

AUTUMN MOONBEAM

DANCE MAGIC!

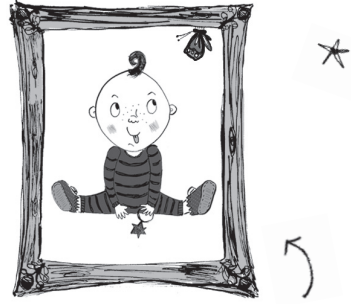


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AUTUMN MOONBEAM



KNOTWEED MOONBEAM

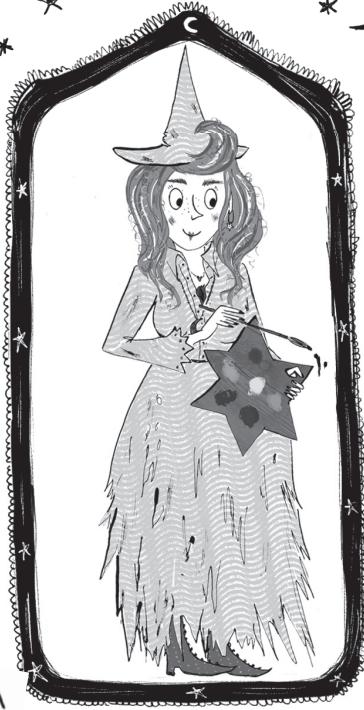


MORDECAI AND TOADFLAX MOONBEAM



STORM

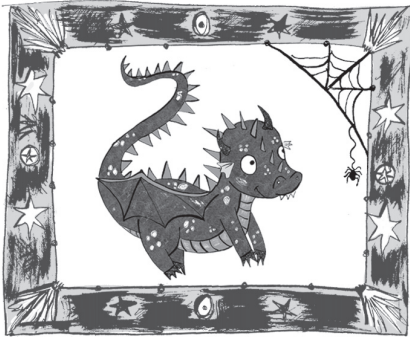




SILVER MOONBEAM
(AKA MUM)



GHOSTLY
GRAN



TREVOR



ZEPHYR MOONBEAM

EDITH 'BATTY'
BATTINGTON



SEVERINA
BLOODWORTH



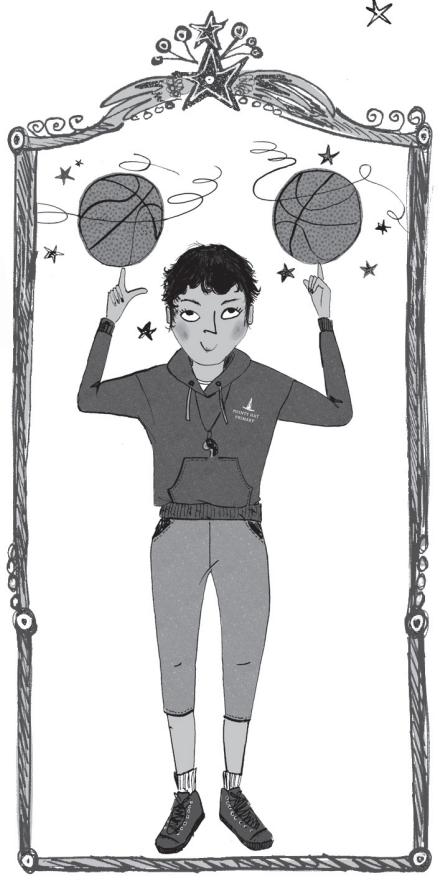
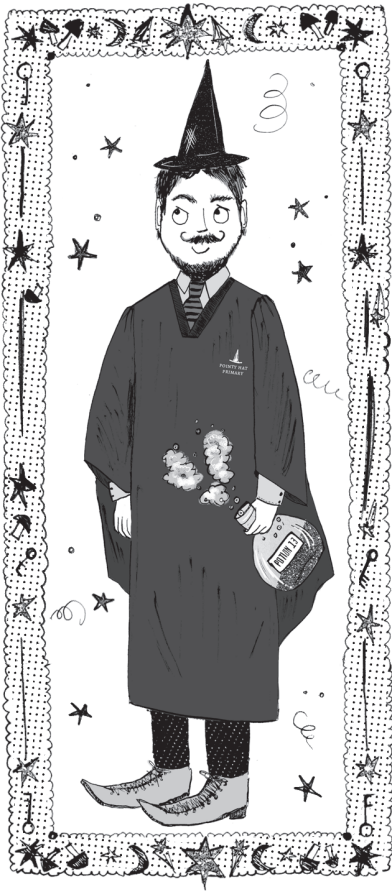
LEIF KERRSE



