The Worst Witch Saves the Day
The Magical Adventures of
The Worst Witch

The Worst Witch
The Worst Witch Strikes Again
A Bad Spell for the Worst Witch
The Worst Witch at Sea
The Worst Witch Saves the Day
The Worst Witch to the Rescue
THE WORST WITCH
SAVES THE DAY

JILL MURPHY

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TROPICAL sunshine beat down on the pupils of Miss Cackle’s Academy for Witches as they arrived in the school yard on the first day of Winter Term. Only the first-years entered the school on foot, as they had not learnt to fly yet, but all the other pupils, and of course the teachers, soared over the high stone wall on their broomsticks like a flock of crows—a spectacular sight to see. The school year
was divided into two long terms, instead of the usual three, so the weather conditions were often mismatched to the girls’ uniforms at the very beginning of term.

“This is just typical!” thought Mildred Hubble, wriggling her toes uncomfortably inside thick grey socks and heavy winter boots. “When we came back for Summer Term it was snowing and we were all frozen to death in our summer dresses!”
Mildred was beginning her third year at Miss Cackle’s Academy. She was relieved to be coming back at all, after an accident-prone two years under the beady eye of the bloodcurdling Miss Hardbroom (or H.B. as the girls called her), who had been Mildred’s form mistress for both of those years. However, this term Mildred felt much more confident. During the summer break, she had been on a special two-week broomstick crash course (a rather unfortunate description in Mildred’s case) and had received a Broomstick Proficiency Certificate and a smart new broom from her mum as a reward. Sadly, her cat, Tabby, who was the only tabby cat in the school (all the rest being regulation black ones), had not improved very much—in fact, at all, if one was to be truthful. Of course he had got used to flying after four terms’ practice, but he still hated it and always
crouched down on the back of the broom in a guinea-pig-like hunch, or, worse, completely flat so that he could hang on better.

However, he was a very affectionate and cuddly cat, just the sort to curl up with on a freezing night at the stone-built, draughty school, and Mildred loved him with all her heart.
Mildred zipped over the school wall without wobbling, despite the heavy luggage hanging from the back, and coasted to a halt near the broom shed.

“Not bad, Mildred Hubble,” said a sneery voice from the gloomy interior. “Had a brain transplant during the hols, did you?”

“Oh, hello, Ethel,” said Mildred without enthusiasm, as she peered in and saw who it was. Ethel Hallow was the top student in Mildred’s class. She was brilliant at every subject, including popularity with the teachers, which had unfortunately gone to her head and given her a tendency to belittle her classmates. Mildred’s lack of ability in all directions had made her Ethel’s number-one target since their very first term.

Mildred unhooked her luggage and clipped her broomstick into the rack below
her name. It always pleased her to see her name waiting for her at the beginning of a new year, above her coat peg and broomstick clip and on her bedroom door, as if everyone expected her to come back as a matter of course. “Mildred Hubble” it proclaimed, as if she was important in the world.
“Nice broom,” said Ethel. “Pity to waste it on someone like you.”

“Don’t start, Ethel,” warned Mildred.

“Start what?” exclaimed Ethel loudly in an innocent tone. “Honestly, Mildred Hubble, you’re so touchy.”

Mildred made her way out into the yard and scanned the groups of girls for one of her friends.
“Maud—is that you?” she called, as she suddenly realized that the smiling person running towards her was her best friend, with her hair in curly bunches instead of the usual straight ones.
“Of course it’s me,” laughed Maud. “Do you like the hairdo? My aunt gave me a brilliant styling brush. You just turn it on for a bit, roll up your hair in it, and—Abracadabra!—your hair’s all curly. You can have a go if you like.”

“Thanks, Maudy,” said Mildred. “Oh, it’s so nice to see you again. It’s the only thing that makes this school worthwhile, knowing you’re in it with me.”

“Well, I’m not going anywhere else for the next several years!” said Maud. “So we’re well and truly in it together—as long as you don’t go and get yourself expelled.”

“No chance,” said Mildred. “I’m going to be the best witch in the world this term, just you wait and see. Look, isn’t that Enid landing by the wall? And there’s the bell. Let’s go and see who we’ve got this year. It can’t be H.B. again!”
CHAPTER TWO

IT wasn’t H.B., much to Form Three’s utter joy. It was a new teacher, named Miss Granite.

“Welcome, girls,” said Miss Cackle, smiling fondly at her flock of pupils, all lined up in orderly rows in the yard. “I hope you’ve all had a wonderful summer holiday and are rested and ready for some hard work, especially our new pupils. Don’t worry, girls, it won’t be long before you’re all doing loop-the-loops around the bell tower!”
Miss Hardbroom raised a disapproving eyebrow at Miss Cackle’s lighthearted attempt at friendliness, and the new girls looked more anxious than ever as they were not sure whether to laugh or to look serious. Although Miss Cackle was the headmistress of Miss Cackle’s Academy, Miss Hardbroom had somehow risen through the ranks of the teachers to be an unofficial second-in-command who seemed more in charge than the headmistress. Because of this, the girls were always caught nervously between Miss Cackle’s kindliness and Miss Hardbroom’s overriding disapproval. Miss Cackle gave up her attempt at joviality and handed the morning over to Miss Hardbroom.

