



*Maggie's  
Christmas Adventure*

*By  
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## *Christmas Eve*

It was the most beautiful Christmas Eve Maggie could imagine. The whole world outside her front door was covered in a sparkling, white blanket of snow. The reflection of thousands of Christmas lights twinkled in the snow flakes that were gently falling from the star-speckled sky. Of course, the Christmas lights themselves were impressive, too. Every house on Maggie's street was decorated with lights. There were red lights, green lights, blue lights, yellow lights, white lights, pink lights, purple lights, orange lights and even colour-changing lights.

Some yards even had lit up displays with mechanical reindeer eating and prancing, snowmen waving, and elves working in Santa's workshop. Old Mr. Gazzoo, a few doors down the street had an enormous sleigh pulled by reindeer, with Santa in the driver's seat, straight across his roof! But everybody knew that wasn't the real Santa Claus because Santa was far too busy to be hanging out on one roof all night – on Christmas Eve, no less!

Maggie pulled her red toque tighter on her head and glanced at her big, white house behind her. She knew that her mother was snuggled warm in her bed with her cocoa and a book. Maggie wished she were snuggled in her own bed with a book and some cocoa. She could almost taste the thick, sweet liquid on her tongue. At the thought, she stuck out her tongue, catching stray snowflakes that quickly melted.

Maggie would get her cocoa, too – just as soon as she found Snowball. Snowball was the precious, white kitten that her daddy had helped her save from the animal rescue shelter. He was a present for her seventh birthday. Michael, Maggie's older brother, had let Snowball out of the house when he opened the door to let his friend, Timothy, inside. Maggie didn't even know that her kitten was missing until a few moments earlier. She had thrown on her coat, boots, mitts and toque and hurried out the door to find him without telling anybody she was leaving.

"Snowball!" Maggie called. She stopped walking and listened for the sound of Snowball's meows. Slowly, she turned in a complete circle, checking the surrounding street and lit-up yards for any signs of her kitten moving.

"Snowbaaaaaaaaaaallllllllll!" she called again. There was nothing to be heard in the quiet, night air but the sound of her own, frantic breathing. Even though the moon was bright and lights were sparkling everywhere, Maggie couldn't see Snowball anywhere. It would be pretty hard to spot a white kitten in all that snow.

Maggie kicked at the ice chunks on the sidewalk to keep herself moving and warm while she thought about what to do next. She wasn't supposed to be outside all alone at night. If she stayed out there much longer somebody might notice that she wasn't in her bed, where she was supposed to be.

She wondered if Snowball might have wandered away from their block. Maggie was never ever allowed to leave her block without an adult. She knew that she shouldn't break that rule but she was very worried about her tiny, helpless kitten being all alone, probably cold and frightened. If she went home



and asked for help her parents might tell her it's too late at night, too cold and they would just have to wait until morning. Snowball could be really, really lost by morning. Or a dog could get him - maybe Mrs. Buzzworthy's mean, old German shepherd. That would be horrible.

Maggie couldn't let that happen. She was just going to have to find Snowball, herself, even if it meant that she might get into trouble. She headed for the end of the block, where she planned on turning right to check the next block over. As she neared the block's last streetlight she thought she saw a snowman on the sidewalk, directly across the road. Who would put a snowman on the sidewalk?

Maggie stopped at the corner and looked both ways to make sure there wasn't any traffic coming. Wait a second! That snowman just moved! She was certain of it. She squinted her eyes against the flurrying snowflakes that were falling heavier and faster now. The snowman stood still - if it was, in fact, a snowman. She thought it was a snowman. The streetlight nearest the figure was burned out so she really couldn't say that it was a snowman, for certain. Maggie decided that she would have to cross the road to get a closer look.

Slowly, carefully, she made her way across and onto the sidewalk until she stood inches away from the snowman - except, it wasn't a snowman at all. It was a great, big, white snow...bunny? Maggie stepped even closer. It was a bunny all right - a very tall bunny. It was at least a whole head taller than Maggie and she was almost four feet! A pale, blue bow-tie was fastened around the bunny's neck.

He didn't smell like he was made out of snow though. He smelled like cookies, actually. Maggie stepped even closer and sniffed at his neck. Yup! He smelled like sugary butter with a hint of peppermint, like shortbread cookies and candy canes.