lee

lee

MR SNAILCRUNCHER



MISS SPINNINGWEB



lee





↪ ONYX DARKSTONE



↪ COSMIC-CREEPER



↪ VERITY CHARM



SKYE
CLOUDSKIPPER



RAINBOW
CLOUDSKIPPER



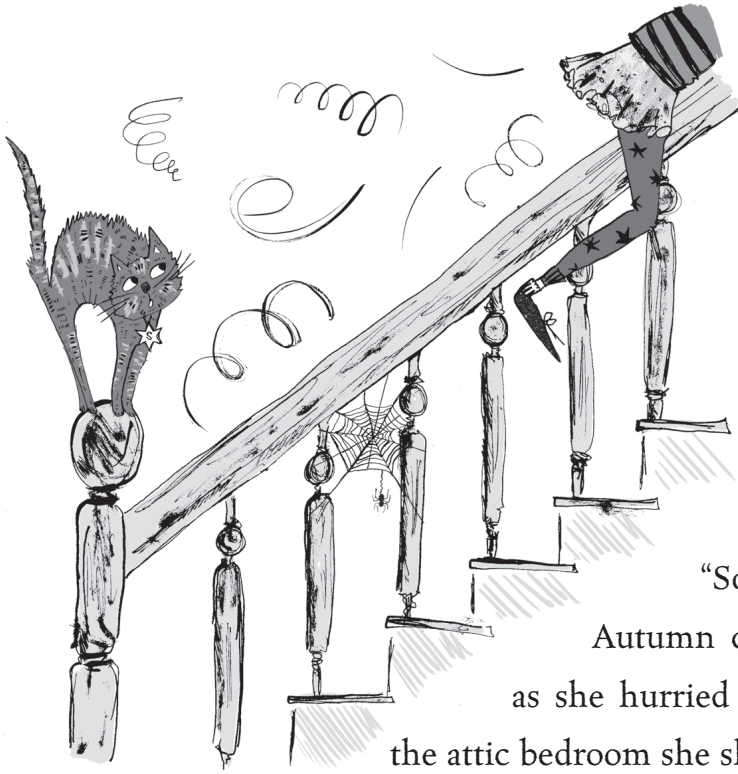




MOONBEAMS AND CARTWHEELS

AUTUMN MOONBEAM leapt from her bed and cartwheeled across her room, leaving a trail of yellow swirls of light behind her.

“Do you have to do that in here?” Zephyr, Autumn’s twin, said from the bottom bunk bed. She was busy playing chess with Ghostly Gran. It was a bit tricky as Zephyr had to move the pieces for her but she loved board games.



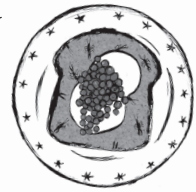
“Sorry!”

Autumn called
as she hurried from
the attic bedroom she shared
with her sister. She slid down the bannister, startling
Storm as she did so. His scruffy grey fur stood on
end and he miaowed once before trotting after her.

It was Saturday morning and she couldn't wait
for her favourite dance show on the spell-a-vision
to start. Autumn absolutely loved gymnastics and
dance.

“A most wonderful gymnast,” Miss Spinningweb had said. She would know – her PE teacher was in the gym team for the Aaarghlympics.

The kitchen table was already in chaos as Autumn’s two older brothers, Mordecai and Toadflax, were making their way through fried snail’s eggs on earwig toast for breakfast. There was no sign of her younger brother, Knotweed, who they always called Weed for short. Autumn knew that she had an amazing family but they were always so loud, so noisy, so messy and, most of all, they always got in her way when she was practising her dance magic.



Autumn poured herself some Beetlebix, stretching her leg up on the kitchen counter as she ate.

“No dancing in the kitchen. You’re eight now, pumpkin, you know not to do it!” Mum breezed in from the garden, carrying Autumn’s grubby little brother under one arm and a baby dragon under the







other. She plonked Weed down in his highchair at the table while Trevor – the dragon – squirmed free of her grasp and scampered off before he could be confined too.

Autumn sighed and reluctantly lowered her leg. “It’s not dancing; I’m stretching.”

