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TROUBLE at the BOOKSHOP "Whiskers and Wise"

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TROUBLE AT THE BOOKSHOP
"WHISKERS AND WISE"

A Play for Children

written by

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Synopsis

It’s Christmas break in the village of Buttersnow, at the Academia of Magic Mapplewaffle. Three adventurous students: Barney, Josephine, and Peter, set off to the magical bookstore Whiskers and Wise, owned by Mr. Cat and Mr. Owl, to pick out new books for the holiday. Everything seems perfectly normal… until a mysterious book incident happens.

Cast of Characters

MR. CAT (THE PROPRIETOR)	Wears a long, tailored charcoal trench coat and perfectly pressed dark grey striped trousers. Sophisticated and watchful.
MR. OWL (THE CO-PROPRIETOR)	Wears a soft, deep brown velvet jacket over a crisp, cream-colored shirt with a subtle red and blue plaid pattern. Wise and often bewildered.
BARNEY	(8–10 years old): Energetic, mischievous, and a natural leader.
JOSEPHINE	(8–10 years old): Observant, poetic, and the favored child of the family.
PETER	(8–10 years old): Clumsy, eager, and obsessed with culinary experiments.
MR. BLATHERWICK	A warm, dear father.
MRS. BLATHERWICK	A bustling, slightly stressed mother.

Place

The village of Buttersnow

Time

Morning

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: SCENE I takes place in the Blatherwick home. The house is wonderfully lopsided and higgledy-piggledy, as if it's held together by messy magic. A large wooden table overflows with breakfast remains: crusts of bread, spilled hot cocoa, and half-eaten sausages. At least three different calendars hang on the walls. Each shows a slightly different day, but everyone agrees it's Christmas. Odd items are stuffed into every corner: a half-mended bicycle wheel, a pile of unmatched mittens, and a stack of books threatening to topple over. The house is noisy, busy, and bursting with life.

At Rise: The scene opens at the Blatherwick kitchen. BARNEY, JOSEPHINE, and PETER sit at the cracked, slightly wobbly table, surrounded by the remains of breakfast. MRS. BLATHERWICK bustles about, frantically clearing plates, repeatedly bumping into MR. BLATHERWICK, who struggles to read a crumpled newspaper.

MRS. BLATHERWICK

(sighing dramatically, holding a plate stacked precariously high with crusts and a forgotten sausage.)

Honestly, this mess! You three are worse than a litter of pygmy shrews in a jam factory! We're having guests for Christmas, you know. Guests! I swear I just saw a stack of Peter's cooking books holding up the back leg of the sofa!

MR. BLATHERWICK

(not looking up from the paper)

Now, now, dear. It's their first day of holidays. Let them have a bit of a celebratory morning. They'll tidy later.

(beat)

Eventually.

BARNEY

(excitedly, grabbing a book from the floor that was under his chair)

Headmaster Grimswood doesn't let us do anything! Rules, rules! But now finally it's the holidays! Don't worry, we'll tidy up as soon as we get back from Whiskers and Wise!

MRS. BLATHERWICK

Josephine, dear… did you eat enough?

PETER

(muttering, licking cocoa off his fingers.)

I need some new recipe books! I want to make a chocolate cake so good that Aunt Miley would never see it coming… like when her husband suddenly turned into a curly-haired birdie!

MR. BLATHERWICK

(folding his newspaper and giving PETER a serious look)

Peter, you nearly turned the water pump into lemonade last summer! Please, no more kitchen sink alchemy until January. Promise your poor father.

PETER *(sighing)*

Fine. But I'm still looking for the Scarf Cake recipe! It's too important!

JOSEPHINE

(standing up straight, pulling on her coat with calm dignity)

Don't worry, Mama. I'll bring home a lovely book… maybe something about gentle witchy love spells.

MRS. BLATHERWICK

(beaming at JOSEPHINE, ignoring the boys)

That's my girl! So thoughtful!

BARNEY

(jumping up, scattering a few crumbs)

The headmaster said a small mind is a wasted mind! But a mind can't grow unless it knows how to make your brother's nose wiggle in a hundred funny ways! I need a handy book on tricks and mischief! It's for growing my brain!

