

BeaTwitched:  
The Misadventures of a Twitchy Witch  
Picnic at Stony Brook

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Beatrice Twitchy was getting ready for a summer picnic. So she took off her apron and smoothed her flowery yellow dress. Then she tucked a long strand of her curly hair behind one ear as she went to answer a knock at the front door of her cottage.

The visitor was none other than Mrs. Keeley, the second grade teacher who lived down the street. Mrs. Keeley was somewhat red in the face as she told Miss Twitchy, "I know you are a good witch, and that you help a lot of people, but the tall tales have got to stop! Made-up stories about gigantic swamp frogs, four feet high and four feet wide, will give children nightmares."

"But swamp frogs are real," said Miss Twitchy.

Mrs. Keeley shook her head back and forth very fast. "No! No, they're not," she said.



Miss Twitchy took a deep breath, and answered, "I know I get mixed up a lot, but I am not mixed up about swamp frogs."

Just then, a swamp frog, nearly as tall as Miss Twitchy, but a good deal rounder, hopped through the living room on his way to the kitchen.

Mrs. Keeley stood with her mouth open, but she could not speak.

Without any further words on the subject of swamp frogs, Miss Twitchy gave Mrs. Keeley a cookie and a juice

box. Then she led the teacher out to the sidewalk and pointed her towards home. And Mrs. Keeley probably made it home just fine because when Miss Twitchy looked out later, she wasn't there.

Packing up goodies for the picnic, Miss Twitchy shoed the swamp frog away from the picnic hamper and out the back door because he was in the way and because the picnic goodies were not good for him.

Thinking hard, Miss Twitchy next did what she did a lot. She talked to herself. “We won’t need the magical hourglass to travel today because we can walk to Stony Brook.”

Miss Twitchy’s thinking and talking were interrupted by a knock at the back door. Three smiling children had arrived, hoping for treats from Miss Twitchy’s magical garden.

“Okay,” said Miss Twitchy. “But you can only have two treats each today, because I don’t want you to spoil your appetite for the picnic.”

As she led the children out the back door, Miss Twitchy told them, “Last time we planned a picnic, it rained cats and snakes.” (Maggie, Jeffrey, and Gerda smiled because Miss Twitchy often got things just a little wrong.) “But I checked the weather report for today,” the witch added, “and it’s supposed to be perfectly clear.”

The children followed Miss Twitchy down a garden footpath where they stopped by a curved furrow in the corner, next to a bush of green roses.

Bending down, Miss Twitchy picked three pink sugar stalks topped with fluffs of blue cotton candy. Then she gave each of the children a purple ice pop from the hill of purple ice pops. But she did not give them any strings of licorice from the licorice tree, or hunks of taffy from the taffy trellis, because that really would have spoiled their appetites for the picnic.



The children eyed the row of double-decker cupcakes on their way out of the garden, but they were happy with their cotton candy and ice pops, so they didn't ask for cupcakes.

After the visitors left, Miss Twitch went back inside to finish getting ready for the picnic. Her everyday clothes would be fine, but she didn't want to forget her floppy green garden hat because the day was very sunny. So she put the hat on straight away.

This was perfect for Miss Twitchy's guinea pigs because they liked to ride on her hat when she took trips. Right away, Curly and Larry both jumped from the top of the refrigerator to the top of the floppy green hat. Curly had straight gray hair, and Larry had curly cinnamon-colored hair. Sometimes Curly and Larry rode in Miss Twitchy's red handbag, but they knew she wasn't taking her handbag with her today.

Miss Twitchy was talking to herself again. "I can't ride my unicycle or scooter and still carry the picnic hamper. So I guess I will need to pull the red wagon."



This was the cue for Miss Twitchy's gray and white ragdoll cat to get ready to go too. Her name was Blue because she had big blue eyes. As Miss Twitchy pulled the wagon out from the pantry, Blue jumped in. She would be riding with the picnic basket, to keep an eye on the food.

Miss Twitchy's fat dog, Moon, did not like to ride in the wagon. He was planning to walk alongside Miss Twitchy on the trip to Stony Brook. Moon was patiently waiting by the back door.

Miss Twitchy put the hamper, along with her croquet set, into the wagon before collecting her boa

constrictor for the outing. Diamond Jess liked to ride on Miss Twitchy's shoulders and curl around her neck when they took trips.

With the wagon loaded and ready, and all of the pets collected, Miss Twitchy set off.

The wagon bounced a little going down the back steps, and Blue wished she had waited until after the steps to get on board. But by the time they made it to the sidewalk, Blue forgot about being bounced because the day was so pretty and because she was on her way to a picnic.

Of the neighborhood children, Nancy, Gerda, and Harold tagged along. Many others were already on their way to Stony Brook, or would shortly follow.

On the next street, Serena and Anthony joined the group.

They reached Stony Brook four streets and one gravel road later with Andrea, Mark, and David added to the mix.

Stony Brook, of course, had lots of stones, both in the water and all along the banks. And many of the rocks were shaped just like mushrooms, rabbits, flowerpots, squirrels, birds, and such like. One extra large stone looked just like a suitcase.

By the time Miss Twitchy parked her wagon and unloaded the hamper and her pets, about fifteen children in all had made it to the brook for the picnic. Some had brought apples and peaches to add to the food Miss Twitchy had made.

A curved bridge with vines growing on the rails crossed the brook. On the other side of the water, a path led to a small cave with tall trees growing in front of it.

They ate first, before exploring and playing croquet.

