

*IT'S TIME TO LET IT GLOW—
THIS IS WHO WE ARE.
TOGETHER WE WILL GLOW,
SHINING BRIGHTER THAN THE STARS.
ON BOTH HANUKKAH AND CHRISTMAS DAY,
IT'S TIME FOR US TO CELEBRATE
WITH WARMTH AND LOVE AND LOTS OF SNOW—
YOU AND ME, WE'LL LET IT GLOW.*



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Let it Glow

Marissa Meyer and Joanne Levy



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CHAPTER 1

Aviva

“YOU’RE GETTING TO BE SUCH A PRO WITH THOSE CHOPSTICKS,” my grandmother said. We were at our favorite Chinese restaurant in the middle of the dim sum rush on a Sunday. It was our special day together—one I looked forward to every week, and not only because we stuffed ourselves with dumplings and then hung out at the mall, either. (Though that was a major perk.)

Some kids think their grandmothers are boring or too old to be fun, but my bubbe is the Best. She’s smart, sassy, and loves being the center of attention—just like me.

When I looked up to agree with her about the chopsticks, the slippery dumpling slid out of them onto the tablecloth with a plop.

“Whoops!” I exclaimed, grinning at her. “Maybe not as good as you think!”

She leaned closer conspiratorially. “I guess we’ll just have to come back next week. After all, practice makes perfect!”

We both laughed. She’d been saying this for years. But really, who needed an excuse to go out for dim sum?

“Speaking of practice,” Bubbe said, “I have great news.”

I stabbed the dumpling with a chopstick and lifted it up carefully so it wouldn’t slide off. “Oh?” I said before I shoved the entire doughy package of deliciousness into my mouth.

“The holiday pageant at Rowena Village is coming up later this month.”

I was still chewing, but said, “Okay,” as I reached for the steamer basket of sticky rice. “Sounds fun.”

Bubbe lived at a senior center—not because she was old, but because she hated to cook for herself, all her friends lived there or were close by, and there were fun programs almost every night. I knew part of it was also that her eyesight had gotten pretty bad and she couldn’t drive anymore, but that hadn’t slowed her down yet.

Still, the way she talked about Rowena Village made it sound really good. Like a year-round summer camp. More than once I’d asked her when I could move in. (She always laughed, even though I wasn’t totally joking.)

“You should be in it,” said Bubbe.

Sticky rice instantly forgotten, I looked up at her. “Really?”

“Of course. You’re a born performer!”

“You are not wrong!” I sang, shimmying in my seat.

She winked as if to say, *Of course I’m not wrong!* and picked up a har gow dumpling with her chopsticks. “The best part? I made sure they’re including a Hanukkah number this year.” She took a bite of the dumpling, not dropping the rest. She was such a pro.

Once she was done chewing, she pointed the half-eaten dumpling at me. “You’ll be in the Hanukkah number and will shine like the star you are, my bubbeleh.”

See? This was one of the reasons I loved my grandmother. She knew I was meant to be a star. In movies or on Broadway. Wherever.

Except . . .

“Of course I want to be in the pageant, Bubbe,” I said. “I want to sing and dance and perform. You know I do. But . . .” I reached

again for the sticky rice, dropping my eyes to the steamer basket, not sure how to finish the sentence.

“But what, Vivvy?”

I grabbed one of the packets of rice wrapped in a lotus leaf and plunked it on my plate. Then I gently pulled at the corner to open it. Yes, I was stalling.

“Vivvy?”

“Fine,” I muttered through a sigh. “I’m just not that Jewish.”

“Speak up, bubbeleh.”

“I said”—I looked up at her—“I’m not very Jewish.”

Her eyes narrowed a little. “What do you mean? You’re Jewish. There is no ‘very.’”

“I just don’t *feel* very Jewish.” I shrugged. “We don’t celebrate anything. Dad’s not even Jewish. And, well, you know, there’s that whole I’m-adopted thing. I just don’t feel very Jewish. How can I do a Hanukkah number?”

Bubbe put down her chopsticks slowly and reached for her small cup of jasmine tea. She took a drink before returning it to the table. Now *she* was stalling, her eyebrows knitted together like she was thinking hard about what she should say.

