

# The Worst Witches' Problem

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It was early winter, on a Wednesday afternoon and the class had gathered in the laboratory for their potion making lesson with Miss Hardbroom. Everyone wished it was their normal potion teacher, Mr Pepper, but he was turned into a jumping, hopping cricket in the last lesson. When Ethel Hallow tried to use him in her spell, he hopped away and has not been seen since.

The laboratory was dripping water from the ceiling and mould was growing everywhere. The spiders and bats were as black as night and the cauldron was bubbling like a volcano.

"Today, we are making a kindness spell. The spell is in front of you. Make sure you measure out carefully. Begin!" declared Miss Hardbroom.

### Kindness spell

Ingredients:

1. page of an adventure story
2. arm of a frog
3.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a witch's wand\*
4. a unicorn's horn
5. point of a witches' hat
6. wing of a bat
7. a ruby (the Jem)

Mildred turned to Maud and said to her, "Maud, I've had a good idea. Do you remember all those times when Miss Hardbroom has been so mean and strict?"

"Yes of course I do!" answered Maud.

"Well..." said Mildred, "she's never kind like we want her to be, so this is our chance to turn her into a kind witch."

"I don't know..." said Maud quite uncertain. "There's always something that goes wrong."

"Come on Maud, do you want Miss Hardbroom to be nice?" asked Mildred.

"Yeah," she replied.

"Let's do it then!" whispered Mildred excitedly.

"Ok," replied Maud, "but promise nothing goes wrong," she said with a stern, serious look on her face.

"I promise," whispered Mildred with a huge grin spreading across her face.

"Witches!" came Miss Hardbroom's icy voice, "less chat more work!". She spoke, glaring at Maud and Mildred. So they continued to create their kindness potion.

The potion was turning dark blue as they were adding the ingredients. Once they had finished the kindness potion, it was a dark navy colour.

"This is amazing!" explained Mildred. "She will be very nice after drinking this."

"This potion smells awful!" replied Maud.

"Do you think Ethel Hallow heard us talking about our plan earlier?" asked Mildred.

"I hope not!" replied Maud.

"Ethel Hallow is my arch nemesis!" said Mildred in a worried voice.

Then Ethel walked past mysteriously, smirking and snooping at their potion. "Are you sure you've got your ingredients right?" questioned Ethel. She walked away.

"Why are you friends with that?" she said to Maud.

Mildred was very happy with her spell. Miss Hardbroom will be very kind and lovely she thought to herself. The bell went for the end of the lesson.

"Come on Maud," said Mildred. "Let's go to Miss Hardbroom's office and put the kindness potion in her tea." They went to Miss Hardbroom's office and waited until she had gone out. Maud said to Mildred, "why are we doing this again!?"

"Because, remember, she was going to expel me for the time I accidentally turned Ethel into a pig," said Mildred.

"I remember now," said Maud.

"Come on Maud, she's gone now, come on," said Mildred. Mildred sneaked into Miss Hardbroom's office and swapped her tea for the potion. Maud was on the lookout in case someone was coming. Suddenly Maud heard footsteps coming down the corridor. She shouted at Mildred to find a hiding place in the office and she hid under the table.

Miss Hardbroom came back and slowly drank the potion. As soon as she drank it, she coughed and groaned. Her stomach suddenly yearned with the sound of sticky slime.

After play, the children returned to class and Miss Hardbroom entered the laboratory. Mildred and Maud stared at Miss Hardbroom and Mildred whispered to Maud and said, "I wonder what will happen next?"

"Oh I don't know, the spell can take days to work," whispered Maud back.

Miss Hardbroom stood up for a second and Maud thought the spell hadn't worked yet. Suddenly Maud saw something strange about Miss Hardbroom. "Mildred, look at Miss Hardbroom. She looks very strange," said Maud,

Miss Hardbroom's nose turned green, slimy and snotty. As she shrank down to the size of an ant, her hands turned into a green slimy body. Her eyes went brown. There was a patch of smoke and they thought she had vanished into thin air. There was a slimy puddle on the floor and in the middle

of it was a tiny, slimy creature. It was Miss Hardbroom and she had turned into a slug!

"What have we done!" muttered Mildred.

"Did you remember to put in  $\frac{3}{4}$  of your wand?" asked Maud.

"Er.....no, I put the whole wand it!" replied Mildred.

"Oh no, maybe that's what Ethel meant when she said we had done something wrong with our potion!" said Maud worriedly looking at Miss Hardbroom.

"Help!" everyone shouted. Like a lightning bolt, Miss Cackle appears in a purple flash.

"What's going on?" Miss Cackle sharply asked.

Mildred and Maud looked at each other in disbelief.

Something had gone disastrously wrong. "Oh no, we're in serious trouble!" said Mildred to Maud. "What are we going to do?"

"You're right. We'll be expelled for sure after this. We've got to do something about this and quick," Maud said in a panicked voice. "I know, we need to find a reversing spell, a spell to turn a slug back into a human. Let's go the library, we're bound to find the spell there somewhere."

In a rush, Mildred and Maud sprinted down the gloomy corridor towards the library. They bounced up the crooked stairs. They turned the handle and pulled the door open.

They tip toed through the gigantic dusty library. The library was 200 years old and full of lots of very old spell books. It was pitch black and lit by lots of black, waxy candles. There was a red velvety carpet in the middle of the library. It smelled like dusty candles.

