

ROARING GOOD READS
Collins

Witch-in- Training

Flying
Lessons

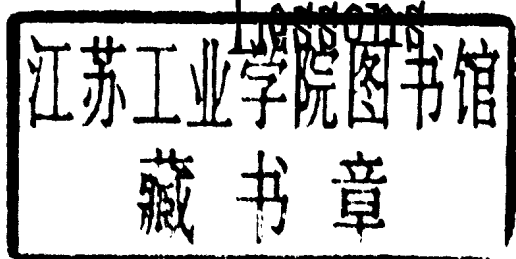


Maeve Friel

Witch-in- Training

Flying

Lessons



An imprint of HarperCollins Publishers

Roaring Good Reads will fire the imagination of all young readers.

Coming soon:

Witch-in-Training Spelling Trouble by Maeve Friel

Other Roaring Good Reads from Collins

Mister Skip by Michael Morpurgo

Little Daisy by Jean Ure

The Witch's Tears by Jenny Nimmo

Spider McDrew by Alan Durant



Witch-in- Training

Flying
Lessons



Maeve Friel



Illustrated by Nathan Reed



An imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers



First published by Collins in 2002
Collins is an imprint of HarperCollins *Publishers* Ltd
77-85 Fulham Palace Road, Hammersmith, London W6 8JB

The HarperCollins website address is www.fireandwater.com

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Text copyright © Maeve Friel 2002
Illustrations by Nathan Reed

ISBN 0 00 713341 3

The author asserts the moral right to be
identified as the author of the work.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by
Omnia Books Limited, Glasgow

Conditions of Sale

This book is sold subject to the condition
that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise,
be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated
without the publisher's prior consent in any form,
binding or cover other than that in which it is
published and without a similar condition
including this condition being imposed on
the subsequent purchaser.



Chapter One

Miss Strega's shop was not like its smart neighbours. For one thing, it didn't have a large plate glass window with eye-catching displays of toys or trainers or books or

mobile phones. On wintry afternoons, when bright lights blazed in the other shops along the High Street, Miss Strega's shrank back into the shadows. And if anybody ever popped in to buy some clothes pegs or jam pot covers – and hardly anybody ever did – old Miss Strega bustled out from behind the counter and more or less chased them back out on to the street.

“Just closing up,” she would say. “Come back tomorrow.”

Children, hurrying home from school, were never tempted to stop and peer in to the shop's shabby, overcrowded window. If they had, they would have seen what a heap of junk it sold; hurricane lamps, mousetraps, bird scarers and flypapers dangled on hooks above a stack of black iron cooking pots and an untidy jumble of

balls of twine. Ancient-looking fishing rods and rusty garden forks leant against the door as if they had just been dumped there for the binmen to take away.

So no one noticed when a small broom was propped outside the door on the thirty-first of October. It had a short handle and a bunch of spiky birch twigs tied together at one end. A notice scribbled on a piece of cardboard was tucked into the twigs:

