First published in 2023 by Scallywag Press Ltd.,
10 Sutherland Row, London SW1V 4JT

Text © Derek Keilty, 2023
Illustrations © Magda Brol, 2023

The rights of Derek Keilty and Magda Brol to be identified
as the author and illustrator of this work have been asserted by them
in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988
All rights reserved.

Edited by Deborah Chancellor

Designed and typeset by Louise Millar

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY



001

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data available

ISBN 978-1-915252-33-3

For Sarah-Jane and Rebekah

D.K.

To Pet Shop Boys

The soundtrack for this book

M.B.


GROT CASTLE
NEWT CASTLE
SWAMPLANDS
CROW CASTLE
SHADOW VALLEY
HAUNTED HOUSE
GREEN WITCH BROOM PORT
GREEN WITCH VILLAGE
N
MIRACULA


QUEEN FENELLA
KING LUCIUS
FELICITY TICKS
SCURRY & BINKY
IVY & TOM
MAGPIE MEG
THADDEUS CREEP
CASPER & FERGUS





CHAPTER ONE

The Haunted House

In the faraway land of Miracula, the early dawn mist drifted around Newt Castle, home of a young Sand Witch called Ivy Newt, and her parents King Lucius and Queen Fenella.

Tucked up in her bedroom in one of the many castle turrets, Ivy opened an eye and blinked. Immediately she remembered what day it was.

"It's Halloween!" she shrieked, leaping out of bed. "I knew there was something special about today."

She prodded a skinny grey wolf, who was curled up on a blanket at the foot of her bed, snoring loudly. This was no ordinary wolf. This was Tom Wolf, Ivy's familiar – and, of course, every good Sand Witch needs one of those.

Tom was no ordinary familiar either – he had the magical ability to change shape. In a heartbeat, he could turn into a boy whenever he felt like it, then back into a wolf. But right now, Tom was most definitely a wolf. A very fast asleep wolf.



"Tom, wake up! It's Halloween!" called Ivy.

He lifted his shaggy head from the blanket. "Hello-what?" he said woozily.

"Not hello anything," Ivy chuckled. "It's Halloween. C'mon, we've got to get up."

Tom groaned, "But it's still dark."

Ivy dashed into the bathroom to get dressed. Every now and then, she stuck her head out the door to check the window as the sky began to turn pink. "Hurry, Tom, or we'll miss it!" she called.

In a flash, Tom Wolf morphed into Tom Boy and followed Ivy downstairs, scratching his untidy mop of dark hair.

"How can we miss Halloween?" he asked. "It lasts all day, doesn't it? Or at least it did last year."

"I don't mean miss Halloween, silly." Ivy sighed. "I'm talking about that haunted house on the other side of the bay. Don't you remember? It's only here for one day every year, and that one day is Halloween. It appears out of nowhere at dawn, then vanishes at midnight, not to be seen again for another whole year."

"Spooky!" said Tom.

"You're dead right it is," agreed Ivy. "So hurry up or we'll miss seeing it arrive!"



Ivy's mum and dad, King Lucius and Queen Fenella, were already up and waiting expectantly at the door of Newt Castle. Their familiars, a tubby badger called Binky and a playful squirrel called Scurry, were chasing each other around in the hallway. Queen Fenella had not forgotten to dress them both in their Halloween best – smart orange jackets that made them look like speeding pumpkins.

Ivy squeezed in between her mum and dad. "Why didn't you wake me? Has it appeared yet? Have I missed it?"