Then Mildred turned to Maud and said, "you go from the back and I'll go from the front." They looked and looked for the big book of reversing spells. As Maud turned a corner, she didn't see a wet patch on the floor. Some of the large candles had been dripping on the floor of the corridor. She skidded and slipped and landed on her face.

"Are you ok Maud?" said Mildred.

"No I'm not, ouch," replied Maud, as she rubbed her bruised nose.

"I'm coming to help, where are you?" Mildred shouted.

"I'm down here, help," screamed Maud.

In the corner of Maud's eye, she spotted a battered, dusty book that laid on the lowest shelf.

"Maud, did you find anything?" wondered Mildred.

"This could be it," remarked Maud. They plodded towards the books. Mildred blew off the dirt. It was the book of reversing spells. Strangely, there was only one page in the book. They stared, puzzled, but then Mildred exclaimed, "It's the spell!" Mildred gasped. The spell was 'How to turn

a slug back into a creature'. There were a list of ingredients you would need to find to make the potion: eye of a toad, wing of a bat, scale of a dragon and hair of an elf. At the bottom of the spell there was an important note: 'You only have 2 hours in which to administer the reversing potion. If not, you will stay a slug forever'.

Maud and Mildred sneaked out of the library and went to the school gardens. The adventure had started.

"First," said Mildred, "we need to find the eye of a toad!"

Maud said, "I know where to find a toad. It's in the pond where we sunk on our first day and where we met that toad, the funny one! I will take it out of that toad."

"That's sad, poor toad, but I guess it has to be done" said Mildred.

At the pond, Maud crept up behind the toad and suddenly she did it. The toad was pouncing aground madly, trying to get away, croaking, "get back here with my eye right now!" They ran away quickly.

Now we need to find a wing of a bat!

"To get the bat-wing, you need to go into a cave!" said Maud in a scared voice.

"I can't do this," mumbled Mildred.

"You can, don't get silly, you're a witch!" laughed Maud.



"But I'm scared of the dark," cried out Mildred.

"WHAT!" shouted Maud, "you are not like that, you are brave."

"I'm also petrified of bats!" blubbered Mildred.

"Fine, I'll do it but you are flying there," said Maud.

Eventually they reached the cold, dark cave. Slowly Maud crept in hesitant. "I see one," whispered Maud. She snapped it's wing off. The bat flew around angrily.

Fortunately they quickly grow new ones.

"Nice let's go," said Mildred, "off to get the dwarf's beard."

"Come on Maud, we have got one hour left," said Mildred. "It's a hair from an elf now. Where might we find one of those?"

"How about we go and get a hair from Billy, the ground Elf's, beard?"

"Ok, but I can't see very well, the fog is really coming in," said Maud.

"Billy.....Billy, where are you?" called Mildred.

"Urgh, who's there?" said Billy as he was sweeping up leaves.

"It's me Mildred, we just came to ask if we could have a bit of your beard. It's for a spell we are making."

"Not on the hair on my chinny chin chin! Who are you making it for?" enquired Billy suspiciously.

"Um..... Miss Hardbroom," replied Maud.

"Oh, well I would definitely do anything for her. There you go, here's a bit of my beard."

"Yes," said Mildred, only one more ingredient left to go.

"Yes, come on Mildred, and we have one hour to go. We are on the last ingredient. It's a dragon's scale and it's on the other side of the wood."

Finally, they got there and there was a green dragon. Mildred remembered to bring some food so she could get it. She decided she needed to get close enough so that she could pick it. Maud stayed back because she was scared of blood. The dragon was sleeping.

As she crept closer, Mildred accidentally stepped on a twig...she was nervous but the dragon still kept snoring. She got close enough to see a scale that was about to fall off. She put a glove on, then put her hand on the bleeding part and wiped it all away. Finally, she put her hand on the bottom of the scale. But she stopped, she heard a faint noise but she realised it was Maud. She was whispering, "It's getting foggy, so hurry up," she looked back and she pulled it off and there was a loud flash of lightning.

All of a sudden, they realised they didn't have much time left. "30 minutes to do the rest," said Maud in a panicked voice.

"Hurry up quick, we are really running out of time," said Mildred, sprinting as fast as she could back to the laboratory.

"I agree, I hope we get there before class starts," replied Maud. The weather was turning foggy now and it was getting more difficult for them to find the way back.

Finally, they found the lab but the door was locked. "Oh no, the key has gone," said Maud.

"The teachers must have the key so we can't get into the laboratory without them," said Mildred.

"I've got a good idea," said Maud, "let's check the plant pot. I'm sure I've seen Miss Hardbroom hiding a key in there before."

They grabbed the potion and ran to get the juiciest lettuce they could find for Miss Hardbroom. They ran to the kitchen but it took a while because of the fog. They eventually got a lettuce and pored the potion onto the juicy mouth-watering lettuce. They rushed out of the kitchen and towards Miss Hardbroom's office.

When they got there, they couldn't find Miss Hardboom. Eventually, after looking for a long time, they saw a trail of slug slime leading to a small cardboard box.

"It's here, look!" They put the lettuce carefully in the box and waited. Slowly, the slug slined over to the lettuce and started to eat. Gradually, the slug started to grow bigger and bigger. It was slowly growing hands and feet. She was now a green Miss Hardbroom. Her skin was slowly turning into a peachy colour and at last she was normal Miss Hardbroom.

A fuming Miss Hardbroom shouted at the top of her voice, "W,W,W,Who is responsible for this?" Mildred and Maud looked suspiciously at each other. "Mildred, Maud...have you two something to do with this? I would have thought this! Tomorrow, 12.00, come to my office."