

# **WILD MAGIC: LEGEND OF THE BLACK LION**

half title TK

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LEGEND OF THE  
BLACK LION**

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Full title TK

Simon & Schuster

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To my magical nephew, Akorede.

May you continue to shine bright x

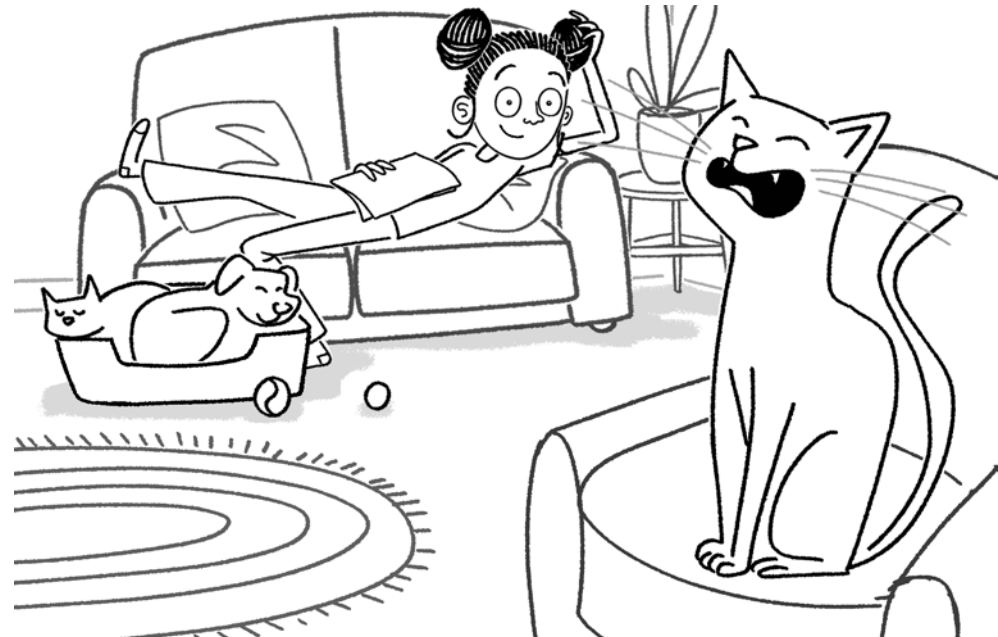




# CHAPTER ONE

## *The Next Big Adventure*

**M**isha lay on the sofa and wrapped her long braids into two buns on the top of her head. It was the first day of the



summer holidays. She flipped through her comic book, ignoring the grey Bengal cat with green eyes that was purring next to her.

‘One second, Fergie,’ she said.

Fergie rubbed his head against her arm and Misha laughed. ‘I’ll get you a snack. Let me just finish this part, okay?’

The cat purred loudly.

‘I know, you told me yesterday. I’ll get you the white fish treat this time.’

Fergie jumped from the sofa and walked over to the Staffordshire Bull Terrier called Blue, who was curled up asleep in her bed, her red plastic balls by her feet. Fergie pushed himself onto the bed beside her. Misha shook her head, smiling. Fergie had said Blue’s bed was comfier than his, and luckily Blue didn’t

mind sharing as long as her toys weren’t moved.

The other grey cat, identical to Fergie, meowed loudly from the chair across the room.

Misha ignored it and the cat meowed again even louder as if he wanted all of the neighbours to hear.

‘Shh!’ Misha said. ‘And, no, it’s not my problem that you’re bored.’ Loud footsteps pounded down the stairs and Misha looked at the closed door. ‘Quick, Ziggy!’

The grey cat leaped into the air and when it landed, in its place was her ten-year-old twin brother with his curly high-top haircut. Ziggy quickly sat on a chair and flicked on the TV, trying to act like he’d been a human all along.

‘Ziggy?’ Misha said, and when he looked at her, she pointed to her nose.



Ziggy touched his own nose and felt the whiskers. He shook his head and they disappeared just as the living-room door opened.

‘Hi, Dad,’ Misha and Ziggy said in unison.

‘Jinx!’ Misha said, like they always did when they spoke at the same time. Which happened a lot – it was a twin thing.

‘Ah, man,’ Ziggy groaned.

‘You know the rules,’ Misha responded, and she mimed zipping her



lips. Ziggy pouted and crossed his arms over his chest.

‘Hi, kids,’ Dad said. He was a tall, slim, dark-skinned man with a neatly trimmed black beard and black-framed glasses. ‘How’s the comic, Misha?’

