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opening extract from

Oliver Moon and the Potion Commotion

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Oliver Moon was the hardest working junior wizard at Magic School.

He was smashing at Spellcraft.

He was tip-top at Toad Training.

And as for his broomstick flying...it was absolutely brilliant!

"One of our most promising pupils," Mrs. MacLizard, the head teacher, had

written in his last school report. "If he could just perfect his potion brewing, he'd be dynamite."

But potion brewing wasn't Oliver's biggest problem. Oh, no. His biggest problems were at home. One problem was his mum. The other problem was his dad. And actually, the Witch Baby was a bit of a problem, too.

Oliver knew his mum and dad weren't the worst witch and wizard in the world. Not quite.

They hadn't "Gone Good" like Hattie Toadtrumper's mum and dad.

They weren't knee-knockingly scary like Boris Batbottom's mum and dad.

And they definitely weren't super-strict like poor old Pippi Prowlcat's parents.



No, Oliver's mum and dad were just eye-poppingly awful at *being a witch and wizard*. They didn't have a clue. It was very embarrassing.

"I can't be bothered to cook in that cauldron any more," his dad said one day. He'd burned the scorpion stew again the evening before, and the kitchen was *still* full of curling black smoke. "I've bought us this microwave instead. You can steam a slug in thirty seconds. Look at that beauty go!"

"But Dad, you can't stir spells in a microwave," Oliver pointed out.

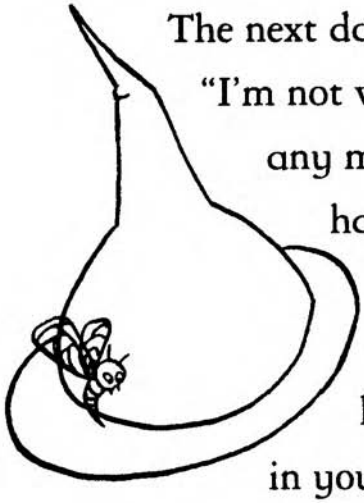
His dad wasn't listening. He was too busy poaching prickleberries to go with his slug.

PING! went the microwave.

"Ping!" echoed the Witch Baby, stretching out a fat hand for a taste.

"Yum," slurped Mr. Moon, licking his lips.





The next day, Oliver's mum said, "I'm not wearing that pointy hat any more. I've just had my hair done and I don't want it going flat."

"But Mum, pointy hats heat up the magic in your brain," Oliver reminded her. "You can't cast spells with a cold head!"

His mum didn't pay any attention. She was too busy brushing her hair with her thornspike brush.

SQUIRT! went the hairspray.

"Poo!" squeaked the Witch Baby, wrinkling her nose.

"Gorgeous," said Mrs. Moon, winking at herself in the mirror.



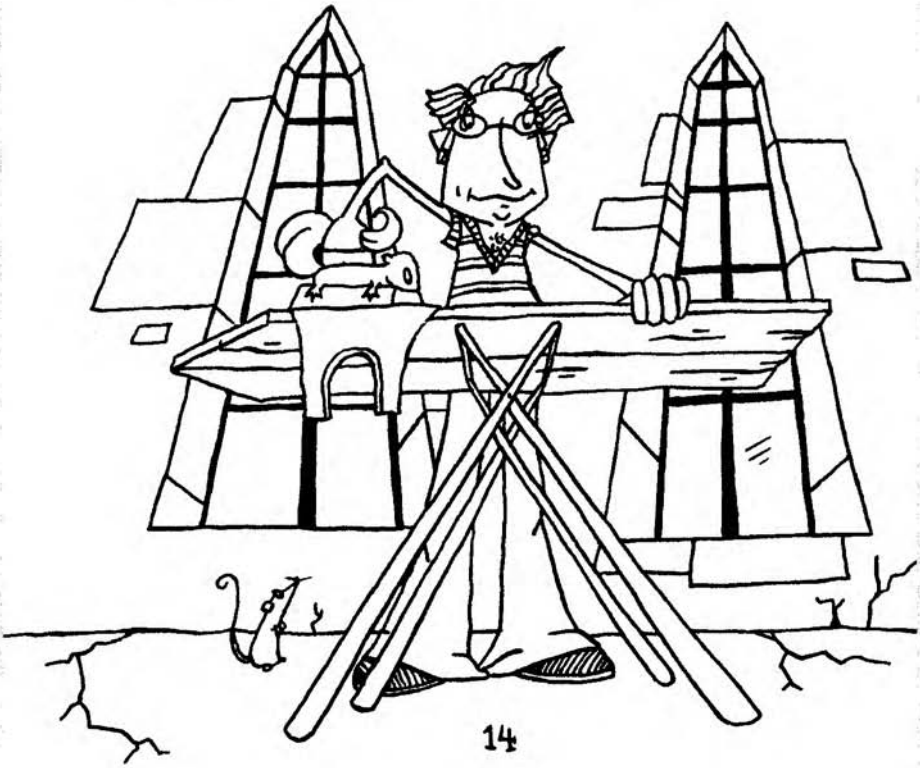
And there was worse to come...

"Mum and I have had enough of wearing dusty old cloaks," Dad announced. "We want to wear trendy clothes for a change."

Oliver *almost* told his dad that purple pantaloons and glittery gold tank tops

were not trendy at all, but he didn't want to hurt his feelings. Instead, he reminded him that a swishable cloak was a key part of the wizarding wardrobe. "You need to swish before you can wish, Dad," he said. "Remember?"

Mr. Moon didn't change his mind. He was too busy ironing his orange vest.



SSSSS! went the iron.

"Yuck!" yelped the Witch Baby, blinking at the brightness.

"Perfect!" cried Mr. Moon, doing a twirl. "Swishing is for squares."

As for broomsticks...Oliver didn't even want to *think* about broomsticks. His mum and dad had flatly refused to put their bottoms anywhere near one ever since his mum's nasty accident with the tanglebranch tree.

"But broomstick flying is what we *do*," Oliver begged them. "You can't be a witch or wizard without swooping through the night sky."

"It's too dangerous," his mum said, shuddering. "I might crash again."

"It's too cold," his dad said, shivering.

"I might catch something. You know me and my coughs."

"Atchoo!" sneezed the Witch Baby, wiping her nose on her sleeve.

Oliver glared at her.

"Anyway, we've got a car now," his mum and dad said together. "*And* it's got a stereo. You can't listen to music on a broomstick, can you?"

"I give up," Oliver said to his best friend, Jake Frogfreckle, as they walked to school one Monday. "Mum and Dad are so unmagical, it's not true. And they're just getting worse."

"Maybe they'll grow out of it," Jake said helpfully.

Oliver snorted. "Grow out of it? When?

Mum's two hundred and four years old already. Dad is two hundred and twenty next month. You'd think they'd act their ages by now." He shook his head. "No, they're never going to change. Never in a billion years!"

