

Magic Elizabeth

written by Norma Kassirer

illustrated by Joe Krush

Chapter Four: Another Sally

a breakfast serials story

THE STORY SO FAR: Sally has fallen in love with an oil painting of an old-fashioned girl just about her age hanging on the wall of the bedroom she will be staying in at Aunt Sarah's house. In the girl's lap is a most adorable doll.

Sally's fingers touched the dimple in her own cheek. "Why, she looks just like *me!*" she thought in astonishment as she stared at the girl in the picture.



"You resemble her quite remarkably," Aunt Sarah was saying. "They called her Sally, too."

While Sally began unpacking her suitcase, her aunt straightened the curtains, turned back the yellow spread to reveal a bright patchwork quilt beneath it, and moved a vase carefully into the very center of a little table that stood beside the bed. She cleared her throat several times as if she were going to say something and then, quite abruptly, she touched Sally on the shoulder, said, "Well, good night," and out she went, with Shadow following.

Mysterious sounds from the darkness outside invaded

the quiet room. Trees creaked and groaned in the wind, and a sudden splash of rain hit the window as if a hand had thrown it. And yet Sally felt comforted by the pretty room and its oil painting. She smiled shyly up at the portrait of the other Sally and her doll.

"She looks nice," she thought. "I think I would have liked her. But I don't like Aunt Sarah, and I don't like Shadow," she told herself as she put on her pajamas.

She woke up once that night, shivering, from a dream in which Aunt Sarah, wearing a pointed black hat and a great billowing black cloak, was riding upon the back of an enormous Shadow.

But when she fell asleep again at last, it was to dream that she was playing with the other Sally and her doll upon the round rag rug beside the bed, and that the sun was streaming in through the window.

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There was something cold on Sally's forehead. Her eyes flew open in alarm. Looming over her was Aunt Sarah's sharp-nosed face; her thin hand rested upon Sally's forehead. Something moved at the foot of the bed, and Sally's eyes turned quickly to confront Shadow. He narrowed his eyes and looked back at her. For a moment, it was like another bad dream.

Her aunt, seeing Sally staring up at her, quickly drew her hand away.

"Good morning," she said sharply. "Do you feel all right? Your head seems warm and you look quite flushed. I'm not used to children, you understand."

"I'm all right," Sally answered stiffly. Her voice, to her

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surprise, sounded rather hoarse. She tried to stifle a cough, but Aunt Sarah noticed it. She looked sharply at Sally, who looked back, unmoving. Something flickered in Aunt Sarah's eyes. If it had been anyone else, Sally would have thought it was concern, or kindness. But since it was Aunt Sarah—Sally turned her head away. "I hope I'm not getting a cold," thought Sally, remembering the rain the night before. "Then she'll be really mad at me."

Her eyes moved to the window. A maple tree was looking in. She blinked at the brilliant gold-and-green light that glittered in the moving leaves. Between two swaying branches, she could see what looked like the corner of an old barn.

Sally raised herself on one elbow and looked up at her aunt. "Is that a barn?" she asked.

2 "Yes," said Aunt Sarah. "This was a farmhouse a long time ago."

Sally looked at the painting above the fireplace.

"This was all country when she lived here," said her aunt, following Sally's gaze to the painting. "None of these buildings—" She waved an arm to indicate the apartment buildings on all sides. "But breakfast is almost ready," she said. "We'll see you downstairs shortly." Aunt Sarah turned and walked out the door.

Shadow growled low in his throat, flicked a glance at Sally, and jumped off the bed to follow Aunt Sarah out.

As soon as they had gone, Sally ran to the window. She peered down through the moving leaves into what seemed at first to be a rippling green sea. What must once have been a garden was now a blowing field of foxtails, tall grass, and Queen Anne's lace. Blue and yellow butterflies rocked like tiny boats on the billowing green. The leaves of the apple trees were still shiny with rain.

Tall apartment buildings rose on either side and at the far end of the yard. They enclosed the leaping garden as if forbidding it to move on any further. A row of pine trees at

the back of the yard might have been the beginning of a deep forest, had it not been for the buildings just behind.

In all that moving green, a tiny flash of red caught Sally's eye in the crack between the barn doors. She pressed her face against the glass and stared out at it. She wondered what it could be. How she longed to be out there, feeling the breeze lifting her hair. She wanted to wade through that sea of green, the foxtails tickling her knees. She wanted to peek into the barn. What had it been like when the other Sally lived here? she wondered.

How quiet the room seemed behind her. The only movement was the flicker of leaf shadow over the walls and floor. The furniture seemed as stiff as the buildings. Only the ticking of the grandfather clock in the hall broke the absolute stillness of the house.

Just then came a metallic clatter from the kitchen, reminding Sally that Aunt Sarah was waiting. She sighed and turned from the window.

They had very little to say to each other during breakfast, although Sally was bursting with questions such as, What is that red I saw in the barn? and Can't I please play outside? But every time that she peeked across the table at Aunt Sarah's stern-lipped face, her courage failed her.

Sally sneezed.

Aunt Sarah looked up. "That doesn't sound good," she said. "You'd better stay inside this morning, Sally. You may play in the parlor or anywhere you like in the house, if you are careful not to break anything, but you'd better not go into the attic. It's much too dusty and dirty up there."

to be continued ...

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