



LILLY

(Ewing's Sarcoma)

MEEET LILLY! Lilly is the only known person to be born with Ewing's sarcoma and survive. She had a zero percent chance of surviving, yet she did. She is literally one of a kind. Nobody has ever done what she has done. She has had to fight tooth and nail for her life, and at three years old, she completely embodies what it means to defy the odds. She is an absolute miracle in every sense of the word. Her strength is matched only by her mother's. Lilly's story is as much about her as it is about her mother, who has stood by her and fought with her every step of the way.

Lilly is an example of never giving up hope, despite the odds. She is living proof of how powerful hope truly is and that anything is possible—anything can be.



LILLY, WARRIOR PRINCESS

Shannon Hale

LILLY WAS LOCKED UP IN A TOWER.

The first day wasn't so bad. She was too angry at herself for falling into her enemy's trap to notice the time.

The second day the anger still warmed her. The third day that heat began to trickle away. But the fight in her didn't.

She kicked the door again again again until sweat prickled her brow. She brushed her hand over her forehead and smooth scalp. The first thing her captors had done after shackling her in this room was shave off her hair. There were old stories, folktales of princesses locked in towers and their long hair granting them the power of escape.

It was utter nonsense, of course. As if her power was locked into her hair and could so easily be cut away. She laughed, alone there in the dark. Her power wasn't in her hair. It boiled in her blood, baked into her bones, strengthened with every breath.

Time and time again, the goblin army had tried to kill Princess Lilly until at last they realized the truth: she could not be killed. The best they could do was trap her, keep her locked up and helpless. But if she couldn't get out to help her people, then what was the use anyway?

She kicked the door again. It didn't even shake. She couldn't do this alone. She needed help. But how could anyone find her?

By the tenth day, a creepy crawling emptiness began to drip into her heart. She

spent more and more time curled up on the floor, trying to sleep away the hopelessness. Her bones felt as cold as the stones.

On the eleventh night, she woke up with a start after a dream: she'd been old and wrinkled and still shackled in the same tower.

The world was as dark as mud. Like the dark, the hopelessness pressed in. She curled up tighter. How had she lost her will?

Lilly touched a stone. "Cursed. They cursed this place."

She'd read the stories. She knew what happened to princesses trapped in cursed towers. Eventually the hopelessness laid them down so low they slept forever, never waking again.

Her eyelids felt as heavy as the stones. She began again to dream. *Withered hands, brittle bones, her body just lying there like a fallen tree . . .*

"No!" she said, sitting upright. "I won't sleep!"

She cast her mind around for something powerful, some old magic she could cling to. Her mind and body were so weakened by the curse she could barely think. But a hum started on her lips. The song her mother used to sing to her when she was just a baby. A song sung every day until it had coated her bones and entwined with her muscles. A song so powerful only a mother could sing it.

Lilly hummed. She whispered. And soon she had the strength to sing.

As long as she sang, she was awake, the curse held at bay. So she sang for days. Her voice was hoarse. Her lips were dry. Still she sang. She just had to hang on until—

"Lilly!" a voice called from outside the tower walls.

"Yes! I'm here!" Lilly shouted back. "I'm in here!"

"Lilly! Hold on!"

The tower shook. Lilly fell, her knees bruising against the stones. The tower tipped. She covered her head with her hands. Everything crashed to the ground.

The wind was knocked out of her lungs. She coughed and gasped. Sunlight hit her like spears.

Strong hands lifted away the stones. And then they picked her up.

“Mother!”

Her mother carried her away from the tower. She sat in the grass and held her, rocked her, cried and kissed and even sang.

Lilly drank water from her mother’s flask. She ate. And then she stood.

“You’re exhausted,” said her mother. “Rest first.”

“No time,” she said. “I can feel the ground shaking. The goblin hordes are on the move.”

Her mother opened her mouth as if to protest, but shut it again and nodded. She, too, could feel the ground shake. She went to her horse—a tall, black stallion—and pulled items from the saddlebags.

