WITCH SNITCH

SIBÉAL POUNDER

Illustrated by
Laura Ellen
Anderson



BLOOMSBURY
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY

Bloomsbury Publishing, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi and Sydney

First published in Great Britain in October 2017 by Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3DP

www.bloomsbury.com

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A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 1 4088 9204 6



Typeset by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk
Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Hold on to your hats, above-the-pipes witches, for it is Witchoween time! Grab your jam jar bags and bejewelled dresses, brew your Clutterbucks cocktails and come on down, because the party is just about to begin!*

* There will be a place to leave your cat, should you wish to bring it.





The Weird Request

Dear Tiga,
I have a weird request for you. I need you to present a documentary for the Fairy 5 channel – with Fran. It's for Witchoween. Come to Linden House tomorrow for jam and I can tell you all about it?
Big old witchy wishes,
Peggy

'Oh good, I was wondering when Peggy was going to do a Witchoween,' Fluffanora said, rifling through Tiga's wardrobe. She pulled a fluffy shawl out, wiggled her finger, and with a snap, it wrapped around her like a skirt. 'I'd make this into a skirt if I were you.'


TOAD
TOAD

'What is Witchoween?' Tiga asked as she flicked through a copy of the latest *Toad* magazine.

Fluffanora flopped down on the floor next to her. 'Witchoween. You know *Witchoween*.'

Tiga looked at her blankly. 'Is it like … Halloween?'

Fluffanora and Sluggfrey, who was sliming over Tiga's boot in the corner, both rolled their eyes.

'Not really, but Halloween technically only exists because of Witchoween … and Roberta Trotter and Ruthie Soot.'

'Who?' Tiga said, taking a gulp of her Clutterbucks cocktail.

Fluffanora flicked her finger and refilled it. 'It's only one of the best and most famous witch stories! Roberta Trotter and Ruthie Soot were two teenage witches, who lived years and years and years ago – way back before Celia Crayfish. One day, they decided to sneak out of school and fly up the pipes. They'd heard so many things about the human world and they wanted to check it out.

'They took their chance on the day before Witchoween, when every witch was busy preparing for

the special day, so they knew no one would notice they'd gone. Up they went until they popped out of a tiny tap in a small village on the edge of a spooky-looking forest. Of course their hats had got all tattered and pointy, plus Ruthie Soot had two very prominent warts on her nose from the pipe travel.

'The story goes, they walked through the village, barely able to see a thing apart from the pinpricks of candlelight in the windows. Ruthie Soot caught a glimpse of her reflection in one of the candlelit windows and shouted, "I'VE GOT WARTS ON MY NOSE!" So Roberta Trotter snapped back, "STOP COMPLAINING ABOUT YOUR WARTS, WART NOSE. IT'S A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR MISSING WITCHOWEEN. I HATE WITCHOWEEN."

'Ruthie Soot got cross and with a flick of her finger carved angry faces into a bunch of pumpkins sitting on a cart outside one of the little houses. The house belonged to a man called Jasper Gump and he sold pumpkins and all sorts of fruit and vegetables.'

'Are you making this up?' Tiga said, an eyebrow raised.

Fluffanora held three fingers against her nose. 'Promise I'm not.'

(Witches do that to promise. If they're lying, their noses temporarily fall off, for twenty-four hours.)

'Continue,' Tiga said after inspecting Fluffanora's nose.

'Ruthie Soot pointed at the grumpy-looking pumpkin carvings she'd just done and said, "THIS IS HOW GRUMPY YOU'RE MAKING ME RIGHT NOW, ROBERTA! I'D RATHER BE DOING WITCHOWEEN THAN STANDING HERE WITH YOU!"

'But while they were fighting, neither of them noticed the old man who had ducked under Jasper Gump's cart for a nap. He emerged when the arguing witches were out of sight, and nearly fainted when he saw the carved pumpkins! He'd heard everything they'd said.

' "Those beings in pointy hats were magic!" he cried. "And they spoke of Halloween!"

'He completely misheard because his ears were old.

It's *Witch*oween, obviously. But he just kept shouting about *Hall*oween. He stood tall and declared to the town, "TODAY IS HALLOWEEN!" And they were all like, "Cool, sounds great." And humans have celebrated Halloween every year on that day ever since.

'That's how Halloween happened, because of Roberta Trotter and Ruthie Soot.'

'So Witchoween *is* like Halloween,' Tiga said.

'Absolutely nothing like it at all,' Fluffanora scoffed. 'Halloween is about ghosts and scary ladies in pointy hats. Witchoween is a celebration of witches! It can happen at any time, whenever you want. You just need to get your favourite witches together and celebrate how excellent you all are. Plus there's great cakes and stuff.'

'That sounds fun!' Tiga said, gulping down the last of her Clutterbucks. 'But what's Peggy's documentary got to do with Witchoween?'

