

Oliver Moon and the Spell-off



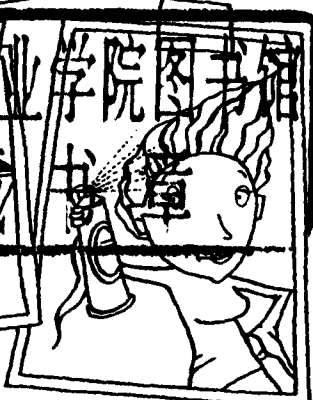
Sue Mongredien



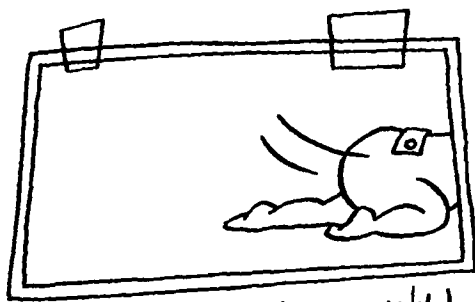
My Family



Dad



Me
Oliver
Moon



Mum

my sister, the Witch Baby

Oliver Moon
and
the
Spell-off



Sue Mongredien



Illustrated by



Jan McCafferty





For Harry Graves, with lots of love

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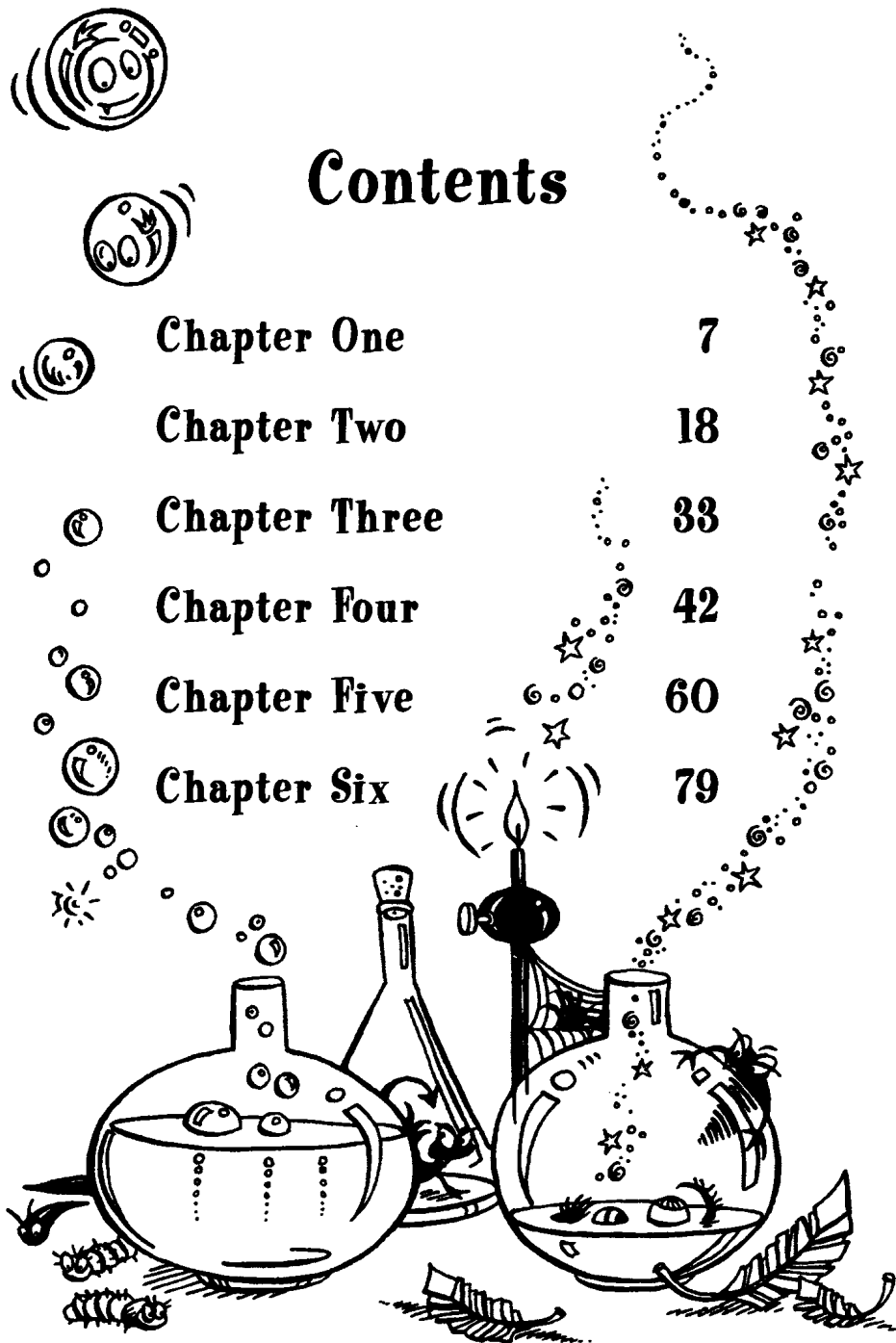
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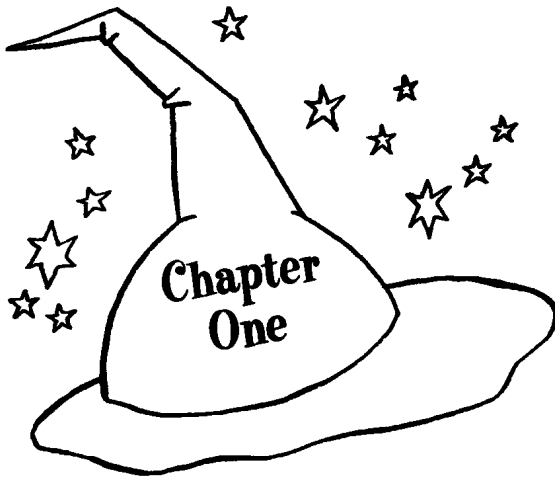
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The Moon family were sitting down to breakfast one morning when they heard a familiar rattle from the front door. “Post-ghost coming!” the letterbox announced. “Late as usual, I see – what a surprise! Oof!”