“I’ve kept it ready,” her mother said.

Lily’s armor. She strapped on the well-worn leather jerkin, cap, and limb guards. They fit like a second skin, worn to a dark brown and smelling of sweet oil. She began to feel more herself.

The breastplate and helmet gleamed silver, like new money. Her mother helped attach the shoulder guards.

“I beat out the old dents,” she said, “and shined it up a bit.”

“Thanks,” she said.

Her mother tied the breastplate in back and secured the helmet over her cap.

“I’ll ride beside you,” said her mother.

“I know you will.” Lilly took her hand. “I’m not afraid.”

“No, you’re not,” she agreed. “But *they* should be.”

She looked around. Her mother had brought two horses, but neither of them was Arrow. The tower had stood on a hill high above the moors. The wind whipped from the east, tangy with marsh grass and a hint of brine.

“Arrow!” she shouted. “Arrow!”

“Lilly,” her mother said, “didn’t you know? Arrow was . . .” She couldn’t seem able to say it. “We’ve looked everywhere, but when the enemy kidnapped you, they took Arrow, too—”

Still Lilly cried out, “Arrow!”

“I brought another horse for you,” said her mother. “I know it’s not the same, but—”

“She’ll come,” said Lilly. “I know she’ll come.”

The princess climbed atop a boulder, faced the wind, and shouted with all her might, “Arrow!”

A whinny. The clatter of hooves. A streak of white. Lilly hallooed with joy just as Arrow galloped by. Lilly leaped off the boulder, landing on Arrow’s back. She threw her arms around the mare’s neck, hugging her as they cantered together. When the horse slowed, Lilly slipped onto the ground, her arms still around the horse’s neck.

“Good girl,” she whispered into her mane. “Good, good girl. How did you ever get away from them, you clever pony?”

Arrow nickered and nuzzled Lilly’s neck.

Lilly laughed. “That tickles!”

Arrow’s nicker sounded almost like a laugh.

“We should go,” said Lilly’s mother. “The goblins . . .”

Arrow’s nostrils flared as if she could smell the vile creatures on the wind. Arrow wore no saddle or bridle, but Lilly swung herself up onto her bare back, directing the horse with shifts in her seat, nudges of her knees and ankles.

They rode hard for hours. It had been days since Lilly slept. When she nodded off now, Arrow and the wind keeping her from falling.

At last they crested a hill and found the battle. Before the city walls stood her people, armed and fierce, fighting the goblin hordes. But for every one of her people there were five goblins, riding creatures with many limbs and yellow skin. They cackled and tossed smoke bombs and moved closer, ever closer, to the city.

“We’re not too late,” said her mother. “Thank the stars, we’re not too late!”

Lilly pulled her sword from its scabbard. She raised it high, the sunlight flashing off its silver face. A hum almost too high to hear shot out from the blade. The battle paused. All eyes looked up.

“To me!” Lilly shouted, her voice echoing against the mountainside. “To your princess!”

There was a roar. Her people raised their spears and swords, clanged their shields, shouted her name. So loud was the clamor the very rocks in the mountain shook, the battlefield quaked.

The eyes of the enemy widened, large and white and, for the first time in many a year, showing real fear.

Princess Lilly charged.

SHANNON HALE

Shannon Hale is a *New York Times* best-selling author of fifteen children’s and young adult novels, including the popular *Ever After High* trilogy and multiple award winners *The Goose Girl*, *Book of a Thousand Days*, and Newbery Honor recipient *Princess Academy*. She also penned three books for adults, beginning with *Austenland*, which is now a major motion picture starring Keri Russell. She cowrote the hit graphic novels *Rapunzel’s Revenge* and *Calamity Jack* and illustrated chapter book *The Princess in Black* with husband Dean Hale. They live with their four small children near Salt Lake City, Utah.

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RAE

“Give yourself permission to dream.” —Randy Pausch