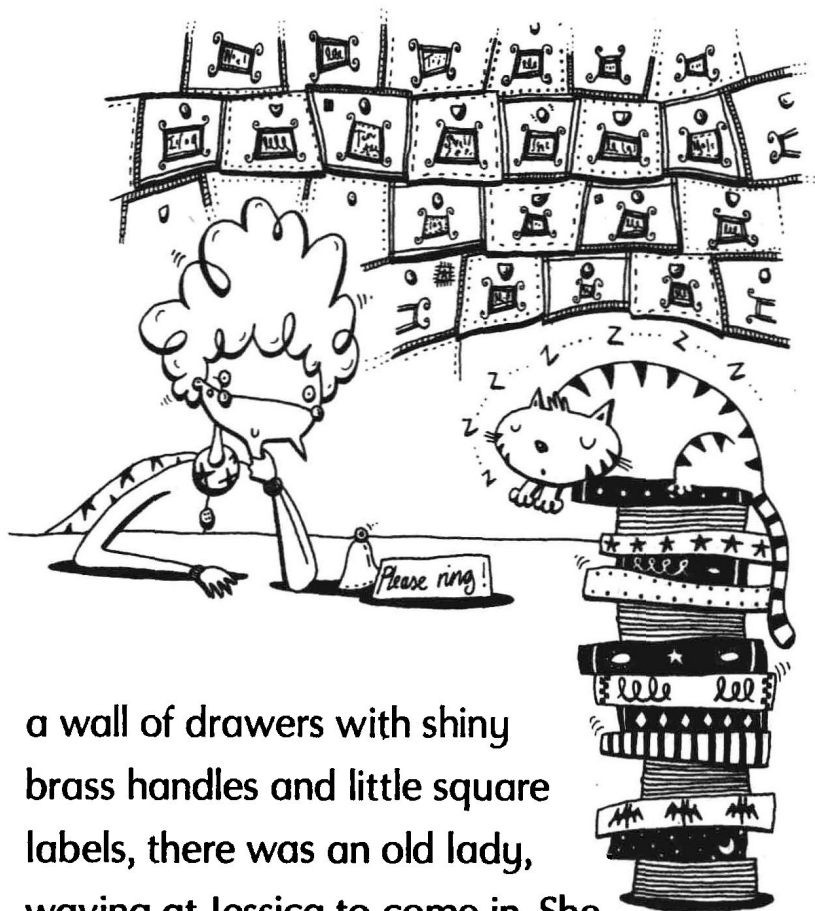
Birch Besom £4.99
Flying Lessons extra

Jessica wouldn't have seen it either, if a sudden gust of wind hadn't snatched her party hat out of her hand. It was a tall, white, pointy hat, the sort that princesses wear, with a long floaty veil stuck on the top.

“Hey,” she shouted, “come back.” But the hat paid no attention. It galloped along the pavement, skirted around an old lady with a shopping trolley and somersaulted over a baby’s buggy. It sailed between the legs of a boy on roller blades, danced over the heads of the shoppers and finally came to land on the spiky twigs of the little broom.

“Flying Lessons extra,” Jessica read as she reached for her hat. “How curious.” She was just looking up at the peeling old shop sign that hung out from the wall, creaking and groaning in the wind, when a voice said: “Have you come for the broom, my dear?”

Jessica scrunched up her eyes and peered into the shop. She could see a large ginger cat snoozing on top of a pile of books which balanced precariously on the high wooden counter. And behind the counter, in front of



a wall of drawers with shiny brass handles and little square labels, there was an old lady, waving at Jessica to come in. She was so small, like a little bird with twinkly eyes, that Jessica could only see her head and shoulders. She had one hand firmly cupped over her chin.

“Come in,” she said. “I’ve been expecting you. I would have closed earlier – Halloween

is always such a busy night for me – but I knew you would appear before long.”

Jessica lifted the latch and walked in.

“Now, what can I get for you, my dear? Let me think,” said Miss Strega, smiling broadly. “Was it grate polish you were looking for? Or perhaps a new bath plug? Or maybe you need a frying pan?”

Jessica glanced behind Miss Strega at the wall of drawers with their spidery handwritten labels. For a moment in the bad light, the letters seemed to be all mixed up. “Gnats’ Spittle, Bats’ Legs,” she read, “Frogspawn.”

She squinted again and the words floated back into place. “Grate Polish, Bath Plugs, Frying Pans.”

“No,” she said, apologetically. “I don’t need anything at all. I just came to get my hat.”

“And the broom of course,” Miss Strega said. “I left it out especially for you.”

“But I... I... don’t have any money,” Jessica stammered.

Miss Strega shook her head vigorously from side to side. “I wouldn’t dream of charging *you*. After all, it is your broom. But you will have to take the lessons of course. They’re very important.”

Jessica frowned. “My broom?”

“Flying is not as easy as it looks, you know,” the old lady said, tapping her nose. “Even one lesson can make all the difference.”



“Oh dear,” thought Jessica, “this is very silly.” She backed towards the door. “Thank you very much,” she said, “but I don’t really need a broom.”

“Oh you do,” said Miss Strega, “we all do. And don’t forget, it’s been waiting for you all these years.”

“For me?”