Now that she thought about it, Maggie didn't think that the bunny looked as though he was made out of snow either. She eyed the bunny over from his big, wide feet upwards. She had to step on the very tips of her tippy-toes and crane her neck as far up as she could to see the tops of his long, fuzzy ears. He definitely looked furry. He couldn't possibly be made of snow.

Maggie scanned his round, bunny face, noticing that his whiskers were quivering and were far too thin to be made of ice. It looked like his nose was twitching just slightly. His dewy, black eyes looked far too real to be made of rubber, plastic or glass. They certainly were not buttons. There was something strange about his cheeks, too. Maggie thought they looked bluish and puffy, as though he was holding his breath. She stared at his face a few moments longer, puzzled. She was right. His cheeks were even a bit bluer now.

As she began to take off her mittens so that she could touch the bunny, Maggie thought she heard a teeny, tiny meow. She stopped moving and listened harder.

"Meow! Meow!" It sounded really close.

"Snowball?" Maggie cried.

"Meow!" came the reply.



That was Maggie's kitten all right. She was sure he was nearby. It sounded like he was right behind the big bunny. That was when it happened.

"Ha-ha-ha-CHOOOOO!" the bunny sneezed.

Maggie jumped backwards. In an instant, Snowball landed in a clumsy pile at her feet. She quickly bent over and scooped him up, brushing the snow off him as she prepared to put him inside her coat.

"Hey! That's my kitten! Give it back," said the bunny.

"You-you," Maggie stammered. "You can talk?"

"Of course I can talk," the bunny said. "Don't change the subject. Give me back my kitten, please."

"But Mr.—"

"Easter," the bunny interrupted, "Easter Bunny. Also known as, Peter Cottontail," he continued. "That's not my real name though. It's a nickname but that's a long story and I don't have a lot of time. Besides, I don't think I look like a Peter. Peters are too common. There's Peter Pan; my cousin, Peter Rabbit; Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater..." He was counting them off on the toes of his front paws as he went.

"But Mr. Bunny—"

"Easter."

"Easter," Maggie continued as she tucked Snowball into the front of her coat, "Snowball really is my kitten though."

"Yes," the Easter Bunny nodded. "Yes, I suppose he really is your kitten," he smiled at Snowball who was poking his face out of the top of Maggie's coat and licking at her neck, much to her delight. "You mind him better from now on and don't let him slip away again."

"I will. I promise!" Maggie exclaimed, nodding her head.

The bunny reached into a fold of fur on his belly and pulled out a silver pocket watch on a long silver chain. He opened it and frowned, snapped it shut again and stuffed it back into his fur.

"You have pockets like a kangaroo?" Maggie asked.

"No. A kangaroo has one, big pocket," Easter corrected. "I have many small pockets hidden all throughout my fur. I would be too belly-heavy if I carried everything in one big belly-pocket. Then how could I possibly hop and run as quickly as I do?"

"But kangaroos run and hop with babies in their pockets."



“Clever girl,” the bunny replied. “But baby kangaroos aren’t very heavy, you know. Sheesh!” He folded his arms across his chest and stuck his twitchy nose in the air with a huff.

“I didn’t mean to hurt your feel—“

“Oh never mind,” the rude bunny interrupted again. “It doesn’t matter. I would love to stay and chat but it’s getting late. I have very important things to do. You hurry on home with your kitten now, little girl.”

“My name is Maggie,” she held out her hand for the Easter Bunny to shake. “What kind of important things, Mr. -- Easter?”

“Oh, you know. Find Scrooge, save Christmas – that sort of thing.”

“Save Christmas!” Maggie was genuinely concerned. “What do you mean?”

“Haven’t you heard? Santa, his elves and the reindeer are all terribly ill with the flu. Even Mrs. Claus is under the weather. The whole North Pole is out of service!”

“That’s terrible!” Maggie exclaimed. “What will you do?”

“Well,” he began. “I’m going to have to find Scrooge to fly the sleigh. He’s quite good with geography, you know. I’ll need some fairy dust for the deer. I’ll need to find some presents. Then I’ll need to wrap them all. Oh dear. Right now I just need to be on my way.”

“I’ll help you, Easter!”

