

KATIE
AND THE
INVISIBLE
UMBRELLA



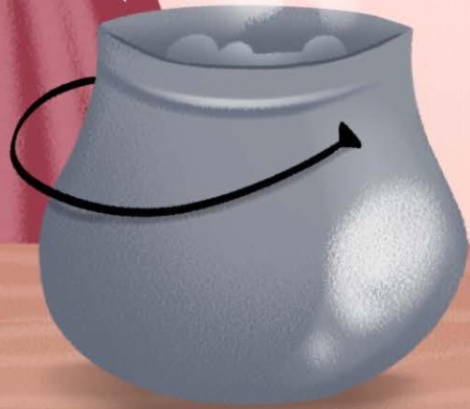
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She's a witch and she can do magic tricks.

Katie's Grandmother had all sorts of beautiful, but rather old fashioned, magical things. Many of them weren't so useful these days, because science has caught up with magic in so many ways.



For instance, before electric kettles were invented, witches had magic cauldrons that boiled the water without any need to put them on the fire. Well, Katie's Grandma still used one of those to make her tea and coffee. And before phones were invented, witches used to call one another using crystal balls, and Katie's Grandma absolutely refused to get a mobile phone or a computer, so if you wanted to send her a text message, you had to use a crystal ball. And of course she still kept a witch's broomstick, though of course these days most witches prefer to drive a car or take the bus, because broomsticks are not very comfortable.





But one of Grandma's most beautiful possessions was her umbrella. It had a golden handle that was shaped like a head of a griffin. The fabric was decorated with old fashioned magic symbols, which Katie could not understand, because these days most witches learn to do spells in modern languages like English or French. But they were very beautiful and Katie loved looking at them.

Grandma was always a little scatty. One day she left her umbrella in the patisserie shop. As the shop was near to where Katie lived, Katie went to fetch it. As Katie left the shop, it began to rain, and naturally, she opened the umbrella.

Other people on the street were turning up their collars or dodging into doorways to avoid the downpour.



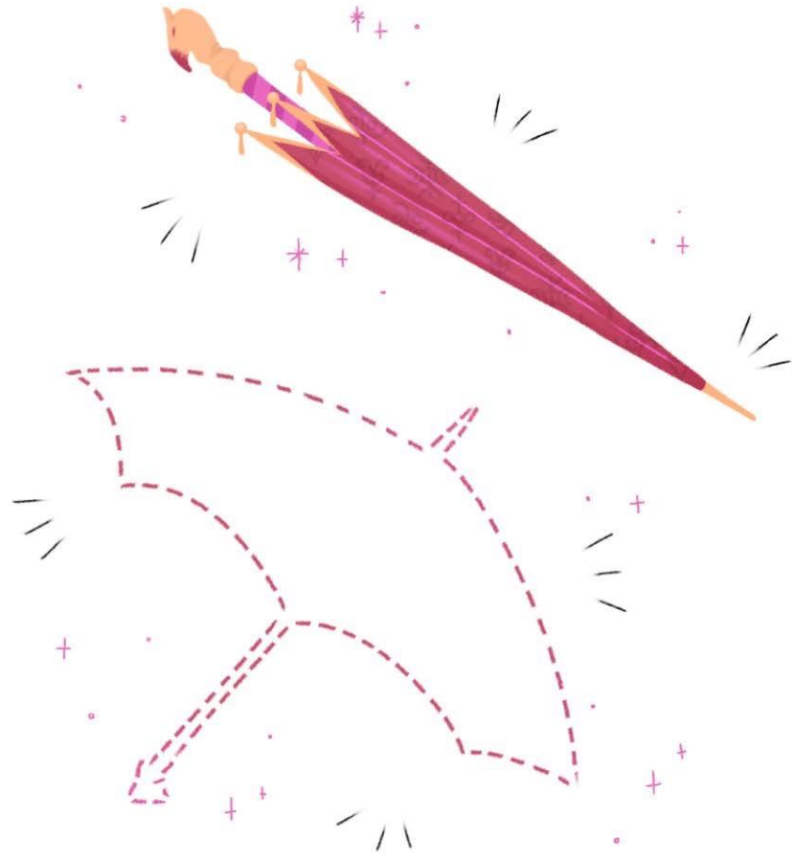


Katie ambled along enjoying the dryness of her umbrella. But as she was passing the mobile phone store, a man barged into her.

