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Opening extract from

Sterling and the Canary

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For Eve White

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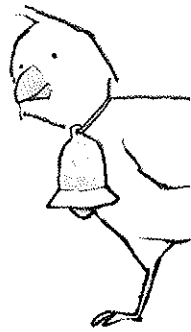
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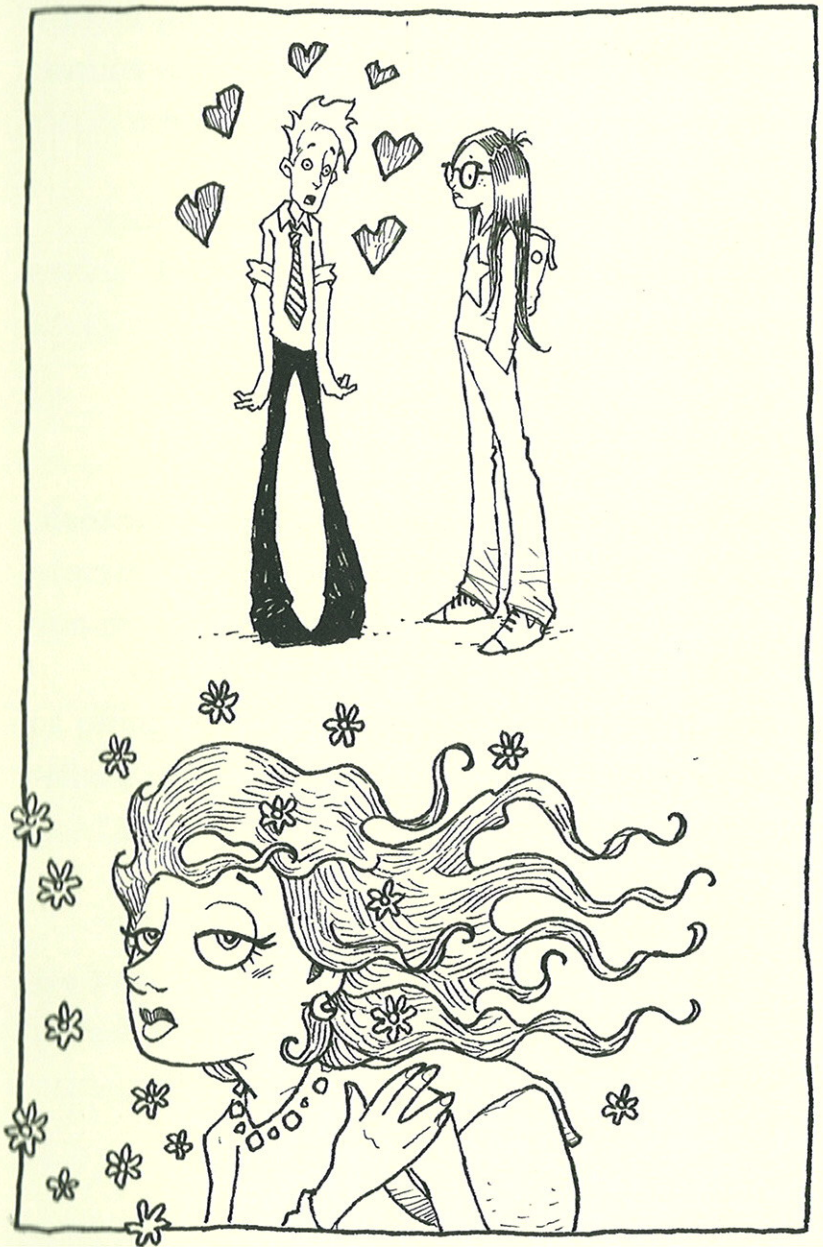
Chapter 1
The New Girl

Sterling Thaxton was the best-looking boy in the school. He was tall and strong and everyone was impressed by him, even the teachers. And he was amazing at sports. He could kick a football so high that when it came back down it had a sun-tan. He could smash a tennis ball so far that it could win a tennis match in a different town. He could run faster than all the other kids, even if they were on bikes. And all the girls at school were in love with him. Every single one.

One day a new girl turned up at school, like new girls sometimes do. One day they're not there at all. Then the next day – BINGO! – they just pop up like they've been there all along. As soon as he saw the new girl standing there like she'd been there all along, Sterling Thaxton was in love.

"Look at that girl," he said. "Her hair is the colour of magic. Her nose is as sweet as music. Her arms are as wonderful as rainbows. I want her to be my girlfriend. I would like to hold her hand. I don't mean I want to chop her hand off and hold it. That would be horrible. But I would like to hold her hand while it was still connected to the rest of her."

"Why don't you go and ask her out?" said Doctor Edward Macintosh.



Doctor Edward Macintosh had long brown hair and a pretty face hidden by thick round glasses. She was Sterling's best friend.

But before we go any further, I'm sure you'd like to know why Doctor Edward Macintosh had such a strange name.

The Story Of Why Doctor Edward Macintosh Had Such A Strange Name

When Doctor Edward Macintosh was about to be born, her mum said, "I'm going to close my eyes. Then, when I open them I will name my baby after the first thing I see."

So she closed her eyes.

Then she opened them and she saw a kind-looking man in a long white coat.

"Hello," he smiled. "I am Doctor Edward Macintosh. I'll be looking after you here in the hospital."

And that's how Doctor Edward Macintosh ended up being called Doctor Edward Macintosh.

* * *

Back in the playground, Sterling was still staring at the new girl like he was in a wonderful dream.

"Go on, Sterling," said Doctor Edward Macintosh. "Ask her out. I'm sure she'll say yes. All the girls say yes to you."

"OK," said Sterling. He took a deep breath. He brushed back his blond hair. He drew an arrow on his school shirt pointing to his strong arms.

"LOOK AT MY BIG STRONG ARMS" said the arrow.

Then he walked over to the new girl.

"Hello," said Sterling. "What's your name?"

"Lizzie Harris," said the new girl. Up close she was even prettier. She was so pretty that Sterling thought his heart might explode out of his chest and try to kiss her.

"That's a nice name," said Sterling. "I'm Sterling Thaxton. Will you go out with me?"

"Let's see," said Lizzie. "You're very good-looking."

"It's true," said Sterling with a grin.

"And I bet you're good at sports, aren't you?"

"Oh, yes," said Sterling happily. "You should see me kick a football, it's an amazing sight."

"And I bet all the girls are in love with you, aren't they?" said Lizzie.

"Oh, yes," said Sterling. "They are."

"Well, not me," said Lizzie. "I don't care how good-looking you are or how good at sports you are or how many girls are in love with you. The only thing I care about is maths."

"But I'm rubbish at maths," said Sterling. "Every time I look at my sums I get so confused I want to scream."

"Well! Don't bother talking to me then," said Lizzie. With a flick of her long brown hair she turned and walked away.