“That’s very kind of you, Maggie,” he said sincerely. “But it’s late on Christmas Eve and you should be home, safe in your bed. It’s quite a disaster, you know. I don’t know how a little girl could help anyway.”

“But Easter,” Maggie revealed a gap-toothed smile, “I’ve been saving all my teeth for the Tooth Fairy! Maybe we could trade her for some fairy dust.”

“Well, I say,” the bunny blurted as he patted her head. “You’re a very clever girl, indeed! Would you be willing to sign a waiver? I can’t guarantee your safety, you know.”

“Sure,” Maggie agreed though she had no idea what he was talking about. “I have pencils at home.”

“And you’ll sign a confidentiality agreement, too?” he pressed. “I can’t have you sharing all our Christmas secrets.”

“Okay.” Maggie nodded, again having no idea what the bunny meant but most eager to join his adventure. The Easter Bunny grasped her shoulders in his paws and gently turned her around. He nudged her to lead the way back to her house.

“Let’s go get those teeth then, Maggie!” he exclaimed, seeming far more cheerful now that he had unexpected help.



## *Boo!*

After throwing some snacks and supplies in her backpack and settling Snowball in for the night, Maggie had climbed into her own bed and hollered for her daddy to tuck her in. Once he had left her room and she heard the sound of her parents' bedroom door closing behind him she leaped out of her bed and piled on the winter clothing she had stashed in her closet. She had climbed out her bedroom window and dropped down into the Easter Bunny's waiting arms.

They had been traveling for almost two hours now. During that time, Easter had told Maggie that he had decided to help save Christmas because there really wasn't time to recruit anybody else. He had hopped over to Santa's castle for cocoa only to find everyone in a sickly state. Easter knew that his young bunnies would be very disappointed if they didn't have presents under their tree on Christmas morning. So he had begun his trek to Ireland, where Scrooge was rumored to be vacationing. It just so happens, that The Tooth Fairy also lives in Ireland. Of course, Easter Bunny took a wrong turn and ended up on a slight detour in Maggie's town.

Maggie no longer recognized the countryside around her. She had never walked this far from home before. At least the moon was bright so they were able to see a little bit through the blizzard. There were no houses, traffic or people around - just endless trees, mountains and snow.

"Are you hungry, Easter?" Maggie asked. "I packed some carrots in my backpack for you."

"Excellent!" he replied, clapping his front paws together with enthusiasm. "My super, bunny eyesight sees a cave in the clearing of trees ahead. We'll stop there for a rest and have us a snack."

"Do we have time for a rest, Easter?"

"We're working on Santa's time now." He patted the spot on his belly where Maggie had seen him shove the pocket watch in his fur earlier. "Every hour on Santa's time is only a minute in real world time."

"But still," Maggie protested. "We have a lot to do."

"That's true," the bunny replied. "But we won't make it much further if we don't stop for a rest. Hop up on my back and I'll take us the rest of the way to the cave."

The Easter Bunny got down on all fours and Maggie climbed on. She held tightly to his bow-tie but the bunny ran so fast it was still very hard to hang on.

"Weeeeeeeee!" Maggie screamed, laughing, as they bound through the snowy clearing and headed toward the cave. She laughed so hard that she had a hard time catching her breath when she slid off his back and stood at the cave's entrance.

"Are you okay, Maggie?"



“Oh yes,” she breathed. “That was really fun!”

The Easter Bunny smiled. “I didn’t go too fast?” he asked.

“Oh no,” Maggie assured. “You can go even faster next time!”

Easter laughed a deep, guffawing chuckle that made his whole belly shake. His paws were darting in and out of different fur pockets, pulling out trinkets and gadgets, then shoving them back in as he continued his search.

“What are you looking for?” Maggie asked as she watched the bunny shove a whistle back into his side-fur.

“My flashlight,” he replied. “I know it’s around here somewhere.” As he spun around patting and searching his fur, Maggie noticed something poking out of his back.

“I think I see something in your back,” she said. The bunny tried to grab it but his arms couldn’t reach.

“A little help, please?” he asked, shaking his fluffy tail at her. Maggie grabbed onto the stick-like object and gave it a tug.

“It won’t budge,” she grunted as she pulled.

“Well put some weight into it,” Easter encouraged.

