

THE
WONDERER:

a DARBY, BAIRD

& CO. NOVEL

A. Reneé Olesiewicz

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{PREVIEW}

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P U B L I S H I N G

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PREVIEW:

CHAPTER ONE: THE SCARECROW

I tread through a labyrinth of sunflowers.

They're all that's visible to me from where I stand; those proud lioness heads of yellow and that secretive blue sky. It won't tell on that formidable storm, the one that caused those fine heads to bow and stoop as if to peer into my young face. The one that drove us into the cellars that night.

These lands, and their willful weather, were still unfamiliar to me. That night I became convinced that someone called for help. When reasoning wouldn't do, my Aunt Em read me to sleep with Baum's Wonder Tales. She'd be in her garden now, bent to some purpose, a large wide-brimmed hat atop her tidy pearl-white hair, shielding her aged skin. I was to keep out of the way as she cleared up the storm damage. This task suited me. I had someone to meet.

As I came to the end of Aunt Em's 'Yard of Sunflowers', all that lay between me and the cornfields were a few feet of grass. On the way, I stop to right a tin-watering can that had blown from the house and now lay on its rusted side. The moment I stand, I see him. He's hung with limbs at awkward angles like some strange fallen angel, arms spread wide as if preparing for flight. His clothing is heavy and dark. His hair, black as mine, falls down his drooping shoulders, obscuring his face. High above, half a dozen crows circle his limp form in a fiendishly rhythmic dance. A brave one's perched on the strangling's shoulder and plucks at strands of hair and clothing.

I proceed cautiously until all that separates us is the wooden fence lining the field. I climb onto a plank, holding onto the post for balance. Now I'm a foot or so away. I peer curiously into that face. Black markings around his eyes stream down prominent cheekbones as if spilled from an inkwell. His ears and eyebrow are pierced and his strange clothes have shiny buckles and chains.

I wonder if that's what interested the bird.

'Caw-haw.'

Multiple things follow at once. The abrupt call causes the stranger to stir and I am startled by both happenings. My stomach pitches as I fall clumsily backwards. The stranger's eyes snap open. His left arm breaks free of its binds as he reflexively grabs my elbow, halting my fall. We stare long. I'm not sure whether to be happy or frightened.

He's real.

"How do you do?" my voice is small. I steady myself on the post.

"How do you do what?" he demands gruffly, releasing my elbow and turning to study his binds. He gives a futile tug, swiping at the raven who returns anyway. I study him.

"Are you a pirate, or an Indian?" he smiles wryly.

"Perhaps I'm both."

"Where'd you come from?" he sighs.

The lobby of the tallest building in the world- at least in this time I assume it still is- in a city that sparkles at night by the sea. What's the year?"

"1926." I answer. He starts, studying his surroundings differently.

"Damn thing's not even built yet. Why here... why now?" his question's carried with the breeze over the corn.

"I used to live in a city with my Aunt. It glittered the way you say and there weren't scary storms like here." The stranger smiles.

"In the city, I do trickery and magic for a living. It's a lot of work, sometimes dangerous stuff, but I don't mind. I can get past that sort of discomfort. But there are riddles to people and life, and I feel the answers often evade me."

This time, I smile.

"You don't want people to call you a fool."

"That's true," he considers, his smile sly. "And I'll tell you a secret: there's only one thing in the world I'm afraid of..." he motions and I lean in to catch his conspiratorial words before they drop. "It's a 'lit match'."

"Fire?" I guess. He shakes his head.

"Call it a riddle. I'm not going to get rid of you very easily, am I?"

"You can do magic?" I hedge. He nods.

"Yes, just as your Aunt. This is an exemplary form of protection spell. She must be one wicked witch."

“Aunt Em doesn’t believe in magic. She ‘resents the modern use of the term’. She says-”

“ ‘*Every giant now is dead...*’ ” the riddler interjects, “ ‘*Jack has cut off ev’ry head... Ev’ry Goblin known of old, perished long ago I’m told. Ev’ry Witch on broomstick riding has been burned, or is in hiding...*’ ” He recites, flawlessly. “I guess those old nursery rhymes are meant to teach us something.” I stare, wide-eyed, wondering how he’d known the rhyme my Aunt tells. He taps a finger above his brow, answering my unspoken question.

“How come your magic can’t get you down?”