“Now then, everyone,” Miss Cackle said, in a rather crestfallen voice, “I’ll leave it to Miss Hardbroom to introduce our new form teacher and to give out any
announcements before you go and unpack your belongings. I’ll see you all at assembly afterwards.”

“Thank you, Miss Cackle,” said Miss Hardbroom, with a nod in the head-mistress’s direction as the girls all stood in line, gasping in the heat. “Now then, Form Three, this is your new form mistress, Miss Granite—put your hat back on, Enid Nightshade, it isn’t that hot. Goodness me, you’re all so feeble these days—always complaining about something. Either it’s too hot or it’s too cold. No backbone at all, no gumption.”
Miss Granite gave a little cough.

“Ah, yes, girls,” continued Miss Hardbroom. “Please greet Miss Granite in a courteous and friendly manner.”

“Good morning, Miss Granite!” chanted the whole class, trying to sound courteous and friendly.

As Miss Hardbroom gave out various announcements, Form Three gazed in amazement at their new form mistress. She was very strange-looking. For a start, she had a huge cloud of bright orange curls, which looked extremely frivolous for Miss Cackle’s Academy. In fact, everything about Miss Granite looked frivolous to the pupils, condemned as they were to black gymslips, thick wool socks, and hob-nailed boots. She wore enormous purple-tinted glasses and a short cape with a collar turned up so high that you couldn’t see much of her face at all.
“She looks as if she’s been at your styling brush,” whispered Mildred to Maud, who giggled.

“Mildred Hubble! If you have something amusing to say, perhaps you could share your little joke with the rest of us,” snapped Miss Hardbroom. “I’m sure we could all do with a little merriment on the first day of this long Winter Term.”

“Sorry, Miss Hardbroom,” mumbled Mildred, blushing scarlet as the rows of assembled girls, plus all the teachers, turned to look at her.

“Well, Mildred,” said Miss Hardbroom. “We’re all waiting.”

“I’ve forgotten!” said Mildred desperately. “It probably wasn’t all that funny anyway. I really can’t remember.”

Miss Hardbroom turned to Miss Granite. “This is Mildred Hubble,” she announced. “It’s a bad sign when she can’t remember anything on the very first day
of term, before lessons have even started. This, I might add, is typical of Mildred Hubble, and you would do well to keep an eye on her.”

At this point the girls heard Miss Granite’s voice for the first time. It was so astonishingly high-pitched and squeaky that it was hard for them not to react, and even Ethel looked startled.

“Oh, I will, Miss Hardbroom,” squeaked Miss Granite. “I most certainly will.”
Mildred glanced at Enid and the two of them suddenly felt a dreadful surge of hysteria. Maud gave Mildred a severe look as her friend grimaced with the effort of not bursting into giggles.

“Stop it, Mil,” she whispered. “Don’t get off on the wrong foot with this one. It’s your chance to make a fresh start.”
THE girls set off to put their suitcases and cats into their rooms and to get themselves tidied up before assembly, which was held in the Great Hall. Mildred was delighted to find that she now had six bats roosting along her picture rail, instead of the usual three. She was mad about animals and, although the bats didn’t do very much except sleep all day—occasionally stretching a wing or shuffling along a bit—it was nice to know they were there. In the early hours, when Mildred was often lying
awake worrying about a looming potion test or some similar horror, it was always comforting to see her little flock come in from their night’s hunting and jostle into position upside down.

It only took a few minutes for Mildred to unpack her suitcase and put away her clothes, so she decided to nip along the corridor to Maud’s room.

“Have you got that styling brush, Maud?” she asked, letting herself in through the heavy oak door. “I’d like to have a little twirl with it and see if I can liven up my hair a bit.”
Maud was still cramming her clothes into her tiny wardrobe. All the pupils had a wardrobe, with space on one side for their robes and shirts and a narrow set of drawers on the other side, which was not big enough to take a term’s supply of socks and underclothes and was, therefore, very difficult to keep tidy.

“Of course you can, Mildred,” said Maud cheerily. “It’s on the bed there. Just push up the switch at the side and it makes a hissing sound, then gets warm in a few minutes.”
“Thanks, Maudy,” said Mildred. She was about to close the door as she left the room when Enid came up behind her. “I’m just going in to have a chat with Maud,” said Enid. “Coming?” “Not yet,” replied Mildred. “I’m going to have a go at beautifying myself with Maud’s magic brush here,” and she skipped off down the corridor back to her room.

“What do you make of our new form mistress, then?” asked Enid, settling on the end of Maud’s bed with her knees pulled up under her chin.
Maud stuffed the last pair of grey-and-black-striped pyjamas into the bottom drawer and closed the wardrobe door.

“She’s a bit weird-looking, isn’t she?” said Maud. “I’m surprised H.B. let her over the doorstep. She’s so—everything H.B. can’t stand, isn’t she? Nervous, twittering, doesn’t look as if she could control a dead budgerigar—and that funny little voice and all those frivolous curls!”

Enid laughed. “Come on,” she said, “let’s go and help Mildred with her hair.”

“Yes, let’s,” said Maud, heading for the door. “I meant to warn her to be careful. It’s really easy to get the brush tangled if your hair’s long.”
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