

## I. ANNA'S MAGIC MISTAKE

Last Thursday started off like any other Thursday. First I overslept, then Aunty Grizz marched around the kitchen telling me off, while Aunty Wormella tried to shovel porridge into my mouth. Finally, I raced out of the house to school, buttoning my shirt as I ran.

As the iron gates of St Munchin's clanged shut behind me, I had a horrible thought: My maths homework was due in this morning, and I'd forgotten to do it *again*!

Mrs Winkle, our head teacher, was definitely going to *kill* me this time. So as soon as I could, I grabbed hold of



my best friend, Mary.

'Can I copy your maths homework into my workbook at break?' I whispered during register.

'Forgotten it again, have we?' she smiled. 'Yes, of course you can.'

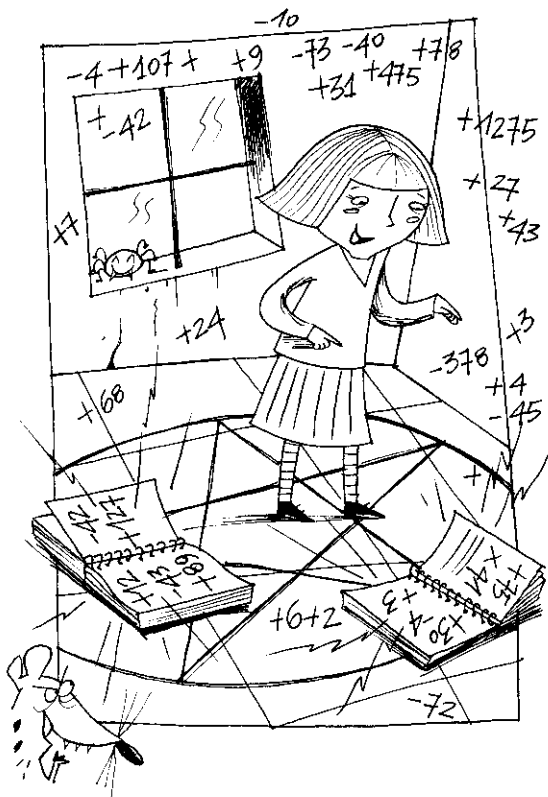
But when I looked at her workbook at break-time, there was *loads* of copying to do! It was going to take all day!

And that's when I decided to give myself a little extra help – *magic* help!

You see, I'm a natural-born witch. Or, to be more precise, I'm a natural-born witch who doesn't like doing her homework – *any* homework, whether it's magic homework or normal homework.

Being a witch and being lazy is not a good combination – especially when you're only an apprentice like me. It makes you do really stupid things – like what I did next.

I took our workbooks and locked myself into an empty classroom. I chalked a star shape on the floor and jumped inside. Then I opened both our workbooks, placed them on a desk, pointed



one finger at each of them and made up a rhyme:

*Boring sums and squiggly signs*

*Copy from her book into mine!*

I never really know whether a spell is going to

work or not. It's a bit unreliable when you're a beginner. But this time, it was instant. I felt power surge through my legs and out through my fingers. There was a flash of blue light, and numbers started to float off the workbook pages.

*Yippee!* I thought. *It's working!*

The numbers hovered in the air. The 2s and 3s started bumping into each other while the 1s formed a line and marched up and down. The 0s tried to eat the 3s and then the 4s, so the 5s got scared and started whizzing about really fast. Meanwhile the 8s and 9s just wobbled on the spot.

Then, to my horror, the whole lot – including all the pluses and minuses – flew across the classroom and straight out of the window.

I ran to the window and stared after the tiny figures. They bounced and swirled away across the playground, over the trees, and disappeared from sight.

I looked back at the workbooks. They were both completely blank!

What was I going to tell Mary? I couldn't tell

her about the magic spell, of course, because she doesn't know I'm a witch. (After all, no-one wants to be the class *weirdo*!)

I took what was left of her workbook and went to find her. She was sitting under the hazel tree in the playground.

'Mary,' I said. 'I'm really sorry!'

'Why?' she said. 'What have you done?'

'I'm afraid I accidentally dropped your book out of the window,' I lied. 'And all the homework pages blew away.'

'You WHAT!' said Mary. 'Oh, Anna! Now we'll *both* get detention!'

And that's exactly what happened. We were kept back after school, and Mrs Winkle marched us into detention. I was worried Mary might crack and tell Mrs Winkle what I'd done – but I should have known better. She's loyal and she kept her lips zipped.

\* \* \*

After half an hour of detention torture, Mrs

Winkle took off her glasses, polished them, and stood up.

'Home time!' she said. 'Mary, go and get the



coats, please.'

Mary leapt out of her seat and raced out of 4B to the coat rack. Mrs Winkle fixed her eyes on me. I gulped.

'Anna,' she said. 'I'd like a little word with you.'

'Miss,' I began. 'If it's about my maths ...'

Mrs Winkle closed her eyes and held up a plump hand.

'It's not your maths that's troubling me the most, Anna,' she said. 'Although you're not exactly top of the class.'

'Yes, Miss,' I said.

Mrs Winkle's voice dropped. She leaned so close to me that I could see the fine white hairs poking out of her nose.

'It's about your *other* work,' she said. 'Remember? Your *other* work?'

Ah, right, my *other* work. I wondered when we'd get round to it.

'Miss,' I whined. 'I've been really busy, and it's summer, and ...' I trailed off.

'Excuses, excuses! It's about time you started

taking it seriously, young lady,' said Mrs Winkle. Her voice dropped to a whisper. 'I know what *really* happened to your homework today. You were fooling about with magic and it went wrong!'

You see, Mrs Winkle knows all about me being a witch. And the reason she knows all about me is simple.

It's because Mrs Winkle – head teacher of St Munchin's, keen golfer, church bell-ringer, and well-respected figure in the community – is *also* a witch!