“Water, in this case rain and a lot of it, undoes most magic. Sometimes it takes a while to get it back.” He considers. “Listen, I oughta be heading back to where it is I came from. Will you help me down?” I climb off the fence and duck under. The corn rustles past, reaching well over my head. I find the lever in the back of the post, bending with all my might. My riddler falls without warning, yet manages to do so with grace. His dark clothes flap with his landing like the wings of those crows circling in the sky. He stoops, hastily retrieving a golden pocket watch from the soil, opening it to check time. Rainwater drips off as he snaps the face shut.

“Thank you, Miss.” He stands.

“My name’s-” he shakes his head adamantly before I can finish.

“What’re they teaching kids these days?” he admonishes. “Never give your name to strange magicians you don’t know. Your name is the first thing given to you when you’re born. No one can take it from you. It holds a lot of power, protect it.”

“I’ll keep your name safe.” He freezes mid-turn.

“Tell me.”

“You’re the Scarecrow, of course.” Quiet.

“Last name Crow, first name Scare...” he admires the name like a shiny new possession, testing its verbal weight, repeating it under his breath. “Thank you.”

He walks swiftly away, shifting through stalks of corn.

“Darby? Darby, where are you?” Aunt Em calls. The riddler glances back, shock registering over stoic features. With a nod he continues.

“We’ll meet again, Darby Gorman.” His voice is carried over his shoulder and back to me on the wind as his distant figure shimmers then fades to nonexistence once more.

CHAPTER TWO: BETHESDA FOUNTAIN

I don't believe in magic.

A gal would be foolish to put stock in such things as luck and chance when anyone who knows anything knows, you're the only one who can make things happen for yourself. I put away those peculiar imaginary friends and Wonder Tales a long time ago; long before I moved to the City to live with my other Aunt, Em's kid sister, Medora. She might've been the only reason I came to be here again.

A couple years back, she took me to see a film for my birthday. Aside from all this, there might've been some popcorn tossing as we found our seats- we were a little more than late.

"Hyperoodon Rostratus...!" is her whispered exclamation. She squints, in awe of the packed theater. Our eyes dawdle to adjust as we proceed, hunched forward, arms juttied out in preventative measure, down the low-lit aisle.

The dog-eared phrase, 'Hyperoodon Rostratus' is a motto my Aunt'd taken on loan from the family of a former acquaintance. As she often said in a say-so tone, it was far better than a swear. These strange words spouted out whenever the occasion arose to name an incomprehensible mystery. And the occasion seemed to arise more often than you'd think possible. Apparently, the world's chock-full of mystery.

We blunder, all thumbs, past knobby-kneed folks and unyielding shoes that poke out from faceless, seated movie-goers. Maybe there's a blessing in the stumbling dark that hides the nose in front of your face, as well as those dirty stares.

"See all the trouble they've caused?" Aunt Medora tugs popcorn from her short auburn bob and returns it from whence it came. She looks young and pretty, even in the dim light. "If they'd've just let us use the front door like everyone else--"

"We were late." I add.

"Nonsense. Everyone hurries too much. The munchkins haven't even begun to vocalize yet..." I stifle a laugh as they begin, almost on cue.

Sitting in that theater as the lights went out and the projector hummed to life, I saw a different world for myself. While I found comfort in the rural grey of the farm, my

heartstrings were taken with the song. I couldn't shake the feeling, and as we were whisked skyward by cyclone, to emerge blinking in the rich Technicolor light, it only grew stronger...

I abandon my stroll down memory lane at the sound of someone fumbling with the door handle. Interviews always remind me that, while I might know there's so much to me, they're only getting to scratch the surface. Intrinsic in that moment is the opinion they will carry forward of me, perhaps indefinitely. If only I were more adept at forming a good first impression.

"Hit the lights, Babe." A woman says.

"Sure, and then you can get me something for this headache, Nurse."

Their laughs echo brashly as the lights flash on, revealing a robust man with dark, thin oiled hair and eyes to match. He starts at the sight of me. The willowy blond with the plunging neckline manages to simultaneously look bored and make me feel severely underdressed. I straighten my floral dress and jaunty dark hat, stepping forward.

"I didn't mean to startle you, Mr. Sorvino. I couldn't find the light switch. Do you have a moment?" he steps away from the blond.

"Yeah. Sure thing..." his voice doesn't sound how I'd expected. It's grating, nasal, and now seems to emanate his newfound perspiration. "Honey, be a Doll, fetch me that aspirin?" he shuts the door behind her, and then whips it open again.

