

Eva and the Secret Magic School





One summer morning a carriage came down at Eva's gate — all by itself, without a single horse. Mike and Oliver were waving out of the window.

"Eva, hurry! Wizard School won't wait!"

Eva knelt down and hugged her corgi tight, tight.

"Button, I'll be back for the holidays," she whispered. "Wait for me by the gate, all right?"

Button licked her nose and gave a bark — bright as a little bell.

The carriage rocked, rose higher than the roof and sailed off over the forest. Eva watched until the small ginger speck by the gate was no bigger than a berry.



The castle stood on a hill, and its towers were pointed like wizards' hats. The doors opened by themselves, the staircase politely offered up its steps, and in the great hall hung a golden board. Words wrote themselves across it in chalk: "Welcome, young wizards!"

A present was waiting for every one of them: a midnight-blue robe with a star-shaped clasp, and a magic wand.

"Mine's warm, like a fresh bun!" said Mike happily.

"And mine tickles!" laughed Oliver.

Eva's wand gave a quiet chime, as if it were saying hello. Eva would have chimed back if she had known how — so instead she gave the wand her very politest bow.



The first lesson was Wandwork. The golden board wrote in chalk: “One rule only: One — a spark, alight!”

“One — a spark, alight!” Mike swished his wand. A spark hopped off the tip and lit his lantern.

“One — a spark, alight!” Oliver swished his. His spark turned a somersault in the air — and lit his lantern too.

Eva swished with all her might. The wand... sneezed! Sparks sprayed in every direction like a tiny firework, and her lantern went out altogether.

“Atchoo!” added the wand.

Eva hid it behind her back. The exam was coming soon, and her spark wouldn’t behave. But why?



Out in the meadow behind the castle, the invisibility cloak lesson began. The golden board flew after them and chalked up another line: “Two — a cloak, hide tight!”

“One — a spark, alight! Two — a cloak, hide tight!” the children chanted together. The chant was growing like the tail of a kite.

Oliver hid first. He threw the cloak over himself — and vanished. Completely. Almost.

“Oliver,” asked Eva, “why is the grass wearing red sneakers?”

Two red sneaker-toes were poking out from under the cloak. The cloak giggled, Oliver giggled under the cloak, and soon the whole meadow was roaring — even the hedges shook with laughter.



At the magical objects lesson there was everything you could possibly imagine! On the shelves, cauldrons stirred themselves, and flying teapots poured tea straight into the air. But the most important objects were waiting in the corner — the broomsticks.

The board chalked up the last line, and the chant was complete:

“One — a spark, alight!

Two — a cloak, hide tight!

Three — a broom, take flight,
and carry us home tonight!”

“Three — a broom, take flight!” the children shouted together.

And the broomsticks jumped straight into their hands! Mike’s impatiently, Oliver’s with a somersault, and Eva’s softly and politely, as if it were saying hello all over again.

“Well, hello there,” said Eva, and bowed to her broom like an old friend.



And then came magical sport — broomball! A golden Gigglesball went darting about above the meadow. It chuckled and spun and dodged away from every single one of them.

Before the start, the children shouted together:

“One — a spark, alight! Two — a cloak, hide tight! Three — a broom, take flight, and carry us home tonight!”

And the brooms shot up into the sky. Mike flew fastest of all and three times almost caught the ball. Oliver chased it through the floating hoops. And the ball laughed and slipped away like a soap bubble.

And then all at once it flopped straight into Eva’s hands!

“Hee-hee!” said the ball.

“Got you!” said Eva, and hugged it to her robe.

The ball giggled right through till evening.



The night before the exam, Eva couldn't sleep. She sat on the wide sill of the round window, frowning at her wand.

"One — a spark, alight!" She swished with all her might.

"Atchoo!" sneezed the wand.

Eva sighed. And then she remembered: on that first day, the wand hadn't shouted at all. It had chimed, softly — as if it were saying hello. Perhaps it didn't like being swished with all one's might? Perhaps it wanted to be talked to?

