

BeaTwitched:
The Misadventures of a Twitchy Witch

The Gingham Cat

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Beatrice Twitchy and her troops were on their way back from a tour of the candy factory. The troops today included seven children and all of Miss Twitchy's pets.

Curly and Larry, the two guinea pigs, had gotten into trouble in the factory by sneaking out of Miss Twitchy's red handbag to snatch sour strawberry gummy worms from a giant bin. When the mischief was discovered, Curly and Larry were double-hiss scolded by Diamond Jess, Miss Twitchy's boa constrictor. Diamond Jess liked to ride on Miss Twitchy's shoulders and curl around her neck.

Miss Twitchy's fat dog, Moon, hadn't gotten into trouble on the tour. But he also hadn't much enjoyed the outing because he was on a diet and was only allowed to have one piece of candy. Blue, the ragdoll cat, was allowed to have two pieces. And even though the candies were very small, Blue decided she was having a pretty good day because she got to have one more piece of candy than Moon. Both Blue and Moon received little bags of candy to take home so they could enjoy more pieces on later days. In general, candy wasn't good for dogs and cats. And too much in one day was definitely a very bad idea. So Miss Twitchy always set firm limits.

The *Giddy Up Candy Factory* was just down the street from the *Giddy Down Soda Shoppe*. So the troops stopped for lunch at the soda shop. While they were waiting for their order, they traded some of the candy from their bags with each other. This took a good deal of time because they traded around, and around, and around. When the trading was finished, all of the kids and critters were happy with the mixed-up contents of their bags. And they were all even happier when they were full of hot dogs, grilled-cheese sandwiches, and strawberry malts.

Walking home, the children talked about the nifty machines they had seen at the factory. Heike had bought postcards with pictures of the Taffy Puller, the Gumdrop Dropper, and the Licorice Twister. And Cam picked up a postcard of the candy factory mascot, Giddy Up Golly. Golly was a one-of-a-kind, fluffy blue, candy-loving monster. But he didn't just love candy, he loved giving hugs too.



When the troops reached Miss Twitchy's cottage, they heard a strange scratching sound coming from behind the bushes next to the front door.

Peering around the bushes, Elaine and Josh discovered a rather funny-looking cat. The cat was funny looking because her fur was completely green gingham. As the cat meowed, Curly and Larry squeaked, and everyone else hung back to keep a good distance.

Blue was especially horrified at the sight of a cat turned to green gingham, and she couldn't even manage a greeting for the visitor.

Moon was also shocked and stared with round eyes.

And Diamond Jess was so surprised that she couldn't even manage a hiss.

Bending down to pat the cat, Miss Twitchy told her troops, "This must be a witch spell. There's no other way to get a gingham cat that I know of."

"Can you help the poor cat?" asked Winston.

"Oh yes!" exclaimed Miss Twitchy, rolling up her sleeves. "I know just the thing."

With this, the plump little witch took her wand out of her handbag and began to wave it in figure-eight shapes. "Stand back!" she cried. As everyone backed up a couple of steps, Miss Twitchy began to dance a polka around the cat. On the third time around, she chanted, "*Convert, revert, assert!*"

As sparks flew from the tip of her wand, a yellow haze covered the gingham cat and Miss Twitchy stopped dancing. Within just a couple of seconds, the haze lifted, and everyone stared in silence.

The cat was now bright yellow with purple polka dots.

"Oh my," said Miss Twitchy with a worried frown. "Hmmmm..." she mused. "I think I was supposed to dance the lion rumba. Or maybe the fox trot? Or was it the giraffe tango? I never learned to kitty waltz...so maybe that's it."

Miss Twitchy was very confused. However, the troops were used to this because Miss Twitchy was often confused. And she was always trying spells without looking them up in her *Spell Book*. Curly and Larry knew



this, so they fished the book out of the bottom of Miss Twitchy's red handbag.

Since Miss Twitchy was still pondering, Gisele took the book and looked under Cat Spells. Flipping the pages, she found one that would undo checkered, polka dot, gingham, plaid, and other types of miscolored cats.