"Ah, and some ice water! Wan' anything?" he directs my way. I shake my head stiffly under his nervous gaze, for fear he'll fling open the door again. Instead, he paces behind his wide desk, attempting to affect some immediate needed change to the papers there.

"So?" he says. I open my mouth but he begins again. "If this is about Jimmie, I'm getting the money, I just need more time--"

The door opens. Mr. Sorvino throws up his hands, scattering the papers. For a jiff, I expect Jimmie stands there, flanked by bulky henchmen, all operating heavy machine guns and merciless expressions.

"Got the aspirin." The blond jangles her wrist. Ice clanks merrily against the glass as she saunters in. The last of the papers float, feather light, to the floor. She glances around. "Or maybe ya need somethin' stronger...?"

"N-not now, Loraine!"

“Humph.” She pouts from the room.

“Mr. Sorvino!” his watery eyes dart back to me. “I’m not here for ‘Jimmie’. I don’t even know who that is.”

“But you were sitting here, alone and in the dark...”

“I know.”

“And you look like you’d be related.”

“Umm-” I stop speaking. No answer could make this any better.

“Do I owe you money?” he seems calmer. This could be my window.

“Mr. Sorvino, I want to sing. On the radio, the stage, anything-”

“How’d you get in here?” he says distractedly.

A picture springs to mind of Aunt Medora dropping her handkerchief and the gallant, Cary Grant-esque security officer trotting forward to save it. I thought that kinda thing only happened in films at the cinema. Mr. Sorvino hits a buzzer on his desk and in catapults a wiry man with oversized glasses. He automatically stoops, retrieving the papers he cognitively knew were there.

“Well? Ya gonna sing, or what?” Paper-man straightens on cue, shoving his frames up the bridge of his nose with one finger, not a very heartening gesture. They both stare. And there it is. Silence. My stage fright is quick to follow. They’re laughing as I turn to leave, but the door handle turns before I can touch it. I stumble out of the way as it opens with some force.

“Sorvino!” a voice roars. They shrink back into the room, smiles long gone. “What have I told you about bringing those types of women into my offices? Did you think I wouldn’t drop in for a visit? Surprise!”

Sorvino stutters excuses. The newcomer appears to be polished and red-haired someone who dresses to the nines, has cutting green eyes and very little patience for whatever is going on here at the moment. Now inches from Sorvino, his face flushes scarlet. The small room quavers with rage, silent and building.

“Fix it!” Sorvino flinches, fleeing the room. The man rounds on his next victim. “Leave them.” Before he can finish the clipped words, paper-man’s long gone. He collects himself in their absence, running a hand over his face. The door betrays my attempt at escape, creaking unbidden, drawing his notice.

“I was just leaving.” I mutter. He stands there, studying me.

“You’re much too nice to be one of his... usual associates...” he says, crossing the room in a few lazy strides. “Pfft. Another Broadway hopeful, or such?” my nerve stutters, realizing he now blocks the exit. “Respectable young lass like you should know better than to stray into my establishments. Or haven’t you been paying attention? Scandal could ruin your chances, but it’s nothing to me...”

“Please move.” I stare fixedly at the door as if I could will it nearer, but I feel his eyes fixed on my face, waiting to pounce on any reaction. He leans closer, but then doubles back in pain. That’s the swiftest kick I’ve ever delivered, signed and sealed with my best foot forward, to anyone’s shin.

“I said ‘please’.” I sidle past but he’s hollering again, grabbing my wrist.

“You’re in the thick of the city girl, and you know who runs things around here, it’s me! You’ll never work in this city again, you’ve just seen to that. Run along to whatever little Podunk town it is you came from – this isn’t the last you’ve seen of me - ”

The threat draws a stinging slap from me I can’t take back. To my surprise, he only stands and stares.

“You ought to be ashamed of yourself, carrying on that way.” I snap. “You can fool everyone else around here with your act, not me. You’re just a coward.” Those steely eyes soften. I’m shaking, flustered and embarrassed. When they tell you to work hard, chase your American Dream, no one mentions what lurks in the wings, in wait to prey on the starry-eyed believers of wishes within their reach. The disappointment stings, salty at the corners of my eyes, liable to drop.

“I’ll see myself out...” This time, when I turn to leave, no one stops me.

Under lighter circumstances, I might’ve turned right around and gone back in. Waking up that morning, I’d known exactly how this would go, rehearsed everything I could possibly say to make them understand how significant this was, how much it would mean to me. And I might’ve just waved my last shot goodbye. The proverbial door not only hit me on my way out, it knocked me out flat.

