

Adult personal development book illustrated by a true story
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Leah McClellan, Editor

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter

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Her first memory was buying something. When she was a young child, her family often took camping trips, and she loved - holding and touching everything in the little souvenir shops. The shops were mostly for campers to pick up the odd loaf of bread or hot-dog sticks and bags of charcoal, but the souvenirs were the real draw for Mina. The little rock collections were especially attractive. They were polished and smooth and shiny, and Mina loved stroking them. They had sweatshirts and T-shirts too with the name of the park on them.

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Inevitably, campers didn't plan ahead for laundry or chilly nights, and the campground laundry rooms were always too small and dirty. Sometimes her family would go into town for a bigger laundromat so they could get done quicker. And in the town

shops, she coveted the birch bark canoes and loved to smell the cedar boxes. She didn't really want one; the dumb sayings ruined them. They just smelled good. One was a box affixed to a base inscribed with "For the man who has nothing, here's a box to put it in."

Commented [LM1]: Is this what you mean? If not, it seems out of place.

Commented [LM2]: One subject, two verbs (compound predicate) don't require a comma and can create choppiness (although can be used sometimes stylistically)

Deleted: herself coveted the birch

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On one occasion, her sister Gina bought an Eskimo doll with a real rabbit fur coat. Mina bought a tiny canoe, consoling herself that she would get the large one later. And as she turned away from the cash counter, a shelf labeled "magic tricks" caught her eye. A shiny silver pendulum, suspended from a short chain in a little box, promised to answer all questions truthfully. She was transfixed - nobody ever wanted to answer her questions, but now she would know everything. She remembered that a cousin had a magic set, and she always seemed so smart. She wondered if there was a connection as she counted out the last of her allowance and paid for it.

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Commented [LM3]: Consider your point of view. It appears to be limited 3rd most of the time, but then it jumps to omniscient (or the author's voice) once in awhile, which can be distracting and takes the reader out of the story. You can still provide the situation but show more instead of telling.

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She enjoyed other things about camping, too; it wasn't just the gift shops. She climbed trees and took hikes by herself, and at her favorite state park she loved to sit on a bridge or at the top of the dam and let her mind wander or just go blank. When she thought back to those days, she was so glad she'd never crossed paths with a bear. Why had her parents allowed her to go out hiking in the woods by herself? Back then the state parks had nature programs for families who were

Commented [LM4]: Suggested wording. Since she has it in the car later, might be good to have her buy it.

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Commented [LM6]: See notes below about time/age switches.

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Commented [LM7]: See next comment.

camping, and she enjoyed the outdoors, but her family rarely participated. So she was on her own.

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Sometimes she felt like she was part of the earth more than a member of her family or her small circle of friends. Of course she couldn't tell anyone that. But she preferred to be alone, and what could be wrong with that? Skiing alone, hiking alone, climbing trees alone . . . , sometimes she sorely missed those

Commented [LM8]: Just a suggestion though it might not be accurate. Readers will wonder as I did, and perhaps something like this could be effective. (You can certainly use my wording if you like.)

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She had read a book about what the author called the Highly Sensitive Person. She was pretty sure that described her to a T. She was perfectly content to stay home alone, but then that would make her feel she should reach out to people. It seemed so difficult to navigate life. What on earth was she supposed to do with herself, or more appropriately, what was she supposed to do with her life? What was her best career option? When it's too hard to make your own mind up, it's very difficult to make these kinds of decisions.

Commented [LM9]: How old is this girl? So far we have what sounds like a young girl, perhaps 10. Then we have her reflecting back (plus the omniscient narrator or author's voice I mentioned. Right after this section, we're back to the young girl. Readers may be confused. Consider creating a pattern of young girl-adult reflections-young girl-adult reflection and so on in sections (you already have sections; perhaps use them in this way). Then the reader will get used to it.

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Commented [LM10]: I'm wondering if this is just rough draft stuff. Perhaps too soon for copy edit? We ...

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On the way to their next stop, she brought out her pendulum and practiced in the car. It was a long drive to the 1967 World's Fair in Montreal, and Mina, her sister, and her brothers sat four across in the back seat of the blue sedan. And because she was the smallest, she had to sit in the uncomfortable middle and straddle the hump. Sometimes they saw antelope and one time even a buffalo. But her brothers were in the way, and she couldn't really see out the window unless they were slouched

down. After eating some soggy sandwiches, Mina was soon tired of straining to look out the window at the scenery or the funny little old fashioned towns they passed through, and she asked the little ball some questions.

But, first, she had to determine which way her pendulum would swing for yes and which way for no. The directions indicated she should ask a question that could be answered either yes or no, one to which she knew the answer.

"Am I wearing a red sweater?" she asked. She was sure all secrets were about to be revealed

Her brothers doubled over with laughter.

"Shut up!" she demanded. "I'm concentrating."

They only laughed harder, but she ignored them.

"Am I wearing a red sweater?" She made her voice deeper, more authoritative.

The pendulum began to swing toward her and then away. Toward and away.

"That must be yes!"

Her sister rolled her eyes.

"You ask it something."

"OK," said Gina. "Will my sister ever grow up?"

Will I get another cat? Mina asked silently. The pendulum said yes.

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Moved up [1]: Sometimes they did see antelope, or even buffalo. But her brothers were in the way anyway and she couldn't really see out the window. They sat four across in the back seat of the teal blue sedan, and because she was the smallest, she had to sit in the middle, and straddle the "hump."

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