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Ever since I can remember, I've always wanted to be a magician. You know the kind . . . like the ones you see on TV that can make animals disappear and saw people in half. Well, not *really* saw them in half, but they sure make it look like they do! Once on TV, I saw a magician make a whole plane disappear. I know it was only a trick, but it sure was cool.

But last Christmas one of my presents was a magic kit . . . and let me tell you, it changed my mind completely about wanting to be a magician!

The problem started a couple days before Christmas. I was upstairs in my bedroom, and my sister was downstairs watching TV.

"Matt!" my dad hollered up to me. "A package came for you in the mail today! You too, Kimmy!"

A package? For me? And Kimmy? Cool! I hardly ever get mail!

"Ohboyohboyohboy!" I heard my sister shout from downstairs. She's six years old and gets excited about anything. I'm eleven, so I've been around the block a few more times than her.

But I was still excited to get something in the mail!

I ran downstairs to find two large, brown packages on the kitchen table. Kimmy was already there, her eyes all bugged out at the sight of a box waiting for her and her alone.

"I think they're from Grandma and Grandpa," Dad said.

I picked up the package and read the address label.

**Mr. Matthew Sorenson  
2456 Willow Street  
Traverse City, MI 49685**

But right below the label was a note that got me really excited:

***Do NOT wait till Christmas! Open immediately!***

Cool!

"Can I open mine, Daddy?" Kimmy asked.

"Well, the note says not to wait," Dad said. "So I guess you'd better open it right away."

I didn't even ask Dad if I could open mine! I knew already that I was supposed to open it.

I couldn't wait. Grandma and Grandpa always get me the coolest stuff. Last year Grandpa got me a model rocket that really worked! This year . . . well, who knows?

I cut the packaging tape with a pair of scissors and opened the box. Inside was a card

addressed to me, and a bunch of popcorn. You know the kind of popcorn I'm talking about... those little white puffy kernels made of foam. They keep whatever is inside the box from shifting around and getting damaged.

I shuffled through the popcorn with my hands and found still another package. This one was wrapped in blue and gold Christmas wrapping paper. A silver bow was attached to the top of it.

Kimmy had already opened up her package and was tearing off the wrapping paper on her gift. She had spilled white foam popcorn all over the floor.

"It's a Barbie!" she suddenly yelled.

"Do you have to be so loud?" I said. Kimmy has this really high-pitched voice. She can be so annoying sometimes. She just stuck out her tongue at me.

Typical sister.

I began tearing into the wrapping paper. What was it going to be this year? A model airplane? Maybe a super giant ant farm! That would be neat!

But when I tore away the final layer of  
wrapping paper, I just stared.

“Wow,” I whispered.

I couldn’t believe what I was seeing.



I read the big block letters out loud:

**“PROFESSIONAL STAGE MAGICIAN  
KIT,”** it read. Right beneath that: *“Over 100  
magic tricks included!”*

“Wow!” I said again, only this time I didn’t whisper. A magic kit! I had always wanted one! How did Grandma and Grandpa know?

“Lemmee see! Lemmee see!” Kimmy shouted.

“Go on, go play with your doll,” I said, turning away from her. For once, she listened to me. She picked up her Barbie and went into the

living room.

I looked at the box, reading the words again.

This was going to be fun!

My own magic kit. Card tricks, disappearing tricks . . . it was all there.

My very own magic kit.

I couldn't wait. I had to go learn some magic right away. Then I could show everyone some magic tricks for Christmas! Uncle Dave and Aunt Kate would be coming, and of course my twin cousins, Alex and Adrian. Maybe I could even put on a magic show!

But I'd have to get started. Christmas was only three days away. That didn't give me much time to learn a lot of magic tricks.

I took the box upstairs to my room and opened it up. I spread out the contents all over my bed. There was a manual, a hat, a cape, and all kinds of cool stuff.

This was going to be a great Christmas! The best ever.

Now, looking back, I wish I'd NEVER opened up that box. I didn't know it at the time,



but what was about to happen almost wrecked  
Christmas – not only for me, but for everybody  
in Traverse City!

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Maybe I could have prevented any problems if I would have read the manual first. But I was in such a hurry to get started that I began playing around with the things that were included in the magic kit. I never even gave the manual a second glance.

Not yet, anyway.

I shuffled through a deck of trick cards. I found a small plastic tube that was supposed to make a penny disappear. There was also a small box that had a secret opening in the bottom to

make it look like whatever was placed in the box would vanish.

Then I found the magic wand.

It looked just like you would expect a magic wand to look like. It was about as long as my arm and all black, except for a white tip. Very cool.

Just then I heard banging on my door.

