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# Bella Donna

Cat  
Magic



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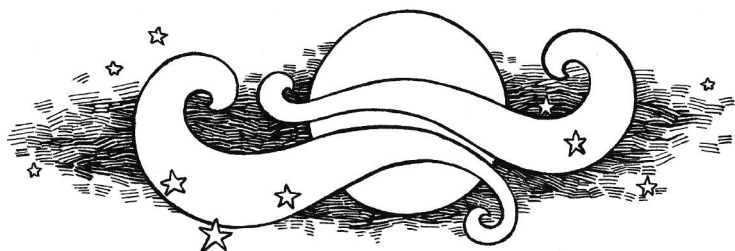
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# Chapter 1



I'd never had a cat before I was adopted by Lilith and came to live in Coven Road. We weren't allowed any animals in Templeton Children's Home anyway. But now I have five cats. Mystica, Amelka, Brimalkin and Bazeeta are all regal

Siamese cats and their favourite place to sleep is on the bookshelves. And then there's Pegatha, a tabby cat, whose favourite place to sleep is on my bed!



I used to think all witches had black cats, but I was wrong. True witches' cats have become increasingly rare and most witches don't have one, however much they might want one. Lilith told me that most witches have never even seen a true witch's cat although she thinks she saw one once, a long time ago.

There aren't any in Coven Road even though everyone who lives in Coven Road, including Lilith, is a witch. Lilith realised I was a witch – or witchling as young witches are called – as soon as she met me at the children's home, even though I didn't know myself. She brought me back to live here, and I've never been happier.

Even though there are no true witches' cats here, there are lots of ordinary ones. Witches all like cats very much, but we also like other animals too. Our next-door neighbours have a dog called Waggy, and another of our

neighbours, called Kelda, has snakes and alligators for pets. There are even unicorns and miniature elephants in the garden at the centre of our street!

Because Pegatha sleeps on my bed, she often wakes me up in the mornings by purring at me. But one Saturday morning she didn't make a sound and I woke up to find her staring at me with her green eyes.

'Morning, Pegatha,' I said, and Pegatha blinked as if she were coming out of a trance. 'Would you like some fish for breakfast?' I gave her a stroke – her fur is lovely and soft. Fish is Pegatha's absolute favourite food. 'If you want breakfast, we must get up then.'

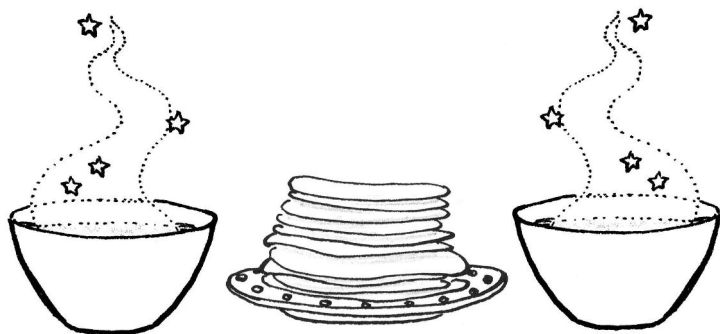
'Blueberry pancakes?' Lilith asked, as soon as I came into the kitchen, followed closely by Pegatha.

'Yum!' Blueberry pancakes are my favourite

breakfast food and we often have them on Saturday mornings as a treat.

Even though Lilith could cast a spell to make our breakfast appear magically on the table, she never does that. We don't use magic for everyday things or we'd forget how to live normally and become very lazy. Besides, Lilith's home-cooked food is so delicious I'm sure magic food couldn't taste any better.

I gave Pegatha a bowl of fish-flavoured cat food – she's only allowed real fish on extra special occasions – and then I ate three pancakes.





Mystica, Amelka, Brimalkin and Bazeeta had already had their breakfast and were back on the bookshelves. They usually spend all day there. They're not that friendly to Pegatha for some reason.

Saturdays are my favourite day of the week.

It's not just because we have blueberry pancakes, or because it's the weekend, but because it's when I have my spell-casting lesson. I love learning new spells and I love my spell-casting teacher – who's also my mum, Lilith!



Witchlings are only allowed to learn one new spell a week, which is a shame. That's because magic can be very tricky and it's especially tricky when you're first learning it. Magic isn't like ordinary school subjects – if you get it wrong it can land you in all sorts of trouble, and I should know . . . Before Lilith taught me to control my magic, I used to accidentally cast spells without realising. Once I even gave someone I didn't like a warty nose!

Lilith makes sure I've learnt each new spell really well and that I can remember all the old ones before she moves on to the next new spell. Luckily I'm a very fast learner when it comes to spell-casting – it's the only subject I'm any good at. Maybe it's because I love casting spells so much that once I've been taught one I don't forget it.

Lilith's niece, Verity, usually comes along to

the spell-casting lessons.

She's a witchling like me,

only she's a couple of years older than

I am, so she's been learning for longer. Verity

was jealous of me when I first came to

Coven Road, and she was very mean to me. We're friends now, though I'm still a bit wary of her.