“Of course. As soon as Jessica hits double figures, she’ll be here, I told it lots and lots of times. And here you are, right on cue, on your tenth birthday!” She clapped her hands and smiled delightedly.

“How did you know that today is my birthday?” Jessica spluttered. “And how did you know my name?”

Miss Strega tapped her nose and smiled even more. Her chin, Jessica could now see, was very, very long. “One of the cats

reminded me,” she said mysteriously. With that, she came out from behind the counter and steered Jessica back on to the High Street.

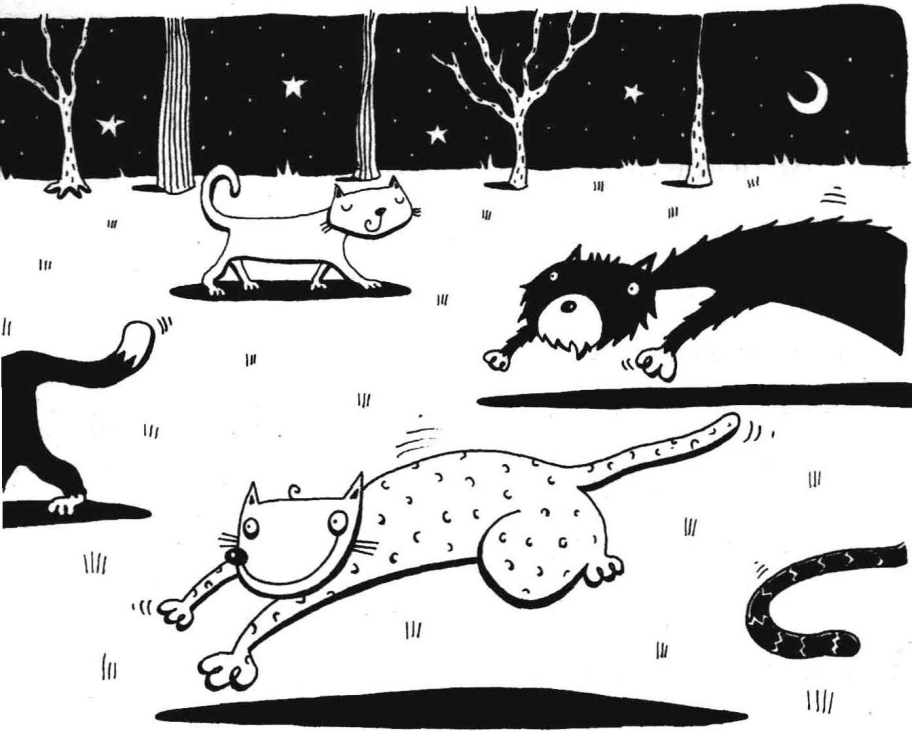
“Now here you are,” she said, taking the broom and putting it into Jessica’s hands. “But do be sensible and come back for the lessons. Beginners often find themselves in sticky situations. One of my girls ended up on top of the Eiffel Tower. It was very, very embarrassing as you can imagine.”





Chapter Two

It was getting dark as Jessica walked home. A tiny Batman and a white-sheeted ghost hurried past clutching their bags of Halloween goodies. Large pumpkin lanterns



with jagged mocking teeth grinned at her from windowsills. There seemed to be an amazing number of cats out and about. Big fluffy marmalades, sleek Siamese, silver tabbies and black moggies did figures-of-eight around her legs. They sniffed at her broom and mewed loudly. "Miaou, miaou, miaou," they said. It sounded awfully like "Happy Birthday, Jessica."

At home, Jessica hurried into the kitchen and rummaged about under the sink until she found a roll of large black bin liners. She fetched Sellotape and scissors and paints. Half an hour later, she was standing in front of the long mirror in the hall wearing her new witch's cape and her pointy hat, now painted black with gold stars. She picked up the broom and put one leg either side of it.

"Thank you, Miss Strega," she said to her reflection.

And then, although she was really a very sensible sort of a girl, she opened the front door, pointed the end of the broom at the sky and said, "Vroom, vroom."

Nothing happened.

"I knew it wouldn't work," she said, stepping off and making a funny face at herself