"Matt!" I heard Kimmy say. "Matt! I wanna see your magic kit!"

"Go away," I said. "I'm learning how to do magic."

"But I wanna see!" she persisted. Sometimes she can be such a pest.

"All right," I said. "But when I open up this door I'm going to make you disappear."

That did the trick. I heard her footsteps running away from the door and back downstairs.

"Dad!" I heard her shout. "Daddy . . . Matt is going to make me disappear! Don't let him, Daddy!"

Sisters.

I experimented with the cards for a few

minutes. It looked like an ordinary deck, except there were a couple special cards. There was even a trick card that shot water like a water pistol! That would be fun.

There was also a small tray that turned a one-dollar bill into a five-dollar bill. That would be even MORE fun!

And a black hat. It was a real magician's hat, one that you wore on your head and pulled rabbits out of.

Well, I guess I kind of figured you could pull rabbits out of it. There certainly weren't any rabbits included with the kit.

I plopped the hat on my head and looked into the mirror.

"Hey," I said to myself. "That looks good." I really *did* look like a magician. My black hair stuck out from the sides of the hat. I'm taller than most kids my age, and a little thinner, too. The hat made me look even taller. I think I might have looked like a young Abraham Lincoln, except he had a really big nose. I don't.

I rummaged through the stuff on my bed

and found another part of the magician's uniform . . . a long black cape.

I draped it over my shoulders and looked into the mirror again.

That looked even better. Wow! Was this going to be a cool Christmas! I was going to do magic tricks for everyone on Christmas day.

But my outfit wasn't complete yet. All I needed to really look like a magician was —

The magic wand.

I picked it up and looked into the mirror.

"That's cool," I whispered. I really *did* look like a magician.

I held the wand up, and waved it back and forth, pretending to make something disappear. I thought it would be really fun if I could make something vanish.

Little did I know I was about to make something *really* disappear.

And that's when the trouble began.



On my wall I have a paper drawing that I made in school. It was a drawing of lots of Christmas things—a snowman, a bunch of elves, Santa's reindeer, and a snow monster. The snow monster looked creepy. I gave him big red eyes and long fangs and white hair all over his body. The elves were all different colors and had pointed hats with a little dingle-ball on top. Their chins were pointy and so were their noses.

I decided that I would make the poster disappear.

“Aleekazaam!” I shouted as I waved the wand in the air. As I spoke, I pointed the wand at the poster.

The poster stayed right where it was, taped to the wall.

Hmmm. That didn’t work. I wondered what else I could try.

I looked around the room, and something outside my window caught my attention. I walked over to the window and peered down at the snow-covered yard below.

It was getting dark, but there was still enough light to see pretty well.

And what I saw made my eyes go wide and my jaw drop.

There were tiny elves running all over the yard! And reindeer! Even a snowman was walking around!

I rubbed my eyes, not believing what I was seeing.

But it was real! I could see them as clear as anything.

That’s when I suddenly realized something, and I turned around in shock, afraid

of what I would see.

The poster.

The paper was still on the wall, but all of my drawings—the elves, the reindeer, the snowman— all of them were missing! They were no longer on the paper!

I turned around again and looked down into the yard.

The elves were running about all over the place, and the reindeer were, too. They had even gone into our neighbor's yard . . . and boy, had they started to cause problems! The elves were climbing up trees that had been decorated. They were pulling off the lights and throwing them into the snow. I could see them smiling and laughing at their own mischievousness.

"Hey!" I yelled at them through the window. "Hey! You can't do that!"

I didn't think that they could hear me, but one of the elves that had climbed up a Christmas tree looked up.

He stuck his tongue out at me!

This was not good. This was not good at all.



The reindeer had gotten into my mom's flower garden. Obviously there were no flowers, just snow – but the reindeer pawed at the ground and dug up dirt! They left big holes in the garden! Mom's gonna freak!

I still couldn't believe what I was seeing. The creatures in my drawing had actually come to life. They were scurrying about all over the yard and into the street.

Suddenly, one of the elves climbed the light post in front of our house. The post was decorated with lights and tinsel and garland.

Do you know what that little stinker did? He pulled everything off! And I mean everything! He yanked off the colorful Christmas lights and they all blinked out. He pulled down the tinsel and garland, slid down the post, and stomped all over the decorations! It was crazy! They were going to destroy the whole yard!

Suddenly I shivered, and I turned and looked back at the blank poster on the wall.

If the elves had come alive . . . .

And the reindeer were alive, too . . . .

And if the snowman had come alive . . . .  
Then that would mean . . . .  
I shuddered at the thought.  
The snow monster.  
*He was alive, too!*

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