Once upon a time there was a village. I know that doesn't sound very interesting but I'm telling you it is. This village was just like any other village.

There is one thing you don't know.

Close your eyes and pretend someone is standing really far away from you. Hold up your hand. It seems that you can put that person between your thumb and pointer finger. Well, the villagers are actually that size. If you picked one up and put her between your fingers she would fit perfectly.

In this village there was a house and in this house there was a family and in this family there was a little girl named Ruby. She lived with her five sisters and two brothers. But, there's one important thing that I haven't told you yet about this village. This village was just small enough to be like a doll set. The people were just small enough. The dogs and cats were just the right size. The grannies and grandfathers were perfect for the little fingers of a child.

By this village, over a big wall, there was a house. For the small people it was enormous like your house would be to a doll. In this house there was a family and in this family there was a little girl named Cynthia. She lived with her mom, her dad, and her dragon Kelsyus. This village was her doll set.

Every night Ruby heard footsteps pounding towards the village. Her parents thought she was sleeping and would never notice. It was a little bit silly for them to think that she would stay asleep through all the pounding and noise that Cynthia made. Every night the footsteps would come. The houses had been designed especially for Cynthia's hands to lift the lids and pull open the sides so that she could reach in. And every night after she had played for a couple hours there was the sound of a booming voice.

Her mom’s voice was high-pitched. “Dear, it's time for dinner. We're having your favorite: orzo pasta.” And every night Cynthia would respond, “Coming Mommy. Let me just tuck in this last doll.”

Sometimes it would be a gruff deep voice that would ring out, “Cynthia time for bed.” And Cynthia would always respond the same thing: “I'm just going to tuck in one last doll.”

One night, Ruby lay awake thinking. She got out of bed and went to her bookshelf and pulled out her favorite book. The book's title was *A Guide to Adventure*. She read a tale about a girl who climbed mountains and swam across oceans. She loved this book. It always made Ruby think about what she was destined to do.

One day she was walking in the park. She heard footsteps. She didn't notice that they weren't as heavy as Cynthia's footsteps. The footsteps came closer and closer and closer.
Oh no, she thought, what if Cynthia notices me? She’ll notice that I’m not in the place where she left me.

She froze. And then she saw something orange bobbing above the trees. She relaxed a teeny bit as Cynthia’s pet dragon walked into the park.

Kelsyus sniffed her and then picked her up in his mouth and began to run. She saw the houses in the village fly past. Soon she saw the wall approaching at dragon speed. Then to her fright and delight - all her emotions combined - Kelsyus jumped the wall! Over the wall there were enormous trees and bushes. Kelsyus was galloping towards - oh no! - the big house. They barged in. The house was enormous.

Inside, Ruby saw what looked like an enormous giant. She assumed it was Cynthia’s mom. The giant said, “Kelsyus, there you are. Time for dinner.” The giant set down a bowl. It was full of pepper and spicy stuff. Kelsyus dropped Ruby on the floor. The giant didn’t notice Ruby. After gobbling down his spicy dinner he took a deep breath and shot a plume of fire out of his mouth! He picked Ruby back up and went out the kitchen door.

Coming to a large set of stairs, Kelsyus began to climb. He went thump thump as he climbed up. At the top, Ruby saw a blue-painted door with a sign that read CYNTHIA in big letters. Kelsyus pushed through the door and into Cynthia's room. And to Ruby’s horror, Cynthia was sitting on her bed!

The first thing Cynthia said was, “Hi Kelsyus.” Kelsyus dropped Ruby on the floor. “Kelsyus, what’s that?”

Cynthia walked towards Ruby. Ruby did the thing no one in her village would ever do. She jumped to her feet and ran. She hoped and wished and crossed her fingers and ran at top speed. She slid under the door and headed for the stairs.

Cynthia came running after holding a cardboard box. Sadly for Ruby, she wasn't as fast as Cynthia. Ruby heard the sound of Cynthia right behind her. There was a slam as the cardboard box came crashing down. She was like a spider caught in a cup. Then a piece of paper slid under the box. Cynthia came into her room. She shut the door and stuffed clothes under it so the little thing couldn't get out again. She lifted the paper and saw Ruby sheltered in the corner. Ruby saw Cynthia’s big face looming over her. And then to Ruby’s horror Cynthia stuck her fingers in and picked Ruby up!

Ruby screamed, “Put me down!”

Cynthia jumped and dropped Ruby onto her bed. She said, “Hello?”

“Hello.”

Cynthia said, “I'm not used to, um, seeing people that small.” There was a long awkward pause and then Cynthia said, “Aren’t you from the village?”
Ruby said, “Yes.”

“Oh no, what if my parents find out? Should I tell them?”