Maggie tugged as hard as she could using all the strength she could muster, leaning back to use all of her sixty-five pounds as leverage. With a few grunts and groans she was finally able to pull the object free. She held it out in front of her.

“It looks like....”

“Oh, my umbrella,” said Easter. “I’ve been looking for that!” He took the umbrella from her, smiled at it approvingly and stuck it back into his back-fur. He continued rummaging through his fur pockets. “A-ha! Found it!” He was holding a large, black flashlight. “Now let’s take a look, shall we?” he asked, not really expecting an answer, as he stepped closer to the cave’s entrance. “Now you stick close behind me, Maggie.” But she was already clutching his side.

The Easter Bunny aimed his flashlight for the middle of the entrance and fumbled with the switch. It made a clicking sound when he turned it on. For a few brief seconds a bright circle of light appeared. The beam was illuminating a withered, warty face with a large crooked nose and beady, grey eyes.

“Boo!”

Easter jumped backwards, dropping the flashlight and knocking little Maggie, who was shrieking with fright, right on her bottom. Great peals of cackling laughter surrounded them.



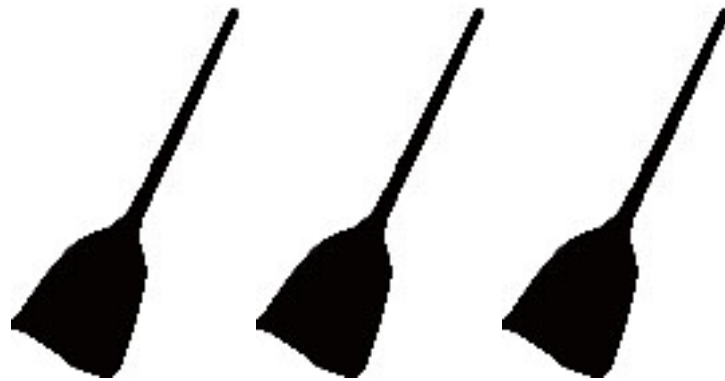
“Grab my hand, Maggie,” Easter instructed as he held out his paw for her. Maggie grabbed onto his toe and he pulled her to her feet. “And whatever happens, do not let go.” Maggie clasped her free arm around his paw, clutching with both hands for dear life.

“What is that?” Maggie squealed as she pressed herself into Easter’s side and tried to hide in his fur. She had her eyes squished shut, afraid to even look around her.

Suddenly, there were three loud pops and three clouds of smoke. Three figures began to appear - one in front of Maggie and the bunny, one to their left, and one to their right. The bunny began to tremble so hard that Maggie could hear this teeth chattering. He was not helping her muster up any courage to be braver.

“That,” the bunny croaked, “would be witches!”

Maggie felt the bunny’s arms wrap tightly around her just before she fainted.



## *Sugar and Spice and Everything Nice*

When Maggie woke up she was laying on a cold, dirt floor. She could hear cackly, female voices but couldn't quite make out what they were saying. Slowly, she opened one eye, just a little, to take a peek around her. A fire was burning nearby and casting dancing shadows on the rough, dirt walls. She remembered that she had been outside of a cave with Easter and understood that she was now, inside the cave. She heard footsteps shuffling toward her and quickly shut her eye.

Just then, Maggie recalled that Easter had said there were witches. She hoped desperately that she had heard wrong. She listened as hard as she could, trying to control her breathing so that nobody would notice she was awake. But she couldn't hear anything anymore. Little did Maggie know but a mean, ugly witch had lowered her scabby face directly in front of Maggie's. She could smell something awful - like rotten eggs and toe jam. She opened her one eye just a crack.

"Boo!"

Maggie jumped at the sight of the warty nose and beady, grey eyes she had seen earlier. The witch's hair was a wiry, black and grey mess with spiders crawling all over it. Her slimy, black mouth opened wide in an ear-piercing cackle.

"Scaredy-cat!" the witch spat at Maggie.

Sitting up now with both eyes open, Maggie was able to see more inside the cave. A few feet behind the tall, scary witch in front of her, Maggie saw that there were two other witches in the cave. One was almost as tall as the one in front of her and skinny, with long, frizzy, green hair. The second one was shorter than the first, and very plump. She had straight, orange hair that just reached her chin.

