

CHAPTER SEVEN



At dawn the celebrations ended, and the pupils flew wearily back to school, some riding double as their own broomsticks were broken. No one was speaking to Mildred (even Maud was being very cool towards her friend), and From One was in disgrace. When they arrived at the Academy,

everyone was sent straight to bed. It was the custom, after the all-night Hallowe'en celebrations, to sleep until noon the next day.

'Mildred!' said Miss Cackle, in a sharp voice, as Form One made their way miserably up the stairs. 'Miss Hardbroom and I will see you in my office first thing tomorrow afternoon.'

'Yes, Miss Cackle,' replied Mildred, almost in tears, and she ran up the steps.

As Mildred opened her bedroom door, Ethel, who was behind her, leaned across and whispered, '*That'll* teach you to go around changing people into pigs!' and she pulled a face and ran away down the corridor.

Mildred closed the door and fell on to her bed, almost flattening the kitten, which leapt out of the way just in time.

'Oh, Tabby,' she said, burying her face in the kitten's warm fur, 'I've had such a dreadful time, and it wasn't even my fault! I might have known Ethel wouldn't lend me her broomstick out of kindness. Nobody will ever believe that it wasn't me

just being clumsy as usual.’

The kitten licked her ear sympathetically, and the bats returned through the narrow window and settled upside down on the picture-rail.

Two hours later, Mildred was lying in bed, still wide awake. She was imagining what the interview with Miss Cackle and her terrible form-mistress would be like. The kitten was curled up peacefully on her chest.



‘It’ll be *awful*,’ she thought, sadly looking towards the grey sky outside the window. ‘I wonder if they’ll

expel me? Or perhaps I could tell them that it was Ethel – no, I would never do that. Suppose they decide to turn me into a frog? No, I’m sure they wouldn’t do anything like that; Miss Hardbroom said that was against the Witches’ Code. Oh, what *will* they do to me? Even Maud thinks it’s my fault, and I’ve never seen H.B. look more furious.’

She lay thinking about it until she was really frightened, and suddenly she leapt out of bed.

‘Come on, Tabby!’ she said, pulling a bag out of the wardrobe. ‘We’re running away.’

She stuffed a few clothes and books into the bag and put on her best robe so that no one would recognize the usual school uniform. Then she picked up her broomstick, put the kitten into the bag, and crept out along the silent corridor to the spiral staircase.

‘I shall miss the bats,’ she thought.

It was a cold, dull morning, and Mildred pulled her cape about her shoulders as she crossed the yard, glancing round in case anyone was watching. The school seemed very strange with no one about.

Mildred had to fly over the gates, which were locked as usual, but it was difficult to balance with the bag slung on the back of her broomstick, so she got off on the other side of the gates and started through the pine trees on foot.



‘I don’t know where we’re going, Tabby,’ she said, as they picked their way down the mountainside.

Task – please answer the following questions.

1. Would you have liked to be at the celebrations?
2. Why was Form 1 in disgrace (page 1)?
3. What does the word ‘sympathetically’ mean on page 2?
4. What does Mildred decide to do?
5. What would you have done in Mildred’s position?