MR. BLATHERWICK

(waving them toward the door)

He's got a point, dear. Go! All of you! Run before your mother finds some chore that involves scrubbing the ceiling! Get to Buttersnow! Find Mr. Cat and Mr. Owl!

MRS. BLATHERWICK

(calling after them as they rush out, pulling on mismatched mittens)

And Barney! Try not to let Mr. Cat see your shoes! And Josephine… if they give you any enchanted chocolate coins, you get the biggest one!

(The children tumble out the door. The scene instantly changes.)

Scene 2

Setting: Whiskers and Wise, a bookstore shaped like a cozy spiral tower made from old boots and wagon wheels. Books are stacked from floor to ceiling, curl up the spiral staircases, and hang from the rafters on tiny enchanted hooks. Comfy armchairs wiggle and giggle when someone sits in them. Brass telescopes point toward constellations painted across the ceiling. The air smells of old parchment, dust, and a faint whiff of singed paper from magic spells that didn't go quite right.

Through the large arched window of Whiskers and Wise, the village of Buttersnow can be seen. It's a sunny winter day. Cobblestone streets sparkle with snow, crooked rooftops lean together, and chimneys puff soft clouds of smoke. Lanterns glow even in daylight, making the village feel warm and welcoming.

At Rise: MR. CAT carefully dusts books on the shelves, while MR. OWL perches atop a tall ladder, peering down at a stack of wobbling tomes.

BARNEY

(barging through the door, practically bouncing)

We made it! Last day of school… and we're finally on our Christmas Reading Quest!

JOSEPHINE

Good day, Mr. Cat! Mr. Owl! We need handy books for the school break.

MR. CAT

(adjusting his trench coat and giving them a sharp look)

Ah, the young scholars of the Academia of Magic "Mapplewaffle"! Try not to track snow all over the History of Enchanted Dust Bunnies. So… what books are you after this

MR. CAT (CONT)

year? Or are you just going to pick the ones that show how to make your parents look silly when the Christmas guests arrive?

BARNEY

Exactly! I need something useful… something I can really try out!

JOSEPHINE

I want something beautiful… maybe love spells.

PETER

(clapping his hands together)

And I want something yummy! The older and weirder the recipe, the better!

MR. OWL

(startled awake, the book tumbling to the floor; he slowly climbs down the ladder)

Ah… the Christmas rush! Always chasing the weirdest, wiggliest books. Mr. Cat… maybe the "naughty-but-smart" shelf for these clever troublemakers?

MR. CAT

(sighing dramatically)

Very well. Follow me.

(MR. CAT leads them to a small, hidden nook. He taps a row of books on the shelf, and— creak!— the whole bookcase swings inward, revealing a secret, dimly lit corner full of mysterious books.)

BARNEY

(eyes wide, points to a thin, worn volume.)

Aha! Found it! This looks promising!

(BARNEY pulls out a book titled 101 Brilliant Ways to Be Cheeky and Blame the Cat.)

MR. OWL

An old favourite. "Chapter 4: The Cauliflower Effect" is particularly effective…

(He leans close to BARNEY, whispering dramatically.)

…but hide it so Mr. Cat doesn't see it!

(MR. CAT nods, trying to look serious but clearly amused. BARNEY grabs a few more books from the nook.)

BARNEY

And… *The Big Book of Tiny Explosions! How to Hide Your Homework From Everyone, Even the Teacher! The Invisible Ink Adventure Handbook!*

JOSEPHINE

(running a finger along the spine of a book bound in shimmering spider-silk)

This one! It's called *The Winter Witch's Almanac of Love Spells*. Is it… good for a young love witch?

MR. OWL

(nodding slowly, adjusting his plaid collar)

Perfectly. It's full of gentle love spells—moon charms, starry wishes, and little magic to make hearts flutter. But I also suggest you *The Magical Guide to Talking to Animals, Potions for Patience and Politeness,* and *The Glittering Book of Helpful Charms*!

PETER

(squeezing past BARNEY, spotting a very thick, grease-stained book)

This is it! *Culinary Alchemy: Turning Trash to Trifle!*

(He opens it eagerly, pointing to a page.)