“Thanks anyways.” I muster a smile for the kindly security guard. He shrugs.

“You’ll get ‘em next time, kid.”

Walking away, the streets are crowded, unsympathetic. I’ve never felt more insignificant. To me, there it was stamped across my face, bellowing like the man who peddles the Times, telling of failed hopes and disappointed dreams. My would-be audience rushes past, disinterested, knocking shoulder with passerby and holding firm to their own tasks in mind. In our trudge ever-upward, we forget to see. Stony eyes can only stay fixed ahead. I’m lost in it all, wandering aimlessly, finding myself at the park.

Something wound so tight inside gives way. Summer sun reassures like a steady hand at my back, guiding me to meander among the other park patrons. The wide path and pace quell my worries. There’s a touch of togetherness in our separate ways.

Along the grass’ edge, sturdy elms are annually placed, interspersed with beckoning park benches and stately lampposts. Picnic blankets pepper the lawn. Others stroll, or settle on park benches reading the news. I remember coming here with my Aunt when I was young, to this open air hall of reception. A place where all sorts can cross paths, the place practically breathes possibility. I’m tugged from my reverie. A passing man shoulders me, knocking off my hat, the jaunty one.

“Hey, watch-” my words catch.

He’s already vanished.

My vexation abates by necessity. That very hat I’d borrowed from my Aunt Medora, just this morning, skids across the ground as if it had sprouted wings. I lunge down the granite stairs in close pursuit as it topples away, step after step, just out of my reach. At the bottom of the outdoor staircase we resume even ground, and the hat takes flight once more. I’m scampering headlong after it, when all of a sudden- it stops.

A small pair of Mary-Janes is introduced to my view. Child hands snatch it up, placing the hat on her abundant head of short brown curls. Matching peepers peer up at me, adorable and mischievous. I couldn’t dream of taking it back, just yet.

“That hat looks like it was made for you. What’s your age, Sweetheart?” she smiles warmly, holding up all fingers on one hand but the thumb.

“All that much?” I marvel and she giggles.

I daresay we’re making fast progress as friends. Looking around, I recognize we’re in Bethesda Terrace. The vast Angel of the Waters Fountain reaches beyond us, extending

across the way where boys stand tugging their model boats anchored to string. They cheer as if the very sound could wash their ship first to harbor.

Feet away, a man leans on the fountain's edge. His dark fedora casts contemplative shadow across his face as he pours over a leather-bound book. Two older gentlemen rally at a small table, matching wits and stratagem in a game of chess. A young woman steers her small children by the grip of their hands in hers as they point and wave at a passing mallard. I turn back to the girl.

"See that angel up there?" we study the carved beauty landed at the top of the upper basin. The girl nods, her gaze curious. "She carries a lily in her left hand. And you see her friends, there?" I motion to the plump cherubs below her. They stare back in a peculiar fashion, as if their expression and stance were captured in time, like a still photograph, trapped in petrified movement.

"Yes."

"Their names are Temperance, Purity, Health, and Peace. Know what that means?"

"What does it mean?" she asks, looking up at them, innocent eyes enthralled. A memory tugs at the edge of my mind, what it was to feel this way. I lean in close so our foreheads nearly touch.

"They say, they give this pool magic healing powers." I confide. She studies my face in that trusting way children do, her gaze wide with wonder.

"Is that why people make wishes here?"

"I suppose that does make this the place for wishes." The mention reminds me. "Have you ever been laughed out of a meeting for the job of your dreams? Not that Mr. Sorvino knew it was a meeting. I kind of ambushed him." I peer at my friend. She grins, fiddling with the brim of her hat. There's a white rose I hadn't seen there before.

"And then there's that cad who thinks he owns the town. Well, City. And he actually might. And I went and borrowed my Aunt Medora's heels; they're much too small and pinch when I walk."

"I had a loose tooth a couple weeks ago, but it didn't fall out yet." Her voice brims with meaning.

"You see! That's precisely what I've been saying. You're a good listener. I really think you'll make a great friend to a great many people someday..."

Movement above my friend's head captures my eye. Over her hat, which continues bobbing sympathetically, I see fedora-man snap his book shut decisively and head our way. His sparkling blue eyes contain a kindred mischief to my faithful companion's. Something unnamable in his presence makes my heart skip a beat. The girl turns, following my gaze.

