Lovereading4kids.co.uk

Helping you choose books for children

0-5 5-7 7-9 9-12 12+

opening extract from

Witch Baby and Me at School

written by

Debi Gliori

published by

Random House

All text is copyright of the author and illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

EIGHTEEN MOONS OF WITCH BABY

'Hello? Anybody home?'

Silence greeted the postman standing on the front doorstep of Arkon House. He cleared his throat and tried again.

'Er. HellooOOO. Postie. Got a p-p-p-p-parcel for you.'

He was beginning to sound like a mad owl. He finished with a sort of youOoOoOooou sound that trailed away into the silence.

The postman swallowed. Hard.

If only there had been a letterbox in the front door of Arkon House, he could have posted the parcel through its slot and that would have been the end of it. However, with no letterbox, the postman had to hand over the parcel to whoever was on the other side of the door. And the problem with *that* was he'd heard that

Arkon House was haunted – and not by any old **Woo-hoo**, icy-fingers-running-up-and-down-your-spine kind of ghost, but by an ancient ghoul with nasty habits and a particular fondness for eating postmen.



Earlier that morning, back at the post office, the idea of a postman-munching monster sounded ridiculous, but now he wasn't so sure. Now, the postman wanted to dump the parcel and run away as fast as his legs could carry him. However, all postmen are taught that, come rain, hail or monsters, The Mail Must Get Through.

One last try, he decided, *then I'm out of here*.

Although it didn't have a letterbox, the front door of Arkon House did have a huge brass knocker in the shape of a toad, so the postman seized this and rapped it sharply



against the door with a loud rat-a-tat-tat.

As the Toad told her Sisters while the three witches were eating supper that evening, *this* was exactly the kind of dumb mistake humans were always making.

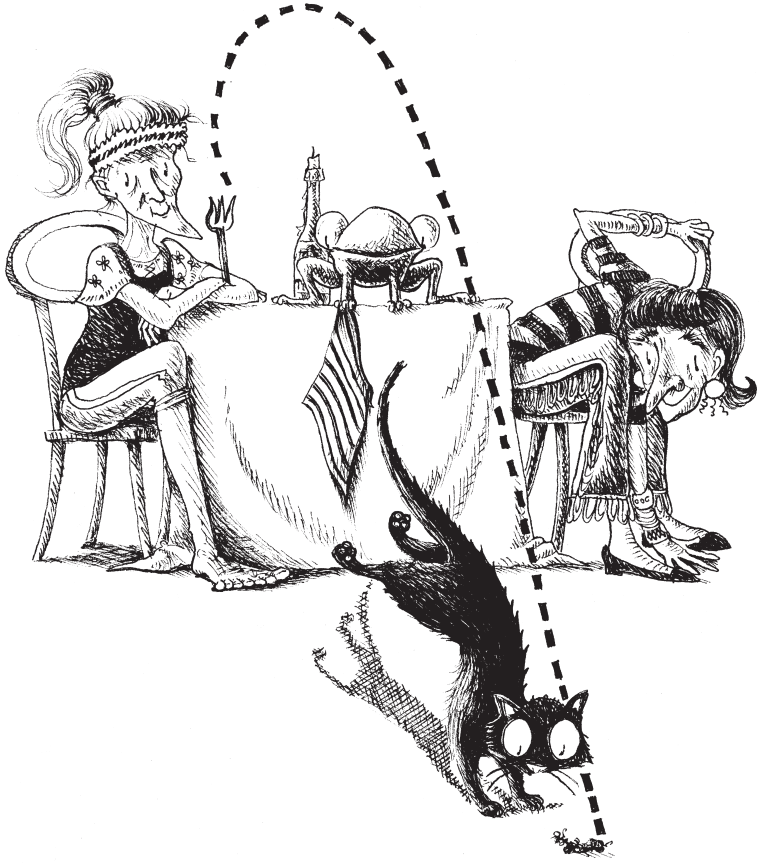
'Stuck his grubby fingers up my nostrils and rapped my rear end *three* times on the door!' she croaked, her eyes goggling at the memory.

The Nose and the Chin tssked in sympathy.

'I mean, what else was I supposed to do?' the Toad continued, hopping backwards and forwards across the tabletop where the three Sisters of Hiss were having supper. 'My bum *still* hurts.'

'Too much information,' muttered the Chin, spearing a lump of gristle on her plate* and flicking it onto the floor. A small black cat

* So sharp is the Chin's chin, she could easily have used it to spear the lump of gristle instead of her fork.



appeared from the shadows, pounced on this morsel and devoured it. The three Sisters gazed at the cat fondly.

'I actually think that turning him into a cat was a brilliant idea,' said the Nose, bending down* to make the kind of encouraging noises that cats are supposed to enjoy: 'Heeeere, possty wossty, psspsspss chhhhhh – who's a ssssweet pussy wussy?'

'Oh, give me strength,' the Chin said under her breath, adding in a normal voice, 'Changing people into animals is all very well, but we haven't worked out how to change them back. Have we, Toad dear?'

The Toad ignored this, running her tongue round her empty plate in the hope of finding an overlooked crumb.



* So big is the Nose's nose, she had to be extra careful that she didn't bang it on the floor as she bent down.

