

Slipping Serenity

The Origin

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Chapter One

Pinewood, New York was your typical town. There wasn't a lot to do in the town, but for the residents it was life as usual. The Callahan house was one of the most typical places in this typical town. The house was a small white house with a porch, and a driveway with no garage. There were two floors, three bedrooms, a tiny kitchen leading into a tiny living room, and only one bathroom. But the house accommodated it's inhabitants very well.

For in the house lived a mother and a father with their teenage daughter. Mr. Callahan and Mrs. Callahan were the perfect couple. They were both a little portly, but not overly so. Mr. Callahan was a stout man with black hair and a mustache, while Mrs. Callahan was slightly taller with dyed blonde hair. Their fifteen year old daughter Katie had dark hair like her parents (although Mrs. Callahan would never admit to it), and had always been a real dreamer.

When she was little, she would often dream that she was in a magical land where she had the power to alter reality any way she wanted. She would imagine that she wore the most beautiful gowns, and that she was a princess in a kingdom far away.

She had given up her dreams of magic, but she still felt the desire to live in a land far away. She liked living in Pinewood, but she longed to see the world. She knew there was something far better out there, and she wanted

to experience it all. Nothing interesting ever happened in Pinewood.

It was a typical Tuesday morning. Mr. Callahan was already at his job writing software for an insurance company. Mrs. Callahan was finishing up making bagged lunch for Katie to take to school. She called upstairs to her daughter, "Katie! Wake up! You're going to be late for school!" Katie groggily descended the steps and looked over at her mother. "I've got to get going honey. I don't have time to make you anything, but there's cereal on top of the counter. I have your lunch on the counter. Have a nice day at school sweetie." Mrs. Callahan kissed her daughter on the forehead and hurried out the door.

Katie poured a bowl of Corn Flakes with three heaping tablespoons of sugar on top, and milk coming up to almost the top of the bowl. She took the tablespoon and her cereal and sat down at the table. She rubbed her eyes as she ate. She looked at the clock and groaned. "I'd better hurry up or I'm going to get detention again." She quickly finished up the rest of her cereal, grabbed her lunch and put it in her backpack. She tossed the backpack over her shoulder, headed out the door, and got on her bike.

When she got to main street she noticed something odd. There was a strange purplish orange glow coming from the center of town. Katie peddled her bike as fast as she could so she could get there in time to check it out. Once she got there, it seemed to her that everyone in town was already here. People ranging in ages from two to ninety-

two sat in lawn chairs in the meadow and stared up at the strange phenomenon. “At least I’m not going to be the only person late to school today”, Katie thought. At that, she looked up in the sky and couldn’t believe her eyes. What she saw definitely didn’t seem natural. The sky looked like someone took a zipper to it and pulled it down halfway. The sky itself was a dark purple, but where you could look into the zipper hole it was pitch black. The strange glow was emitting around the hole in thick, foggy, almost curly-cue shaped clouds.

She went up to the hole to investigate. She went through the crowd of people and stopped once she got to the last person. She had a really strange feeling in the pit of her stomach. She walked forward a few feet and turned around. Shockingly, it seemed to be as if everyone was stuck in time. No one was moving an inch. There were two six year old boys who seemed to be stuck in mid-run chasing after a little girl who had tripped. The girl’s little green dress was partially up in the air, and her legs were higher up than her head. The most amazing thing was that the girl seemed to be hovering inches above the ground.

She turned around and looked at the hole. Could the hole be the cause of this? Why was she the only person who didn’t seem to be affected? A horrible thought crossed her mind. Could SHE be the cause of the people freezing? Her curiosity might have caused everyone to become permanently stuck in time. She had to try to figure out some way to undo whatever caused the town to freeze. She very

cautiously walked up to the hole. She put her right foot in front of the other and took a step. She paused for what felt to her like hours and took another step. After what felt like days, she finally reached the hole. She tilted her head forward and got the shock of her lifetime. The hole was sucking her in!

Katie felt like she was being turned inside out. But strangely, while it felt like years to walk up to the hole, it only felt like seconds before the hole was done sucking her in. She got to her feet and looked around. She could not believe what she saw. It looked like the meadow, but all the people were gone. But the most amazing thing was that beyond the meadow was not the town she expected to see, but a magnificent white castle that looked like it should be in an amusement park. The most shocking thing, however, was that when Katie turned around she noticed that the hole had disappeared!