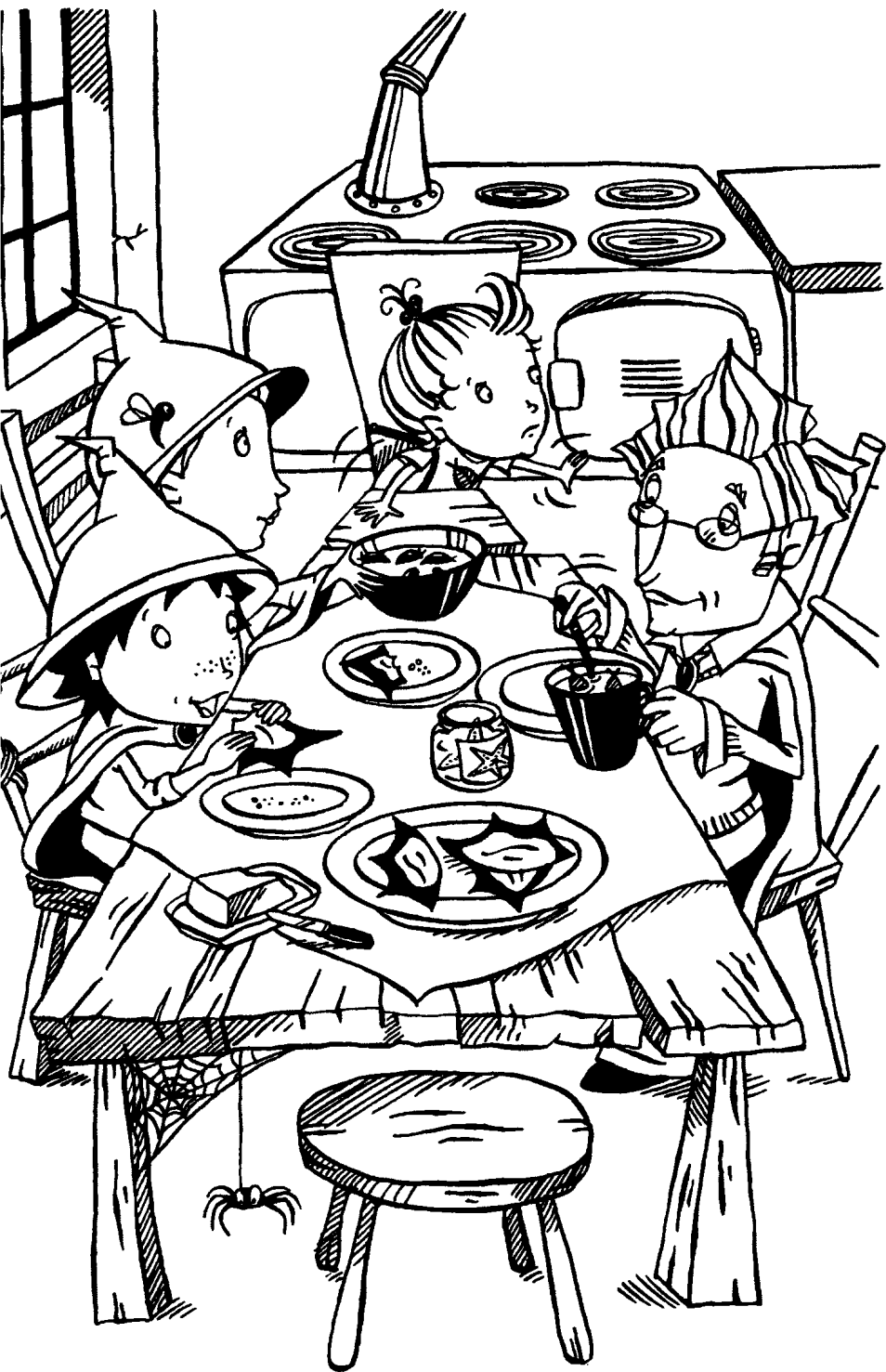
There was a thud, as the post fell onto the doormat.