As soon as Lilith starts getting the cauldron ready for our lesson, Pegatha is there, waiting for us to start. She always comes along to the spell-casting lessons and watches everything I do. She makes me laugh sometimes when she has her little head tilted to one side and seems to be taking everything in! Not that she can really understand, of course, it just seems like she can.

'What spell are we going to be learning today, Aunt Lilith?' Verity asked, as soon as she arrived.

'I'm going to teach you a spell that needs two witches for it to work,' Lilith said.

We'd never done a double-cast spell before. Spells often grow stronger the more witches there are casting them. For instance, once a month, at midnight, all the witches who live here cast a protection spell on Coven Road so

that no one who isn't a witch can even see

the entrance to our road and would

walk right past

without knowing it

was there – unless we wanted them to. That spell is really strong.

Verity and I looked at each other and grinned. If Lilith thought we were ready to do a double-cast, she must really think we were making good progress.



‘This double-cast spell allows you to create an exact copy of something,’ Lilith said, ‘although it will only last for a very short time before the duplicate fades.’

‘Two of me would be wonderful,’ Verity said, ‘but I don’t know about two of Bella.’

I poked my tongue out at her. If anyone else had said that, I’d have known they were joking, but with Verity I’m never quite sure.

‘Here are the ingredients. First you need to decide what order you should put them into the cauldron,’ Lilith said. ‘You both need to throw the ingredients into the cauldron and say the spell at exactly the same time and then point to whatever you’d like duplicated. I’d suggest you try a cushion first.’

‘Let’s start with the cinnamon and then the gold candle, blood leaf and thistle water,’ Verity said.

‘Don’t spells usually work better if the blood leaf goes in first?’ I said, thinking about the other spells we’d learnt before.

‘Yes, Bella’s absolutely right,’ Lilith said. ‘But well done, Verity, you put the other ingredients in the correct order.’

I could see Verity wasn’t very pleased. She doesn’t like me being better at spell-casting than her, and I don’t blame her. I wouldn’t like it if it was the other way round, but it is the *only* thing I am good at.

‘OK, you count us in,’ I said to Verity to try to make her feel better.

‘One, two, three . . .’

We each picked up a little of the ingredients and threw them into the cauldron as we chanted the spell together.

The words we use in spells are very hard to pronounce and don’t come from a language

people ever use to speak to each other – it’s only ever used for casting spells. It’s impossible to write down, but it sounded a bit like, ‘*Seeeorindggoi saheesta stowolhi staoorizlo.*’



Verity and I chanted once and then twice more before we pointed to a gold cushion with

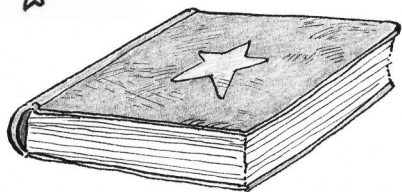
brightly coloured embroidery and beads on it.

‘It worked!’ Verity squeaked a second later.

And she was right. The result had been almost instant and where there had been only one gold cushion, now there were two. Usually we have to practise spells quite a lot before we get them to work as well as that.

‘Can we do it again?’ I asked. ‘Can we try it on something else now?’

But Lilith shook her head. She wanted us to revise a different spell. ‘I’ll just get my grimoire from upstairs,’ she said. Lilith writes down all her spells in her grimoire, which is a special book that all adult witches have.



‘I want to try and duplicate Pegatha,’ Verity said, when Lilith had left the room.

‘No!’ I said.

Pegatha hissed at her.

‘Calm down, I was only joking,’ said Verity.  
‘Stupid cat!’



‘She’s not stupid,’ I told her. ‘Pegatha’s very

clever and she’s my  
friend. She’s more of  
a friend than . . .’

My voice went quiet.

‘More than who?  
More than me?’ Verity

looked like she was  
about to stamp her foot.

‘I suppose you’d rather  
have a cat as  
your cousin.’

‘She’s not just  
any cat . . .’

Pegatha rubbed herself



against my leg and purred so I bent down to stroke her. Truthfully I did like Pegatha much more than Verity.

‘I wish she was a proper witch’s cat,’ I said. ‘I sometimes think she can understand me.’

‘True witches’ cats are always black – everyone knows that,’ Verity replied. ‘Or sometimes black with a white star on their foreheads, but never tabby cats, like Pegatha.’

Pegatha jumped up into my arms as Verity said this. I don’t know why but I always know when she’s going to do that. It’s like we can read each other’s minds.



I didn't say anything to Verity though – she would only have said something scornful.

Pegatha pushed her face into my neck and I could feel her little heart beating very fast.

'I'd much rather have Pegatha than some silly magical witch's cat anyway,' I said.

'Huh!' said Verity, and she rolled her eyes so I knew she didn't believe me. 'One day I'm going to have my own true witch's cat, you'll see, and it'll be beautiful and sleek – just like me!'

'And probably have claws filled with spite like you do too,' I shouted at her.

At that point Lilith came back in. 'Everything all right, girls?' she asked us.

'Fine,' we both said, glaring daggers at each other.