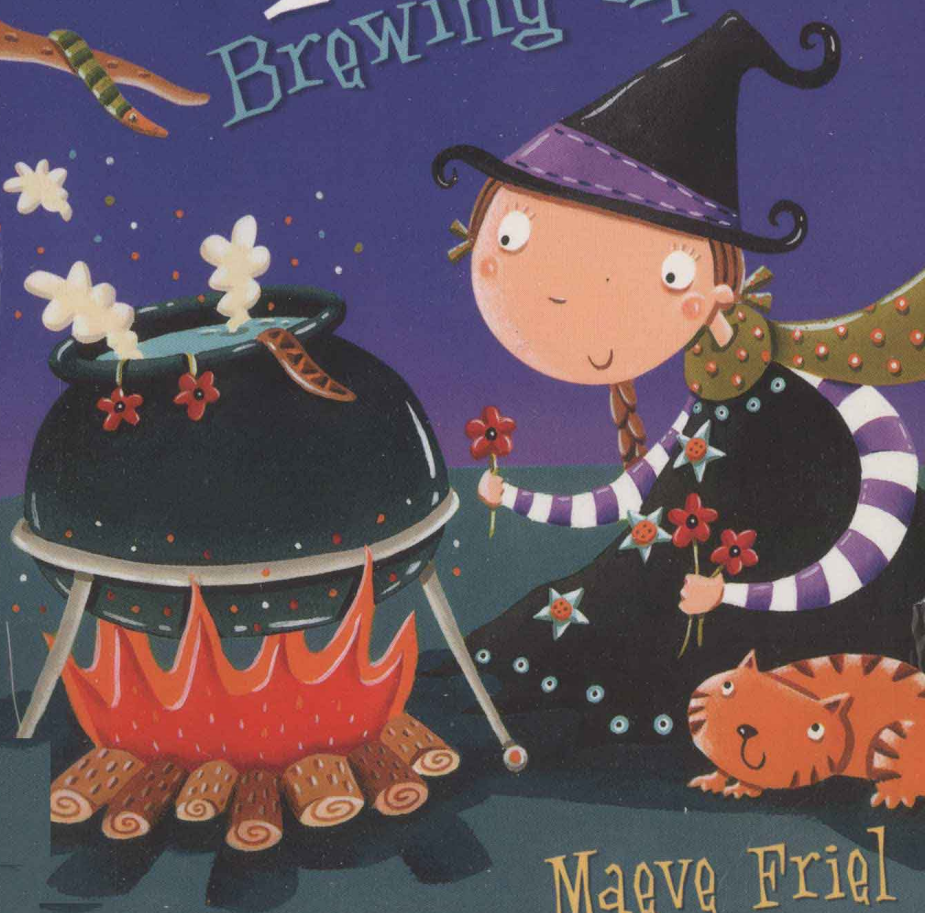


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Brewing Up



Maeve Friel

Witch-in- Training

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Maeve Friel

Illustrated by Nathan Reed



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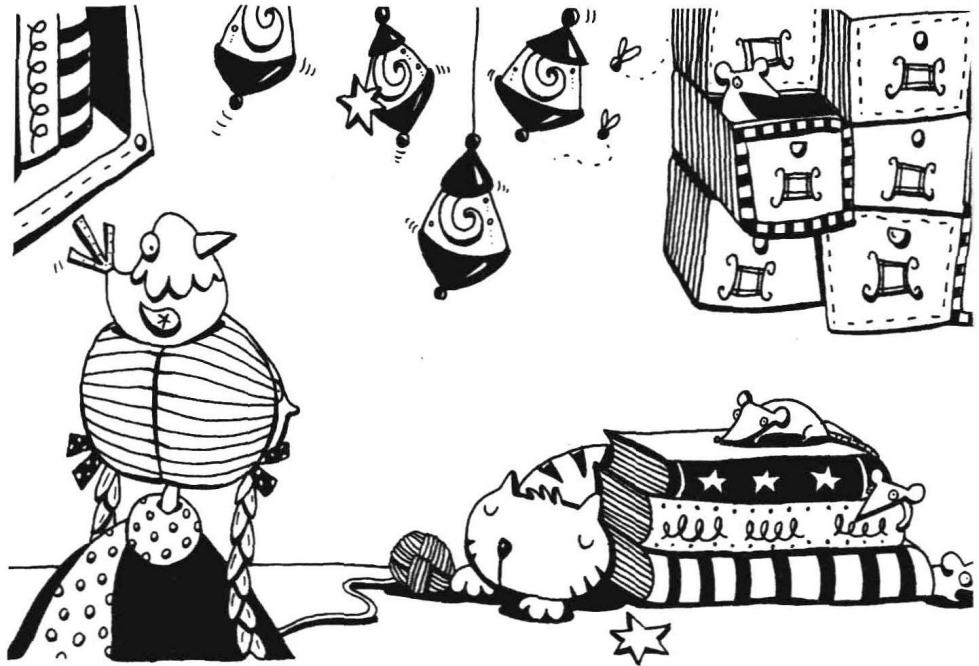
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Chapter One

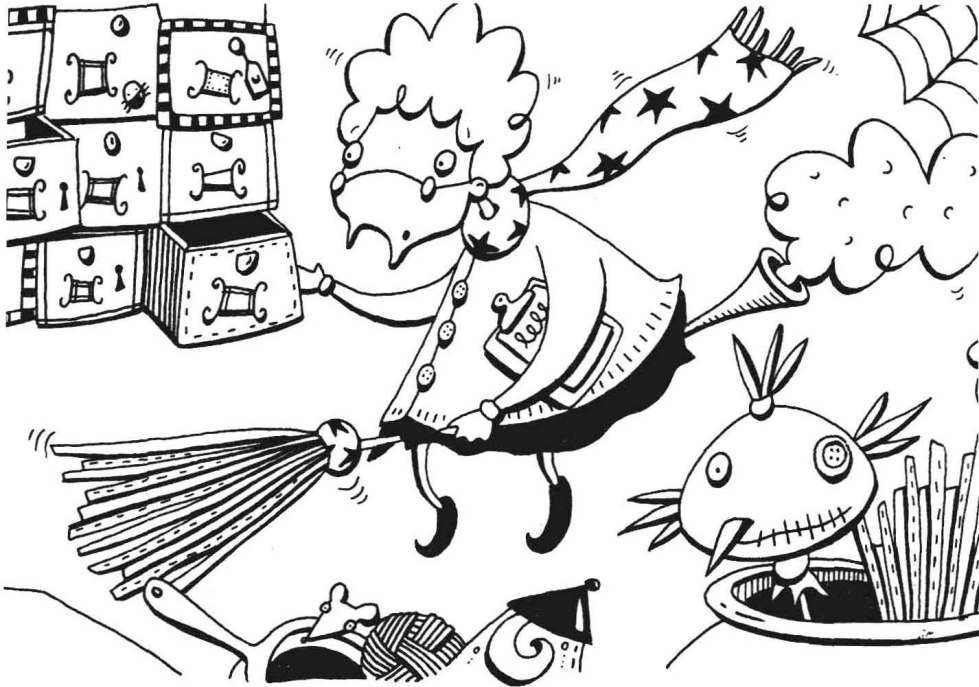
Jessica lazily zigzagged over the roofs of the High Street, paused above Miss Strega's hardware shop and sniffed the air. "How odd," she thought as she zoomed down to the pavement and hopped off her broom.



“There’s no smell of a bubbling cauldron. I thought I was to start my Brewing lessons today.”

She sniffed once more – but there was nothing, not even a hint of Cold Smelly Voles – so she removed her flying helmet, helped Berkeley out of her pocket, lifted the door latch and hurried inside to find out what was going on.

