

# The Other Side of the Magic Shop

Kyria Abrahams



Bella stands behind the counter of the dusty magic shop. The truth is this afterschool job isn't as fun as she thought it would be. The store is cold and dirty. It smells of mold, and it is filled with cobwebs.

She has only one customer all day, and he's still shopping. He's been there for *hours*. He's not old, but he's stooped over like an old man. He wears a grey, woolen cloak that smells like wet dog.

Every once in a while, the smelly man will come up to the counter, and Bella has to hold her nose. He'll bring up some cheap little item, like toy chattering teeth, and inquire as to the price. When Bella tells him the price, he just snorts and then walks away. They've done this about 10 times now. It's getting old.

The man comes up to the counter again. This time, though, it's different. Instead of a tiny trinket, he comes up to the counter holding an old Polaroid camera.

"How much is this?" he asks.

Bella has never seen this camera before.

"I'll have to check the inventory book," she says. "I'm not familiar with that item."

"Well, I doubt very much it will be in the book," the man says. "How much do you think it would be worth?"

Now Bella is confused. He's been in the store all day and hasn't bought a thing. Now he's trying to buy a camera they don't even sell!

"I don't think we sell that. I think you brought that in with you."

"Did I?" he laughs. "Well, maybe I did. In that case, consider it a gift!" The man drops the camera on the counter, along with a business card. He turns quickly, and without a word, he walks out of the shop.

She picks up the business card.

*Maestro Daguerre*

*Image Creator*

"Image creator? What does that even mean? This guy is loony tunes!" Bella says aloud. She hopes he never comes back to the shop.

She picks up the camera and inspects it. It's a Polaroid instant camera from the 1970s. She remembers her mom had one of these. It takes special film and develops photos instantly.

She looks into the viewfinder. She is startled to see that the man is back in the shop again; picking up items, examining them, and putting them back down. When she puts the camera down, he's gone!

She looks through the camera and sees him again. Not sure if it's real, she snaps the shutter and puts the camera down. A square piece of photo paper is ejected. She puts it on the counter. Slowly, the photo starts appearing. She can make out the store, the racks, the man's feet, and his arms. But his arms are not still. No, he is waving at her, beckoning her into the photograph.

Bella shakes her head with disbelief. This is impossible. Before she realizes what she's done, she has taken his hand.

"I knew you would come," he says. "Welcome to the other side of the shop."

The *other side*. She's heard of that before. Her boss had mentioned it when she was hired. "Beware of the other side of the shop," he had told her.

"Oh no!" she says. "I'm not supposed to be here! My boss told me not to come."

"But you did come. And so now you will see the truth."

She looks at the counter. She is shocked to see she's still there, working. There's a customer in the shop now, and he's buying a magic wand.

"Don't bother to yell; they can't hear or see you," says Daguerre. Of course Bella wants to know where she is, so he explains.

"This magic shop, as you know, is very old. Many, many years ago, the shop was beautiful. It was owned by a poor magician. He had a traveling show and would close up the shop every few weeks. One day, he came back from a long time of working on the road. He discovered, to his dismay, that the shop had been stolen by a dark artist. The dark artist had let himself into the store, and he was selling items as if they were his own. However, the items were now cursed. He was a dark magician. All things that were sold through the shop were blackened and evil."

"How do you know all of this?"

"Because, my dear, that poor magician was none other than myself. The dark artist put a curse on the shop and banished me here. Your boss is the dark artist. That is why he told you not to come here."

Bella can't believe what she is hearing.

"I should quit my job immediately!" she says.

“No, please. Not yet! Please help me get my shop back!”

“Why should I help you?”

“There is no reason except the reason in your heart. I cannot give you anything. But you can help me out of kindness.”

She thinks about this for a moment. Should you help someone who cannot give you anything in return?

“Please,” he says, getting down on one knee. Maestro Daguerre hands her a sheet of photo paper. “Capture him inside this photograph!”

He snaps his fingers, and she is back behind the counter. Bells jingle, and the front door opens. The boss! He’s back!

She remembers the camera. It’s sitting there on the counter. Quickly, she grabs it and hides it behind her back.

“Any sales today?” he asks, not really expecting an answer. “Isn’t it about time for you to go home?”