‘It’s really good! It’s about a girl whose big sister is a superhero.’

‘Are you reading anything fun, Ziggy?’ Dad asked, and Ziggy pointed at his mouth.

‘I jinxed him. That means he can’t talk,’ Misha said proudly.

Dad laughed. ‘Well, do you mind un-jinxing him so he can answer me?’

Misha sighed. ‘I guess.’ She knocked her knuckles on the wooden table, like they always did when they had to reverse a jinx, and Ziggy whooped

loudly as if he had been silenced for days.

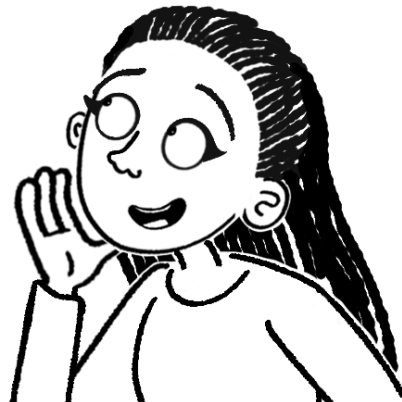
‘It’s the summer holidays, Dad! I’m not doing any reading for the next six weeks!’ Ziggy said. Dad frowned, but as he was about to respond, Ziggy shouted, ‘Dad, it’s you!’ Ziggy excitedly turned up the volume on the TV and the familiar theme song of Dad’s wildlife show filled the room.



Misha closed her comic book and sat up. The twins loved watching their dad on TV. He was a wildlife TV presenter and his job took him all over the world, where he got to see the most amazing animals up close and personal, from boisterous baboons to cheeky cheetahs. But sometimes Dad and the film crew couldn’t find the animals they were searching for – Dad always says, ‘*there are no rules in the wild!*’ – and so the big bosses of the TV channel would ask him to travel to the same country again to try to find them. This meant that Misha and Ziggy wouldn’t see their dad for weeks on end.

But the twins knew if they were with Dad, they could help him find the animals he was looking for. Because the twins had special powers. Gifts

that they had inherited from their mum when they turned ten years old. Misha could talk to animals, and Ziggy could shapeshift into them. The problem was, Dad didn't know about their powers, or Mum's. Grandma Yinka had warned Misha and Ziggy to keep their powers a secret because when their mum was a teenager, people from the Nigerian village she grew up in were scared of her when they found out about her gifts. It was better to be safe than sorry.



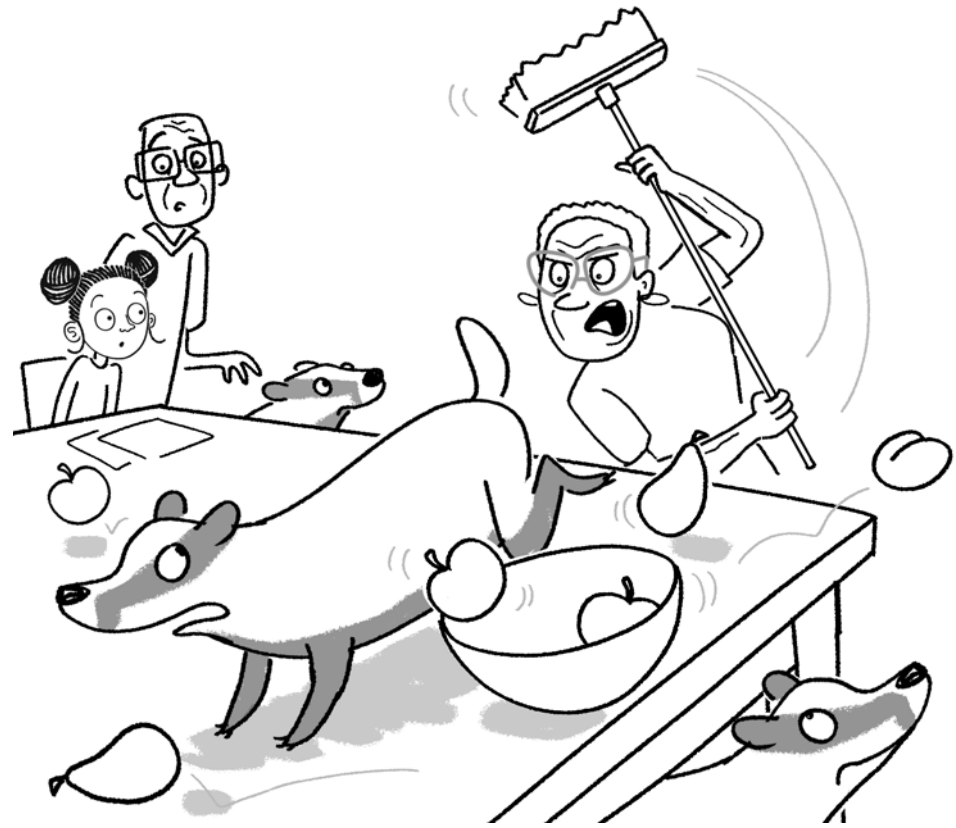
But their mum seemed to prefer being around animals than humans. Whenever she would take the twins on trips to the park or the cinema, she would speak to the birds flying above them in the sky or shapeshift into a squirrel they saw on the street. Mum made Misha and Ziggy keep this a secret, which they did because their mum's powers made her *cool*! Then, one day, just after



