

Magic by Any Other Name: The Witch's Odyssey: Book 1

Alison Levy

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In the bright fantasy novel Magic by Any Other Name, a promising witch sheds her past and discovers her own power.

In Alison Levy's vivid fantasy novel *Magic by Any Other Name*, a young witch escapes her emotionally abusive family and finds not only her footing but new friends and the depth of her own abilities.

All manner of magical and mystical creatures exist in this world, and multiple characters are introduced in a short amount of time. The main characters are Ivy (later known as Georgette), the young witch; Mei-Xing, a wood nymph; and Ishak, a werehyena. Later, humans Neil and Nico meet Ivy and Mei-Xing; Delia the Valkyrie and her sentinel raven Senji seek out the trio; and Ivy encounters Kazimiera, a vampire. Magical folk who are not witches are often referred to as *fae* within this world, which is also the name of the common shared magical language.

Ivy is escaping literal and figurative generational abuse. Only one person in her family escaped before her—her aunt, Olive. Ivy's story opens with Olive's point of view, and she gives her niece advice. She tells her to change her name and never to stay in one place for long until she has forgotten her old identity. Olive's words haunt Ivy—and the novel's progression. No sooner has she picked a new name than she encounters Ishak, who is bound to a witch against his will as the witch's familiar. He is on a mission to find Kalilah, his wife. Ivy agrees to help, catapulting her and Mei-Xing westward.

Ishak's point of view is used to demonstrate the true power of Ivy's magic. He observes the *hathiya* that bonds her and Mei-Xing, which is similar to the bond a witch and familiar have, though Ivy and Mei-Xing can share each other's powers in a symbiotic way. Thus Mei-Xing is not Ivy's slave, nor is she ever named as her familiar; instead, they are friends on equal footing. Later, Delia and Senji are drawn to the witch because of this bond. The significance of Ivy's *hathiya* sheds light on a larger conversation about magical slavery, or witches and their bonded familiars. Part of this is explored in the plot twist, and part is left unresolved—the larger conversation is only just beginning in the series.

While some magical elements, like the *hathiya*, are given space to breathe, other elements of the magical system—and of the world as a whole—are underdeveloped in this volume. It is understood that a balance must be struck in terms of magic's use: Ivy gets depleted after using big doses of her powers. It is also known that she can only extend herself so far, as seen when she uses a transportation spell. Beyond those details, though, a broad understanding of all that witches are capable of is missing. And the world of the fae is also hinted at without being fleshed out. While the plot twist does introduce a whole host of other creatures, questions remain about the fae, where they originate, and how they operate.

In the bright fantasy novel *Magic by Any Other Name*, a promising witch sheds her past and discovers her own power; her story is just beginning in this series-opening title.

RACHEL TELLJOHN (October 3, 2023)

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