“OK, no stretching in the kitchen then!”



Autumn loved to dance at home but someone or something always seemed to stop her. She wished she could go to a proper dance club instead, although her tummy filled with moths each time she thought about dancing in front of others.

She swallowed the last of her Beetlebix, plopped her bowl in the washing cauldron and skipped out of the kitchen before anyone else did. As Autumn skipped, little wisps of green glitter fluttered around her ankles.

Autumn clicked the spell-a-vision handset and images popped out of a little box in the corner of





the living room. An advert for cat food was on and Storm miaowed at the kitten floating above them.

Autumn hopped on the spot with excitement as the dance judges appeared. One arrived in a big puff of sparkly gold smoke, followed by another who emerged from behind a cloud of bats.



She Ooh'd at their grand entrance and clapped along with the studio audience.



The first contestants were up and leaving a trail of fire behind them across the stage. Autumn decided it was best if she didn't try to copy their moves in the living room – her mum would never forgive her if she accidentally burned down the house!

Next a rainbow of butterflies circled the dancer expertly spinning and leaping across the stage. Autumn lifted her leg, trying to copy the witch's dancing.



She leapt into a star shape, arms outstretched, and a couple of butterflies fluttered around her hands.

“Flaming frogs’ bottoms! I’m doing it.”

Autumn’s dance magic happiness was cut short as Weed came running in and bumped into her. The butterflies that had been fluttering around her hands turned a gargoyle-grey, made a hiss and a pop and were gone.

“Dance! Dance!” Knotweed called.

“Oh, Weed. You burst my butterflies!”

But she couldn’t stay cross, and so they danced together. They leapt around the living room making up silly moves, giggling, and totally out of time with the dancers on the spell-a-vision. Their dance moves created noises like they were squelching through mud and made brown foamy clouds appear. Autumn laughed as Weed clapped and chased the clouds.

It was fun but Autumn really wished she could have the chance to dance uninterrupted, at a proper dance club.