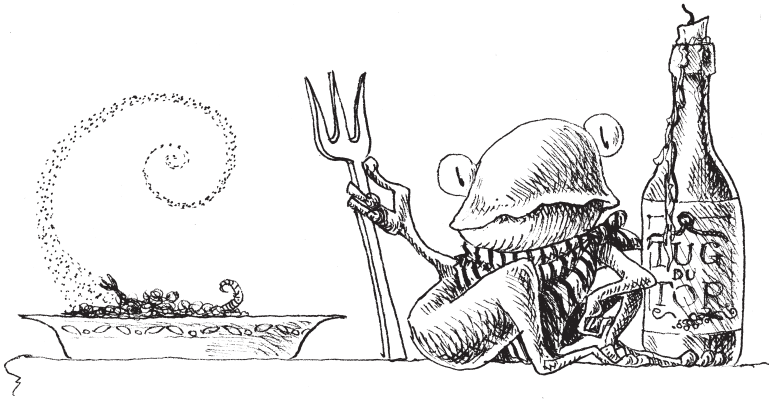
‘Look,’ the Chin said, ‘I’ve told you before: no more magic spells. They’re too dangerous. We’re living here, surrounded by humans. We’re trying to pretend that we are dear little old ladies. Harmless, toothless and utterly forgettable. If we keep on spelling willy-nilly, sooner or later a human will notice that we’re “different”, and then we’ll be in deep poo.’

The Toad rolled her eyes and yawned.

‘DEEP POO,’ the Chin repeated. ‘It’s only been a few hundred years since they barbecued the last witch in Scotland. If they did it then, they can do it again. So. No more magic unless it’s absolutely necessary. It’s too dangerous.’

‘Hang on a minute,’ shrilled the Nose. ‘If we’re not allowed to do any magic, then just *what* exactly are we going to eat?’

The Sisters looked down at their plates.



'Suddenly I'm not hungry,' whispered the Toad, remembering what supper had been before she'd turned it into supper.*

'We don't need magic to make supper,' the Chin said. 'The Toad is perfectly capable of making a good wholesome meal out of whatever she can find lying around—'

'Hang on a minute,' interrupted the Nose. 'I think you're forgetting that we're *witches*, dear Sisters, and not just any old witches either. *We* are the **Sisters of HiSS**. Magic is part of what makes us Us. It is like the very air we breathe.

* Before the Toad's spell, supper was three scabby rats that she had found next to the dustbins. Three rats plus assorted thistles, nettles and pondweed. Grusomely, the rats were already long dead when the Toad found them. So long dead that bits of them had come back to life again.

We cannot live without it. It is as natural—'

'Yes, yes, yes,' interrupted the Chin. 'Fascinating. But all the same, no more magic unless it's strictly necessary. Changing that innocent postman into a pussycat was a really stupid use of magic.'

'**Meeyowl**,' agreed the innocent postman.

'That was a spur-of-the-moment spell,' the Toad said. 'It won't happen again. I'm really, really sorry.'

'What?' the postman squeaked in Cat. 'Is that it? Sorry? You're *sorry*? Have you any idea just how sorry *I* am? What about **meeeeeeyowl**?'

The Sisters ignored him.

'Now,' said the Chin, 'there's a full moon tonight, which means our baby is exactly eighteen full moons old.'

'**Witch Baby**!' squealed the Toad, hopping up and down with excitement. 'Our dear little

adopted human child. To think that she's already eighteen months old. Seems like only yesterday when we chose her at the hospital. Oh, she's soooo sweet and small . . . I *so* wish we didn't have to wait until she's big before—'

'**Ughhhh**,' interrupted the Nose, '*babies*. Disgusting, dribbly little beasts. Who'd be a human parent? I can't tell you how glad I am that *we* don't have to raise her. Nappies? Fluffy toys? Fairy stories?'

'I love fairy stories,' whispered the Toad. 'Especially the one where the Toad gets kissed by the handsome prince—'

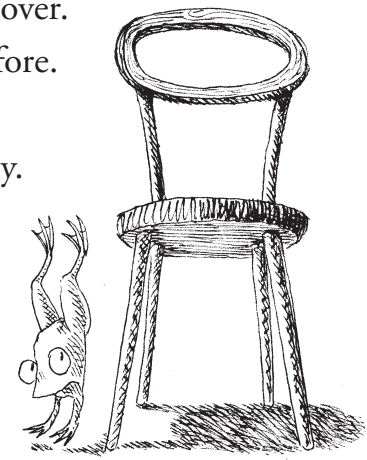


'You're going soft in the head,' said the Nose: 'a) it's a *frog*, and b) it gets kissed by a beautiful *princess*.'

'Don't care,' muttered the Toad. '*And* I don't care if we agreed not to get Witch Baby till she's bigger. I don't want to wait any longer. I want to go and get her right now.'

'Oh, puh-leaze,' groaned the Chin. 'How many times do I have to say this? *We* aren't going to raise Witch Baby. Her human parents will do that for us. Then, when the time is right, we'll step in and take over. And *not* one moment before. Do I make myself plain?'

The Toad didn't reply. Instead, she slid off the table onto a chair and then dropped to the floor with a small **thud**.



'I only wanted a little baby to hug,' she said, waddling towards the kitchen. '*I* don't mind nappies, fluffy toys and stories.' Outside the window, the full moon rose for the eighteenth time since Witch Baby had arrived on Earth. The Toad heaved a sigh. In a house only three minutes on a broomstick away, Witch Baby would be getting ready for bed. The Toad sighed again.

Nappies, fluffy toys and fairy tales? How hard could that be?