Finally, she looked straight at me with the kind of serious face that made me want to fidget and squirm. “That you are adopted has nothing to do with it. You were wanted and instantly loved by your family the second they brought you home. As a baby, you were taken to the mikveh and given a Hebrew name and became as Jewish as if you’d had a Jewish birth mother. You will have a bat mitzvah next year like your brother had a bar mitzvah. And your father not being Jewish does not make *you* less Jewish. Aviva Libby Davis. You. Are. Jewish.”

She stared at me until I nodded in agreement. Then she reached for the teapot. “But as for your family’s lack of observance, well, I wish that was different. Your parents had agreed you kids would be raised Jewish, and I’d hoped that when it came time for Benny to study for his bar mitzvah, your family would have taken it more seriously and not just done the bare minimum. Though I do think your brother was glad he did it in the end.”

She sighed and shook her head before she met my eyes again and said, “But, Vivvy, you can always celebrate with me. I would love to take you to synagogue for the High Holidays next year. Or to the Jewish community center for dances or programs. If you want to enroll in Jewish Sunday school or go to Saturday morning services, we can do that, too.”

“Really?” I said, not sure I wanted to go to synagogue for regular services. But it was the first time she’d ever suggested that, and I believed she would take me, even though she didn’t normally go every week. And Jewish Sunday school? I hadn’t even known that was an option. Benny’s bar mitzvah lessons had been mostly online, but going to a place with other Jewish kids might be fun.

“Of course”—Bubbe nodded—“you just need to say the word. But it has to come from you so your mother doesn’t think I’m pressuring you. It’s up to you how observant you want to be. But no matter what you decide, you are nonetheless one hundred percent Jewish.”

She seemed really sure, even though I still had my doubts. “Seriously, you think I’m Jewish enough to be in a Hanukkah number in the pageant?” I asked. “Even though I don’t really celebrate Hanukkah?”

She nodded. "Yes, of course."

I gave her the side-eye. "Will I get to sing?"

She grinned as she filled my teacup. "I'm counting on it."

"And dance?"

"I don't know if there will be dancing, but if there is, I fully expect you to dance. Sign-up is tomorrow evening at the center. Ask your mother to bring you."

I couldn't help it. I jumped up out of my seat and threw my arms around my grandmother. "Oh, Bubbe, this really is the best news. I'm going to make you so proud."

"Of course you will." She laughed as she hugged me back with one arm and put the teapot down with the other, a little spilling out of the spout. "You always make me proud, bubbeleh. Always. But I think this is going to be your moment. I can't wait."

Neither could I.

CHAPTER 2

Holly

THE ELF IS A TRAITOR!

This thought had popped into my head one hour before the bell rang to let us out of school Friday afternoon, and I hadn't been able to concentrate on anything else since.

Instead of completing the worksheet on local governments I was supposed to be focusing on, I'd spent that hour bent over my notebook, jotting down all my new thoughts. I liked to think Ms. Chang would understand. She was my favorite teacher because she always assigned the most interesting writing prompts—things like *What mythical creature would you want to keep as a pet?* (Dragon, obviously.) Or *If archaeologists discovered the lost city of Atlantis, what sort of technology would they find?* (Magical headsets that let you communicate with mermaids!)

Ms. Chang even once said my stories were really good and that I had the “potential to be a published writer someday.” When I heard those words, my whole body lit up inside like a Christmas tree. I mean, my grandpa had been telling me this for years, but he was family, so I wasn't sure it counted. Coming from a teacher, it felt extra special.

Usually Ms. Chang reserved the last thirty minutes of class for reading or freewriting, but we'd been behind on Friday, so we were stuck doing social studies instead. It was hard enough to pay attention to social studies on a normal day, but when my fingers were itching to work on a story, it was impossible.

Then on Friday evening there were chores to do, and I had to make dinner for me and Gramps because Mom had worked late at the bank again. After we ate, Gramps asked if I wanted to watch the newest spy movie on demand, and I couldn't pass up an invitation like that. Besides, I'd thought that I would have all Saturday to work on my elf-traitor idea, but *no*. Mom finally had a day off, and instead of getting our Christmas tree like we were supposed to, the whole day had turned into one long, tedious slog of errands and housework. Grocery shopping, the pharmacy, the hardware store for new strands of Christmas lights for the so-far-nonexistent tree, followed by laundry, dishes, vacuuming . . . It was never-ending.

