THE MARVELLOUS GRANNY JINKS AND ME

Animal Magic!



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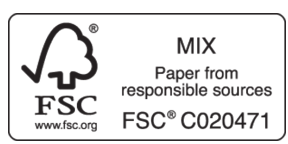
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For the very marvellous and inspiring

Jenny Mayers. Thanks for the magic!

Serena Holly

To Grandma Connie. Thank you for being you.

Your wisdom, strength and discipline continue to

astound me. Nothing is impossible to you!

Selom Sunu





CHAPTER ONE

'You're almost there, Jada, my gem! Just crawl along that branch a liiiittle bit further . . .'

Jada Jinks gripped the tree trunk for support and stared down at her grandmother on the grass below. Granny Jinks was squinting up at the tree, while Jada tried to reach the little black cat at the end of the branch.

Jada made another grab for Luna and sighed



as the cat danced away from her. *Typical Luna!* she thought to herself. *She always picks the worst moments to get into mischief.* Jada hoped she could get Granny Jinks's cat down in time to make it to the *Dalton Green Magic Society* meeting, even if they were a bit late. Today there was going to be a VIP guest, and Jada couldn't *wait* to meet her.

But Luna had other plans. She'd scampered up the tree, no problem, but now couldn't – or wouldn't – get down. She nestled her furry body closer to the branch, and let out a distinctly *dog*-like growl.

'Come here, Luna,' Jada tried, stepping on to the branch. 'Come on, girl!' She was doing her best to sound friendly, but right now Jada was up





in a tree, higher than she'd ever climbed before – and it was more than a little scary. Jada shimmied along a bit further, sweat gathering on her brow, and slowly reached out a hand towards Luna. She felt the cat's soft dark fur beneath her fingertips.

Victory!

'I've got her!' Jada called in triumph. 'Get in position, Granny!'

Granny Jinks quickly held out her billowing red skirt like a circus performer's net, ready to catch the wayward kitty. Jada gave Luna a gentle nudge so she would tumble softly out of the tree and gently down into Granny Jinks's makeshift cat-catcher. But just then, Luna let out a nonchalant miaow-bark and casually trotted





over Jada and along the tree's trunk, clinging to it with her claws as she climbed down. She sauntered over to her owner on the grass. Granny Jinks let her skirt fall and scratched the cat's fuzzy little head enthusiastically as she purred.

Jada let out a **pfffft** and shook her head. 'Oh no, you two enjoy yourselves. Don't mind me!'

Granny Jinks grinned at her as she scooped Luna up and dropped her into her special cat bag. 'Well done, my gem! Do you want me to catch you in my skirts instead?' she asked with a chuckle. Jada giggled and quickly scuttled back down the tree.

'I can't believe we're going to be late to the Magic Society meeting, today of all days!' Jada



said, brushing off her leggings. 'It's not every day a magician like the *Luminous Ms Leyla* visits Dalton Green!'

Granny Jinks reached around to squeeze Jada's shoulder into her soft, squidgy side as they walked hurriedly in the direction of the community centre. 'I know, Jada. I'm excited, too. I think Luna was just trying to get her revenge for me taking her to the vet's this afternoon.'

Luna poked her head out from her bag to let out a smug yelp-miaow of agreement, and Jada shook her head at the cat, but she couldn't stay annoyed for long. Jada was practically skipping as they got to the steps of the community centre. When she first came here a few weeks ago, she



had helped Granny Jinks realise her long-held dream of becoming a magician by making it through the Magic Society auditions. Since then, Jada had been taking her role as Granny's assistant very seriously. She'd spent ages online looking at famous magicians performing, and the *Luminous Ms Leyla* was one of her absolute favourites!

Jada and her grandmother rushed down the warm, shabby hallway of the community centre, making their way towards the room where the Magic Society met once a week. Jada breathed a sigh of relief as she saw the group of magicians still bustling around the empty stage. The *Luminous Ms Leyla* hadn't performed yet. *Phew!*

'Jada! Granny Jinks! Over here!' a familiar





voice called. Jada peered past a man flapping a sparkly purple cape and a woman wearing a top hat, and spotted her friend Tilda. Grabbing her grandmother's hand, Jada made her way through the buzzing crowd of magicians to where Tilda was waving enthusiastically.

'I practically ran here from school – my sister could hardly keep up with me. I saved you both a seat,' Tilda said when they arrived by her side. Her green eyes were glinting with anticipation, above freckly cheeks. She'd only moved to Dalton Green a couple of months ago, but she'd already become one of Jada's best friends.

