

# Home

It was a cold and bitter winter's evening in the joyful run-up to Christmas, where carol singers skipped happily along the concrete pavement and cars drove past swiftly with young trees latched to their snow-covered rooftops.

Meanwhile, sat in the shadows away from all the festive cheer, soundlessly waiting for the arrival of dawn, a towering building stood with tall and pointed turrets that stood dominantly on either side of the grimacing structure. It was just like a castle from a fairy tale that had turned to face the dark side. It had immense birch doors that were bolted firmly to their iron hinges and a massive sign hung against the aged brick that read: *Hawthorn Orphanage for Girls*.

Through the large doors, a countless bundle of starving girls packed the vast space, lying on the hard floor, trying their best to get to sleep while their tummies growled menacingly. And, amongst the crowd, Clover Millis sat with her eyes glued to a grubby old book she'd found wedged inside her wardrobe. Clover sat on the wooden panelled flooring, a burning candle glaring in her face, illuminating the walls beside her.

The very next day, as the morning sun rose, Clover got right back to reading her book when an unexpected dizziness cast over her and her vision fell out of focus. A tingling sensation formed along the very tips of her toes and before she knew it, the sensation spread up to her feeble legs and she felt a light shudder up her spine as a bright light dawned on her. *I must be hallucinating*, Clover's mind told her, but no. She rose off the ground and soon, Clover wasn't in Hawthorn Orphanage any more. In fact, she didn't even know where she was.

Clover looked around, sucking in her surroundings. She was standing in the middle of a massive green field that was covered with a large blanket of pretty buttercups and daisies. Behind Clover stood an old barn house, next to the road. It was made of old, rotting wood and had peeling blue and red paint dotted around in places. It was an exhilarating feeling, seeing how beautiful the world could be, because, for eight long years, Clover had never set foot outside the orphanage.

After a while of confusion and fascination, Clover had finally come to a conclusion. "No, surely not," she murmured to

herself. But yes. She didn't know how exactly, but Clover had somehow gone into the book she was reading! When Clover realised what she had done, she decided to have a look around for someone who could help her get back, and explain why exactly she was there, in a storybook, instead of being in the orphanage.

Once Clover had opened the gate and left the field, she went to investigate the world that sat inside the book from cover to cover. While she was walking, Clover came across a small village. It had a cobblestone pavement with a large, ornate fountain that stood proudly in the centre of the village. It sprouted water out of the very top, before meandering down the side and into a bowl of iridescent liquid. Clover heard a slight rustle of leaves, the snapping of tree branches. She turned to the side in a panic to see who was there. A dark figure emerged from the darkness.

"W-who are you?" asked Clover.

A young lady stepped out from behind an oak tree, she had vibrant golden curls that cascaded down her back and she had eyes like sapphires that glimmered in the sun. Clover stood bewilderedly next to the fountain as the woman introduced herself, "Hello, my name is Tara Hulls."

"Hi, Tara, I'm Clover Millis," Clover stated. "Anyway, can you help me get back to... well, you know, the real world?"

"Sure, but you'll have to wait a few days, I'm afraid," Tara said. "Only once a year, someone can leave a book. But in the meantime, you can stay with me and my husband. If you want?"

"Yes, please!" All Clover had known was the orphanage before she came here.

Tara lived in a small cottage in the countryside. It had an alluring garden at the front that was filled with appealing flowers and plants that seemed to make the book a little bit brighter. Inside was just as beautiful as outside, with the warm fire crackling beneath the fireplace and a small, comfortable-looking patchwork sofa that sat contentedly just by the fire. Tara took Clover to a quiet room where, sitting in a leather seat, was a man with hazel-brown hair and a curly moustache.

"Clive, this is Clover, she will be staying with us for a night," Tara stated excitedly.

Clive gave a welcoming smile and said, "Hello, Clover!"

Tara showed Clover to a small room with a little single bed and a chest of flimsy drawers. "This will be your room."

"Thanks, it's perfect," Clover said in fascination. She went over and slumped onto her bed. She was happy there. The very next day, Clover, Tara and Clive set off to the field where Clover could get back to the real world. When they arrived, a massive ring loomed over the vast grassy banks. Clover stepped closer to the ring, holding her palms up to the bright light, when she suddenly realised how harsh they were at the orphanage and all of the sleepless nights she spent feeling hungry. She reminded herself how cruel they were, barely feeding them a single crumb a day. Clover stepped away from the portal.

"Are you okay, Clover?" asked Clive.

Clover had changed her mind - but not because she had to, because she wanted to. A few days later, it was Christmas day and, in the middle of the countryside, there stood a beautiful cottage holding a happy family simply spending the day together. This family consisted of three: Tara, Clive and Clover.

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