

JENNY PEARSON

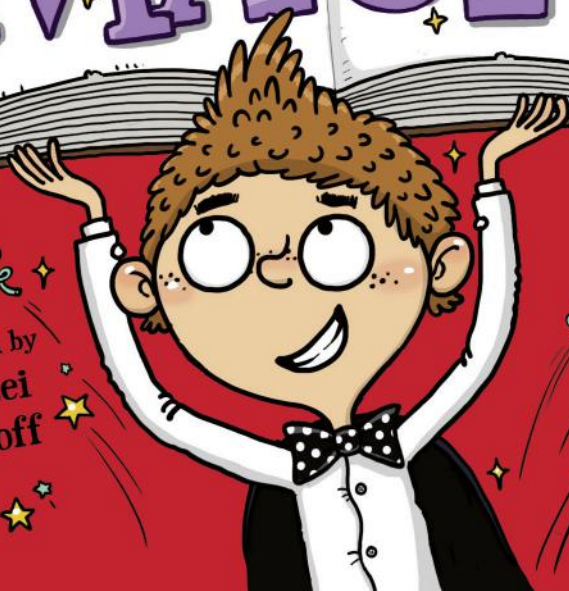
Marvin

and the

BOOK

of

MAGIC



Illustrated by
**Aleksei
Bitskoff**

A cartoon rabbit with long ears and whiskers is shown in a dynamic, jumping pose. It is holding a large, textured ball above its head with its right hand. There are small stars around the rabbit, suggesting motion or magic.

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Published by Barrington Stoke
An imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers
Westerhill Road, Bishopbriggs, Glasgow, G64 2QT
www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

HarperCollinsPublishers
Macken House, 39/40 Mayor Street Upper,
Dublin 1, DO1 C9W8, Ireland

First published in 2024

Text © 2024 Jenny Pearson
Illustrations © 2024 Aleksei Bitskoff
Cover design © 2024 Ali Ardington

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ISBN 978-1-80090-269-5

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed at Pureprint, a Carbon Neutral® printer



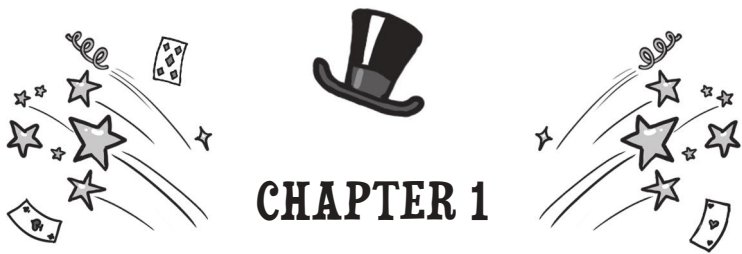
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For Angus Todd Morton Batman –
keep making your own magic

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Never Trust a Squirrel

My name is Marvellous Marvin. You might have heard about me from the show *TV's Most Talented Kids*. Well, from the bloopers if you didn't catch it live – they had 4.2 million views when I last looked. Yup, I'm *that* kid – the one who went on TV to perform magic tricks and ended up destroying the entire set.

Frankly, I blame the squirrel. I'd *thought* it might be more exciting to pull a bushy-tailed rodent from a hat instead of the standard white rabbit. I thought it would really impress the

celebrity judges. But here's a lesson for you – never trust a squirrel.

Squirrels are not as well behaved as rabbits, I discovered. It was just after I'd announced my name on stage. The little blighter leaped out from the secret box I had him in and attacked me. Bit me right on the nose.

My natural reaction was to get the squirrel off me. So I grabbed him and chucked him. He flew off, his little ears flapping, towards the left of the stage.

The squirrel landed, rather expertly, on one of the legs of the stilt walker who was waiting in the wings. And then he started to scramble up the stilt.

The stilt walker did not respond to this calmly. She started running about on her long wooden limbs in a right panic. She screamed. A lot. Then she wobbled as she tried to kick the squirrel off. Of course, stilt-girl lost her balance.

As she fell, she grabbed hold of a rope. The rope stopped stilt-girl from hitting the floor. But it also pulled down one of the ceiling lights.

Right on top of the piano.

The piano was smashed to pieces – which did not please the kid who was going to be playing Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony on it with his feet. He stomped onto the stage and started yelling. Unluckily for him, he’d been eating a peanut bar just moments before. The squirrel must have caught a whiff of peanut because he jumped off stilt-girl and landed on piano-boy’s head.

Piano-boy started running around in circles and then ran straight into a large water tank. It had been standing ready to be wheeled to the centre of the stage. The tank was supposed to be for an act called Tracey Turtle. Apparently, Tracey had trained some turtles to do a dance routine in the water.

Let's just say, the turtles did not get to dance that day.

The tank wobbled backwards and forwards. Then it seemed to stay frozen on its edge for a moment. Before finally tipping over. On top of the judges.

They gave me three loud buzzers. And a lifetime ban from ever applying to appear on the show again.

Anyway, of course I'd told everybody I knew that I was going to be on TV. So everybody I knew saw what had happened. As you can imagine, I was a laughing stock at school.

My dad has always been very encouraging of my magical efforts and told me not to worry about it. He said that people would forget. And then Dad fell about laughing. Again.

It turns out that people forget a lot of things – to do their homework, where they left

their phone, to brush their teeth (maybe that's just me). But they do not forget about the time a kid with a squirrel made a celebrity judge cry on TV because a tankful of water ruined his hairdo.

Anyway, I gave up magic after that. I couldn't face doing it again. All I'd ever wanted to be was a magician, but that dream was over.

See, my grandad was a magician – and a great one. I'll never forget the first time he sawed my nanna in two at one of my birthday parties. Grandad Jim always wanted to entertain me. He was pretty much my favourite person.

Before he died, Grandad Jim told me that I had the family gift for magic. The gift had skipped my dad and gone straight to me. Unlucky, Daddy-o! Knowing this had made me feel special. And I practised magic every day.

Grandad Jim got sick and couldn't get out of the house, so I'd go round to see him. I saw

it as my turn to entertain him. I'd try out some of my new tricks, and he'd give me tips and encouragement. Dad said it was the only time Grandad Jim really seemed like himself those days.



But then Grandad Jim died. And after the TV show disaster, I decided he'd been wrong about me having the gift. I'd pretty much made up my mind that I'd never do magic again. But then something happened. Something truly magical. And everything changed.