"There's no dancing," Gisele told Miss Twitchy. "It's just a really long list of ingredients."

The list was so long that it spilled over onto a second page.

two dandelion seeds

a pinch of talc

a twice unhooked safety pin, hooked up again

three petunia petals

five balls of okra fuzz

a forty-cents-off coupon (any product)

six dust bunnies

a drop of brine from pickled gourd spines

three inches of yellow thread...

The list went on and on.

Looking over Gisele's shoulder, Cam said, "It says the ingredients just need to be mixed together and sprinkled over the miscolored cat."

Ronald, Josh, and Heike ran inside Miss Twitchy's house right away to start gathering ingredients, while Winston and Cam hurried around to the garden.

Curly and Larry scurried off to the newspaper bin to hunt for the forty-cents-off coupon. (They often liked to play in the newspaper bin, and they were also often in charge of Miss Twitchy's coupons.)

Gisele got a bucket from the shed to hold the ingredients. And Elaine helped Miss Twitchy check things off from the long list as the items went into the bucket.

Moon and Blue just kept the polka dot cat company on the porch.

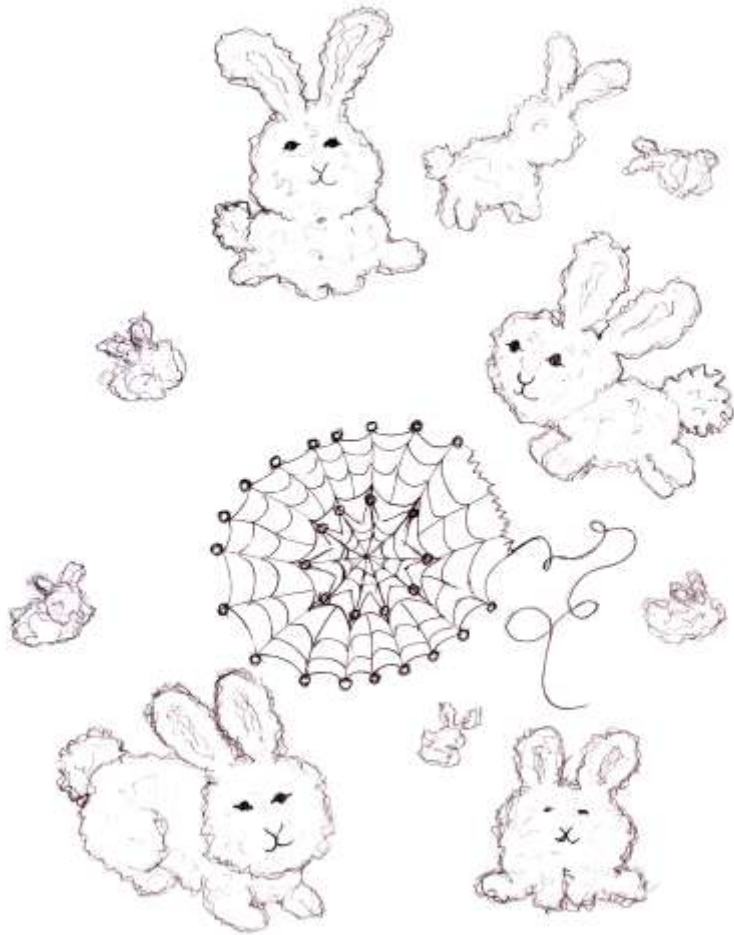
Having completely lost interest in the cat, Diamond Jess decided to take a nap in the glider chair. As far as she was concerned, cats were a dime a dozen, whether miscolored or not.

After scouring bookshelves, rooting through the garden, hunting in closets, fishing under the bed, and searching the kitchen cupboards, the troops found nearly all of the ingredients.

However, they had to be very careful with some of the items. For example, by the time Ronald reached the porch, the dust bunnies he was carrying had multiplied from six to eighteen. So he had to count out six again before adding them to the bucket.