“No need to be so rough!” Oliver heard the letterbox scold the post-ghost. “Just because you’re in a hurry! Shouldn’t have overslept again, should you?”

Mr. Moon, Oliver’s dad, frowned. “That letterbox gets cheekier and cheekier,” he commented, with a slurp of his cockroach coffee. “Must get round to putting a magic muffler on it.”

The Witch Baby, Oliver’s sister, was straining to get out of her high chair. “Down!” she was saying excitedly. “Me see ghost!”

Mrs. Moon gave her a smile. “Not today, pickle,” she replied. “He’s already gone. Eat up your beetle flakes, there’s a good girl.”



Oliver finished his batwing toast, and got down from the table to collect the post.

“Not much this morning,” the letterbox told him, swinging open as it spoke. “A letter for your dad there, and your mum’s *Witch Weekly* magazine. Oh, and some bills, too, I’m afraid.” It shut again with a loud snap.



“Thanks,” Oliver said politely, gathering up the pile and taking it to his parents. It was a Saturday morning, so there was no rush for him to go to Magic School, or for his dad to fly off to work. He sat back down at the table, and spread some jellyfish jam on a second slice of toast.

“Ooh,” his mum said, flicking through her new magazine. “*Green* capes are in this season. Nice... And, ooh, those pumpkin fritters look yummy, I wonder how you—”

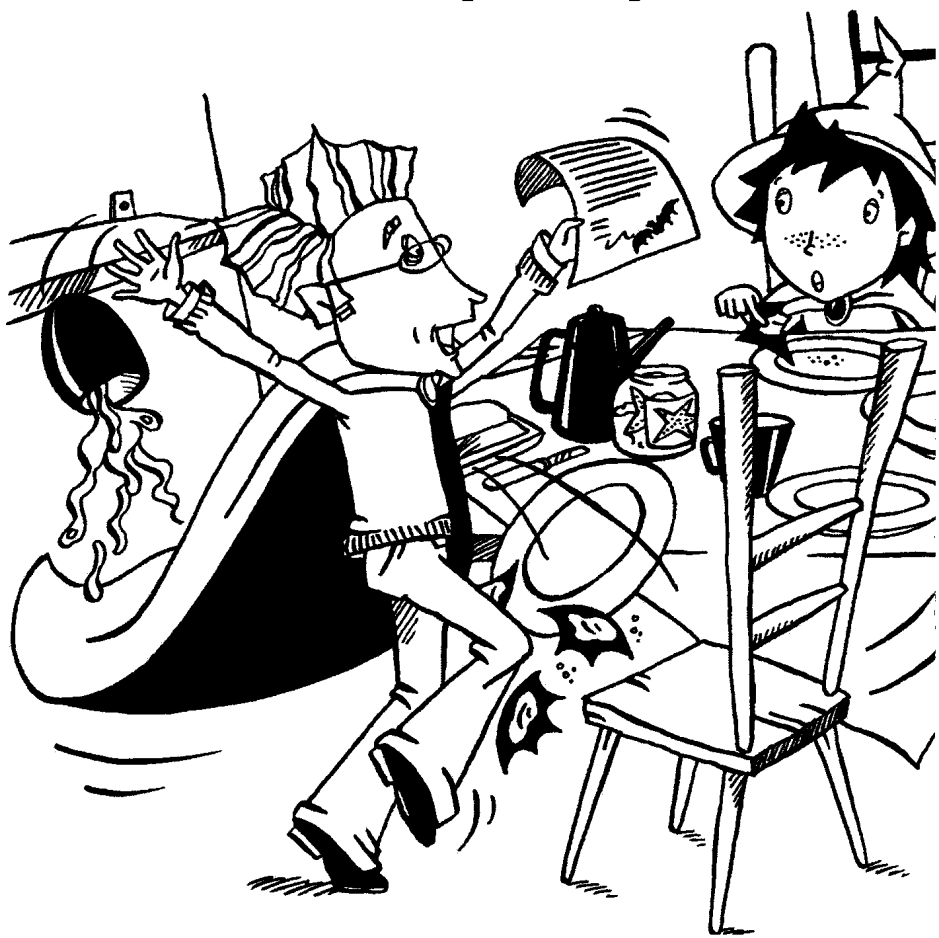
She was interrupted by Mr. Moon jumping to his feet with a shout. “I’ve got it!” he yelled, waving his letter in the air. “I’ve actually got it!”

“Got what?” Oliver asked with interest.

His dad had jumped up so quickly, he'd knocked the plate of batwing toast off the table.