“I believe it is,” she says, not doing a very good job of hiding her fear.

“What’s wrong with you?” he asks. And suddenly, he knows. “Were you on the other side of the shop?”

“No,” Bella says, backing away. “I mean...actually, yes!”

She pulls the camera from behind her and puts it to her eye. When she looks through the viewfinder, she sees the real dark artist. Her boss is no longer a normal-looking man. Now, he is an evil wizard, in a black cloak with glowing red eyes. He’s surrounded by drooling, angry dogs.

He puts his palm to her and says, "My name is Merlock the Dark, and I command you to put down that camera!"

Her fingers feel heavy; it takes all the strength she has. It's like pushing 100 boulders up a steep hill. She strains and strains against his magic. Finally, she overcomes him. Her finger pushes the shutter, and Merlock the Dark disappears.

Suddenly, the shop is bright and cheerful. It's no longer dusty, and the cobwebs have been replaced by beautiful art. Daguerre stands before her, also beautiful.

"You no longer smell like wet dog," Bella says.

"Thank you for the backhanded compliment, my dear." Daguerre gets to his knees and holds out a beautiful golden staff. "Bella, you are the savior of good magic. I told you there would be no prize. Alas, I lied." He hands her the staff.

The evil, drooling dogs have turned into chirping blue jays. They place a crown upon her head. "You are queen of the magic shop!" they sing.

"Oh no! I'm not fit to be a queen! I only wanted to save the shop!" Bella says.

"And by doing the right thing, you were rewarded," says Daguerre.

She places the photograph on the counter, face down. The photograph flutters and disappears in a puff of smoke. The dark artist is gone for now. But who can say to where? And, if one day, he might return.

Bella touches the crown on her head and smiles. If the dark artist makes an appearance again, she knows she has the courage to face him.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is strange about the polaroid camera that Maestro Daguerre brings to the counter?
  - A) The camera is covered in cobwebs.
  - B) The camera doesn't work.
  - C) The store doesn't sell this camera.
  - D) The man has brought it to the counter 10 times.
  
2. How does Bella change in the story?
  - A) At first, she doesn't believe in magic; in the end, she wants to become a magician.
  - B) At first, she likes her boss and feels comfortable around him; in the end, she is fearful of him.
  - C) At first, she is unsure of herself and afraid to act; in the end, she feels confident and brave.
  - D) At first, she doesn't like her job and wants to quit; in the end, she loves her job and decides to stay.
  
3. Unlike the dark artist, Maestro Daguerre is not an evil magician. What details from the text support this?
  - A) Maestro Daguerre tells Bella that she is the savior of good magic.
  - B) Maestro Daguerre was once a poor magician.
  - C) Maestro Daguerre's chirping blue jays place a crown on Bella's head.
  - D) Maestro Daguerre owns the magical polaroid camera.
  
4. What motivates Bella to help Maestro Daguerre get his magic shop back?
  - A) Bella wanted to help Maestro Daguerre so that she would receive a reward.
  - B) Bella wanted to help Maestro Daguerre out of the goodness of her heart.
  - C) Bella wanted to help Maestro Daguerre as a form of revenge against her boss.
  - D) Bella wanted to help Maestro Daguerre so that she could use the magic polaroid camera again.
  
5. What is this story mostly about?
  - A) how Bella's hard work in the shop pays off
  - B) how Bella escapes a dangerous situation
  - C) how Bella saves the magic shop
  - D) how Bella gets magical powers

6. Read the following sentences: "Slowly, the photo starts appearing. She can make out the store, the racks, the man's feet, and his arms. But his arms are not still. No, he is waving at her, **beckoning** her into the photograph."

As used in the passage, what does "**beckoning**" most nearly mean?

- A) making a gesture
- B) singing happily
- C) dismissing angrily
- D) pushing away

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

The shop changes after Bella pushes the camera shutter and Merlock the Dark disappears. \_\_\_\_\_, the cobwebs are replaced by beautiful art.

- A) Previously
- B) In summary
- C) However
- D) For example

8. How does Bella feel about the magic shop at the beginning of the story?

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9. Bella asks Maestro Daguerre why she should help him. What answer does Maestro Daguerre give Bella?

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10. What is the message of the story? Use information from the passage to support your answer.

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