To her surprise, Miss Strega was not in her usual place behind the shop counter. Instead, she was whizzing around, fast-forwarding,



reversing and zooming all over the place, pulling drawers open and scribbling notes on a clipboard. "Moonrays and marrowbones!" she was muttering. "What a mess!"

"What's a mess?" Jessica asked. "Have you lost something?"

Miss Strega swivelled around, peered over her glasses at Jessica, stuck her pencil behind her ear and swooped to the floor. "Three economy packets of owl feathers, two phials of Fairy Tears, half a Dragon's

Tooth, one Wasp Sting and eight Spider Egg Sacs. That's all!"

"That's all?" repeated Jessica, wondering what sort of spell Miss Strega was brewing up with that mixture.

Miss Strega waved a hand at the open drawers. "I'm talking about Brewing ingredients."

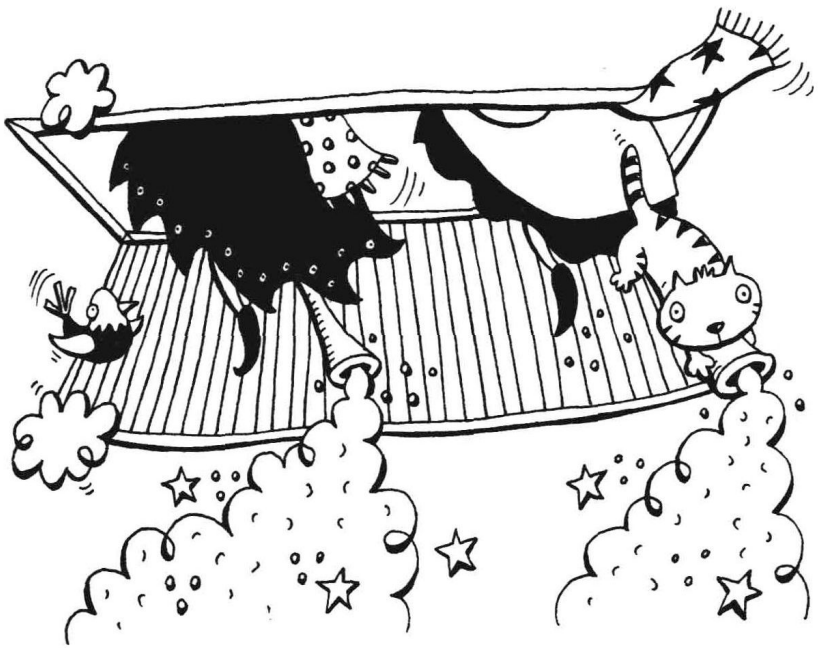
"Brewing ingredients?"

"By the hooting of Minerva's owl, Jess! You sound like an echo. Don't you understand this is an emergency! I've run out of everything from Mystic Biscuits to Teenage Slugs. We shall have to leave on a collecting trip at once."

"A collecting trip? Fantastic!" said Jessica who loved both travelling and shopping. "Where do we have to go?"

"The attic," said Miss Strega.

"The attic?" Jessica's face fell.



“You’re still echoing me, dear. Now, on your marks.” She tweaked the starter twigs on her broomstick: “*Ig-Fo-Li: Ignition, Forward and Lift.*”

As Miss Strega rose majestically towards the ceiling, her cat Felicity, who had been snoozing on top of a pile of Spell books, launched herself on to the back of her broom. Jessica remounted her own broomstick and followed them as they disappeared through the trapdoor into the attic.

