


MAGIC & CAROLINE

A Fantasy Mini-Book with Prompts



Growing empathy through story.

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Chapter 1 A NEW CAROLINE

Caroline hesitated as the magician rolled the parchment scrap into a curl and held it out to her. Could something that humble and small carry such power? The flooding had ruined so much. How could tiny magical scribbles heal their farmland? Fear tempted her to worry, its buzz swarming just outside her hearing, and she gulped. Fear wouldn't save her family. The parchment, however.... The new part of Caroline's heart rumbled and groaned, still a weak muscle struggling to find its strength. Courage wouldn't be easy, and hoping was such a risk that Caroline felt the urge to run away even then. But Octavia smiled at her, and Caroline took the small scroll. The bright, familiar tingling of magic filled her fingers and warmed her skin. She breathed in deeply. She would return home a new Caroline, one armed with courage, hope, and magic.

Pick any question or ask one of your own!

- Who is Octavia? What do you think a magician might look like?
- What do you think could be written on the scroll?
- Why do you think Caroline is afraid? What happened at home?
- What might happen next?
- Have you ever felt fear or courage?



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Chapter 2 LITTLE BITS OF PROGRESS

There was no way to get around her exhaustion and no place to rest. No way forward but to push through. One more mile. Maybe less. Maybe just to that tree on the hill. Caroline heard the cries of her weary feet but refused to give in. She gritted her teeth. It took all her focus to bend her knees, dragging her toes across the squelching earth, remembering to breathe. Her goals became smaller in the face of weariness until she was bartering with herself in tiny measures. Just one more step. Maybe another. Every movement toward home was a step closer to hope and to bringing the magic her family desperately needed. She fell against a tall, spindly tree that bent with her weight. Bent, but didn't break. That was Caroline, pushing further and further ahead. Hope might force her to bend, but it wouldn't break her. One more step forward, one inch closer to home.

Pick any question or ask one of your own!

- How is Caroline feeling here?
- Has it been easy for her to get home? What obstacles do you think she met?
- What would you do in Caroline's situation?
- What keeps Caroline motivated to go forward?



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Chapter 3 SHINE

The magician hadn't forbidden it, but Caroline felt wrong for opening the parchment scrap. The weight of doubt had crept in, joining its power with hardship and guilt. Only magic could give her feet again. She needed to see it. To remind herself that it was real and not some crazy dream. Her fingers held the corners, pulled the edges straight until it lay before her. The drawing was no larger than her palm, a flourish of delicate lines and dots created with Octavia's gift of magical inks. The power beneath it stirred as Caroline breathed in the image of wholeness and hope. She almost saw their farm with its land ordered again, dried and settled from the floodwaters, prepared to protect and nurture their crops. On the page before her, the dark ink shone brighter than the moonlight, a glowing beacon for her hope. Caroline hugged the parchment reflexively. Her resolve was back.

Pick any question or ask one of your own!

- What did Caroline find in the scroll? Do you think she already knew what was there?
- Should she have opened it? Would you have?
- How did Caroline feel after she opened the scroll?
- What is Caroline going to do next?



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Chapter 4

TWENTY-ONE HELLOS

She had already dismissed it, rubbing her eyes until they produced spots of light that dissolved into the night. But the second flicker was undeniable as a congregation of others joined it. Caroline's numb limbs moved as though swimming through dream-water, floating closer to the lights on the horizon. There must have been a dozen torches. More! Twenty-one flickering lights surrounded her, illuminating the faces of her parents. Her sister, Charlotte. Their neighbors. All smiles, laughter, and tears. They were all looking for her. No—waiting. Charlotte squeezed her tightly and explained everything in a breathless rush. "The magician, she sent a finch to us. Told us you were coming. To expect magic," said Charlotte. Caroline's shoulders sagged in relief. Being welcomed home was more lovely than she had dared to imagine.

Pick any question or ask one of your own!

- What do you think Caroline expected when she got home? What was waiting?
- How do you think Charlotte felt about Caroline?
- How did Caroline feel when she got home?
- How would you feel if you were Caroline?
- What do you think people will do or say when they see the magical parchment?



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Chapter 5

SAD AND HAPPY

Caroline cried great, shuddering sobs. Her shoulders shook, and air caught in her throat with little gasps. How else could she tell Mama how very sorry she was for running away? How she hated the hurt her impulsiveness had caused? If the magic worked, would that be her salvation? She knew it was powerful, but would the parchment be enough? Caroline wiped her snot and salty tears against her soiled sleeve. "Oh, Caroline," said Mama, pulling her close. Fresh waves of sorrow and affection rippled across Caroline's shoulders. Mama continued with a sigh, a tear falling down her own cheek. "Our forgiveness doesn't rest on the magic you brought. You are forgiven now, this very moment. Regardless of what the morning brings."

Pick any question or ask one of your own!

- How does Mama respond to Caroline? How would you feel if you were Caroline?
- Have you ever felt sad and happy at the same time?
- What are they waiting for? What is it like to wait?
- Aha! What do you learn about why Caroline was gone from home? Why do you think she left?



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Chapter 6

RHYTHM

Two dozen gathered in the sunrise glow, all of them linked by hands and elbows. Young and old. Her family and their neighbors too, all collected in a scrunched up row. The chain led down to one tiny parchment gripped between Caroline's finger and thumb. The tension fell onto Caroline, who was almost paralyzed. Octavia had made magic look so easy that Caroline hadn't thought to ask questions. But she was full of queries now that she had no idea what to do. How could she move magic from paper into life? Behind her, Papa began humming a familiar tune, an old children's song of birds and gifts. Others took up the music, and Caroline found her toes twitching with the beat. The community was all crowded together, and she stared at both the magical image and the land before her. Warmth flooded Caroline's arms and hands, and the ink brightened as the whole world filled with the rhythm of magic.

Pick any question or ask one of your own!

- How did Caroline get the magic to work?
- Who was there? Why?
- What do you think the song sounded like? Why did it help Caroline?
- What is Caroline hoping will happen?



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Chapter 7

CELEBRATE

The ground rained backward first, sending moisture dancing into the sky. Caroline didn't dare move her hand to wipe the water from her face. Instead, she stared at the earth before her and gripped the parchment. The littered rocks and broken sticks gathered themselves into ordered piles. Caroline heard laughter and murmurs behind her, but still, the song was steady. Her cheeks ached from grinning as she sang the old words. The earth rumbled, but it was more like a purr than a roar as the land shifted somehow. Soil seemed to pour from the parchment in her hand, filling in the earth that had eroded away. The music dissolved into gasps, whoops, and cheers of celebration, and Caroline felt Papa's hand on her shoulder. The chain had broken, and the land was restored. She was weary and alive with wonder. "Papa," said Caroline, turning up to face him. "Whose farm can we save next?"

Pick any question or ask one of your own!

- Can you imagine your backyard/park/etc. drying up and healing from a storm?
- What does Caroline plan to do next?
- How would you feel if you were Caroline?



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