"Mr. Baird!" she dashes forth to meet him, wielding an enthusiasm to be reckoned with. So much for faithful. They smile, chattering amiably as she pulls him over by his jacket sleeve.

"Hello," I shake his hand, wondering if that's proper Central Park-patron introductory etiquette. "I didn't catch your name."

"Baird, Robert Baird." By way of greeting, he lifts his hat to hover above his head, revealing disheveled brown hair. "And yours?"

"I'm Darby Gorman."

"Right." He turns unceremoniously back to our friend. She smiles up at him as he kneels beside her. His voice is fluent with the accent of a native New Yorker.

"So Ms. Odessa," Baird reaches past her head, appearing to conjure a coin. His adept sleight of hand is quite convincing to the naked eye, and if it wouldn't seem forward of me, being a perfect stranger and all, I'd demand he do it again. And slower, this time...

He holds the coin before her beaming face.

"A penny for your thoughts? Now we've heard all Darby Gorman's."

I hadn't realized I was talking so loud. His wink and tone are harmless, but I can't help it. "I wouldn't have taken you for someone who couldn't mind his own business." I snap.

He stifles a laugh.

"It was hard to miss." He says, eyeing my stubborn resolve. "And I wouldn't've taken you for someone who'd give up so easy. The way you were chasing that hat of yours, I thought you'd've gone back in; shown 'em what you're made of."

I wasn't expecting that. While I'd suppressed certain unsuitable particulars of the fiasco's retelling for the kiddy's sake -which certainly argue to the contrary- I can't deny, I'd wanted to do that very thing.

"Well you're so smart," my eyes narrow, a silent dare. "How do you make 'em listen?" This answer had better be good.

“Give ‘em something to listen to.” He says simply. “Folklore and such. It’s our oldest and noblest form of communication. You say to someone, ‘I’m gonna tell you a story,’ what happens?” I’m too preoccupied with that déjà vu feeling, so I shrug.

“Their mind’s open,” he answers. “It’s a key.” Then he asks a question I’m utterly unprepared for: “Do you believe in magic, Ms. Gorman?” I stare blankly.

“Like your coin trick?” I ponder. “I think the eyes and the other senses can be deceived. Sometimes we see what we want to.” Sometimes I’m not certain what I believe...

“You’re saying perhaps, the heart and soul are our best discernment, and magic can only truly exist when believed in by the formers?” he studies my face.

“Interesting theory.” Baird turns back to the girl. “And what says Odessa? Are you a believer?”

“You hid this in your sleeve!” she accuses, brandishing the coin. There’s practice embedded in her tone that implies she’s spoken these words many times, a careworn script, yet enthusiasm like hers can’t possibly be faked.

Mr. Baird feints shock, searching her expectant face. “Oh, how could you speak such nonsense? You know I’d never-”

“You did, you did!” she bounces insistently on tiptoe. Looking at the pair of them forces a smile. There are people willing to care, if we let them. “I’m afraid she’s right, Mr. Baird.” I join in the fray.

“No!” he’s quite convincing. “You ladies call me a fraud?” he mimes incredulousness with panache.

“And I think you stole the coin from the fountain.” I say matter-of-factly. Odessa crosses her arms in agreement. Out of the corner of my eye I notice a crowd blooms, surrounding us. A constable paces alertly on the outskirts. I lean toward Baird.

“I was only joking about the money.” He laughs. When next he speaks, I’m surprised to see he addresses the entire crowd. He straightens up, turns to greet them.

“Well everyone, these lovely ladies are in doubt of my magical abilities. Is that correct?”

I eyeball that crowd, hesitant. Maybe this sorta thing happens every day in New York City. And there’s fun to be had in well-meaning mischief. “Yes!” I blurt.

“You’ve got that right.” Odessa chimes in. He steps nearer, a theatrical acceptance to our challenge.

“I suspect the City’s making you hard, and age’s turning you cynical.” He nods to me and Odessa respectively. “Or visa versa.”

Odessa giggles against the backdrop of the crowd’s unanimous laughter. Their impatience matches hers as Baird paces, removing his jacket. He rolls his shirtsleeves past his elbows, boosting Odessa onto the fountain’s edge so she can better see. Baird halts directly in front of me. Lifting the fedora from his head, he plunks it on mine and winks.

