

No. 15

*It always starts with
once upon a time. . . .*

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(Junior Category)

Once upon a time...Once upon a time...Once upon a time...

'Yes,' thought Emily, 'that's how Granny starts a story.' Emily was sitting on the large windowsill looking over Liverpool. 'Good bye,' she whispered.

'EMILY! EMILY!' came the shrieking voice of her sister, Meryl.

'WHAT?' she yelled back.

'Have you... Oh my GOSH," said Meryl, coming into the room, "you're doing it again!'

'Doing what?'

'You're sitting on the outside window sill.'

'But the window sill is massive!'

'Still, maybe an evil witch might come and knock you off! And then you would fall down 20 storeys.'

'Gimme a break,' said Emily.

'Emily,' said another voice, this one belonging to her brother Joshua. 'You're still in your nighty, the train leaves in an hour!'

Emily began to whistle like she always did when she was irritated.

'Stop that stupid whistling,' said the eldest, Jess.

All three older siblings were in Emily's room now. She could have screamed. Then their mother came into the living room. 'Hallo darlings.'

‘The End.’

Their Granny ended yet another fairy tale, and when the four children were outside Meryl said, ‘And she thinks we are just going to believe that that really happened.’

Emily’s face grew hot.

‘Look, little Em believes her,’ said Joshua and they all laughed.

Emily began to whistle. ‘Being the youngest of four is hard,’ her Dad always said, but now him and her Mum had got a divorce and Mum had custody of them all. They had moved out of their little flat in Liverpool and gone to live with their Mum’s Mum in the Lake District for the time being.

That night in bed, Emily looked out the window and thought about all the stories Granny told about here. About swimming with mermaids in the lake and how the fairies took her flying and having lunch with pixies and how she was caught by the evil witch and was taken to her castle at the top of the hill and how the handsome knight saved her. But that all happened like a million years ago, when Granny was a little girl.

‘She was the same age as me,’ thought Emily. ‘But eleven isn’t that little!’

She sat up. ‘What’s that?’

On the other side of the lake was a small light.

‘I’ll go and see what it is! Nobody will miss me.’ She hopped out of bed, almost landing on Meryl, with whom she was sharing a room, and ran as quietly as she could down the corridor. She would have given someone a shock if they saw her, for with her white nighty and brown hair she looked remarkably like a ghost.

It was very cold outside, and Emily shivered. ‘I’m glad I brought my coat, now to find that light.’ But, alas, when she began to run to the other side, the path was full of brambles.

It didn’t matter. Once she set her mind on something, Emily always did it.

‘I think there is a raft outside of Granny’s house.’ There was and she got on and pushed off. ‘How beautiful’ said Emily, looking about.

Suddenly the raft began to shake violently.

‘What’s happening?’ said Emily.

Then just as suddenly as it started it stopped.

‘I’m glad that stopped, now let’s get to the other side.’ With that she began to paddle. When she was half way across the lake the raft

began to shake again! Only this time much harder than last time. Then it gave a massive tilt sending Emily into the water. She screamed as she went in.

‘Oh isn’t it cold!!!’ cried Emily between the chattering of her teeth. ‘Why oh why did I come?’

Then she remembered the thing in the water and began to swim as fast as she could until “that something” grasped her leg. It felt like a hand, but wetter and clammy!

‘HELP, HELP, HELP!!!’ yelled Emily.

It began to pull her under. She heard a voice say, ‘keep still!’, so she did and as she went under she thought she saw a broom going overhead. Then she heard the voice again.

‘Keep still and drink this.’

Emily opened her eyes to see what was offered to her. It was a tiny glass bottle. Inside it was a blue liquid.

‘Drink it!’ the voice persisted.

So, not knowing what else to do, she did! Then things began to happen: first she began to gag (for it tasted disgusting) and her mouth let in a lot of water; next the world, or lake, went first pink then yellow then green then blueish again.

‘AIR! AIR! AIR!’ screamed her lungs.

‘Take a deep breath,’ said the voice.

'Is it crazy?' Emily thought, for she wasn't sure if it were a girl or a boy or what? But she did anyway, and she found she could breathe. It was really weird! Then she passed out.

When Emily awoke, she looked about her in amazement. It was like a picture out of her Little Mermaid book! Mermaids and mermen were swimming about everywhere.

'Whoa,' she said.

Then a mermaid swam up to her and said, 'Ah, you have awakened.'

'How long was I asleep for?'

'Half an hour, that's all the potion allows, you know, the one you drank. Now you are to go and see Neptune, the God of Water, come on.'

Relief and disappointment flowed through Emily as she saw she hadn't any tail.

Neptune was a massive god. 'You,' he boomed, 'have a quest.'

Emily had decided it was all a dream so was willing to go along with anything, so she nodded. 'What's this quest, oh gracious majesty?' and thought, 'Might as well get him to like me instead of hate me!'

‘Your quest is to capture the Witch of Doom!’

A murmur went round the room.

‘You will have weapons, of course.’

‘Great,’ Emily said with a bow. ‘Thanks! Sounds easy.’ It didn’t really, but she wasn’t going to say so!