All three of the witches wore the same black robes, hats and boots. Only the stripes on their black stockings were different. The one with green hair had green stripes, the one with orange hair had orange stripes, and the one with black and grey hair had grey stripes. The black and grey-haired witch was definitely the ugliest. She had the scraggiest hair, the most crooked nose and far more warts than the others.

The green and orange-haired witches were hovering over Easter, who was lying on the ground. They were snickering and peering at Maggie. She couldn't quite see what they were up to and if Easter was all right. She hoped that he was sleeping and that was the reason why he wasn't moving.

The black and grey-haired witch extended one, bony finger in front of Maggie's, face, nearly scratching her nose with her sharp, black fingernail. Maggie was trying very hard to keep her head up and at least pretend she wasn't frightened. She knew she had to try to be brave.

"No biting or kicking," the witch scolded, "Or I'll eat your pretty, brown eyeballs!" She snatched the toque from Maggie's head and her other hand came forward, as though she were about to touch



Maggie's shimmering, brown hair. Maggie batted the witch's gnarled hand away and tried to grab back her toque.

"You're mean and you smell terrible!" she rebutted. The witch only cackled her evil laugh, joined by the cackles of the other two witches who had scuttled to her side. They were all poking and prodding at Maggie with their fingers. It was then that Maggie noticed that the witches' eyes matched their hair colour.

"A pretty one," said the green-haired witch with the piercing green eyes.

"Sugar and spice and everything nice," chanted the orange witch as she licked her fat lips.

The black and grey witch elbowed both of them out of the way. "My pet," she hissed. "You eat the rabbit." Maggie leaned sideways and glanced past them. She could now see that the green and orange witches had been tying Easter's hands and feet to a large, wooden stake.

"You can't eat my friend!" Maggie protested. The witches grew silent so that Maggie could only hear the crackling of the fire as its flames licked at the logs.

"Can't I?" snarled the black and grey witch, arching one jagged eyebrow.

"No!"

The witch grabbed Maggie's chin in her dirty fingers and pulled her face closer until their eyelashes were almost touching.

"I can," the witch said, "but I won't eat the rabbit – feet!" The witches burst into cackles.

"She won't eat the rabbit feet!" the green witch repeated.

"She needs them for her spell." the orange witch added.

"She won't eat the feet!" the green witch repeated again.

"I get the toenails!" the orange witch exclaimed.

"Shut up!" boomed the black and grey witch, startling the other two witches into stillness and causing the whole cave to shake.

As the floor continued to shudder, Maggie was so frightened she just couldn't hide it anymore. A single tear slid from her eye. It landed on the black and grey witch's finger, which was still hovering near Maggie's face. Ever so slowly, the bent and twisted finger began to straighten. The wrinkles began to melt out of the skin and the fingernail grew shinier. The witch gasped

"My finger," she exclaimed. "Look at it!" The other two witches oohed and ahed in admiration. "And I-I feel-I feel all warm and bubbly inside." A strange contented smile that wasn't as ugly as her usual



grimace, spread across the black and grey witch's face. Then the smile began to falter and the witch's face began to harden into its usual ugliness again. "No. No. Never mind. It passed," she said, seeming relieved. She looked at her finger again. It was still young and smooth compared to the rest of her withered hand.

"Sugar and spice and everything nice," came a voice from behind the witches. It was Easter. He must've woken up in all the commotion. All three witches turned to gawk at him, confused.

"Sugar and spice and everything nice." the orange witch echoed.

"Little girls are made of sugar and spice and everything nice," Easter continued, "What did you take from her to allow you to feel the warmth of sugar and spice and everything nice?" The black and grey witch spun on her heels and turned, stomping toward him.

"I took nothing!" she spat at the bunny. "Not a single nibble of her pretty, young skin! But you, Easter Bunny, you are just in time for our late night snack!" She snickered wickedly. "In fact, you ARE our late night snack."

"Late night snack," giggled the green witch.

"I get the toenails!" added the orange witch.

Maggie began to sob.

"There, there, pretty one," crooned the black and grey witch. "We aren't going to hurt your bunny friend. We're just going to shave him a little, cut off his feet a little and roast him like a pig!" She threw back her scraggly head and howled an evil laugh. Her friends cackled in unison.

