

Nothing Something Everything...



Written & Illustrated by:
Xygarathma Lebibi

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I dedicate this book to my family, especially my mother Michele Lebibi, my grandma Lebibi and Aunt Linda who both live in Yakima, Washington State, USA. I also give thanks to my friends – Emily, Orissa and Fatima for being very supportive of my efforts.

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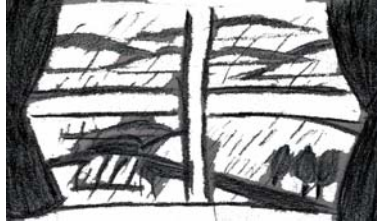
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CHAPTER 1

THE ORPHANAGE WINDOW

It was not at all nice to be an orphan. I had wanted to grow up in the wild, fun city of Bellaring, but instead, I had lived in a worn down, windswept little, yet, quite pleasant hut with a kind hearted lady called Ms. Madeline who had brought me up since I was a wee thing of two. Before that, I was with my late mother or as some called her, the "Lilac Lady". After sweet sunny days by the beach I was taken by an orphanage at the age of seven. It was a sad turn of events.

The orphanage was the Bella Orphanage, not in the city, but at the rim of Wishing Well Forest. What I hated most was when the

students of Neland School for Privileged Girls passed the orphanage with bright, navy blue pleated skirts and spotless white shirts, and little red ribbons for their dainty locks, and not to mention, their black dancing slippers that clinked and clanked quite noisily. They often remarked on how sad the orphans looked, and shook their proud young faces in false pity.

Miss Grange, the keeper of the "brats", as she called us fiercely, on days when her mood was bad, was forced to keep a few learning books in the reading corner which no one entered but me. I learned by myself, quietly on the window seat, that looked out



to the little orphanage donation box and the little cherry tree, and beyond that, a vast field coated neatly with fluffy white snow.

My secret trick was, whenever someone walked by our orphanage, and happened to glance at it, I would make my saddest, most pitiful face I could make and most of the time, the people would walk over and put a penny in the little yellow donation box. I was the only one who bothered to enter the reading corner to read and study a little

of each subject and also read a bit of the comic book for some fun.

I stared and stared at the field and the two children making a strange-looking snowman with a fine glossy black hat and a cute carnation pink scarf with a blue trim of lace on it, not to mention, the coal face and buttons and an adoring little carrot nose.

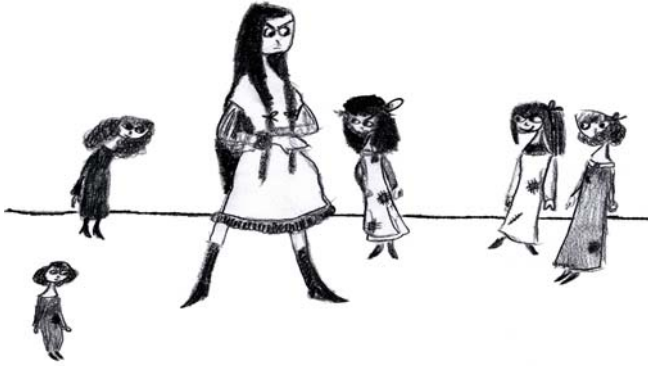
I stared wide-eyed at these things, then resumed back to the "How to Ride and Train a Horse from Scratch" book I was absorbed in, for the seventh time this month.

I had taken a special liking for horses, though I had only seen a

real horse once from the orphanage window. It was riding slowly up Neland hills and into town. I was rather cold myself with nothing to warm me but an old torn-up coat and jacket with little yellow mittens and blue socks with small sneakers and lots of laces.



I had a small memory of my mother given to me by her. It was a tiny silver bell which was ugly on the outside but inside it had jewels and little gold designs and it seemed to have such a pretty chime that I could never go without it.



Being a dull little girl it was the only form of jewellery I had because I joined it to an old piece of yarn I found under the parlour table.

I wore it around my neck until Ms Grange snapped, "How dare you wear a necklace! You're an orphan! Ya' don't wear jewellery!"