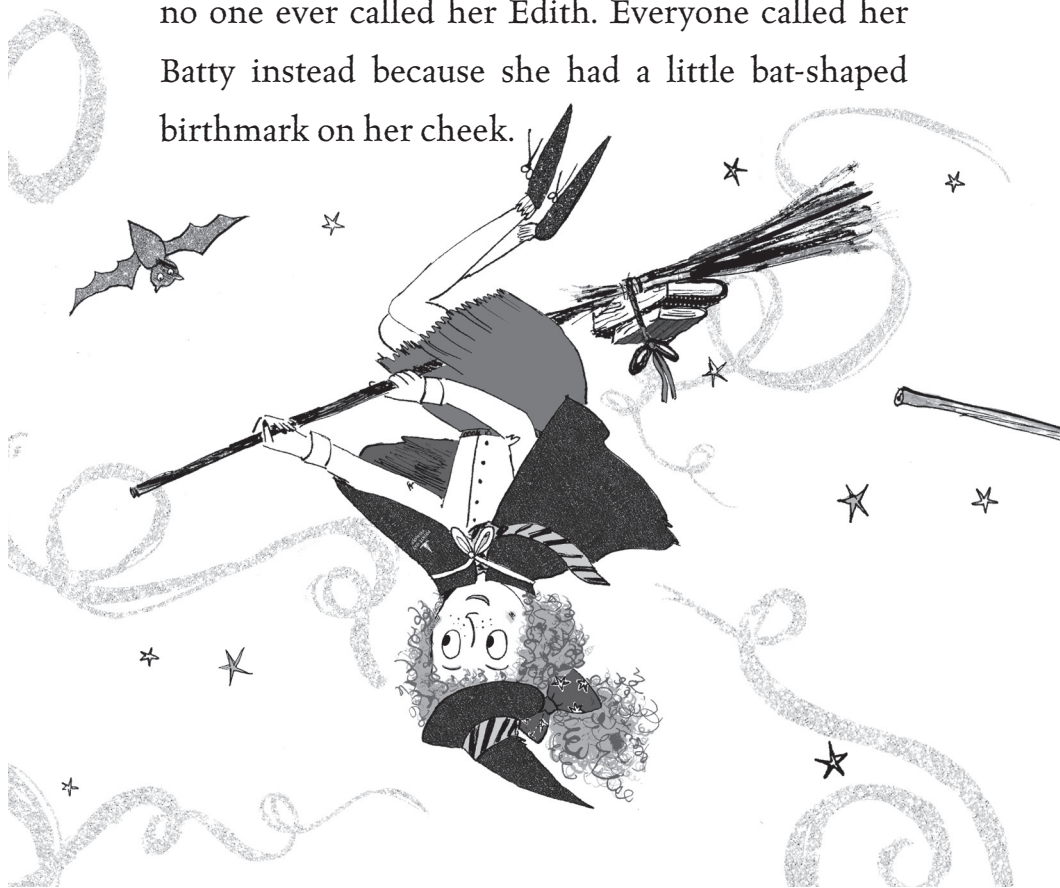


WHAT I'D ALWAYS
WISHED FOR!



IT WAS MONDAY, and Autumn was excited to talk to her friends about the dances she'd watched on the spell-a-vision. Autumn zoomed and looped on her broomstick, thinking about all the dancers she'd seen. Zephyr flew alongside with her headphones on, listening to a book about chess.

“Hey, bestie!” It was Edith Battington, although no one ever called her Edith. Everyone called her Batty instead because she had a little bat-shaped birthmark on her cheek.



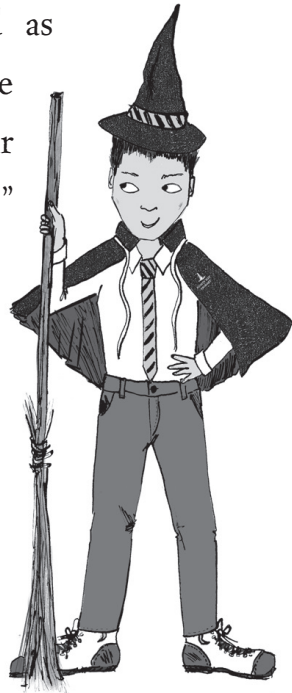
She and Autumn had known each other since starting school and had been best friends ever since. They both loved gymnastics and dance, and Batty was always coming over so they could practise together in Autumn's garden.

"I even created butterflies when I swirled," Autumn told her.

Batty's eyes were as round as cauldrons. "Did you see the dance troupe that created fire with their moves? They were spell-tacular!" she said dreamily.

They parked their broomsticks in the shed outside Pointy Hat Primary as their other friend, Leif Kerrse, pulled up.

The friends headed to their classroom for Potions – their first lesson of the day.



“Hi Skye!” Leif waved. A witch from the year below grinned back at him before doing a handstand into a bridge on the grass outside school. An arch of pink and purple twinkled above her and her friends clapped and cheered.

“Wow! She’s amazing,” Autumn said.

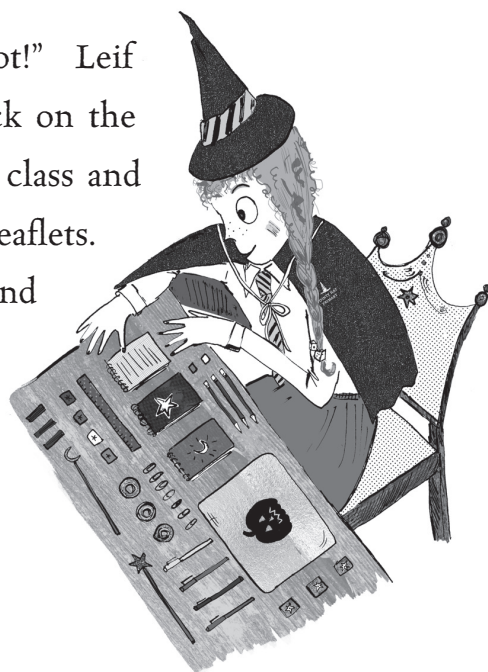
“She’s in my team at Sparkledale Dance Academy,” Leif said.

“Wish I could go there too!” Autumn skipped on the spot.

“I nearly forgot!” Leif plonked his rucksack on the desk in the Potions class and pulled out some leaflets.

“Here, one for you and for you too, Batty.

I’m guessing you won’t want one, Zeph,” Leif laughed.



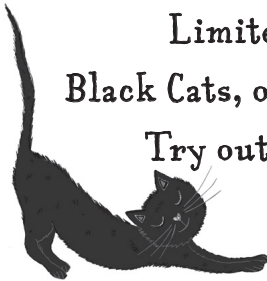
“Not if it’s dance-related,” Zephyr smiled and organised her pens and wand neatly on her desk. Autumn was sure she was setting up her equipment like she would a strategic board game.