“Oi, you could say ‘sorry’, or ‘excuse me!’” exclaimed Katie. The man turned around and stared at her blankly like she wasn’t there.

Katie continued home, but it wasn’t long before she collided with a traffic warden and then was nearly run over by a woman with a pram.

“Aren’t people rude these days?” thought Katie. “It’s just a little bit of rain. They are all in such a hurry, you would think they were all running away from a rampaging elephant or something.”



As she stepped through the door of the house, she half closed the umbrella, meaning to leave it in the hallway to dry off. And that was when she noticed something very peculiar about it. Because, until the umbrella snapped shut, she couldn't see it. And then, when it went "click," it appeared again.

“Ah,” thought Katie, “there’s more to Grandma’s umbrella than meets the eye ” And she tried standing in front of the mirror with it open above her head – and do you know what? She was looking straight through herself. But if you could have seen Katie’s face, there would have been a mischievous grin on it. She thought:

“I’m going to have fun with this.”



The next morning promised a bright and sunny day – but all the same, Katie took her umbrella with her to school.

At break-time, Katie's friends, Jenny and Isis, were talking about their favourite tv programme. It was one of those talent contests which are so popular these days, and they were discussing who was going to win. Suddenly they could hear Katie saying:

“I think it will be Annabelle McTabith, because although she's not beautiful like most stars, she's got an amazing singing voice.”

“Ooh, Katie, you shouldn't sneak up on people like that. It's creepy!” exclaimed Isis. But when she looked round, Katie wasn't there, and that really was creepy.



Outside, some boys were playing football. Katie didn't like that, because they hogged a big part of the playground, and careered all over the place, getting in people's way. When the ball rolled past Katie's feet, she pulled it up under her umbrella so that it became invisible like her. She laughed as she heard Steve Smart saying, "Where did it go?" and all the boys were looking round all over the place. Then she carried the ball over to near the goal posts – which were actually two bags on the ground – and kicked it through them. That really got the boys exclaiming, "What the?" and "Where did that come from?"



Next, Katie did something she had always wanted to do. She went into the Teachers' Staff Room. She saw Miss Vile and Mr Philpott sitting very cosy together, and she heard Mrs Jefferson saying, "That boy Darcy Thomas has so many airs and graces that you would think he was royalty," and Miss Thomas was nodding and saying, "Well you should see the parents, they're so stuck-up that on parents day I felt I ought to curtsy to them."

The bell rang for lessons and Mr. Hutchinson said: "Oh no, I don't think I can face the hooligans of Class 4C."





Katie hurried back to her class room. She sat down next to Isis and held the umbrella over both of them so that they were invisible together.

Miss Vile came in, and the babble of children's voices died down. The teacher cast her steely gaze over the room and noted the empty seats where Katie and Isis normally sat. When she turned her back, Katie let down the umbrella. There were gasps from those who saw the two friends appear. Miss Vile span around and stared at them. Katie put on her most innocent face, and Isis didn't have to put on a face because she really was innocent. Miss Vile said:

“Katie, there’s no need to bring that umbrella into the classroom. It’s got a sharp point on the end and it’s against Health and Safety.”

“But Miss Vile, it’s valuable, and I don’t want to leave it in the cloakroom.”

“Well, give it to me, and I’ll look after it.”
And Katie had no choice but to give it to the teacher.

And at the end of the lesson, when Katie asked for her umbrella back, Miss Vile said: “It’s confiscated Katie. You can ask me for it at the end of term.”



Suddenly it seemed like Miss Vile was everywhere, all at once. Some boys who were kicking bags around the cloakroom didn't notice that Miss Vile was watching them.