'They do that every year now, for Witchoween,' Fluffanora said, getting up and rifling through Tiga's wardrobe again. 'They film a bunch of interesting

witches – it's different ones every time. It's always brilliant, because you get to find out what toothpaste they use and things like that. Fran presents it.'

'I wonder why Peggy wants me to present the documentary with Fran,' Tiga mumbled, reading the letter again.

Fluffanora shrugged. 'Who knows? She probably thinks it'll be extra special with you in it, and it'll be your first Witchoween!' She flicked her finger and one of the pillows leapt up and hit Tiga in the face. They both rolled back on to the bed in a fit of giggles.

'I'm coming with you,' Fluffanora said. 'If Peggy wants to make this documentary special, she's going to have to make me Head of Wardrobe.'



Fran Being Fran

Tiga and Fluffanora skipped into Linden House just in time to see Fran's eyes widen to the size of jam jar lids.

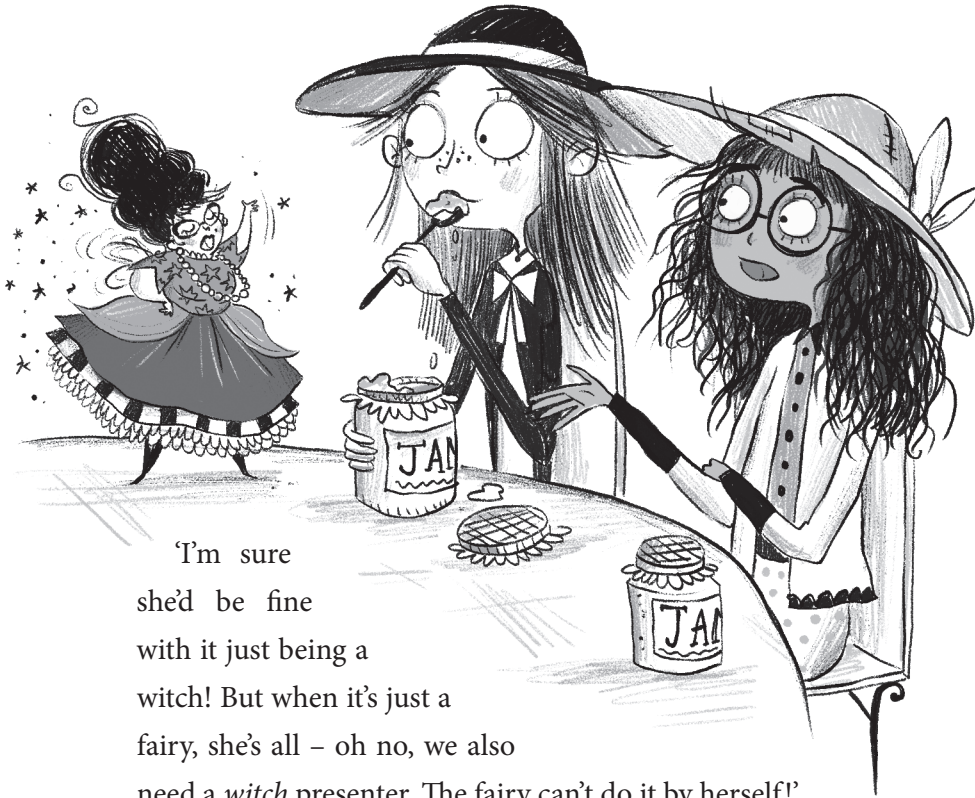
'CO-PRESENT? As in, me and ANOTHER?'

'Not just any other,' Peggy said patiently. '*Tiga*.'

'But Tiga's an AMATEUR! A garbage, rubbish, frog-face AMATEUR! No offence, Tiga.'

'None taken,' Tiga said, grabbing a pot of jam from the table and gulping down a spoonful. She was used to Fran.

'Fran,' Peggy tried again. 'Patricia the producer has specifically requested that we also include a witch presenter. She wants the documentary to include both a witch and a fairy this time.'



'I'm sure she'd be fine with it just being a witch! But when it's just a fairy, she's all – oh no, we also need a *witch* presenter. The fairy can't do it by herself!'

Fluffanora shrugged. 'She actually makes a good point.'

'But Fran,' Peggy tried again. 'What would *Witch Snitch* be without you?'

'Why is it called *Witch Snitch*?' Tiga asked.

'No idea,' Peggy said. 'Fran made it up a long time ago, didn't you?'

Fran stuck out her chin proudly and smoothed down her beehive, letting it dramatically ping back up. 'I did, and everyone loves it. Because "snitch" means *genius* in fairy slang.'

'Does it?' Tiga asked, sounding unconvinced.

