

OMG... AM I A WITCH?!



BY TALIA AIKENS-NUÑEZ

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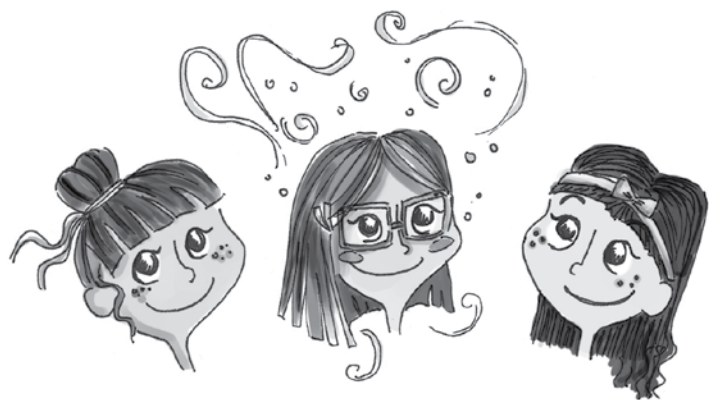
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TO MY LOVING AND SUPPORTIVE FAMILY

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ONE



APRIL tightly held the little, white, fluffy dog as she sat on her bed, her heart pounding so hard, she thought it would pop out of her chest.

“Arrr!” he yelped.

Oh gosh, I’m choking him. She tried to trace the outline of the pink dots on her green blanket, but her hands wouldn’t stop shaking. *Breathe. Just breathe. I can’t believe I just did that. I can’t believe . . . wait—I wonder, what else can I do? Who else can I turn into a dog?*

Her enormous, ugly, fire engine red glasses slid down her face. The sweat that gathered at the tip of her nose dripped onto Austin's head.

"Sorry about that." She wiped the sweat off his cotton ball-looking head, rubbing it farther into his fur. Holding him with one arm, she wiped her clammy hand on the blanket. She switched the dog to the other arm and wiped her other hand.

Breathe in through the nose, out through the mouth—ugh, that yoga class I took with Mom was stupid. She said there would be other girls there my age. Nope, just a bunch of old, deep-breathing moms.

Mrs. Appleton yelled upstairs, "April, is that you?"

Freak! Freak! Did Mom see me run in with Austin? She will kill me! She can't find out about Austin or, my, uh, powers. Wow! I have powers! Would she even be able to tell this is him?

She picked up the dog and took a good look at his face. She wrinkled her nose and shook her head.

“Nope, you look nothing like him. You’re smaller than a football. And have more fur than anything else.” *I have to fix this ASAP.*

“Grrr . . .” Austin growled.

“Austin, shhhh!” April pleaded, putting her finger over her tightly squeezed lips. “Please, please, please be quiet. I’m trying to figure out what to do. I’m still shocked no one saw you on the bus.” She grazed her hand over his head, which was so small it only partly covered her palm.

“Grrr . . .” Austin growled again.

“This is what I get for Googling ‘how to turn your brother into a dog.’ It actually worked!” April threw her head back and looked at the ceiling. Her eyes filled with tears. “If I just had someone else to ride with on the bus this

. . . this . . . this would never have happened.” She wished Grace had been there to ride home with. April continued to pet Austin. She knew he understood her.

The soft fur brushing against her hand soothed her. “If I knew that new girl, Eve, a little better I would have sat with her instead of—” She looked down at him. He narrowed his eyes at her. Her hand dropped to the comforter.

“Sorry, Austin,” she sighed. “We just have to sneak downstairs to the computer without Mom seeing us. And, I can Google ‘how to undo turning your pestering brother into a dog.’”

“Grrr . . .”

“Well, it is sort of *your* fault this happened.”

“Grrr . . .”

“Well, fine. Maybe no one really deserves to be, you know, turned into a dog, but . . . but, you are soooo mean and annoying.”

Austin grumbled. He turned his head away from her. She ignored him.

“OK. Well, how about I text Grace and ask her to do the search? She has a computer in her room.”

Click-clack. Click-clack. The steps got closer. The sound grew louder. *Click-Clack. Click-CLACK.* Her heart raced as she heard each step.

“April, are you home?” her mother yelled up the stairs.

“Yes, Mom!” April yelled through the closed door.

“Is Austin home, too?”

April held her breath as if that would stop time. Her heart pounded so hard she felt it in her head.

“Uh . . . I think he . . . uh . . . had practice?”

Tell her more so that she doesn't try to find him. Think fast. Think fast.

“I don’t know what he’s doing.” She took a deep breath again. “But, uh, he said he would be home later. And, to tell you not to worry . . . or call . . . he’ll be home.”

OMG! I have never ever lied to her! I am a horrible daughter. But, her mother couldn’t know about Austin. She would be so mad at April if she knew she had turned him into a dog. *WOW! Did I really just do that? Did I really just turn my brother into a dog and lie to my mother in the same hour?*

Click-CLACK. Click-clack. Her mom returned to the living room.

April let out a huge breath. “Geez, that was bad.”

Austin grunted as if he agreed.

“Thanks, Austin . . .” She straightened her back and squeezed her shoulder blades together, looking down at him under her glasses. “Even

though you are a year older than me, I kind of like feeling . . . bigger and . . .” she cleared her throat, “witch-ier!”

“Grrrr . . .”

“Well, too bad *I’m* the witch and you’re the dog.”

Am I really a witch?