In class 4C, when Mr. Hutchinson's back was turned, the "hooligans" started chatting to each other. Somehow they didn't see that Miss Vile was in the room and noting down their names.





When Isis and Katie were trying out lipstick in the girl's loos, they didn't realise that Miss Vile was standing behind them. Makeup was banned in school and they were both in trouble.

In fact, it seemed like nobody could get away with anything anymore. No illegal snacks, no talking out of turn, no play-fights, no sneaking into out-of-bound places like the bike sheds, and no mucking around of any kind at all between lessons.

On Friday evening, the detention class after school was the biggest that anyone had known. It had 30 people in it, and 27 of them had been put there by Miss Vile. And there are no prizes for guessing which teacher was wearing a very smug and satisfied smile on her face.



That weekend, Grandmother came to visit, and Katie had to admit what had happened to her umbrella.

“I’m really, really sorry Gran,” said Katie. “It’s terrible and I don’t know what to do about it.”

At first, Grandma was a little bit grumpy about her missing umbrella.

But by evening, Gran had softened her tone a bit, and just as she was getting ready to fly home, she said:





“You know Katie, I’m probably a fool to do this, but I’m going to lend you my spare spectacles. And this time you do have my permission to take them to school, only you must promise to be very careful with them.”

And she rummaged in her handbag – which was always so full of many more things than could possibly be kept in there, except by magic – and finally she found the case with her spare spectacles in them.

Katie put the glasses on and looked at herself in the mirror. They were a very ornate pair, made of gold and decorated with precious stones.

“Hmm, they don’t really suit your face, do they?” said Grandma. And she said a magic spell which made them look trendy – or rather Grandma’s idea of trendy – which meant the frames were large and square and bright blue.

“Thanks Grandma,” said Katie, “But why are you lending them to me?”

“You’ll see,” said Grandma. “Or rather, they will help you to see.”

On Monday morning, Katie wore Grandma’s glasses to school. Isis said that they were a total fashion disaster. Michael said “I didn’t know you were short-sighted Katie,” and Katie replied, “Neither did I ‘till yesterday.”





It wasn't until the break at lunchtime that Katie understood what the glasses were for. Isabelle was walking down the corridor and she sneakily took a piece of chewing gum out of her pocket and put it into her mouth. Katie was walking towards her, and was trying to signal frantically that Miss Vile was standing in a doorway and had seen the whole crime – but it was too late. Isabelle was signed up for detention.

But of course what Katie also had seen, was that Miss Vile was holding up her umbrella over her head. Now she understood that the glasses enabled her to see everything – even things and people that were invisible.





After school, Katie saw Miss Vile standing by the school gate and watching them all. She was holding up her umbrella and nobody could see her except Katie.

Katie came up to her and said: “Hello Miss Vile, would you like a piece of chewing gum?” and Miss Vile said:

“Katie. You know perfectly well that chewing gum is illegal.”

“But nobody will see you, will they Miss?”

And Miss Vile smiled. “No they wouldn’t, would they? But as it happens, teachers can’t break the school rules. It would be setting a bad example and I would have to put myself in detention.”

Katie laughed and said, “That’s good, because I don’t actually have any gum. But Miss, I’ve got a question. Do you think it’s ok for teachers to use magic?”

And a rather uneasy smile passed over Miss Vile's face, because she knew just as well as Katie that magic was against the school rules. And not just a little bit against them. "I mean," said Katie, "if Miss Hepworth was to find out that your recent success at crime detection was all down to my Grandma's magic umbrella, do you think she would be pleased?"

And As Miss Hepworth was the head-teacher, Miss Vile realised that that was something she would not like to happen at all. Not one little bit.

"Well Katie," she said. "I heard on the radio this morning that the weather forecast is for rain. I don't think it would be right for me to hang on to your Grandmother's umbrella anymore. Perhaps you could take it home for me?"

And of course Katie was happy about that.



Katie and the Cat who Talked

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