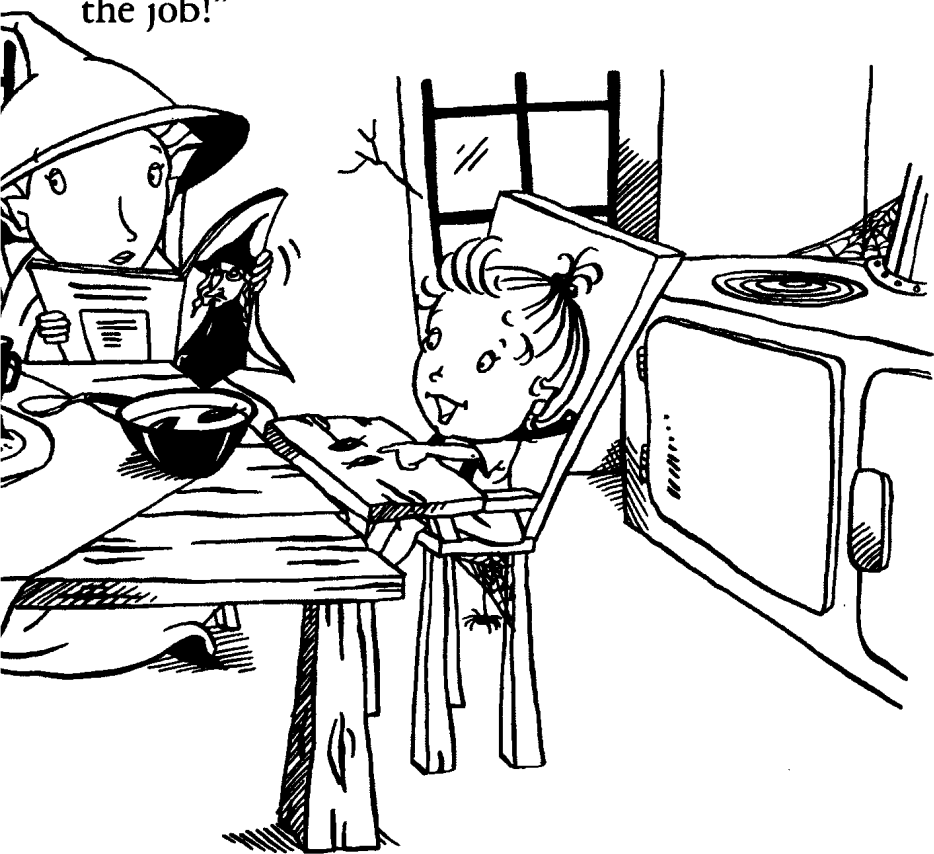
"Fleas," giggled his sister. "Daddy got fleas!"

Mrs. Moon dragged her eyes away from "101 New Pumpkin Recipes" to



look at her husband. "What's that, dear?" she asked distractedly.

"The job!" Mr. Moon cried, a grin on his face. He flung his arms wide, elbowing a vase of stinkweed off the shelf behind him in all the excitement. "I got the job!"



“Really?” Oliver’s mum jumped to her feet, fritters forgotten. “Let’s see!”

“What job?” Oliver asked. “What are you talking about? You’re leaving ValuStix?”

“I certainly am,” said Mr. Moon, passing the letter to his wife with a flourish. “I’ve been offered a job, Oliver. At your school!”

Oliver’s eyes boggled at the news. His dad working at Magic School? Oliver knew Mr. Moon had never really enjoyed his job as a broomstick salesman, but he’d had no idea he was thinking of leaving. “But... But...” he stammered, trying to take it in. “But what are you going to be doing at Magic School? You’re not... You’re not going to be

a *teacher*, are you?”

Oliver crossed his fingers behind his back. He really didn't want his dad to be one of his teachers. It would be so embarrassing!

“Not a teacher, no,” his dad replied. “I'm the new Potions assistant. I'll be helping out with the experiments, that sort of thing.”

“Well done, darling!” Mrs. Moon cried, throwing her arms around her husband's neck. “That's so exciting!”

Oliver stared at his beaming parents. He couldn't help feeling surprised. The current Potions assistant at school, Mr. Newt, was one of the cleverest people Oliver had ever met. Whereas Mr. Moon... Well. He was just...*Dad*.

“Um...Dad,” Oliver said, choosing his words carefully, “do you actually *know* much about potions?”

Mr. Moon shrugged. “Well, I *used* to,” he said breezily. “Quite a few years ago, anyway. Won the school prize for Potions, back when I was a lad.” He smiled. He poured himself another cup of cockroach coffee, splashing some on the tablecloth by mistake.