'Awesome. Thanks so much, Tilds,' Jada said. 'Our fuzzy friend decided to escape from her bag





on our way here.'

'Luna, what are you like?!' Tilda scratched Luna on the head as she popped out of the bag and on to Granny's lap.

'Thank you for the seat, Tilda,' Granny Jinks said, sighing with relief. 'We were worried we'd miss the beginning of the *Luminous Ms Leyla*'s act!'

Tilda tilted her head towards the front seats near the stage. 'No danger of that, it turns out . . .' she said, rolling her eyes.

Jada looked over to see a boy dressed head-to-toe in black and waving his white gloves about with a flourish, before producing a small bunch of plastic flowers. Next to him, they could just make out a tall, willowy lady with waist-length



dark hair nodding patiently. It was the *Luminous Ms Leyla* herself! Every now and then she glanced towards the stage, but was clearly trying not to seem impatient. The boy presented his flowers to Ms Leyla, then bowed low, flinging his red-satin-lined cloak out as he straightened back up.

Jada raised her eyebrows at Tilda. 'Henry's trying to impress her already!'



Henry Zhao was the grandson of Ernest Zhao, one of the founders of the *Dalton Green Magic Society*. Henry's grandfather went by the stage name '*Zhao the Magnificent*', and was currently making a magnificent display of applauding his grandson's trick.

'Ugh, we'd all love to show Ms Leyla what we can do, but we're here to see *her* perform!' Jada said, shaking her head. Back in the day, Henry's grandfather and Grandpa Jinks had a bit of rivalry as magicians, and as much as she tried to be friendly to everyone, sometimes Henry could be a bit irritating, too.

'Ah, fret not, my dears!' Granny Jinks pointed to the stage. The *Luminous Ms Leyla* had managed





to peel herself away from the Zhaos, and as she entered the spotlight, her long lilac dress swirled around her in a way that could only be described as *mysterious*.

'Welcome, fellow magicians,' she said in a deep, rich voice. 'I am the *Luminous Ms Leyla*, performer, weaver of illusion, and a member of the **Magnificent Magic Circle**.'

The crowd went '*Ooh!*' and Jada bounced up and down in her seat excitedly. **The Magic Circle** was the ultimate society for magicians, one of the oldest and most respected in the world. Granny Jinks had mentioned the other day that she would love to join. Jada knew it was *really* hard to get in – you had to be an amazing





magician – but Jada was convinced that, like her grandpa, Granny Jinks had what it took. She just needed to keep practising her magic. As her magician's assistant, Jada planned to do everything she could to help her granny fulfil her dream.

'I have something very special to show you today,' continued Ms Leyla, her voice echoing around the room. 'A little something known as "Orange, Lemon, Egg and Canary".'

'That sounds awesome,' Tilda said to Jada.

'*Shhh!*' Henry turned round to glare at them from the front row.

Tilda crossed her arms grumpily.

On stage, a table had been set up. There was



something box-shaped on top of it, covered in a red velvet cloth. Ms Leyla moved towards the table then paused, slowly looking out over the crowd. Suddenly a hush settled over the audience. Jada felt a fizz of excitement go all the way down her spine when Ms Leyla looked directly at her. The magician reached out and pulled away the velvet cloth to reveal a very large golden birdcage. In it, a tiny yellow canary chirped away happily. Ms Leyla leaned towards the cage and made a small kissy noise, just like Granny Jinks did to Luna!

Then Jada noticed that there were also three paper bags on the table. There was a different object in front of each one: **an egg, a lemon and an orange**. She frowned. She couldn't imagine



what Ms Leyla was planning to do with such a strange collection of objects. Jada watched as the magician produced a silky white handkerchief, and brought its corners together to form a neat pouch. Ms Leyla opened the cage and gently took the bird out, put it into the hanky-pouch, then flapped the hanky open, turning it around so the audience could see. Jada gasped – the little bird had disappeared!

Before she had time to wonder how Ms Leyla had done *that*, the magician popped the egg inside its paper bag, scrunched the bag up into a small ball in her fist and threw it away over her shoulder.

Hmm . . . Jada thought. *Maybe the egg's all smashed up in there?*





But then Ms Leyla quickly did the same with the lemon! There was no way a lemon could smoosh up all tiny like that. Jada turned and made her wide-eyed **WOW** face at Granny Jinks, who did the same.