“This woman knows better than anyone I know, how to keep good track of a hat. Makes it look better, too.” The audience eats this up. I can’t help but laugh along, budging the hat from my eyes. A kind of suspense has been built, clinging to atmosphere for what comes next. Their minds are open, and so is mine. He paces from the tight knit inner crowd. Baird now stands feet away from Odessa and me. “Alright, I’ll show you a real trick,” he catches my eye. “Watch closely.”

He shakes out his hands in preparation, leaving them loose at the wrists. He shows us the back of his hands, then the palms. Finally he summons them in front of him, palms down, thumbs together. Silence encompasses our group. It’s a peculiar sound for so many folks gathered in a park. Slowly, Baird curls down the tips of his fingers. The outsides of his hands follow, as if he’s cupped them upside-down. At last, they flip right-side up, open palms to the sky... but he’s not empty handed.

Sunlight glistens across the intricate, fire orange and charcoal black wings of five monarch butterflies. They flex at their leisure, revealing the deliberate artistry abound, inherent of their paper thin tools of flight. The delighted audience erupts in cheers punctuated by earnest applause and Baird smiles, lifting the butterflies to the breeze where they take flight, circling Odessa and me. Her arms are far-flung to feel the delicate wings aflutter against them. After their waltz about the Terrace, the wind carries the bewitching monarchs higher and away, off into the summer sky.

“Thank you, everyone!” Baird wraps up the show with a bow and a nod to the constable. The officer returns the gesture, and begins dispersing the audience. All part of the act, it seems.

“Nothing more to see here. On with your day...”

Odessa hops from the fountain's edge with Baird's assistance, and he gives her small hand a hearty shake. "Always nice working with you."

She smiles. "I know, Mr. Baird."

He turns to me. "Ms. Gorman-"

"Call me Darby." I insist. "That's quite the introduction, your little parlor trick..." I assert. It's a poor disguise for the seeping wonder that refuses return to its dormant existence without a fuss, but it's the best material I've got to not seem completely bowled over, all the same. "But I suspect that's just the standard salutation for all your new acquaintances, females in particular, I have no doubt..." I steal a sideways glance. That face...

"Darby," he tests the name, but seems to see through my smokescreen of doubt, enough to disregard it. "The City could use someone like you around. Don't let it change you." I study his face, contemplating that half remembered dream.

"Mr. Baird, have we ever met before?" he considers.

"No, I don't believe I've ever had that pleasure." I can tell he means it. Central Park-patrons sidle between us as they disperse.

"It was nice meeting you, Mr. Baird."

"Same here." His grey-blue eyes sparkle mischief. "You have a wonderful evening, and an even more beautiful tomorrow." There's sincerity laced in his tone that assures few could get away with saying this and sounding half so charming. My stomach plummets. Slightly dumbfounded, I manage a nod. With this, the hat slips down, masking my vision in black. When I shove it away, I look for him where I had seen him.

Now I don't. Just the rush of passerby. For a jiff we were united, and that was enough. I wander the mall as we go our separate ways, feeling like I'm wading from a dream.

"You ready to go home, Kid?" I hand Aunt Medora her hat. She must've finished work already. "You can tell me about your day." Studying me, she swipes her auburn hair from her warm, smiling brown eyes. "Nice hat." She's not referring to her own hat, but the one still on my head: Mr. Robert Baird's fedora.

PREVIEW:





'His Majesty the Scarecrow atop the Empire State Building' A.R.O. ©2018



'The Scarecrow meets Darby Gorman' A.R.O. ©2018



'Feats of Central Park at Bethesda Fountain with Darby, Baird, & Odessa' A.R.O. ©2018



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About the Author A. RENEE OLESIEWICZ

IS A BOOKISH OLD SOUL. SHE IS SMITTEN WITH *TYPEWRITERS* AND ALL MANNER OF HISTORICAL QUIRKS. GROWING UP, SHE WAS HOMESCHOOLED, AND SURE TO BE FOUND REREADING 'JANE EYRE' FOR THE UMPTENTH TIME. SHE BEGAN BOYCOTTING BOOKBURNINGS AT 8 YRS. OLD.

MS. OLESIEWICZ HAS ALSO PARTICIPATED AS A NOVICE EQUESTRIAN HORSE VAULTER, VOLUNTEERED AS A LIBRARY PAGE, RENDERED PEOPLE *SCREECHLESS* AS AN ACTRESS IN A HAUNTED HOUSE, AND YEARS AGO, *CHANCE* BROUGHT HER TO FILL IN AT AN UNDERSTAFFED THEATER FOR AN ACTUAL MAGIC SHOW.



{END OF PREVIEW...}