PETER (CONT)

Look! "Chapter 3: The Scarf Cake"! It shows how to use an old woolly scarf to make a chocolate cake. Perfect for that scratchy sweater and scarf Great Aunt Miley gave me last year!

BARNEY

Whoa! check these out! You'd love these! *101 Recipes for Bewitched Brownies!, The Magical Spice Rack: Stir, Shake, and Spell!, How to Make Your Cake Fly Without Setting Fire to the Kitchen!*

(They gather all their books and head to the counter, grinning with excitement. MR. CAT gestures over the pile of books. One by one, each book floats gently into the air, hovers in front of him, and emits a tiny twinkle or soft "beep" as if being scanned. After the brief hover, it lands neatly on the counter.)

MR. CAT

That will be… three Glitter Bucks and five Marble Mints, please.

BARNEY, JOSEPHINE, & PETER

(dumping a handful of shiny, coin-like objects on the counter)

Thank you, Mr. Cat! Thank you, Mr. Owl! Merry Christmas!

(They hurry toward the door, excited to start reading.)

These pages have been removed
for the preview.

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Scene 4

Setting: Same as Scene 3.

At Rise: MR. CAT points out the window at a severe-looking figure walking down Buttersnow, carefully brushing a single speck of snow off a perfectly tidy chimney. The children squint; they can't quite see the face.

MR. CAT

The Headmaster of the Academia of Magic Mapplewaffle himself! He clearly doesn't like the kind of fun and curious learning we encourage! He doesn't like anything outside the normal school lessons— especially the shady magic arts of math!

PETER

(holding up his book, fists clenched)

Not on my Christmas Break!

BARNEY

But how do we get the page off? We can't rip his shirt!

MR. CAT

(thinking quickly, eyes landing on PETER's book)

You can't rip the shirt, but maybe we can change what's on it! Peter, your book— "Culinary Alchemy: Turning Trash to Trifle"! Does it have a chapter on un-cooking?

PETER

(flipping frantically through the grease-stained pages)

Chapter 7! "The Dissolving Draught: Making Things Back Into Ingredients"! It says it can turn something that's been made… back into its core parts!

JOSEPHINE

The page has turned into a story on Mr. Owl's shirt! Can you un-make it?

PETER

I can try! Barney, I need a piece of the trench coat— quick!

(BARNEY quickly and carefully snips a tiny, almost invisible thread from the bottom hem of MR. CAT's coat. PETER scoops up a pinch of dust from a nearby shelf labeled "Shame" and waves it toward MR. OWL.)

PETER

Okay, Professor Ted Bumbles! Time to be un-written!

(PETER, holding his book open, sprinkles the dust and coat thread over the page on PROFESSOR TED BUMBLES' shirt.)

PETER

Thready-thread! Dusty-dust! Fix the shirt! Undo the fuss! Turn Professor Bumbles back to Mr. Owl, we must!

(The page on MR. OWL's shirt shimmers wildly, then pops off, floating harmlessly to the ground. PROFESSOR TED BUMBLES blinks rapidly. Suddenly, his eyes return to normal. He speaks in his deep, thoughtful voice.)

MR. OWL

(touching his plaid shirt, looking bewildered)

My word… I seem to have… briefly imagined buying a sailboat. How utterly unsettling.

MR. CAT

The plot is foiled! The Headmaster wanted the children to read boring books and stop them from learning fun magic. But the very books he hated saved the day!

BARNEY

My *Handy Book* taught me to be quick and smart when things go wrong!

JOSEPHINE

My *Witch's Almanac* taught me how to use love to make tricky things calm down!

PETER

And my *Culinary Alchemy* book taught me how to un-cook things and turn them back into what they were!

MR. OWL

Indeed. The best kind of magic is the kind you read about, then apply to the real life.

(The children beam, their books now representing a symbol of victory. They finally head out the door, into the sunny, peaceful streets of Buttersnow, ready for their break.)

MR. CAT

(to MR. OWL, dusting his trench coat)

You know, Professor Bumbles was quite rude about my trench coat.

MR. OWL *(smiling)*

Nonsense, Mr. Cat. He had style. Now, how about we brew a nice pot of tea? I'm feeling rather… unwritten.

(CURTAIN)



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