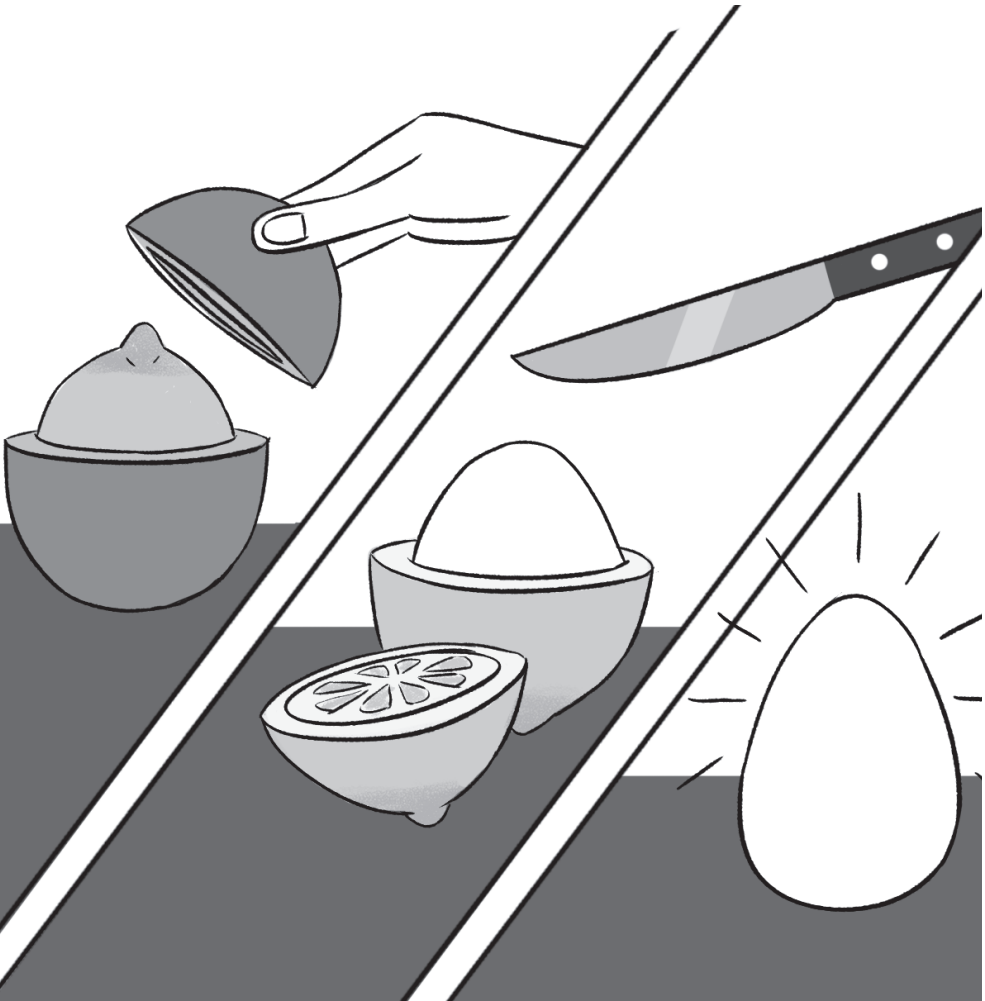
The trick wasn't over yet. When Ms Leyla came to do the same thing with the orange, she made a show of not being able to scrunch up the paper bag. Instead, she pulled the orange out again, and with a small knife, cut the top off the peel to reveal . . .

'The lemon?' Tilda whispered beside Jada, incredulous. They kept watching as Ms Leyla tugged the lemon out of the orange, and stared as she cut the peel off it to reveal . . .



‘The egg!’ Jada said quietly, her voice breathy with excitement.

Ms Leyla held up the egg to show the audience, who were all leaning forward in their seats. She



moved back over to the birdcage, opened it up and tapped the egg gently against the canary perch a few times. She wasn't quite as theatrical as Granny Jinks when she made her famous spicy scrambled eggs, but it was close. With one final tap, Ms Leyla grinned—

'The canary!' Granny Jinks exclaimed, not even bothering to whisper as they all gasped.

The cracked egg lay on the floor of the cage, while the little bird fluttered around inside merrily, as though it had been freed from the shell. It hopped on to its perch and began chirping happily again. The *Luminous Ms Leyla* spread her arms wide, and the audience burst into thunderous applause.



'How did she do that?' Jada asked, barely able to pick her jaw up to speak.

Granny Jinks grinned down at her. 'That, my darling, is a ***true magician***!'

Jada saw her grandmother's eyes twinkling with delight. She couldn't wait until her granny was performing tricks like that, too. And, with Jada's help, she *knew* Granny Jinks would get there.

