

Chapter One

“Magic is real. Not like in the *Harry Potter* movies. I’m talking about real magic, like what I’m about to show you.” I was talking to myself, practicing what I was going to say onstage.

“Next!” a voice called. “Who’s next?”

“Okay, Kylie,” I muttered. “You’ve got this.”

“I said next!” the voice boomed.

“Coming!” I yelled. I headed onto the stage.

The first round of tryouts for the magic club's talent show was packed. Every magician in the club wanted a chance to get onstage. I had joined the club just six months back, but I had already learned some pretty amazing tricks. I wanted people to ooh and aah with wonder at my magic. I wanted them to clap for my tricks. I wanted them to jump to their feet and cheer for me. But all that would have to wait. Right now I just wanted to puke.

So far I had only ever done this trick in front of my bathroom mirror. Now I had to do it in front of Peter, the show's director and head of the magic club. My nerves were getting the better of me. I had to hold my hands to keep them from shaking.

Peter looked up from his clipboard and grunted. "Well, the stage is yours, Kylie. Let's get going, shall we? I have a lot of acts to see today."

He headed off the stage and took a seat in the front row, clicking his pen over and over again as he waited for me to start.

I fumbled in the vest pocket of my black jacket and pulled out a solved Rubik's Cube. Each of the six sides of nine blocks was a solid color. *Here goes nothing.*

"Magic is the thing that is real," I began. "No, wait. Hold on. I messed up." I looked out into the rows of seats. "Can I start over?" I asked.

Peter sighed. "Relax, Kylie. Breathe."

I shoved the cube back into my pocket. "Magic is real," I said. "Not like in the *Harry Potter* movies. I'm talking about *real* magic, like what I'm about to show you."

I pulled the cube out again, but it flew out of my hand and hit the stage floor with a *thud*.

"You okay, Kylie?" Peter asked.

"I'm fine. Fine," I said. "Just a little nervous, I guess."

As I bent over to pick up the cube, my wand and a deck of cards flew out of my vest pocket. I scooped them up and stuffed everything back into the pocket.

“Oh right, the cube. Oops...sorry,” I said as I reached into my pocket to pull out the cube again. Only this time I pulled out a pink bra.

Peter chuckled.

“Magic is real,” I began again as I stuffed the bra back into my pocket. When I pulled my hand out this time, a stuffed bunny was hugging my wrist. I shook the bunny off, and it went flying across the stage. It smacked against the black curtain and stuck there.

Peter laughed.

“Magic is real,” I said again. “Let me show you with this...this...hey, where is my Rubik’s Cube?”

I spun around the stage, searching for the cube.

“Check your pocket,” Peter said.

I pulled out my wand, the cards and the bra. Then I pulled out a giant pencil that stretched and stretched until it was six feet long. I tossed it behind me as I eyed the stuffed rabbit. I hopped over to the curtain and yanked the toy off. I turned around to

show the audience—well, Peter—that the rabbit was holding the cube.

“Ah,” I said, trying to pry the cube from the bunny. “Magic is real. Take this ordinary Rubik’s Cube.” The bunny wouldn’t let go. Finally I ripped the cube away, along with one of the bunny’s feet. The foot landed in Peter’s lap.

“Heh, heh,” I said. “Looks like you got a lucky rabbit’s foot.”

He smiled. I could tell he was figuring out now that all my fumbling was actually part of my act.

“But I won’t need luck for this trick,” I continued, really finding my groove. “For some people, this Rubik’s Cube is just a kids’ toy. But in the right hands, a toy can become a thing of magic.”

I began to mix up the colors on the cube, twisting the various pieces this way and that.

Peter leaned forward. In the wings, some of the younger kids awaiting their turn were watching. I held up the cube, now a jumble of colors.