A witch animation backflipped over shimmering silver and turquoise letters on the piece of paper. Underneath it said:

ll ★ *Sparkledale* ★ *ll*
Dance Academy

Limited places available in
Black Cats, our competitive dance team.

Try outs on Saturday at 1pm!



A black cat drawing stretched and curled at the

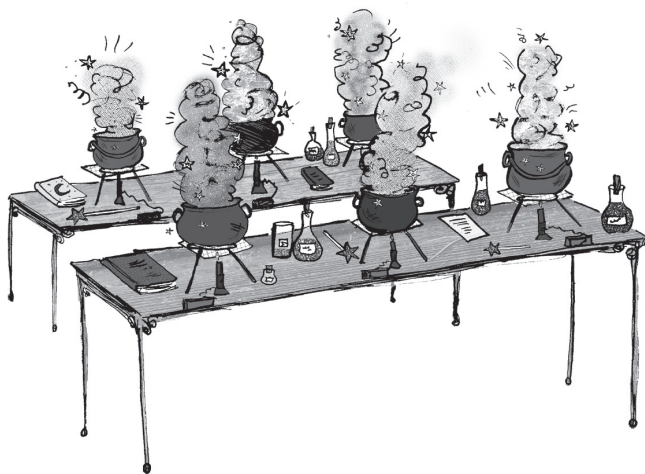
bottom of the leaflet then rubbed its head against the lettering.

Before Autumn had even finished reading, the leaflet was snatched from her grasp. “You’re not going to try out are you, Moon-flop?”

came a sneering voice. Severina was Autumn’s neighbour and a general annoying know-it-all.

Autumn tried to get the leaflet back but Severina held it out of her reach. She knew Severina was really good at gym and dance, she’d seen her prancing about her back garden making all sorts of dance magic. Severina Bloodworth’s parents were always getting her new things; she even had a big stage where she could dance as much as she wanted. She didn’t have brothers getting in her way every five minutes.





Mr Snailcruncher cleared his throat and raised an eyebrow until they sat back at their desks. “OK, class, today we’ll be making a potion to turn ourselves into an animal.”

Cauldrons bubbled and steam of all different colours swirled as the potions heated up on each desk.

Mr Snailcruncher offered the choice of an extra ingredient to finish the potion. Autumn chose a hair and wondered what sort of animal it belonged to. She dropped it into the potion and it fizzed and smelt of mouldy cabbages. “Yuk!” She held her nose as she took a sip. It tasted of liquorice and frogs.

Autumn wrinkled her nose, then fur sprouted over her whole body . . . and a curly pink tail. Her skin felt like she was being stung with nettles.



“Eek!” Autumn squeaked.

Zephyr had turned into an owl next to her. *Typical Zeph, Autumn thought, a really smart creature is perfect for her. I hope she doesn't eat me.*

“Well done,” Mr Snailcruncher beamed, looking round at the classroom full of animals. “It'll wear off in about five minutes.”

Autumn was relieved. She didn't fancy staying as a little mouse for much longer. Especially with Severina nearby eyeing her hungrily and flicking her new cat tail.



After lunch they were in PE, Autumn's favourite lesson, with Miss Spinningweb. Autumn was glad to

be back to her bouncy, witchy self after potion class.

Miss Spinningweb put the class into two teams to play dodgeball.

“Are you going to try out for Black Cats?” Batty whispered between dodges.

“You definitely should,” Zephyr said. “You’re statistically a very good dancer. And imagine not having brothers under your feet when you danced!”

“Joining a dance academy is what I’ve always wished for.” Autumn twirled and a swirl of gold glittered around her.

“I’m going to try out,” Severina butted in, flicking her long green hair over her shoulder. Batty rolled her eyes.

Severina would, Autumn thought. *She’s really good too!* It took the sparkle from her thoughts and nervous moths fluttered in her tummy.

“Shall I come to yours after school tomorrow and we can practise together?” said Batty.

“Can I come too?” Leif asked. “I can show you some moves. I’d love it if you two were chosen for the team. There’s only a few places though, so I’ll keep my wands crossed for luck.”

“That would be brilliant!” Autumn said cheerily, but deep down she was already worried that she wouldn’t be chosen. Especially if Severina tried out too. A gloomy cloud of doubt settled over her.