Ruby said, “You probably shouldn't.”

“My parents don’t let me go out to the village this late. I can't bring you back now. But I can find you a place to sleep and some food.”

Ruby nodded.

Downstairs Cynthia grabbed a little bit of bread and orzo pasta from last night's dinner. She went back upstairs. Cynthia placed the food on her bedside table and Ruby thanked her and began to eat. Cynthia tucked an extra pillow and scrap of fabric into a cardboard box. She went to the bathroom and took an old toothpaste cap and rinsed it out and filled it with water.

She gave it to Ruby who took a sip. Cynthia showed her to her bed.

Kelysus came running in. Cynthia climbed up in bed and Kelysus jumped after her. She gave him some pepper flakes, put the bin aside, and asked if Ruby needed anything. Ruby said she was Ok. Cynthia switched off the light.

When Cynthia woke up she had almost forgotten that Ruby was in her house. Ruby was already awake.

Ruby said, “At some point my parents are going to miss me and go looking.”

Cynthia said, “Well, I guess I could put you back but they would wonder where you have been and they probably wouldn’t like the idea that you were in here with me.”

“That’s true. And we can’t let your parents know.”

“They would freak,” said Cynthia.

“Maybe you can ask your parents about where the village came from? I’ve always wondered.”

“Sure.” Cynthia put Ruby in her pocket and went downstairs.

She asked her mom, “Hey Mom. Where did my doll set come from?”

“Well,” said her mom. “Your grandfather built it. And one day when I went outside to look at the doll set there were dolls in it. Dolls everywhere. And your grandfather hadn’t even put them there. It’s been a mystery for years and years. I used to notice that every month a new doll would appear. Most likely a baby. Why do you want to know?”
“It’s been nagging at me and I just decided to ask.”
“Well … since you’re almost turning nine, I think it’s time you have a chance to learn. Come with me.”

They climbed the stairs to the attic and her mom said, “Your grandfather gave this to me and he told me to pass it down through my family for years and years.” She handed Cynthia a piece of paper. “I’ve been waiting for you to be old enough to find out the secret. I know you can do it. Just like I did. My father made this map.”

Cynthia unrolled the map. Another small scrap of paper fell out. She picked it up.

Her mom winked and walked away. Cynthia bounded to her room. As soon as they reached her room, Ruby scrambled out of her pocket and grabbed the piece of paper. She read out loud.

Dear my loving grandchildren for years and years to come,

I made this map so you could find out the secret that lies in the village. It tells you that this world isn’t just of one kind. And I hope that whoever is reading this will find out the secret, just like my daughter did. I hope this secret will be passed on through generations so that the secret will soon be known by the whole family.

Love, your grandfather (or great grandfather etc.)

“Whoa,” said Cynthia. She looked at the map. “This is the village. And it shows a path that leads right to the church.”

“Let’s go!” said Ruby.

At the church, Cynthia realized she was too big to search every corner. Ruby jumped out of her pocket and ran in. She looked in every corner until at last she came to the organ. There was a giant piece of paper hiding behind it. She unfolded it with Cynthia.

If you are reading this, you are close. You have found the first piece of paper in the hunt to find the secret. I encourage you to keep going.

Love, your grandfather (or great grandfather, etc.)

There was an arrow that pointed to flip the page around. And there on the back was a map and this time Ruby gasped. Because the X was on her house. Cynthia bolted so fast across the village that wind stung Ruby’s cheeks.

They reached Ruby’s house. Ruby jumped out and ran in. She avoided her parents and searched until she came to her own room. At the closet, she opened the door and began to search. In the very back was a piece of paper. She grabbed it. And ran out of the house.
If you are reading this, you have found the last piece of paper that reveals the secret. This poem was passed down from my father because he found the secret: This land is majestic and magical. This land is not just one kind. It is not just giants. It has tiny people who live together in harmony. The people in the village are alive. You must befriend them and be kind.

I love you so much.
Love, your grandfather (or great grandfather, etc.)
PS. Please hide this note for the next generation to find.

“Whoa,” said Cynthia. “Well I knew you were alive but I didn’t know before I met you.”

“I know what we need to do,” said Ruby.

She shouted for her family to come outside. They wondered where she had been but they trusted her. They were startled to see Cynthia.

“Mom, Dad, everyone, this is Cynthia. My new friend.”

“Um,” said her dad. “Nice to meet you, Cynthia.”

And then the whole village began to gush outside to meet Cynthia with all their love and joy. Suddenly there were booming footsteps and Cynthia’s parents came. Her mom hugged her tight and said, “I knew you could do it.”

Ruby picked up her baby sister and said to Cynthia, “From now on, we’ll be friends and your kids and my little sisters and brothers and my kids will live together as friends.”