

Chapter 1

Looking for Lei



“Where’s Lei?” Cora asked her cousin Isabelle. Lei had been walking on the gravel path beside them minutes ago, but now Cora could only see their parents up ahead. They all had binoculars pressed to their eyes as they searched for birds in the blue sky.

Isabelle stopped and spun around. “Did

we leave her behind?” she replied, but she could only see Lei’s older sister, Ying, nodding her bright pink hair to the music coming through her earbuds.



Cora readjusted the heart hairclip in her blonde bob as she thought for a moment. “Maybe she’s somewhere collecting science stuff. She brought those

Cora shuffled down beside her. “It doesn’t look like nothing,” she said gently. “Are you angry with us?”

Lei let out a sigh and shook her head. “I’m not angry with you,” she said, sounding calmer now. “I’m angry at myself. Why don’t I know what my unicorn magic is yet?!”

As Lei’s eyes filled with tears, Isabelle sat down the other side of her and gave her a hug. “I’m sure you will soon,” she told her cousin.

“But we’ve been too busy to go to Blossom Wood for a whole week – and now we’re on this stupid nature walk!”

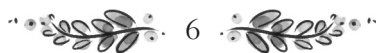
The three cousins had an incredible secret. At the start of their holiday together, they had found hoof prints in a cove near their campsite. When they’d stepped into them, they’d been

OK for you – you know your unicorn magic is light. And Cora’s is healing. What if I don’t have any magic at all?” She buried her face in her hands, tipping her long hair forward and revealing the pink hair braids underneath. She hadn’t been allowed to dye her hair pink like her older sister, so this was the next best thing!

“There’s no way that we both have magic and you don’t,” Cora told her cousin. “You just have to be patient.”

Above Lei's head, Isabelle raised her eyebrows at Cora. Lei was the least patient out of the three of them. In fact, she was the least patient person Isabelle knew! She jumped up, deciding the best thing to do was to try to take Lei's mind off it.

“Come on – I saw a pond up ahead,



with loads of tiny things growing in it.
Did you bring your microscope?”

Lei looked up, her face brighter now,
and she let Isabelle pull her from the
ground. “You bet!”

The three cousins clambered back over
the wall, and Isabelle pointed to the
pond in the distance.



Lei began sprinting towards it. “Last one there is a rotten egg!” she yelled.



“How much more cheese should I grate?” Isabelle asked Cora. Cora’s blue eyes were filled with tears – but since



she was smiling, Isabelle guessed it was only from the onions she was peeling!

Cora looked at the pile of cheese, towering up from the chopping board like an Egyptian pyramid. “Um, unless you’re planning to feed the whole campsite, I think that is enough!”

Isabelle grinned. “What? You can never have enough cheese!”

“Where’s Lei got to?” Cora wondered, wiping away her onion tears and looking around. “She’s been washing those peppers for ages.”

The two girls glanced at each other. “Uh-oh!” they chorused, guessing exactly where she might be.

Isabelle thought quickly. “We’re just going to the loo,” she said to her mum, who was pulling the picnic plates out of a big basket.

“It means real, or true,” Cora explained. “Dad uses it a lot!”

They headed towards the toilet block, passing the washing-up station – where, as they’d guessed, Lei was nowhere to be seen. A bag of red and green peppers sat on the draining board, abandoned.

“I think we were right,” said Isabelle, spotting the peppers. “We have to get to the cove!”

They veered off past the toilets to the edge of the Hilltop Hideaway campsite, then ran down the hill towards the small lake in the distance.

“Do you really think she would have gone there without us?” Cora panted.

“I don’t know,” Isabelle replied, her red, curly hair bouncing as they ran.

“Maybe. You know what she’s like...”

Cora nodded. Her cousin was a lot

more confident and headstrong than she was. Once, Lei had even flown from her home in America all the way to London by herself, so she could stay with Isabelle for the Easter holidays while her parents were busy working. Still, going to Blossom Wood without them? Lei would have to be *really* upset to do that.

They reached the shore of the lake, where a family of swans were floating gracefully. Sand flew up from the girls' trainers as they sprinted towards the cove that was set into the hillside.

Isabelle squinted, trying to see into the shadows despite the bright sunshine. There was no sign of their cousin. "She must have gone!" she cried. "Quick, Cora, we have to go after her!"

But as they ducked into the cove and their eyes got used to the dark, they



spotted a familiar figure curled up in a corner.

“Lei, you’re still here!” Cora rushed over to her. “We thought you’d gone to Blossom Wood.”

Lei looked up, her face streaked with tears. “I tried,” she sniffed. “But it didn’t work. I don’t think I have any magic left at all!”

Isabelle frowned. “That’s weird. Why would it suddenly stop working?”

Cora stared at the three sets of hoof prints, deep in thought. “Maybe it only works if all three of us do it at the same time? We’ve never gone there separately before.”



“No – it’s me. It’s all my fault!” Lei said uncertainly.

“Well,” said Isabelle, stepping into one of the sets, “there’s only one way to find out!”