'Definitely,' Fran said. 'As an example, a while back Julie Jumbo Wings told me that she thought Crispy's hair looked like a burnt mango and so I went over to Crispy's caravan and told her that's what Julie Jumbo Wings thought. And then I fixed her hair. Later that day, Julie Jumbo Wings was looking up at Crispy's new hair, because Crispy had Julie Jumbo Wings in a headlock, and Julie Jumbo Wings shouted over to me, "YOU LITTLE SNITCH!" And I thought, *Yes, I* am *a genius*. I am abnormally excellent at hair.'

Tiga stared at her blankly.

Peggy flopped on the sofa. 'Fran, I'll triple the budget so you can have excessive costume changes if you let Tiga present with you.'

'Deal,' Fran said, before zooming out of the window, muttering something about a hair appointment.

Peggy, Tiga and Fluffanora burst out laughing.

'That was easy,' Tiga said.

'Remember she presented *Melt My Wings and Call Me Carol*, that weird game show that involved melting her wings and calling her Carol?' Peggy said with a smile. 'She only did that because they let her dye her hair the colours of the rainbow.'

'So what do I have to do?' Tiga asked as Peggy waved her hand and a little book came cantering across the room like a badly behaved horse. It dropped to the ground halfway.

Peggy ran over and picked it up. She blew on her finger. 'I can never get that floating object finger-flick right!'

Felicity Bat levitated into the room and flicked her finger, sending the little book flying from Peggy's grasp and into Tiga's hand.

'Show-off,' Peggy whispered to Felicity Bat with a wink.

Tiga stared at the book. On the front it had a picture of a grumpy witch sitting in a bucket and the title *Berta*

Takes A Bath. 'Um …' Tiga began. 'I'm not sure I understand why I need this.'

'Open it,' Peggy said excitedly as Tiga reluctantly did so.

Inside, it wasn't a book about a bath or a Berta at all – it was a notebook. A completely blank notebook, apart from the inside cover, which was covered in Peggy's messy handwriting.

Behind the Scenes with the Real Witches of Ritzy City

Witches to interview:

1. Miss Flint, owner of Desperate Dolls in the Docks
2. Sophia Slopp, CEO of the Mouldy Jam Factory in the Docks
3. Captain LT, boss of the Flying Ferry over Driptown
4. Melodie McDamp, Weekend Guide at the Mermaid Museum in Driptown

5. Mrs Clutterbuck, owner of Clutterbucks in Ritzy City
6. Christy Brunts, coordinator of the Costume Cupboard in Brollywood
7. Pip Glow, actress who plays Washy Cat in Brollywood
8. Darcy Dream, editor of *Toad* magazine in Pearl Peak
9. Aggie Hoof, richest witch in Sinkville, in Pearl Peak
10. Idabelle Bat, guide at the First Witch Who Landed in Sinkville historical site on the edge of Pearl Peak
11. CONFIDENTIAL FOR SECURITY REASONS, the Cauldron Islands, Upper Cave 4
12. Lily Cranberry, party co-host in the Coves
13. Gretal Green, inventor at NAPA in Silver City
14. Mrs Brew, creative director and designer at Brew's

15. Trilly, owner of Trilly's Tea in the forest
16. Marge Mustoyd, creative director at Ritzytwig Theatre
17. Mavis, owner of Jam Stall 9 in Ritzy City
18. Peggy Pigwiggle, Top Witch, Linden House

'It's your first Witchoween notebook!' Peggy cheered. 'That's the full list of witches you and Fran need to interview. They were chosen by a panel of witches and approved by Patricia the producer in Brollywood. They sound so fun! And some of my favourites are on there.'

'What do we interview them about?' Tiga asked.

'Oh, you can ask all sorts of questions!' Peggy said, skipping about the room and tripping. 'You can film them at their place of work, ask them things like, "What advice would you give to young witches who want to do your job when they grow up?" or "Where do you buy your hats?" or –'

'What toothpaste do you use?' Fluffanora interrupted.

'Exactly,' Peggy said. 'Absolutely anything. Just get

them to talk about themselves. Oh, and Patricia the producer gave you an extra assignment, Tiga. She asked that you use the notebook to write down Five Things You Didn't Know About … for each of the witches and they'll use those facts for the documentary, too!'

Tiga closed the notebook and hugged it excitedly. 'This is going to be fun! How much time have we got to do all of this?'

'Two days,' Peggy said. 'In two days I'm throwing a Witchoween – we'll need to have the documentary by then. I'll screen it at the party.'

'Two days,' Tiga said with a gulp. 'Sure … no problem.'

'And I'm sending Lizzie Beast with you,' Peggy added. 'She'll be a great camera witch.'

'And you'd be a fool not to make me Head of Wardrobe,' Fluffanora said. She flicked her finger and a ridiculously cool-looking book of dress doodles and *Toad* magazine clippings landed with a thud on top of Tiga. 'I've already been putting together some costume ideas.'