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 The Magic Within

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 Chapter One

If you travel far into this forest, you will find a magical place hidden within in. A place full of

 small and large forest animals. In this part of the forest, there is something very different

 about the animals you find here. All the animals here talk, and most walk up-right, for all

the animals in this forest are magical and each a possess special power.

 Every animal would learn of their power by the time they turned two. Their power would present itself at the right given moment and become apparent to each animal as their second year went on. Somewhere given the ability to grow things, some to heal, other had the ability to fly or see great distances, just to name a few. All the animals would gather at the end of the year, to view all the new powers given to the two-year-olds at a big celebration. Every animal in the forest would attend the celebration of powers when they turned two, expect one little hedgehog named Oliver.

Oliver was four this year, and still had not discovered his power. It worried his mother, but didn’t really bother Oliver. He kept to himself, so he didn't see the need for one.

Oliver, enjoyed being a home, following his same routine every day. He even had a schedule posted in both his bedroom and living room, so he could keep track of his day. He would wake up and get ready for the day, eat breakfast, walkdown to the post office and check his mail, run by the grocery store, eat lunch, tend the house and garden, read the newspaper and one his favorite books, take a bath, then finally bedtime. Oliver would repeat this schedule every day, and days he didn't, Oliver would struggle and become very unhappy.

He didn't pay much attention to others, he struggled with social interaction, and making friends. Oliver kept to himself, as though he were in his own little world, sometimes. Many of the other animals, never took the time to even say hello to Oliver, would whisper about him and laugh when they saw him. He stood out among the other animals, and when you stand out you become different. The other animals were afraid

of different. Different can be scary, sometimes, when we don’t understand it.

 There was a lot that was different about Oliver. He wore funny little ear muffs. You would see the other animals wear their ear muffs during the winter, but Oliver would always wear his, despite the weather. Since birth, he could not handle certain noises. Sometimes, loud noises, like the hooting from an owl perched on a branch, warning the other animals of danger, would cause him pain or anxiety. There was this big word for it, hyperacusis, that was told to his mother by the family doctor. Oliver would always try to pronounce it, but he never got it right. So, to help with loud noises, his mother gathered the caps from mushrooms and made him earmuffs.

Oliver’s mother made him a new set of ear muff every Spring, since he could remember. The earmuffs, would help block out some of the sound. This helped Oliver, remain calm in the noisy forest that he lived in. Even though, it helped Oliver go with his mom to town, or attend public gatherings, it did make Oliver stand out among all the other animals.

 The one thing that stood out about Oliver, was how quick he was at solving any time of puzzle. He liked having clear guidelines and objectives, and exceled in putting together any type of puzzle, or solving a riddle that involved numbers. He was one of the top students in his class. Oliver would always be asked to help the other students with their work, but he tried to avoid that as much as possible. Again, he wasn’t good with interacting with others.

One morning, Oliver woke at the same time he always did to start his day as he always had. As he was heading out the door to get his mail, he realized that it was not the same forest he went to bed to. Color had left the forest.

The magic seemed to have disappeared. He saw no one, heard no other animal. Oliver entered the post office, inside he saw one worker, standing behind the counter holding his ears. Even though, Oliver had always struggled with recognizing emotion, he could tell the rat was terrified.

Oliver walked over to the counter, curious to know what was wrong with the rat. The rat explained to him, that night before the sun rose an evil witch, who stumbled across the forest, casted a dark spell. She wanted to take all of the magic from the forest, for herself. The rat told of the song she started to sing and how with every word her voice rose higher and higher. This made it to where the animals of the forest where unable to hear, leaving only ringing left in their ears. The ringing left many unable to think, or to move

 As though they were paralyzed by fear. The animals, even with all the magic they

 possessed, were defenseless against the witch. That's why Oliver had not seen or

heard anyone when leaving the house.

Oliver tried to recall if he had heard the witch before leaving the house, but couldn't. He got up, got dressed, and ate breakfast with no interruptions. Before, walking out of the post office, the rat yelled at Oliver to see if he could use his earmuffs in hopes to get rid of the constant ringing in his ears. It took the rat, running to stop Oliver at the door, for him to be able to hear him, for as always, Oliver was wearing his earmuffs. Oliver politely told the rat no, feeling bad about leaving him there like that, but then he realized.... it was

the earmuffs. He wore them all the time, even when he was asleep. The earmuffs

always blocked out sound. This is why Oliver was not affected by the witches singing.

At that point Oliver realized something. He was the only animal in the entire forest,

 that was capable of stopping the witch from taking all the magic. Of course, this was

terrifying to Oliver. He was never one to step or be the hero in any situation, but he knew

this one time he had no choice.

He walked home, sat at his table and thought what to do. Being thrown off his daily normal routine, Oliver struggled at first, to really think about what he needed to do next. After hours of pacing, Oliver could only come up with, confronting the witch. He knew that always facing a problem head on, was the fastest way to solve it. So, he

decided that he would gain his strength and wake up first thing in the

morning and venture out to find the evil witch.