So when I woke up Sunday morning, I didn't give anyone a chance to derail me. Mom had gone for a run and Gramps was sleeping, so I left a note on the counter, bundled up in my coat and boots, and hightailed it to the public library a couple of blocks away. I ran the whole way through the slush, my backpack bouncing on my shoulders. I waved to Ms. Clark at the front desk as I hurried past, heading straight for my favorite spot.

The library was like a second home to me, and all the librarians knew me by name. Mr. Merino, the youth librarian, would even set aside new books for me when they came in, especially anything with a dragon on the cover.

My reading nook was waiting—a bright-yellow beanbag chair that lived in the bay window behind the graphic novel section. I dropped my backpack on the floor and slumped into the squishy beanbag, exhaling in the same way Gramps did when he finished the long, slow walk from his bedroom at the end of the hall to his favorite recliner in the living room.

Most importantly—*why* did Barnabus want to sabotage the train and ruin Christmas? Maybe he had been on the Naughty list when he was a kid, and now he wanted the toys to go to the naughty kids? Or maybe he wanted all the toys for himself? Or maybe he was the long-lost son of the Grinch, wanting to finish the job his dad had started years ago?

The next few hours flew by as I brainstormed new ideas and wrote out the next part of the story. It was different from the things I usually liked to write—more reindeer, fewer fairies—but it was turning into a fun story that I knew Gramps would love. I couldn't wait to give it to him on Christmas morning.

Once my stomach started to growl, I packed up my things again and waved goodbye to the librarians on my way out. The air was crisp and smelled like fresh snow was on its way, and now that I wasn't in a hurry, I could enjoy all the lights strung on the eaves and the wreaths hung in doorways. Our town felt so enchanted this time of year, like the whole world was celebrating together.

When I got back to the apartment, I skipped the elevator and took the stairs to the second floor. I opened the door quietly in case Gramps was resting.

As soon as I entered the apartment, though, I could hear the TV on in the back bedroom. Sherlock, our gray tabby cat, meowed from his favorite perch on top of the kitchen cabinets. He stood and gave a long feline stretch before jumping down to the counter and then to the floor. He meowed again and brushed past my ankles as he pranced over to his empty food bowl.

"Hey, Sherlock," I said, giving him a quick scratch on his neck as I set my backpack down. "Did Gramps forget to feed you?"

I filled his bowl before making my way down the hall.

"I'm home!" I called, knocking softly on Gramps's door, which was partly open. "Can I get you any—"

My gaze landed on a form sprawled across the floor. I gasped. "Gramps!"

He groaned as I dropped to my knees beside him.

"Gramps, are you okay?"

"Yes, yes," he said with a grunt. "I'm fine, Holly. Can you help me up?"

But he didn't sound fine, or look fine. He was lying on his side, his walking cane on the floor a few feet away.

"What happened?" I asked, taking his arm.

"I just lost my balance," he said, accepting my help. "I'm not hurt. It happened just before you got home."

I frowned, shaking a little as I helped him up onto the bed. He sat down and exhaled, resting his elbows on his legs. I grabbed his cane and leaned it against the mattress. I couldn't help looking around at the furniture in the room. The sharp corners of the dresser and his nightstand. Mom had told me that falling was dangerous for older people. It wasn't like they could just bounce back up, or heal from a bad bruise practically overnight, like I could. If he hit his head or broke a bone, it could put him in the hospital . . . or worse.

"It's all right," Gramps said, and I knew he was trying to reassure me, but I was worried. No, more than worried. I was *scared*.

Neither of us wanted to say it, but this was the third time he'd fallen in the last couple of months. His balance was getting worse.

"I'm sorry," I said, sitting next to him. "I was at the library. I shouldn't have been gone for so long. I should have been—"

"Now, now, enough of that." He put an arm around my shoulders. "It's not your job to take care of me. Were you working on a new story at the library?"

"Um . . . yeah," I said. "But I can't tell you about it, because it's a surprise."

"I'm sure it will be fantastic. After all, storytelling runs in our blood." He smiled at me, like he always did when he reminded me that we had storytelling in common. But this time I thought he looked tired beneath that smile, and I couldn't help but feel like he was just trying to distract me from the real issue.

He said it wasn't my job to take care of him, but Mom worked so much, and there was no one else.

If I couldn't take care of him, who would?