"Take it off this minute or I'll put it into the fond-of-box just makin' sur' you don't run off. You smelly ol' brat!"

I stared at her with open eyes till she squirmed under my lonely gaze. "Go Ya' fool. Ya'll pay for thad!" I did leave to my retreat at the window seat to observe spring taking place and it was then I connived a cunning plan. I had been here for nine years and had grown tired of it. I would have run away a long time ago if not for the fond-of-box. If Ms Grange got suspicious of anyone she would take their most loved possessions and keep it.

But I am going to run away. I am to leave next week after the feast when everyone is all sloppy and slow that they would knock off into slumber. So I have a

week to think of where to go. I would go to the city but that's the first place they would check for someone missing. Or, I could go to the forest and cross over to the neighbouring countryside of Dravon. Yes! No one would know that! So the days passed faster and faster till the February feast was only a day away.

I had neatly organized all my clothes and things in a little pile. Then I dumped it all into a pouch bag. If Ms Grange felt suspicious I would give her a fake silver bell, a red-haired spoilt girl had left on the path in front of our donation box. When we had lined up for church I had pretended my blue ribbon had dropped and I had picked the bell up. My luck!

After church, I spent all my time at the window, gazing out to the field that had once been white with snow but now it was a land of lilacs, lavender, roses of white and carnation pink and an old willow tree that stood right in the centre of that little paradise of flowers.

“Hey, Samantha! Wasn’t your mom called the lilac lady? Well then, hello lilac loser!” Wendy, a spoilt little brat sneered.

“Ha! Soon they’ll kick ya outta here and you’ll have nowhere to go? At least I’ll inherit my granny’s fortune and live happily unlike you!” I stood up in rage. “You’ll just see sneerer! No one’ll kick me out of

here. I'm leaving sooner than you think!"

Ms Grange was there and angry with what she heard. She scratched me up with her long, dirty fingers and screeched. "Give me that bell and go to your room till tonight's feast! You dirty brat!"

I did not squirm under her gaze but I pretended to cry and wail at the thought of giving her my bell. "No please! Don't want to give away my bell, please no!"

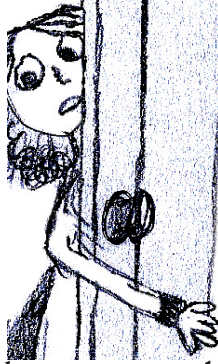
She laughed evilly and screamed, "Ha! Ya fool you thought you could run away ye little brat!"

I stammered, but slowly held out the fake bell, weeping a bit. She snatched it and flung it into the fond-of box and laughed evilly, once again. I stared at Wendy as though it was really my true bell. "Good lot that did, you rascal!" I turned around and marched up the grey stone stairs and into my room which overlooked the forest and I gave a soft cry of delight, followed by silence.

I watched the snowbell trees and the tall wispy snow-brushed pine trees. The soft spring breeze wafted past and brought in the smell of lilacs and daffodil. I leaped out and absorbed the luscious smells of the world.

I turned into the old musty room and stared at it and picked up a doll Ms Melinda had given to me, a long time ago. It was a doll that was hand-made by Ms Melinda's good friend, Sandra. The doll was so old now, but it still showed signs of a real satin blouse and scarlet silk. Red Indian pictures had been neatly painted around the bottom of the skirt. But now it was a dull pink and grey outfit of some sort.

“Sammy? Ms Grange asked me to tell you that the feast has started if you want to come.” Alice, the only nice one in this dump, peeped her small head around the doorpost.



“Please do come! I shall have no one to sit with, otherwise!” I looked at her little red head and an idea popped into my head. “Alice! Do come here. I wish to tell you something! Close the door silently and come and sit on my bed for we will be leaving soon.

“So hush and do not sneer as Wendy does!” Alice, in complete shock, silently closed the door. She crept to the bed and was soon told everything I knew of how we

could steal into the woods tonight and make off to Dravon.

“Oh yes! I will go with you Sammy! But for now we must hurry on down before we grow suspicious and I promise I won't sneer!” said Alice in utter joy. So we went down and sat at the table that was slowly filling up. The feast was very grand.