And the spider-web doily Heike had found in the cupboard was enchanted to unravel itself every afternoon at one o'clock. Then it was set to spin itself back up again at exactly midnight. The doily fell apart in Heike's hands just as she was about to place it into the bucket. Fortunately, a rose lace doily would work just as well, and Miss Twitchy always had a stack of them on hand. The rose lace doilies didn't do any tricks, but they did smell like fresh roses.

After twenty minutes of gathering, the troops had found everything except the zebra tail trimmings. And they were going to have to take a trip to the zoo for this ingredient because Miss Twitchy never kept zebra tail trimmings on hand. (Only fresh zebra tail trimmings would work in witch spells.)



Since the zoo was far away, Miss Twitchy decided that they would need to use her magic hourglass to travel.

To use the hourglass, they all stood in a perfect circle holding hands. As Cam and Winston held the hourglass between them, Miss Twitchy stated, “To the zoo please, near the zebras.”

After a short whoosh of soft air that smelled like cinnamon gum, several puffs of pinkish-gold light began swirling about their heads. Five seconds later, the troops were standing next to the zebra pen at the zoo.

Fortunately, a zebra was standing right next to the fence, so Miss Twitchy was able to use the little scissors she had brought to snip some tail trimmings. She then carefully stowed the trimmings in her pocket.



Next, they all visited the orangutans, peafowl, lemurs, and hippos before joining hands to return to home.

Moon, Blue, and the polka dot cat had been keeping watch on the bucket on the porch.

Curly and Larry had also been keeping watch and were waiting anxiously for Miss Twitchy to add the final ingredient.

In the glider, Diamond Jess opened one eye to a small slit because she was slightly curious.

As soon as the tail trimmings were added, Josh gave the bucket a good shake to stir up the contents, which all turned to ash at the moment of the shake.

Wisps of black and white smoke were already seeping from the bucket as Miss Twitchy reached inside to grab a handful of the ash to sprinkle over the polka dot cat. In a puff of thick smoke, the cat immediately changed from a polka dot cat to a striped cat.

Looking closely at the cat, and after a very long pause, Miss Twitchy said, "I don't think this is right."

Everyone else was eyeing the cat too. And Blue was even more horrified than she had been before.

"Some cats have stripes," said Elaine, somewhat doubtfully.

"But they don't have zebra stripes!" exclaimed Ronald.

He was right, of course.

Josh was already looking in Miss Twitchy's *Spell Book*, and he figured out right away what went wrong. "Two pages are stuck together," he said. "The zebra tail trimmings belong to the next spell in the book."

They also hadn't needed the shoo-shoo pebble or the flakes of ginger.

"I feel like we've just been on a wild goat chase," said Miss Twitchy. Then, smiling, she added, "But the zoo was fun anyway, so it wasn't really a wasted trip."

After emptying the bucket onto Miss Twitchy's garden compost pile, the troops gathered all new ingredients for the spell. This time, the gathering only took about fifteen minutes since they knew right where to look for everything

"Third time's a charm!" announced Miss Twitchy, as Winston gave the bucket of new ingredients a good shake.

The smoke and ash were a creamy red color this time.

As soon as the ashes were sprinkled over her, the zebra-striped cat turned into a beautiful calico cat. However, something was still slightly strange because she had a yellow paisley on one hip.

Examining the cat closely, Miss Twitchy said, “This is probably about as close as we’re going to get. I’m really afraid to try again.”

No one else wanted to risk another spell either.

“Maybe she already had a paisley on her hip to start with,” suggested Cam.

The others agreed that this was possible.

Next, Miss Twichy called the animal shelter to find out if anyone had lost a calico cat. No one had reported any cats as missing recently, but Miss Twitchy left her number with the shelter, just in case.

“If no one claims the cat,” said Elaine, “I would like to adopt her. My mom said I could get a cat for my birthday.”

No one ever claimed the calico cat, and Elaine decided to name her Paisley.

The End