Katie thought that she had better get out of the meadow, because she had no idea where she was or who was here. It would be safer, she thought, if she got out of the open. She decided to walk toward the castle. She wasn't sure if the rules were the same here as they were back home, but she was taught to find a police officer if she was lost. Castles usually mean that you can find a king or a queen inside. Since they would be the people who ran this land, the castle would be the closest approximation to a police station that Katie knew.

Once she reached the castle gates, to her surprise they

swung right open. To her even bigger surprise, once she got through the castle gate, the sky here made the sky above the zipper hole look completely normal. It was a deep reddish purple, and the thick, foggy, curly-cue clouds she'd seen above the zipper hole were here too. But the clouds were a mixture of colors, most of which she had never seen in the sky before. The familiar orange clouds were here, but there were yellow, red, green, and light blue clouds too. She thought it looked a lot like a crayon box.

It all made her quite uncomfortable. She wished that she could see the familiar blue sky with white fluffy clouds to ease her discomfort a little. To her surprise, as soon as she thought these thoughts, the sky changed to look just as Katie had remembered it back home.

"Aww, who changed my sky?" Katie looked to her right see a boy about her age standing next to a woman who appeared to be in her early 30s. "It's not just your sky, Kevin. That girl over there has just as much right to hone her craft as you do."

Katie looked at the two people she assumed to be a mother and her son. They both wore long robes. The mother's robe was lavender with lace at the neck and on the sleeves, and her son's robe was a plain forest green with short sleeves.

"Hello. My name is Emily Emerson, and this is my son Kevin. Don't mind him. This is his first time in the Old World projection." Mrs. Emerson put her arm around her son and pulled him in close to her. "He doesn't mean to be rude. He's just excited that he's finally old enough to

hone his skills.” Kevin smiled from ear to ear and nodded his head in agreement.

Mrs. Emerson looked at Katie from head to toe. “So where are you from? Judging from those clothes you’re wearing I’d say Strider Square.” “My name is Katie. I live at 321 Broadway Avenue...” Before Katie could finish, Kevin spoke up. “Numbered houses? Definitely Strider Square.”

Mrs. Emerson looked over at Katie with concern. Where are your parents dear? How are you planning on getting home?” “My parents are home. I was out riding my bike and I got sucked into a hole and ended up here.” Mrs. Emerson’s expression turned to one of disgust. “Those teenagers and their pranks! Poor dear. I bet you’ve probably never even been to the projection before, have you?” Katie shook her head. “Don’t worry dear. I’ll make sure you get home safe. Kevin, Katie, hold my hand please.” As soon as they put their hands in hers, they were all gone in a flash.

This entire day was full of surprises, but when the trio reappeared, Katie was in for the biggest surprise of her life. While the Old World projection was similar to the world she knew, Strider Square was another story. The sky was its familiar blue with puffy white clouds. But that is where the familiarity ended. The buildings seemed to be a combination of styles from every era. They had large wooden arched doors like the castles from medieval times, the siding looked like log cabins, and the roofs extended up into a reflective material that seemed half metal and half

wood and looked like something that came straight from the future.

Katie was so taken aback by the sight in front of her that she didn't notice the "keep off the grass" sign. She put one foot on the grass and she fell right through it. The grass splashed like water and blades of grass extended into the air and spread out like water in a pool after someone does a cannon ball. Mrs. Emerson got down on her knees and helped Katie out of the grass hole. "Are you OK?", she asked while she brushed Katie off. "I think so."

Katie looked back toward the grass and saw what looked like a cube of water behind it. A small hole opened in the water cube. A man in navy blue sweat pants, sneakers that looked like they were made from a banana peel, and a plain white shirt with no collar walked out. "Hey! No swimming!" Mrs. Emerson looked at the man. "I'm sorry sir. She didn't see the sign and just fell right in." The man's angry expression turned to one of concern. "Are you alright, miss? I guess I need to make the sign bigger." The small sign turned into a large billboard. Katie was surprised that the sign could stay up in the grass, since it seemed as if it was a liquid. She regained her composure and responded, "Yes sir, I'm fine". "I'm glad. Come back next week and the pool will be open to the public." "Thank you sir" Katie heard herself say, although she didn't intend to ever set foot in the grass pit again.

The man smiled and went back into his water house. Mrs. Emerson looked over at Katie. "We had better get you back

home. Which way do you live?" Katie looked over at Mrs. Emerson, shrugged her shoulders and sighed. "I don't think we're in the right place. I'm from Pinewood, New York." Mrs. Emerson looked over at the girl in front of her and her eyes got wider than Katie had ever seen. "You can't be."