

Just Like Magic

Maria Papayanni

When young Eva finds out that the curses she places on people come true, she sets out to avenge the wrongdoings of the world through her newfound power.

Eva's mum is different. That much is certain. Her hair is as red as can be, she makes flowers bloom just by speaking to them, and animals seem to love her. Eva's dad says her mum was born in the wrong era, but was there ever a time when Madalena would fit in? Madalena teaches her daughter to punish wrongdoers with Upside-down Wishes. Eva inflicts her first Upside-down Wish on their godawful gossip of a neighbour. Growing up, Eva will find out that life is full of miracles and magic. She will also discover that in order to succeed you have to put up a fight. Upside-down Wishes sometimes do come true, but sometimes you have to jump into the action and overcome your fears.

Eva and her parents Diamandis and Madeline moved into a small house in the city centre. As bad luck would have it, a great gossip, Mrs Frosso, lives in the building opposite and spends her time spying on the new family...

Eva grows up in a home which is very different from the others around her. It looks like a small jungle in amongst the grey blocks of flats. Then there is her mother, Madeline, who isn't like any other mother she knows.

"My mum is not at all normal. Maybe she is a little bit like a witch? Not that she does strange magic like ordering the broom to clean up around the house or changing Frosso the gossip into a lizard, although I wouldn't mind that. But she is not like any other mum in the world, at least not like any I've met so far. And I've met a fair number.... My dad still says that my mum was born at the wrong time. If my dad is right, then I was born at the wrong time too, because I am my mother's daughter.... Sometimes I think my Dad doesn't like my mum at all. Why did they get married, since they are so different?..."

Not even their dog is normal. Si wanders around the streets all day and goes in and out of the house opening all the doors himself.

Sometimes Eve wonders why Si isn't a normal dog who waits behind the door for his owners to take him out for a walk on the lead.

But the world would be so boring if it were full of normal people and normal dogs! "Lots of people don't like seeing people who are different from them so they fight them" Eve thinks as she encounters the violence of everyday life in guise of the respectability of the neighbour, the cruelty of a stuffed animal collector or the intransigence of an authoritarian headmaster.

Eva knows that her mum and dad do not get on well together as they are always fighting about everything. Her dad leaves on the pretext of a business trip, and sends his daughter letters from far, distant countries.

As the house slowly turns into a small paradise in the grey capital, the gossiping neighbour begins to be jealous. Madalena's unconventional way of living and dressing upsets the neighbour who wants to get them thrown out of the neighbourhood.

Eva goes to fourth grade. The school gets a new headmaster who wants to everything to be orderly and to impose discipline on the school. He keeps tabs on everything that is going on and interrogates the children about the smallest thing.

Madalena tries to help her daughter overcome her fears by expressing her anger. She teaches her a game "How to punish the bad guys with Upside-down Wishes". Sometimes the Upside-down wishes work, *just like magic*. Sometimes, something more is needed ... To overcome your fears, to choose the right friends and dare to do the impossible with them. And then the great adventure begins. Small or large - battles are always worth it. Eva is growing up and learning to believe in miracles - that people who are different from us are helpful in that they let us see our lives through new eyes. Now why isn't everything as it should be? Well, maybe because miracles are not the same for everyone.

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