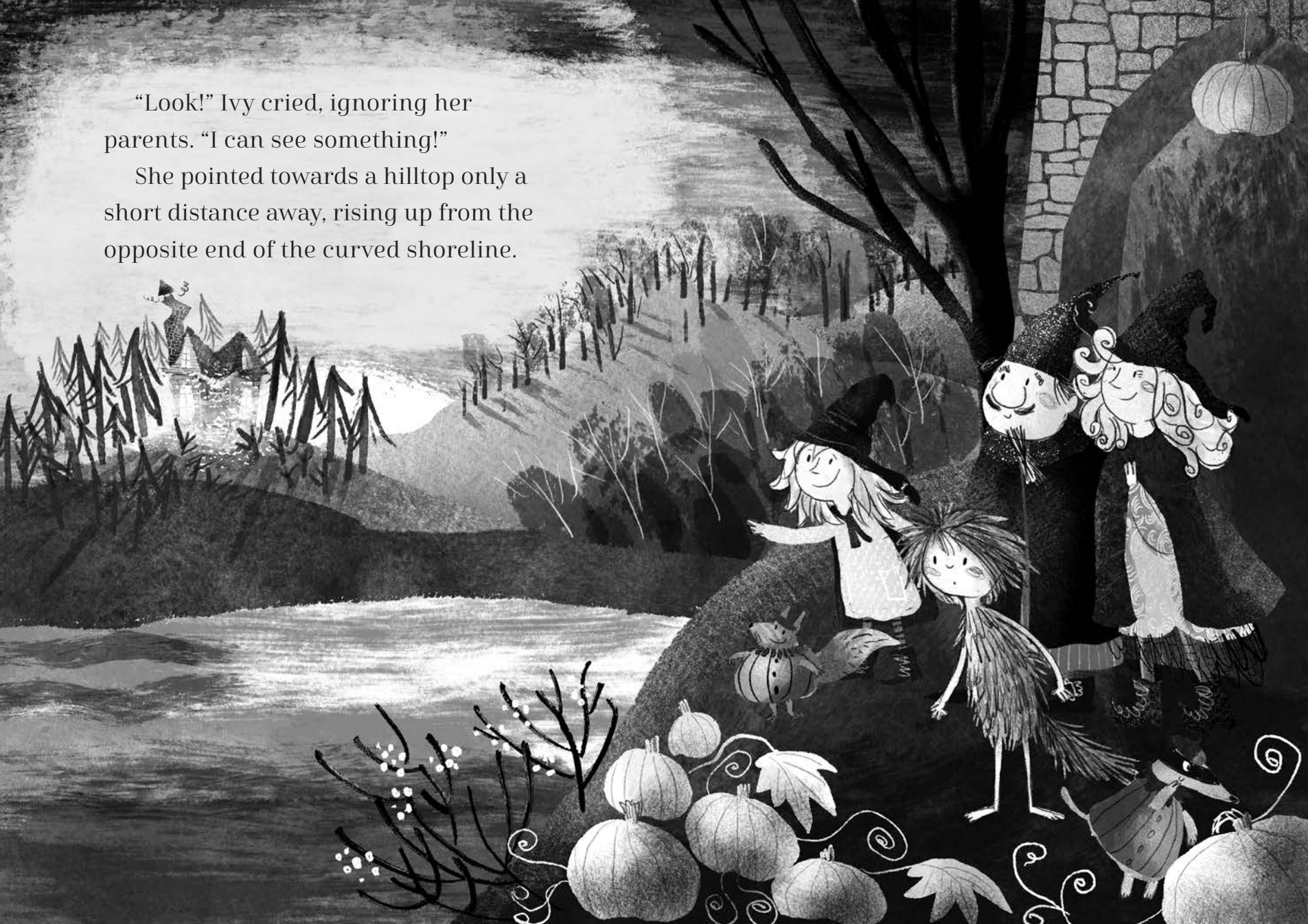


"No, not yet." King Lucius smiled, pulling his royal robes together with a shiver. "It'll be here. Sure as the sun is rising."

"Right on time," Queen Fenella said, then added with a sigh, "I just wish you were always as punctual as that haunted house, my most whizzical, abracadaberous king."

King Lucius laughed and his round tummy wobbled like a jelly. "But, my cherishable chore-giving cherub, you know I'm as reliable as clockwork when there are odd jobs to do around the castle."

"Hmm . . ." murmured the queen, unconvinced. "You're usually running late and sometimes magically disappear when any hard work needs doing."



"Look!" Ivy cried, ignoring her parents. "I can see something!"

She pointed towards a hilltop only a short distance away, rising up from the opposite end of the curved shoreline.

As they stared, the hazy outline of a house began to appear out of thin air. At first, they could see right through it, like a ghost, but gradually the details became clearer. Compared to the grandeur of Newt Castle, the old house was dilapidated. The two crooked gables of the roof met in what looked like a frown, and the broken windows and arch over the front door made the whole house look like it was scowling.

Ivy gasped. “Wow! Right on time. It’s amazing.”

King Lucius nodded. “And mysterious, like a mirage in the desert.” He turned to the queen, their differences apparently forgotten. “Remind me, my mathematically miraculous muffin, how long has this been going on?”



Queen Fenella thought for a moment. “Got to be at least ten years now, by my reckoning. It started before our Ivy was born.”

“Imagine that!” the king marvelled. “And even after a decade, it’s still quite a spectacle.”

“Or spooktacle, I’d say, my dearest. It does look a bit scary.”

Ivy giggled.

The queen glanced down at her daughter fondly. “Now, Ivy, my precious princess, I know we say this every year, but you and Tom are not to go poking around that old place, however exciting it looks, OK?” Her eyes narrowed. “Don’t forget that haunted house is cursed.”

Ivy nodded. “But why is it cursed?” she asked.

“Good question,” her mother replied, shrugging her shoulders.

The king frowned. “We don’t know for sure but a curse seems the most likely explanation. Truth is, the whole housey business is shrouded in mystery. It’s even more baffling than why some folks get fluff in their bellybuttons.”







"Or why when you drop a slice of bread and jam, it always falls on the jammy side," the queen added.