Morning came, and still the forest was under the witch's dark spell. Color was almost completely gone from the forest. Oliver knew he had to hurry .Oliver walked the same route he took every morning, and it didn't take long for the two to find each other. It upset the witch to see Oliver. She could not understand how he was not under her spell, for every other animal in the forest was still in the same spot as the day before unable move due to the ringing in their ears.

The witch tried one more time, trying to make her voice go even higher than before. Oliver still wasn't bothered by the singing of the witch. He asked the what she wanted, and she replied that she wanted to take the magic from the forest and have it to herself.

 The witch did not realize this, but what gave the animals powers, was the water that flowed through their river. The sparkling water, in the river, came from the snowy mountain tops. The elders had discovered, the magic of the rivers many-many years ago. The animals all drank from that river, giving them the special powers they possessed.

Oliver told the witch of the river, which made the witch the stop, and start to listen to Oliver. The witch kept responding to Oliver oddly. She thought she could out-smart him, and trick him with her clever riddles. For the witch did not know, that the one animal in the forest not affected by her spell, was always the one animal in the forest that could solve every one of her riddles.

With each riddle that she spit out, Oliver would quickly figure out and respond back to the witch. The witch started to get nervous. She realized that Oliver was stronger than she thought. After a few hours of trying to out-smart Oliver, the witch finally gave up. She didn’t want to leave the forest without any magic so she asked Oliver to make a deal.

 She would release the forest of her evil spell, if the animals of the forest

allowed her to collect water from the river. Oliver had never had such responsibility put on him, but he thought about the witches' request. He knew that if he didn’t, make a deal with the witch, every animal in the forest would remain, unable to move. Oliver decided to

make the deal, but on one condition, the witch had to promise to never cast a spell

upon the magical forest ever again and leave.

The witch agreed. She pulled out a large jar, unscrewed the top, and dipped the jar into the river collecting the magical spring water. The spell was instantly lifted. Slowly life was brought back to the forest. The leaves and grass slowing started turning back to different shades of green. Flowers stood return to their up-right position no longer, bent over without life.

Then Oliver, did something he hadn't done in a long time. He took off his earmuffs. He wanted to hear the other animals in the forest, for the first time in a long time. He heard a door open, and out walked Mrs. Mouse followed by her 5 children. One by one, every animal started to come out of the trance sat upon them by the witch. They all started to slowly gather in the middle of town, were Oliver stood. They were in shock. They realized that Oliver, had saved them. As Oliver found the courage to tell the other animals what happened, their eyes started to grow big and mouths opened from shock. They knew the courage it took to stand up to the evil witch. Suddenly, you could hear someone say loudly, “Wait.” From the crowd appeared, one of the oldest squirrels in the forest. The squirrel said, “Oliver, I now know what your magical power is.” Oliver turned and faced the squirrel. He continued,” Your power, is probably one of the most magical of powers you can possess. Your power is, your mind, your courage, and those silly little earmuffs you wear all the time.” All the animals started to laugh. The very things that made Oliver different, finally made Oliver standout. Oliver finally knew what his magical power was, it was himself. Things changed, after the evil witch visited the forest. The animals, who once did not understand Oliver, actually took time to get to know him. They stopped making fun of him about things they didn't understand. Instead, they asked so that they could understand. There was also a change in Oliver. He started to believe in himself, and every now and then would venture out without his earmuffs. Sometimes being different is a

good thing, because it can be what makes you stand out.

Oliver’s Superpower: Autism

Autism, just mean, that person’s brain develops differently. This changes how that person sees the world, making it hard at times to understand what is going on around them. In the book you saw that Oliver has a daily schedule. This is what a daily schedule might look like:



This helps a person with autism navigate through day. When they know what to expect and what is coming next, it makes for a better day. When life isn’t predictable, and things suddenly change, it throws a person with Autism off. It can cause them to become upset.

Oliver, struggled with understanding his superpower and understanding the emotions of others around him. Many people with autism struggle with self-awareness and understanding how others might feel. They might not recognize if your sad, mad, or happy with them. It might come off like they are insensitive to the people around them. They just need help understanding how you feel.

People with autism, can sometimes, have sensory issues. This can include sensitivity to sound, lights, smells and even the clothing. You might see someone with autism wear sunglasses or earmuffs, like Oliver. This helps with bright lights and loud noises, that can sometimes cause them pain or stress.

A lot of times, people with autism, have things they are really interested in. From toys cars, maybe a certain superhero, or even history facts. Pay attention, to what they might be really interested in, and use it to start a conversation.

In the book, Oliver had a hard time making friends. People the autism struggle with social interaction. It might be easy for you to go ask someone at the playground, you don’t know to play, but it can be a very scary thing to someone with autism. They can become very nervous, and not know what to say. They don’t always understand the boundaries of friendship, making it hard to keep friends.

Autism does not look the same for everyone. You might hear the word “spectrum.” This word is used to show, how autism can look different in each person that has it. So may have a lot of communication, while others have to use different methods to communicate. Take time to get to know them. Understand, autism just means they see the world in a unique way. And remember what makes you different, might just be the very thing that makes you stand