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AMANDA SWIFT

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Barrington Stoke

For Barnabé – J.G.

For Lisa – A.S.

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Contents

1. Magicat Arrives 1

2. Magicat Needs a Home 10

3. Magicat's Sleepover 19

4. Magicat Makes Breakfast 26

5. Magicat Makes a Cat Cave 35

6. Magicat Escapes 45

7. Magicat is Home Alone 55

8. Tacijam! 65

9. Magicat the Magic Cat 78

CHAPTER 1

Magicat Arrives

"It's really dark and misty!" Jessie said as she stood on her doorstep and looked up at the night sky. "It's perfect for Halloween. We might even meet a real witch!"

Jessie loved everything to do with magic, especially stories about witches and wizards. Halloween was her favourite night of the year and most of all she liked trick or treating.

"Hurry up, Ali!" Jessie said.

Ali was Jessie's best friend. He and Jessie were in the same class at school. Ali's house

was at the back of Jessie's, so their gardens were joined.

"Wait!" Ali called out to Jessie. "My beard is falling off. I want to be the best wizard on the street!"

Jessie waited while Ali fixed his false beard back on and then they set off together.

They ran down the street with their treat buckets swinging in their hands. Jessie's mum was just behind them. Lots of the houses had pumpkins in the windows and fake spiderwebs round the doors. There were groups of children going up and down the road in all kinds of spooky outfits. *If one of them really is a witch*, thought Jessie, *no one would know*. It was almost pitch-black, apart from the street lights and the moon and stars.

"Hang on a minute," said Jessie, "now my false fingernail's fallen off." Jessie had green fingernails to match the green make-up on her face.

"You'll just have to be a witch who bites her nails," Ali said.

They both giggled.



Jessie walked up to the first door. "Have you got a trick?" she whispered. "Just in case?" Ali loved tricks as much as Jessie loved magic.

"I've got three! Hope we get the chance to use them all!" Ali patted his pocket.

Jessie knocked on the door. A woman opened it. "Trick or treat?" Jessie said.

"Here's a treat!" said the woman. She gave Jessie and Ali some sweets.

They ate one or two each but left the rest until they got home.

"I love sweets but I hope someone asks for a trick!" Ali said.

Up and down the street they went. They took turns to knock on the doors. Jessie's mum met a friend and they started to chat together. Jessie and Ali had great fun shouting "Trick or treat!" but everyone gave them treats rather than asking for a trick.

Ali and Jessie turned the corner of the street. "Oh no," said Jessie. "It's Eddie Biggs and his gang. They always spoil everything.

Look! They haven't even dressed up for Halloween."

Eddie Biggs went to their school. So did his friends. Eddie was a bully. He enjoyed making fun of other children and scaring them as much as he could. He had very short hair and a mean look on his face. He wore big black boots and walked along with his hands in his pockets, chewing gum. So did his friends.

And the worst thing about Eddie Biggs was that he lived next door to Jessie.

"I know who you are," said Eddie.

"No, you don't," said Jessie. "I'm a witch and he's a wizard, and we're just here for Halloween."

"There's no such thing as witches and wizards," said Eddie.

"How do you know?" Jessie said bravely.

"It's obvious. You're Jessie and you're Ali. You've just got black bin bags as capes and black wellies. You're not a real witch and wizard. I saw you make your hats at school. They're rubbish."

Eddie knocked Ali's hat off his head. Ali bent to pick it up.

"Stop it, you bully!" Jessie yelled.



Eddie reached out and grabbed Jessie's treat bucket. Then he turned and ran off down the road. His gang ran off too.

"He's taken my sweets!" said Jessie.

"I wish I'd done one of my tricks on him ..." Ali said.

Jessie sighed. She wished she could do a *real* magic spell on Eddie.

Just then there was a loud whoosh! Suddenly the sky was lit up by a shower of gold light. The children looked up.

"Wow!" said Ali. "That's the first firework I've seen this year. It's fantastic! I hope there are more ..."

"I don't," said Jessie. "Not if it's the same people letting them off. Look."

Ali looked down the road to where Jessie was pointing. Eddie's big brother was showing

off to Eddie and his gang by lighting another firework.

Jessie looked around to check if Mum was nearby but she couldn't see her. She must still be round the corner, chatting to her friend.

Another firework whooshed into the air. As Jessie and Ali watched the green stars fall through the dark, they saw two sparks that seemed brighter and bigger than the rest. And they seemed to be coming very fast towards *them*!

As the sparks got nearer, Jessie and Ali saw that they weren't sparks at all. They were eyes. They were green eyes. Green eyes on a black and white body. And they were getting nearer and nearer until suddenly ...

PLONK!

Something landed in Ali's treat bucket.

"It's a cat!" Jessie gasped.

The cat was very small. It curled its tail neatly round its body and it held a tiny book. It looked up at them with its head on one side and its green eyes wide open.

"Trick or treat?" asked the cat.

Jessie and Ali stared back at it. They were so shocked they didn't know what to say!

How come you can talk? thought Ali.

I wish I had a cat like that, thought Jessie.

"Trick or treat?" the cat said again.

"I don't want a trick," said Ali at last. "I've got my own."

"Good, because I'm the treat," said the cat. "I'm Magicat."