



*This made me believe again in magic. Not the kind that comes from wishing on stars or blowing out candles. This magic was only arm's length away and reached out to me.*

## Walking Books and Pixie Dust: The True Magic at Arm's Length

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Within the depths of our souls lies a glimmer of hope for even the tiniest twinkle of magic to sprinkle upon our lives and send our hopes and dreams into shining fruition. Some wish to fall into love that lasts; others wish on stars like children for longer, healthy lives filled with contentment and peace. In the age of modern technology, this can feel impossible to obtain. With one swipe of our thumb, the lives of millions spread out like a canvas before our eyes, making it impossible to ignore that the colors on *theirs* are more vibrant than the dimness of *ours*. One single swipe has the power to pull the seed of our wants and dreams right from the soil of our hearts.

I dare say, perhaps the spark of magic we hope to fuel the gnawing within us isn't found in the experiences we have. Perhaps it isn't even in the size of our bank accounts. Maybe the all-

encompassing peace and contentment we crave exists right before our eyes, and it is all—yes, every piece of it—at arm's length. Words are magic. So are people.

I discovered this early on in life. In kindergarten to be exact. I found the darkest color in my crayon box and let it mold a new and different Snow White. Her hair spun in braids around her waist, and under her prince charming's golden crown were dreadlocks. To me, the "white" in her name meant only purity and innocence. Unfortunately, I was in for a rude awakening when I showed my rendition of Disney's first princess to my kindergarten teacher. While she read through my first manuscript, her lips were pursed, and eyebrows slung. She explained to me the importance of copyright infringement: I could not remaster anything without the

author's permission. She made it clear that I should hang up my paper and crayons and never write again. If I continued to write stories such as these, no one would read them, and I might be sued or arrested. Her words, like vines wrung the glimmering magic of dreams and wishes right out of me. Or so I thought.

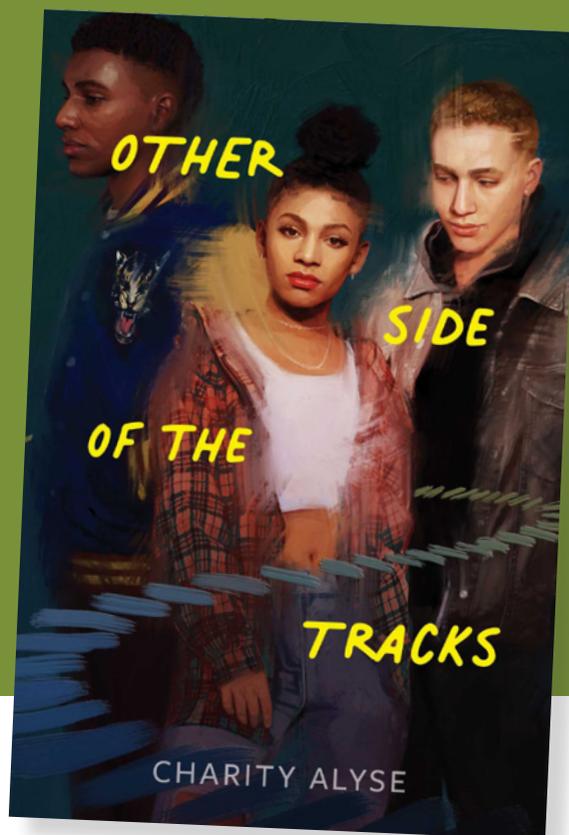
In wants to keep a clear criminal record and avoid being the first six-year-old sued, I vowed to give up creating worlds for good. This meant no more writing stories about Black princesses—or anything else for that matter. Magical things like words and stories rarely die. Words are eternal just like our personal stories.

The next summer, my grandmother's air conditioner lost its ability to keep us cool. She found relief in the only place where one could sit all day, stay safe, and, most importantly, stay cool. Her local library. I'm sure every

person in the brick building found it strange to see a little girl gawking out of the large glass boundary separating the children's section from the rest of the place. Especially, when she was surrounded by endless shelves of books, toys, and coloring pages at her disposal. My little heart was too busy dancing within me. The vines that poured from my kindergarten teacher's lips to hold me captive were drying at the root. I was *finally* reading the most beautiful stories again, and it wasn't those that lay between paperback and hard covers. These stories were alive and walking all around me.

The homeless man who usually slept on the bus stop bench waited patiently next to the vending machines while a librarian purchased food for him. Others dropped off cans into overflowing boxes labeled "food drive." Paintings of every color hung around the library, a gallery of artwork on canvas created by the neighbors I met during the summers I spent with my grandmother. Teens who crumpled the pages of their summer homework in frustration found solace in the sweet voice of their tutors who showed them another way. The clicking of countless keyboards and hushed whispers sounded as a symphony to my ears. This made me believe again in magic. Not the kind that comes from wishing on stars or blowing out candles. This magic was only arm's length away and reached out to me.

The library was where I learned to do more than read books. As I grew older, under the direction of librarians I had the pleasure of volunteering my time in various ways. From reading books to little children to aiding in homework help like many librarians did for me. I learned to play guitar (and realized it wasn't for me), did crafts, and tasted international food for the first time.



The glimmer of magic that I mentioned earlier never ceases to meet me when I walk through the doors of my local library. I still feel the fluttering in my heart reminding me of the pleasure that comes in grazing the spines of unread stories and worlds. Most importantly, the desire to reach out to those around me—whether the homeless man, the teenager, child, or family in need—has endured.

The past patiently waits to be called forth by the present, and, when the two meet, the warmth of nostalgia settles in. A new generation lies in front of us, another little Charity—an open book ready to embrace lessons of love and acceptance. What better

place to find them than in a building that houses both bound and walking stories. There is power in both words and action. Our words can set a child to dreaming, and our actions can show them a better world. It was in my grandmother's local library that I found both. The magic we search for is bubbling before us, walking stories waiting to be influenced by our good works. Can you see the magic glimmering before your eyes, now? The pixie dust sparkling on your words? Contentment lies not in the dreams that are fulfilled but the people we serve. May the difference we make in the walking stories around us light the way to a brighter future.

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