

The Magic Ladder
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Once upon a time, there was a magic ladder. Only children could make it work. When they went to the top of it, it took them somewhere nice that they wanted to be. It was sent from one place to another. One day, a man and woman who owned a hardware store bought it. They didn't know about its magical powers. The man went up and down, shelving items. Their daughter, Susie, wanted to shelve items, too, and up up up she went. Then POOF! She was suddenly at her friend Maya's house.

Susie and Maya were confused but happy to find that Susie had suddenly appeared to Maya out of nowhere. They played happily for a long time, and then Susie wondered how she was going to get home without her parents finding out.

"Well," said Maya, "you went up a ladder to get here, maybe you go down a ladder to get home." So they tried going down a ladder into the basement...but it didn't work.

"Ok," said Maya, "you went up a ladder to get here, maybe you go up a ladder again to get home?"

So they went up the ladder to the attic, and sure enough POOF they both ended up at Susie's house. Now they had to try to figure out how to get Maya home without their parents figuring it all out, so Susie took Maya up to her attic but was careful not to get on the ladder herself this time. It worked just fine.

The next day, Susie and Maya tried talking to the ladder, saying "Ladder, please take us to Louie's house." The ladder didn't say anything to them, but they climbed up and POOF they were at Louie's house.

The next day, the three kids wanted to see if the ladder could take them to other kinds of places than friends houses. So Susie said, "Ladder, please take us to the land of purple pumpkins." Up they went and POOF they were in the land of purple pumpkins. As far as the eye could see,

there were green vines with purple pumpkins growing on them. They romped and played hide and go seek and were proud of their newfound power to travel.

Then, Susie suddenly said, “How are we going to get home? I don’t see any ladders to climb up.”

Maya and Louie looked around and realized she was right. It was a flat land full of pumpkins and vines. They thought for a long time, until finally Maya said, “Well, why don’t we make a ladder then, and see if that works.” So they took the strongest vines they could find and used them for two side rails of a ladder, and then wove other vines like laces between the two. The crosspieces were all tilted, but they could climb it. So up went Louie and POOF he was gone. And up went Maya and POOF she found herself at home. Hurray, she thought, it worked! She ran over to Susie’s hardware store to celebrate, but Susie’s mom said she wasn’t there. Maya was puzzled. She ran over to the ladder, and said, “Take me to Susie, in the land of purple pumpkins.” She started to take a step up the ladder, when the ladder said, “I can take you to Susie, or I can take you to the land of purple pumpkins, but I can’t take you to Susie in the land of purple pumpkins because she’s not in the land of purple pumpkins.”

“She’s not? Where is she? Why isn’t she home like Louie and me?”

The ladder answered: “She is halfway between the land of purple pumpkins and this store, because she only went half way up the ladder before she slipped.”

Maya didn’t even hesitate. “Ladder, please take me to Susie, wherever she is.” She climbed up the ladder with strong, sure steps. POOF, she was surrounded by gumdrops...and there was Susie, miserable in the middle of them all.

“Susie!”

“Maya! I’m so glad to see you. How did you get here? How did I get here? How are we going to get home? I can’t find anything to make a ladder out of!”

Maya looked around. Susie was quite right, there were only gum drops, which squished if you stepped on them. Even a bunch altogether wouldn't hold their weight. She looked sideways at the gumdrops and then said, "We can make a mini ladder. Maybe it will work if we make a mini ladder and walk our fingers up it."

Susie looked at her skeptically, but started picking up gumdrops and sticking them together.

They made a little ladder. Susie went first, because she didn't want to be alone again if it worked. Up up up she crept her fingers...and POOF she was gone. Maya did the same thing and POOF she was home.

Ever after that, Louie and Maya and Susie always brought a tiny dollhouse ladder with them so that they could get home if there were no ladders in a place they visited.