of our teacher's view Nate gives me a look that would make me melt if I wasn't so mad, "Hey, if you needed help with your essay, you could have just asked me. You don't need to be embarrassed not knowing where to start."

"Right," I keep looking down and let go of his hand.

"Is there something else going on here?" I shake my head because we are still in school and I'll still be the villain in this break up story even if it was not my fault.

"Okay, well, we really should get to history. Mrs. Rain hates when we are late," Nate's ocean blue eyes stare into my soul and I almost feel bad for not being honest. Suddenly, I get a flashback of him dancing with his arms wrapped around her waist and that fades away.

Nate and I start walking to class. Our problems can wait.

"Hey! Hey, guys wait up!" I hear Sophia's voice and I almost wince as I see Nate turn around.

"Hey, Sophia, what's up?" Nate asks.

"Nothing much. Oh, Emma, I didn't see you again after you asked where Nate was. Did you two go off alone?" She raises a sneaky eyebrow. What does she know about this? Gosh,

probably the whole grade knows he is cheating on me with a senior. I can't believe I was so stupid.

“What? Emma stayed with her grandmother this weekend. She wasn't at the party,”

Nate's eyebrows raise in confusion and he looks at me.

“What do you mean? I talked to her at your house...”

“Hey, Sophia! We are going to be late for math, we gotta run!” A girl I don't recognize pulls her away and she waves still confused. I close my eyes and wait for Nate's voice. When he doesn't say anything, I open them.

“Umm..” I try to get him to speak.

“So, you came to the party and just figured you wouldn't tell me?”

“Not exactly,” I don't know what to say.

“That's what it sounds like, Emma, why would you lie to me?” The flashback of the girl and him returns and I speak up.

“I don't know, Nate. It takes one to know one I guess,” Nate gives me a blank stare, “I saw you.”

“You saw me what?”

“Don't play dumb, Nate. I get it, you are this big quarterback and all the girls love you and that's fine. I guess I just thought what we had meant more than you dancing away with some senior,” the color starts to return to Nate's face.

“Oh no.”

“Oh yes.”

“You mean you saw me with Anna?”

“Oh great. She has a name, she’s a real person,” I feel my eyes getting hot as they brim with tears that I blink away.

“Anna is my neighbor. She came to the party last night and I found her crying on the steps. She is dating Tommy from our grade or I guess was dating. She found him making out with another girl and was sobbing. I had to help her. Our moms are friends and she would have basically murdered me if I didn’t help her.” Great, now I’m a bigger ass than Tommy and he put gum in my hair in the third grade.

“Oh, I don’t know what to say. I’m sorry I jumped to conclusions, thanks for telling me the truth,” I keep looking down until I feel his hand lift my chin up for me to look at him.

“I could never cheat on you, Emma. I love you.”

He kisses me and then the bell rings. We laugh and then remember we have Mrs. Rain and run to class.