their tenth birthday, the twins came home and Mum had vanished. They found the shedded skin of a chameleon on their Mum's favourite chair and knew she had left to live in her animal form. They both wondered if Dad would ever find her in the wild on one of his many film trips, and they hoped that they would see her again. But they tried not to miss her too much because they still had their dad, and he was the best.

So, every time Dad went on his next trip, the twins were left behind at their grandparents' house. Not their cool Grandma Yinka, who lived in a hut in the deep Nigerian forest, casting magical spells. It would be amazing to be around someone who they didn't have to hide their powers from.

No. They had to stay with Grandma Joy and



Grandpa Tunde, Dad's parents. Grandma Joy and Grandpa Tunde lived across the road from Misha and Ziggy's house and were *so* strict. Grandpa Tunde made Misha and Ziggy do their homework during the school holidays! Plus, Grandma Joy HATED animals! She always had her broom ready to swipe

at any animals that came close to her house. It was no fun for the twins, though. Misha loved when animals came to visit – she finally had someone else to talk to other than her brother. But when Grandma Joy shooed them away, Misha sometimes felt lonely. And Ziggy was always at risk of one of Grandma Joy's broom swipes when he was in animal form. One time, Grandma Joy hit him when he was with a group of badgers, sitting on her dining table and nibbling apples, pears and plums from the fruit bowl. Now that Dad was about to go on another work trip, this meant staying with Grandma Joy and Grandpa Tunde once again.

‘Do you think you’re going somewhere hot or cold on your next adventure?’ Ziggy asked.

Dad put a finger to his chin. ‘I think hot.

Hopefully, with a beach and clear-blue water, so I can see all the tropical fish.’

‘Why can’t we go?’ Misha moaned for the hundredth time.

The beach sounded great, but really Misha wanted to speak to the wild animals. She only got the chance to speak to her pets, the neighbours’ rabbits, and Ziggy, when he transformed into random animals. She dreamed to be up close to a leopard or a dolphin and hear their stories. Plus, she could wipe the smug smile off Cassie Evans, a girl in her class who always boasted about her amazing summer holidays to every exotic place imaginable. Cassie found it hilarious that their dad travelled the world, but the twins were stuck in London.

Ziggy was desperate to travel with Dad because he

wanted to see what new animals he could shapeshift into. With his powers, he could only transform into the animal that he was physically close to in real life, but once he had done it the first time, he could do it again at his command. So far, he only shapeshifted into small- and medium-sized animals that he usually saw in London. If he were to travel to all the wild places with Dad, imagine what animals he could transform into? Could his power make him as big as a whale? As tall as a giraffe? Maybe he could become a shark and swim up behind Misha when she was playing in the ocean and make her jump.

The thought made Ziggy laugh out loud. Misha and Dad looked at him and he quickly put his hand over his mouth to control himself.

Dad's phone rang in his hand. 'That's the TV

producers now. I'll just be in my office and then we'll go out for dinner.'

As soon as their dad left, the twins walked over to the globe that sat beside the bookshelf. Dad had brought it for them so they could always see where he was. Ziggy spun it so fast that it tilted even more to the side. Misha quickly straightened it up before it fell.

'Okay, I bet you two cinnamon pretzels that he's going to India,' Ziggy said, pointing at the globe. 'They have loads of cool animals like tigers, elephants and the Indian cobra!'

'Hmmm maybe,' Misha said, turning the globe more gently. 'I bet three chocolate-chip cookies that he's going to Australia. He can see the kangaroos, koalas and crocodiles!'