

The Chronicles of Possy

by *diana_hawthorne*

The story behind a tradition of a fictional boarding school that is the basis for my in-progress novel.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Polly's feet padded silently down the hall. She paused to peer around a corner, her gaze turned left and then right as she checked the hall for dorm parents who might make her go back to bed. There was no one there. She slipped down the steps and slowly eased down the main staircase of Coles House. She crept into the Student Living Room and curled up in the flowered armchair. This was not the first time she had found herself alone in an armchair in the dead of night. Since starting school, Polly had had a hard time making new friends.

Everyone else seemed so much more outgoing than she was. Polly was far more withdrawn. She liked to bury her nose in books and dream of far away lands with witches and wizards and princes to rescue her from her high tower. Whenever an older girl tried to speak to her, Polly would suddenly be struck dumb and mutely nod or shake her head in response. In her classes, Polly tried to retreat into a shadow, and when Mrs. Wharton called upon her, Polly would murmur "I don't know" to avoid giving a response and then shrink back into her seat.

It had only been two weeks so far. Everyone else seemed to have established a circle of friends right away; Polly felt increasingly like a single animal turned away from Noah's ark for lack of a partner. And so Polly would find herself alone in the dark halls of Coles House.

Feeling her stomach growling, Polly pulled herself out of the armchair and walked down the hall to the kitchen to get an apple. Along the way, her eye caught sight of the Elf-Arachnid flags encasing the Corinthian Academy's pale blue and cream flag. She paused in front of the flags. She had heard so much about this tradition and was excited for it to come, but in her current state of loneliness, she wasn't too optimistic about the future. She turned around and was startled to see another girl standing at the foot of the stairs. She hadn't heard anyone come down.

The two girls stared at each other for a moment. This new girl had dirty blonde hair that cascaded down to her shoulders. She was wearing a blue sweater over her nightgown. The girl smiled a friendly smile at Polly and started to walk towards the door, motioning for Polly to follow. Polly stopped for a moment in the space by the mailboxes as the girl propped the door open to allow them back in. She was a girl Polly could not remember seeing in school. But then again, there were so many people Polly didn't know yet, she could easily have forgotten.

The girl in blue ghosted her way outside onto the Coles steps and turned around expectantly, the moonlight glistening off her hair. Polly hesitantly walked out after the girl. By now, the girl turned the corner and walked past the Coles wall. Polly hurried to catch up.

"What's your name?" Polly whispered, afraid to disrupt the silence of the night.

The girl seemed not to hear and moved forward towards the Coles patio overlooking the hill.

The ground felt cool against Polly's bare feet, and a slight breeze ruffled through her hair. Crickets chirped in the night, and Polly saw a dark figure fly silently across the moon. Polly's imagination seized hold of her as the possibility of a witch out to cast a spell crossed her mind. The sound of a stick snapping underneath her brought her back to where she was. Grass crunched under her soles as the two girls wandered onto the grass. The two of them walked down the hill until they came to a little wooden swing Polly had never seen before. The girl got on the swing, and Polly came around to face her.

"What's your name?" Polly asked again.

"My name's Kassie," the girl replied. Polly glanced more closely at the girl's sweater and noticed the initials KBW embroidered across her left bosom.

"You're new aren't you?" Kassie asked Polly.

"Yeah... Is it that obvious?"

"I've just been around for a long time; I can tell a new girl when I see one."

Polly thought her wording sounded odd but didn't think much of it.

"Look, I can tell you're having a rough time adjusting to the crazy schedule and new people, Polly. But I can guarantee you you'll get through it and make new friends. It might take a while, but it'll happen."

Polly, trying to change the subject to something other than herself, asked, "What's this swing? I've never seen it before."

"This is called the Possy swing. It's here for girls when they need to trust someone to keep their secrets. This is a place of quiet peace and is here for you forever."

"What's Possy? I've never heard of that before."

"Possy is a sacred tradition of Corinthian Academy. If you tell someone something that's Possy, they cannot tell anyone at all. It would be a breach of trust, and that girl would not be trusted again. There's power in being able to keep secrets."

Polly opened her mouth to ask Kassie more questions, but Kassie cut her off with, "It's really late. Come on, we should both be in bed. But I'm glad I could show you the Possy swing. It is a sacred, quiet place where you can always collect your thoughts. Let's go back to the dorms."

This time Polly led the way up the hill. They did not speak as Polly was saving her breath for the steep climb up and the even steeper stairs back to her room. Polly trudged back in through the door Kassie had propped open. This entire time, Polly did not turn her head. It was only when she reached the top of the stairs to the third floor of Coles House where her room was that she turned, panting to see whether or not Kassie was behind her. When she wasn't there, Polly assumed she must have lived on the second floor. Oddly enough, Polly did not feel alone as she snuck back into her room. There was a warm glow that filled the previous empty space of loneliness. Polly had made her first friend here at Corinthian Academy. As she snuggled under her covers that night, Polly was filled with buoyancy for her years ahead.

The next morning, Polly threw on her baby blue kilt, buttoned up her uniform shirt and ran downstairs to the second floor of Coles House and read the names on the doors. None of them read "Kassie." Confused, Polly slowly walked down the stairs to breakfast. She sat with her roommate and for the first time engaged, in an audible voice, in breakfast talk. The thought that her new friend might walk into the dining hall any moment filled her with optimism.

As she and her roommate walked into the Chapel for morning meeting, Polly searched in vain for the blonde tresses that were so distinctive to Kassie. Though she craned her neck, Polly could not make out Kassie amidst the chattering mass of girls. At the commencement of morning meeting, Polly slowly walked up the Chapel steps, her heart sinking for not catching sight of Kassie.

Suddenly she noticed the sunlight glistening off a framed portrait she had never seen before. It was the portrait of a young girl, her dirty blonde hair cascading down her shoulders. The plaque below read "Kassie Bunn Wilson. May some of the quiet peace of this place be with me forever."

It was beyond a doubt the same girl Polly had met last night. In slight confusion, Polly looked and noticed two dates indicating birth and death, 1945-1962. Polly turned around to face the windows of the chapel, a frown puzzling her brow. She then saw the faint haze of her friend Kassie in the morning light. Kassie was smiling and waving at Polly; Polly smiled back and understood. The lines of Kassie's poetry flashed through Polly's mind – may some of the quiet peace of this place be with me forever. Her years at Corinthian Academy would be rich and full of friendship. She would always have Possy with her and the memories of Kassie, her first friend at school.