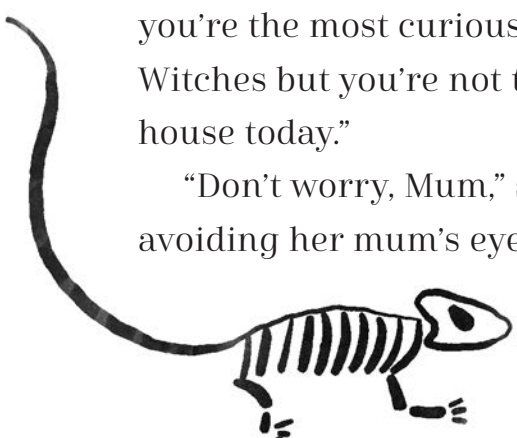
"Or why a cat always lands on its feet," said Ivy, playing along.

Tom grinned. "Or why feet stink."

"That's just your feet, Tom," Ivy said, laughing.

"Seriously, though," said Queen Fenella, her brow furrowing, "I know you're the most curious of little Sand Witches but you're not to go near that house today."

"Don't worry, Mum," said Ivy, avoiding her mum's eye.





"Now go and have some breakfast," said the queen. "I'm sure you haven't forgotten there's no school because it's the Halloween holiday. So you can take your time this morning."



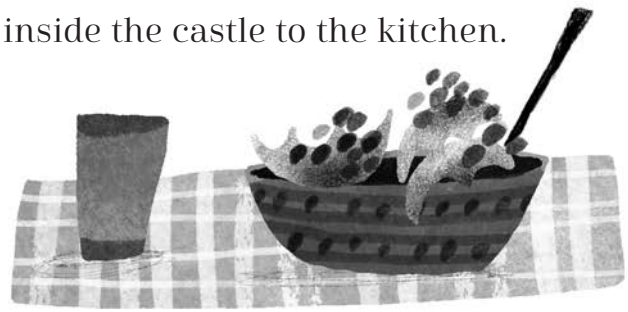
"Ah, yes," King Lucius broke in, "but after breakfast you and Tom can help me decorate the castle. I've decided the theme for Halloween this year is skeletons."

"That's . . . great," Tom muttered with a shiver. Despite being a Sand Witch's familiar, he was easily spooked.

"I'm making two skeletons for each side of the castle entrance then some more for tonight's Halloween party," the king carried on enthusiastically.



"Sounds great, Dad." Ivy smiled. "Tom and I will go out this morning to collect some twigs and branches for you to use." With that, she gave Tom a nudge to follow her, and they went inside the castle to the kitchen.



Ivy helped herself to some breakfast. "I've got an idea, Tom," she whispered through a mouthful of Witchy Weetabix. "Collecting those branches for Dad can be our excuse."

"Excuse for what?" Tom asked.

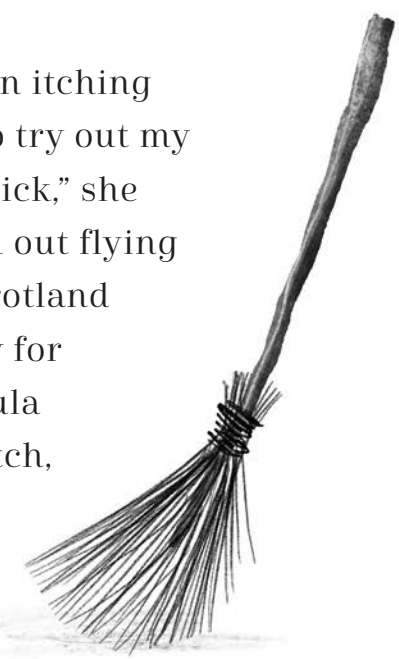
"To sneak away to go and see that house."

Tom raised his eyebrows. "But didn't your mum say we're not to go poking around?"

"Oh, Tom, don't be so boring! And anyway, flying over a house is hardly poking around inside, is it?"

Opening a kitchen cupboard, Ivy took out a swish-looking broom. It had a sleek handle of oak and a tail of sturdy brushwood.

"Besides, I've been itching for a good reason to try out my brand-new broomstick," she said. "I haven't been out flying since the King of Grotland gave me this beauty for helping save Miracula from that Storm Witch, Clawdelia Thorn."



Tom gulped, rolling his eyes. “I remember it well,” he said. “But, Ivy, doesn’t your mum know best about that haunted house? I have a bad feeling about all this.”

Ivy tutted impatiently. “When that house disappeared on the stroke of midnight last year, I promised myself that the next Halloween I’d find out what was going on. And that’s now! It’s Halloween again, Tom – today’s the only day we can go.”

Tom said nothing – he knew better than to contradict Ivy when she got into stubborn moods like this.

He followed Ivy as she ran out of the kitchen and up the spiral stairs to the top of the castle tower. She opened a door out onto the



battlements and stood astride her new broomstick.

“C’mon, Tom,” she said. “Get on board! This mystery won’t solve itself – it’s up to us to work it out. There’s no time to lose!”