



*There's an island where magic lives and breathes. It's not a vaudeville sideshow of tricks and illusions. It's a real island filled with real people and with the magic of the universe. It wasn't always that way—and it won't stay that way if everything continues as it should. The people there will be spreading the magic far and wide—one day.*

*Right now, though, they're all still learning. Learning from a little girl named Cordelia—who learned from a blue whale named Beatrice.*

*This is their story.*



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## *Cordelia*

**I**t was summer vacation and the normally sleepy, little island where Cordelia lived was now jam-packed with tourists. People were everywhere on Ananda Island, enjoying the vacations they'd saved up for the entire year. For nine months out of the year, there were no lines, no crowds, no traffic, no people practically—but after Memorial Day came? Everywhere you looked—lots and lots of people filled up the island, and filled up McKenna's Seashell and Souvenir Shop, the beach store Cordelia's parents owned.

Cordelia's parents made most of their money for the year in those three months, so she didn't see them all that much during the summers—unless she went to hang out at the store.

Cordelia's older sister, Janey, worked at McKenna's too, but Mom and Dad didn't want their youngest to work

yet. They wanted Cordelia to have the kind of childhood they'd had. Her parents had grown up on the island. They'd grown up playing together, and had what they called a "magical childhood." Cordelia had heard that phrase so much growing up she'd started asking Mom and Dad where their wands and fairy dust were if everything had been so magical.

Mom always called Cordelia by her full name, but when Cordelia said something smart Mom used her middle name, too. "Cordelia Joy, watch your mouth young lady."

Actually, Cordelia did know how lucky she was to live on Ananda island. She loved her home. She loved that normally there were hardly any people around. Cordelia was not what you'd call a people person. She was more of a loner and she was okay with that—she preferred it that way.

But Cordelia's parents wanted her to have "grand childhood adventures" and "magical childhood experiences." *We still live in a place where neighbors know and watch out for each other, where everyone knows everyone else's names, where people don't have to lock the doors at night and kids can stay out until after dusk, and blah, blah, blah...* Cordelia and Janey had heard all of that about a million times. At least.

"Cordelia," Dad would say, "you're eleven years old! Work will be waiting for you for the rest of your life. Go out and be eleven! Have fun with your friends!"

Which was all well and good. Except for the part about friends.

Cordelia didn't have many of those.

Well, there was Maddy Mason. Cordelia had sat with her at lunch this past year. But that was only because Cordelia preferred books to people and Maddy felt the same way. Cordelia had tried talking to her once, around November, but Maddy had just glared at Cordelia then put her nose right back into her book.

So, Cordelia guessed, Maddy didn't really count as a friend after all.

Nope. No friends. Cordelia didn't really mind it that way. She was fine with no friends.

Absolutely fine.