"Witches," the black and grey witch said, motioning her long, twiggy arms in Easter's direction. "Bring him to the fire!"

"But why?" Maggie cried. "Why would you do such horrible things to The Easter Bunny?"

"Because," the witch explained. "I need his feet for my beauty spell. And Grenevieve," she added, pointing at the green witch, "needs his fur for a broom seat for her skinny butt. And Oamra—"

"I get the toenails!" Oamra, the orange witch, repeated as she jumped up and down in a ridiculous sort of dance.

"We're hungry," the black and grey witch said, matter-of-factly.

"Well I have all kinds of treats and snacks in my backpack." Maggie said. She took the pack off her back and unzipped it for the witches to see the sandwiches, cookies and other assorted snacks inside. Greedily, Oamra snatched at it.

"Wait," Maggie said as she tightened her grip on the pack. "Promise me you won't eat my friend first."



“I promise we won’t eat your friend,” said the witch, who then hastily added, “Right now.”

“And untie me,” Easter added. The black and grey witch frowned.

“Please!” Maggie corrected.

“Fine!” the witch agreed. She jabbed each of her friends in the ribs with one, pointy finger. “Untie him!” Grenevieve and Oamra scuttled over to Easter and set about untying the ropes from his hands and feet while the black and grey-haired witch rustled through the contents of Maggie’s backpack, shoving candies and treats into her mouth without even unwrapping them.

“My name’s Maggie. What’s your name?” she asked the black and grey witch.

“Pfoo!” the black and grey witch almost choked and spit out a candy wrapper. “What is my name?” she repeated haughtily. “I am The Magnificent Mesmeralda! Have you not heard of me?”

“No,” Maggie replied as she shook her head.

“But I’m the scariest witch in the entire world!” Mesmeralda insisted. Maggie shrugged her shoulders. She really hadn’t heard of Mesmeralda before.

“Think hard,” Mesmeralda continued. “I have the scariest cackle and the most powerful magic. I eat children and tame wilderbeasts. I set crops on fire for the fun of it and I kick puppies when nobody’s looking. Perhaps you’ve read about me in one of your silly storybooks.”

“Um,” Maggie rubbed her chin, pretending to think. “Hmm...Nope!” Mesmeralda stomped her feet.

The Easter Bunny, now free of his ties and fearful of the witch’s foul temper, hopped over to Maggie and sat himself down next to her. He was rubbing the spots on his wrists where the fur was flattened from the ropes they’d been tied with.

“Not only is Mesmeralda the most powerful Mistress of Black Magic the world has ever known,” Easter began. “I’ve heard stories about Mesmeralda that could make your skin crawl right off of your bones! Her evil is unmatched by any other!”

Mesmeralda held her head high, practically beaming with pride. She cracked a huge grin, revealing her yellow and black teeth, some of which were missing, at Grenevieve and Oamra who now hovered nearby, rifling through Maggie’s backpack for food. Easter snuggled closer to Maggie and lowered his head closer to her ear, as though he were about to tell her a great secret.

“Ugliness works its way out from the inside,” He whispered just loud enough for Mesmeralda to overhear. “Only the meanest, blackest soul could make a witch as revolting and hideous as Mesmeralda.” Easter winked at Maggie. Mesmeralda scowled while the other witches snickered.

“If I had rabbit’s feet,” Mesmeralda warned. “I could cast a beauty spell to make myself more appealing to you, Mr. Bunny. Don’t test me!”



“Or you could use some sugar and spice and everything nice,” the bunny offered.

“What do you mean, Easter?” Maggie asked nervously. Mesmeralda shushed her with one evil glare.

“Go on,” the witch instructed. “Tell me more.”

Easter Bunny munched on carrots that were scattered near him on the floor while he explained that sugar and spice and everything nice is what makes little girls perfect and beautiful inside. It’s in their souls, tears, hair, skin and even their toenails.

When Maggie’s tear fell on Mesmeralda’s finger, it went straight into Mesmeralda’s cold, black heart and fixed a tiny, little piece of it before her finger changed at all. But the magic in sugar and spice and everything nice only works if little girls give it up willingly. If Mesmeralda steals it, the magic will disappear.

“Bah,” Mesmeralda scoffed. “You lie, rabbit!”

“I can prove it,” Easter insisted, much to Maggie’s dismay. “Oamra, you like toenails, right?”