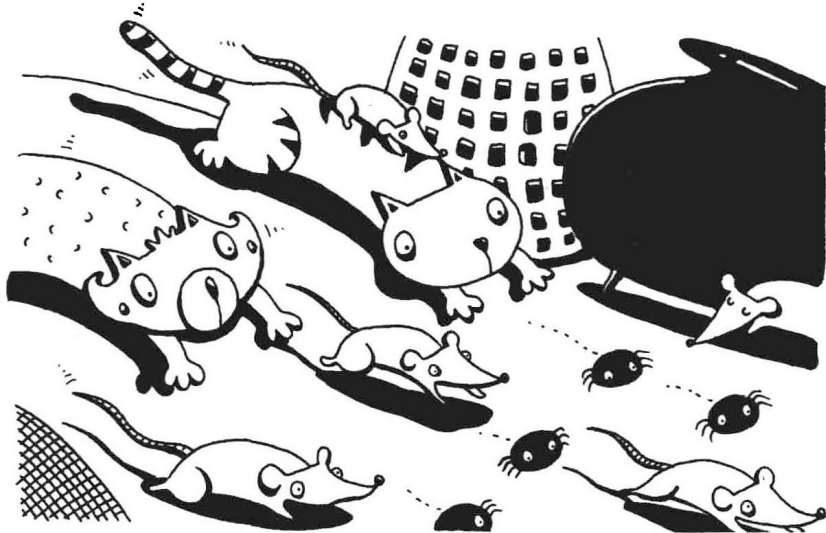
The attic smelt of old suitcases and dusty cauldrons – and cats, of course. Felicity was Miss Strega's number one shop cat, but there were always other cats in residence, cats on holiday or having kittens or in hiding. Jessica took one of them on her lap and sat down on a pile of moth-eaten cloaks while Miss Strega rummaged about behind a curtain of cobwebs.



"Here we are," she said at last. "This is what we want – the Expedition Kit." She began to haul out chests marked Samples and boxes marked Specimens, baskets of every shape and size, long-handled fishing nets and short-handled butterfly nets.

"And of course, we shall have to take the campfire cauldron." Miss Strega turned a small cooking pot upside down and whacked it.





Several cross spiders scuttled across the attic boards in search of cover. A family of bewildered sleepy mice, who had bedded down for the night, tumbled out on to the floor. Felicity and all the other cats immediately chased after them.

Once she had calmed everything down again, Miss Strega started loading her broomstick while Jessica inspected the Expedition Kit. Inside one of the boxes, she found rows and rows of glass jars and bottles, each labelled in Miss Strega's spidery handwriting, as well as tweezers and

camel-hair brushes, pin cushions and tins of rubber bands.

“The plan,” Miss Strega explained, “is to collect all the standard shop items...”

“Like Snails’ Drool and Gnats’ Spittle,” suggested Jessica, reading the labels on the bottles.

“Exactly, but we’ll scoot around looking for some new products as well...”

“...like the Conjuring Stones from Pelagia’s beach or Dr Krank’s Withershins Balls?”

Miss Strega nodded her long chin vigorously. “Absolutely! Witches World Wide like novelty as much as anyone. So, we’ll need to fly off the usual flight paths and go to the Very End of the Earth.”

“That sounds great,” agreed Jessica as she hurriedly replaced the cork on a whiffy bottle labelled Aroma of Lion’s Den. “But

how on earth are we going to carry all this gear? Once these boxes and baskets are full, our broomsticks won't be able to lift off the ground."

"That's where the homing brooms come in." Miss Strega pointed at a pair of long-handled dusters leaning against the water tank and nodding their pink and grey feathered heads as they chatted. "They work rather like those racing pigeons that always know their way home," explained Miss Strega, ignoring Jessica's raised eyebrows. "Once we have collected enough stock, we send the brooms back with all our parcels; they'll come and go as often as we please."

Jessica whistled admiringly. The homing brooms turned a little pinker and bowed.

Miss Strega heaved the last of the boxes on to the back of her broom and handed

Jessica a large butterfly net. "You'll need that in a minute. Now, are we ready to fly? Are all your twig controls in working order? Have you got your flying helmet? Is your cloak clean?"

Jessica nodded, fastened the strap of her aerodynamic flying helmet under her chin and smoothed down the front of her silk Super-Duper De-Luxe Guaranteed-Invisibility-When-You-Need-It cape.



“Have you got your Spell book? Your wand? An owl feather in case you need to do some Mingling?”

Jessica nodded again, three times.

“Then, let’s take to the sky. I think we might start our journey with a moon-vault.”