‘EASY? EASY!’ Neptune bellowed louder than before. ‘Five of my best men have failed!’

A mermaid whispered something in his ear.

He growled, ‘My good daughter has told me something serious, this time you have only in till morning to do this task or you and the rest of my men will die!!!’

Emily gulped. ‘Only a dream, only a dream,’ she murmured.

Emily was given a shield, a dagger, a breast plate, a map and a boat, better than the one she had been tipped off (by a mermaid).

‘Good luck!!!’ said Neptune.

Emily bowed and hopped on to the boat. ‘Good bye. I shall return.’

‘Now,’ said Emily, looking at the map, ‘first to go and ask Prince Edwin what advice he has for me, he is at the other side of the lake.’ She clapped her hands twice and a strong wind blew and filled the

sails (Neptune had told her that when she did that he would send a wind). Emily soon got to the other side and she got off and went to find Prince Edwin. She found him slashing at the brambles.

‘Hello,’ she said, ‘what are you doing?’

‘I,’ he began, thumping his chest, ‘am in the act of rescuing Sleeping Beauty!’

‘Oh, that’s what those brambles are, OK... um... I’m trying to kill the Witch of Doom and the Water God said you would have some advice for me.’

‘Yes,’ he said, swishing his gold hair, ‘don’t trust her!’

‘OK,’ said Emily, thinking this guy was a bit of a weirdo, ‘anything else?’

‘Yes!’ said Prince Edwin, dramatically, ‘go and find the fairies Jasmina and Adalaná; they will help you. Good luck!’

‘Yeah,’ said Emily doubtfully. ‘You too.’ Then she hopped back into the boat and clapped.



The fairies lived in the wood and it took her a long time to find them but in end she did and they were so beautiful it was unimaginable.

Jasmina had long black hair and Adalaná had gold and they were tiny, about the size of Emily's hand.

Emily told them about her quest and asked if they had any advice.

'Yes,' they said in their small bell-like voices, 'go in by the front door.'

'The front door?!'

'Yes, we tell everyone this but they don't believe us! But the Witch of Doom has very few guards on that door.'

'Thank you very much! I must go,' said Emily and ran off again.

When she was on the little boat and on the way she said, 'No putting it off now, I must go and kill the Witch of Doom.' She shivered. 'I must climb the hill.'

The hill was large and steep and when she got to the top Emily was out of breath and had to sit down. When she looked up at the castle she was surprised for what was a ruin that afternoon was now a massive castle!



‘That will be fun to get into.’ She went through the front door (or massive gateway) easily, for the witch was not expecting people to go that way. Emily made her way to the top tower where Neptune’s men were. But when she opened the door there was only one.

‘Hello,’ said Emily. ‘Um... where’s the rest of you?’

‘Dead!’ was all he said.

He was tall; Emily could see this even though he was sitting down. He had dark hair and a nice face and looked like the youngest son from a fairy tale Emily had once read.

‘And now,’ he said at last, ‘I suppose you have been sent by the witch to drown me too!’

‘No, no, I have been sent by Neptune to free you and kill the witch.’

He looked doubtful, but after a bit of explaining he nodded. ‘Alright, but I shall help you.’

‘Fine with me,’ said Emily. ‘What’s your name?’

‘Roland.’

‘I’m Emily’

‘I’ve got a sister called Elinor, that is like Emily, now come, we must make haste!’

They ran down the stairs and went to the living room where the witch was having tea.

‘Now,’ whispered Roland, ‘you distract her and I’ll grab hold of her and then we’ll tie her up!’

‘Alright’

But then someone put a hand over Emily’s mouth (Roland ducked into the shadows).

‘I have you now,’ said the high pitched voice of the witch!



Emily was high in the air, in front of the witch riding her broom. She was terrified.

‘What am I going to do?’ she thought. She began to cry. ‘You horrid witch!’ she screamed.

‘Be quiet, or I’ll drop you in the lake!’

Emily began to cry harder, but then she had an idea. ‘Horrid, miserable, smelly witch!!’

‘Grrrr!’ The witch didn’t like that.

Then Emily began to sing to the tune of Yankee Doodle, ‘Once there was a smelly witch, she smelt like garbage in a ditch, a girl came by and smashed her head and cut her into little bits! Once there was a smelly witch she smelt like gar...arrhhh!!!!’

The ‘arrhhh’ was because the witch pushed Emily off the broomstick! But this was what Emily hoped would happen, for instead of falling, she grabbed the end of the broom and began to swing about, causing the broom to bounce and jiggle like crazy. The witch fell off the broomstick and into the water, where Emily saw three rather startled mermen grab her and pull her under.

“Meryl, I just saw a fairy!”

“Don’t be silly there’s no such thing!”

It was the next day, and Emily had just been talking to Jasmina and Adalaná. Emily smiled. ‘If you want to believe that, then do, but I know they are real!’ She smiled at her.

‘Huh,’ said Meryl.

Emily looked at Granny and winked.

Granny winked back.

That night Emily pulled out a gold medal with “Emily: Witch Slayer” on it. Roland had one, too, and Emily never forgot what happened that night.

The End