Eva lifted the wand right up to her lips and whispered, quietly, like a secret:

"One — a spark, alight."

The spark slipped off the tip and flew straight and steady, like a little star above the sleeping beds.

"Thank you," Eva whispered.



In the morning the exam began in the great hall. The golden board wrote up three tasks: light a lantern, hide under the cloak, and fly a figure of eight on a broom.

Mike lit his lantern on the very first swish. Oliver hid under the cloak completely — this time he even tucked his sneakers in.

Then it was Eva's turn. The whole hall held its breath. Eva didn't swish. She bowed to her wand and whispered, like a secret:

“One — a spark, alight.”

The spark flew straight, like a little star — and the lantern lit at the very first try!

Then the cloak. Then the figure of eight on the broom — the roundest one in the whole castle.

“Hoo-ray!” shouted Mike and Oliver.



For passing the exam, each of them was given a star badge — as shiny as a real star. And they were allowed to take one magical object home for the holidays.

Mike chose the self-stirring cauldron — “so it can make cocoa”. Oliver chose the invisibility cloak. And Eva chose the Giggleball.

“Hee-hee!” said the ball happily.

The carriage was waiting at the gates. It rose above the towers and sailed off homewards. Below them stretched a dark spruce forest, and out of it came curling a gray mist.

And suddenly, out of the mist, came a bark. Bright as a little bell.

Eva pressed herself against the window.

“Button?” she whispered.

“What are you doing in the forest?”



The carriage came down on a path. Among the spruces stood a crooked tower, and in the little yard behind a thorny hedge a clear bubble hung in the air. Button was sitting inside it! A prickly vine was wound all around the bubble.

“That’s the tower of Thistle the witch,” whispered Mike.

“And the mist’s so thick you might as well shut your eyes,” whispered Oliver.

Eva gathered up her courage and crept forward on her own. She bowed to her wand and whispered:

“One — a spark, alight.”

The spark flew straight and steady and burned a little path of light through the gray mist — right up to the bubble.

“Woof!” said Button happily. Bright as a little bell.



“Two — a cloak, hide tight!” the children whispered, and all three of them dived under the invisibility cloak.

The cloak covered them. Completely. Almost. Underneath, three pairs of sneakers poked out like mushrooms: white, blue and red.

The tower door creaked. Thistle the witch peered out.

“Oh! Shoes!” she gasped.

“Walking shoes!”

“Three — a broom, take flight!” cried Eva.

The brooms shot out from behind the spruces and swept the children up from under the cloak. Eva flew across to the bubble and touched it with her wand — pop! — the bubble burst, and Button jumped into her arms.

“Woof!” he chimed, and licked Eva’s whole cheek.



The children soared up over the tower. And from below came something that wasn't "give him back!" at all.

"Oh well..." sighed Thistle, and sat down on her doorstep.

"I've got nobody to play with."

Eva looked at her. Then at her Giggleball. The ball chuckled.

"Catch!" called Eva, and threw the ball down.

"Hee-hee!" The ball spun round, dodged once for the sake of good manners, and flopped straight into the witch's hands.

And Thistle smiled. For the first time in a hundred years, by the look of it.

The children waved to her and flew off into the sunset. And from the tower, for a long time afterwards, you could hear: "Hee-hee!" — and "Hee-hee!" in reply.



That evening the carriage settled softly by her own front gate. Button jumped out first and tore around in happy circles: around Eva, around the currant bush, around his red bowl — and around Eva again.

“See you at school!” Mike and Oliver waved from the window.

The star badge gleamed on Eva’s robe. She stroked her broom and whispered to it the very last line of the chant:

“...and carry us home tonight.”

“You did,” said Eva quietly. “Thank you.”

And then she knelt down by the gate and hugged Button — nose to nose, just as she had promised.

“Woof!” answered Button. Bright as a little bell.