“I get the toenails!” Oamra exclaimed.

“Go ahead then,” Easter said. “Take a bite of her toenail. Mind you don’t hurt her -- just the toenail!”

Oamra didn’t need any further encouragement. She grabbed onto Maggie’s leg and pulled off her boot, then her sock and eagerly nibbled off a piece of her toenail. She licked her lips as though it was the tastiest thing she had ever eaten. Everybody stared at Oamra while they waited but nothing seemed to happen.

“Do you feel any different?” Easter asked Oamra. She shook her head from side to side. “All right then,” Easter continued. “Go ahead and offer her your toenails now, Maggie.” Maggie giggled. She held her foot high in the air and wiggled her toes.

“Would you like to trim my toenails, Oamra?” she offered. Within seconds, Oamra expertly trimmed every last toenail with her teeth.

Instantly, Oamra’s face began to soften. Her warts disappeared and her orange eyes glowed brighter. By the time two or three minutes had passed, Oamra looked slightly thinner as well.

“I get happy!” Oamra blurted with a smile. Mesmeralda wasn’t sure what to think. She scratched her head, making spiders jump and scatter.

“Maybe, “ said Maggie, “When you’re happy on the inside, you’ll be skinnier on the outside.”

“That’s right,” Easter replied. “It all starts on the inside.”

“Now me! Now me!” Genevieve exclaimed. But Mesmeralda shoved her aside.



“Fine,” Mesmeralda said. “We’ll spare your life, rabbit. But we’re keeping the girl.”

“But I need the girl,” Easter objected, “To help me find Scrooge.”

“Scrooge, you say?” A grin spread over Mesmeralda’s face.

“Scrooge!” Oamra repeated.

“Mesmeralda likes Scrooge.” Grenevieve added.

“Mesmeralda,” Maggie started. “If I save all my toenail clippings and all my tears for you, for the rest of my life, will you take us to Ireland to find Scrooge?” Mesmeralda considered this for a moment.

“Grenevieve’s skinny butt won’t be able to sit on her broomstick all the way to Ireland.” said Mesmeralda.

“Well my fur does need trimming,” Easter suggested. “I suppose you could cut off enough to make a seat for Grenevieve’s broom.”

“Your hair, too, pretty one,” Mesmeralda added as she bent over to grasp a few of Maggie’s glossy locks between her gnarled fingers.

Maggie hesitated. Then she realized she didn’t really have much choice. “Well, my hair will grow back eventually.” she mumbled to herself.

“If Maggie gives you her hair,” said the bunny. “Then you have to guarantee our safety, too. No tricks!” Mesmeralda scoffed at this. “And we reserve one more favour from you, in case we need it on our journey.”

“Bah,” Mesmeralda practically shouted. “No deal!”

“No deal!” Oamra echoed while Grenevieve snickered.

“But Maggie’s hair is so beautiful!” Easter pointed out. “And it doesn’t have a single spider in it! What would Scrooge think of you if you had hair like hers?” He winked at Maggie who was hiding a smile behind her hand.

And so the deal was made. Easter pulled a pair of scissors out of his fur pockets and the witches quickly trimmed his fur. Then he, in turn, cut Maggie’s hair. She didn’t cry once and she was still very pretty with her new, short haircut. Two quick spells later Grenevieve had a furry new broom seat and Mesmeralda had a glorious head of golden brown hair.

Maggie had a short rest by the fire while the witches planned their traveling route and prepped their broomsticks. It was decided that Easter would ride with Grenevieve because he was much larger than Maggie. Being the thinnest of the witches, Grenevieve had the most room on her broomstick.



Mesmeralda insisted that Maggie would ride with her. She said she wanted to keep an eye on the brat but Easter knew that the sugar and spice and everything nice in Maggie's hair were warming Mesmeralda up already. She was growing fond of Maggie. Mesmeralda also smelled much better so Easter doubted Maggie would mind flying with her. Still, Maggie was nervous when she got on the broomstick. She had never even flown on an airplane before, much less a broomstick!

"Just hang on really tight," Easter told her. "Broomsticks are much faster than bunnies."

"Don't be a scaredy-cat," Mesmeralda scolded with a smile. "I've been flying for over three hundred years!"