The cucumber and onion ring sandwiches were everybody's favorites, until they tried the crackers spread with pecan butter and grape jelly. They also had dill pickles stuffed with sweet carrot shreds before enjoying hunks of chocolate star pie. Instead of either chocolate or strawberry milk, they drank huckleberry milk. Blue especially loved the huckleberry milk because it was so blue. And they washed the milk down with fizzy grapefruit soda that tickled their noses.

Miss Twitchy had brought bits of sharp cheddar cheese for Curly and Larry, because that was their favorite food. And Moon had his special diet dog food because Miss Twitchy was worried about how fat he was getting. Diamond Jess just watched the eating. She had eaten the day before so she was too full even for a small piece of the chocolate star pie.

When everyone was stuffed, very full, Andrea and Mark set up the croquet set.

Several other children crossed the bridge to explore the area around the cave. Behind a red burrycone bush, Maggie found a very interesting stone shaped like a little man about two feet tall. So she called her friends to see the stone.

“This is not a regular stone,” Miss Twitchy said with a smile. “This is a troll turned to stone.” Patting the top of the little troll’s head, she added, “If trolls get caught in the sunshine, they turn to stone.”

“He probably lived in the cave,” said Serena.

“And he came out at the wrong time and got caught in the sun,” added Harold.

Larry and Curly sniffed at the troll’s stony toes, and Blue rubbed her head against his elbow.

“Is there anything we can do to help the little troll?” asked Nancy.

“Hmmm...” said Miss Twitchy. “There might be a way we could reverse this, but I would need my *Spell Book*.”

David was already running across the bridge to get the book out of the picnic hamper.

When he brought it to Miss Twitchy, she flipped the pages very fast. “Yes,” she said. “I will need two pecans, a pigeon feather, three cat hairs, a juniper berry, and four drops of water from the trickle of a brook.” Miss Twitchy smiled very brightly. “Well, the brook is handy. I wonder how I can get these other things.”

“We can get them for you,” offered David.

Serena nodded and said, “There’s a pecan tree in the next field.” Serena and David ran away at once in search of the pecans.

Nancy and Andrea right away went after the juniper berry because there was a juniper bush on the other side of the bridge. And Mark was already hunting for a pigeon feather.

Blue looked skeptically at Miss Twitchy when the witch came after the cat hairs. But since Blue had enough loose hairs on her, none had to be plucked for the spell.

Mark found a pigeon feather, along with dove and bluebird feathers. And Gerda brought a cup from the picnic hamper. “Oh, good!” said Miss Twitchy. “That will be perfect to hold the ingredients. Now, who wants to help me count the trickle drops from the brook?”



Jeffrey volunteered because he was very good at counting. At a place in the brook where the water trickled off of a tall rock, he held the cup under the trickle. Then he counted exactly four drops. When the pecans and juniper berry arrived, everything was ready for the recipe.

Putting all of the ingredients into the cup with the trickle drops, Miss Twitchy pulled her wand from her pocket, waved it over the cup, and whispered, “*Orangey vinefruit.*”

With a smoky puff, all of the items in the picnic cup turned into a glittering orange powder, which Miss Twitchy then sprinkled over the little troll’s head.

Unfortunately, the stone troll did not come to life. Instead, with another smoky puff, he turned into a bright orange pumpkin.

“Oh, dear!”  
exclaimed Miss  
Twitchy, scratching  
her head. Then she  
realized, “I was in  
the Vegetable  
Section of the *Spell  
Book*, and I should  
have been in the  
Stone Section.”

“Can we try  
again?” asked  
Nancy, in horror. It  
was bad enough that  
the little troll might  
have to stay stone for  
the rest of his life,  
but a pumpkin would  
have been worse  
because he might  
have ended up eaten  
by animals or rotted  
away.





When Miss Twitchy flipped to the correct section of her book, she said, “Oh good, this is just a verbal spell. But I have to be sitting cross-legged to do it.”

Serena and Harold held Miss Twitchy’s elbows to help her sit down in the grass.

“This is in some strange language,” said Miss Twitchy. “I don’t like spells in strange languages. They are so hard to say.” Shaking her head, and taking a deep breath, Miss Twitchy pointed her wand at the troll and read two sentences from the book that made absolutely no sense to anyone.

Then everyone waited, looking at one another and at the troll.

When nothing happened, the children all looked at Miss Twitchy, wondering what she might have done wrong this time, because she often got things wrong.

Mark was the first to notice that the witch was holding her *Spell Book* upside down.

As he turned it around in her hands, she said, “Ah! No wonder the words were all funny. They wouldn’t make much sense upside down, or backwards, would they?”

“Well,” Miss Twitchy added, taking a firm grip on her now upright *Spell Book*, and blowing one of her long curls out of her face. “Third time’s a charm!”

Then she smiled, as she again pointed her wand and read,

*“What’s turned to stone, should be undone.*

*“Rock to flesh and bone, despite the sun.”*

With another smoky puff, the little stone troll sprang to life. He had dark hair and big teeth. And he was so happy to be free that he danced in a circle around them.

When he stopped dancing, he wriggled his toes, enjoying how his bare feet felt in the grass. The troll hadn’t seen his toes for a very long time, so he counted them. They were all there. Thank goodness. With only four toes on each foot, he couldn’t really afford to lose any. And he had only four fingers on each hand, which he was using to scratch his middle and his knees.

“I thought I would have to stay stone forever,” the troll said, giggling giddily.

The children giggled too at the funny little troll, and Curly and Larry squeaked. Moon licked the troll's hand while Blue twitched her tail and meowed.

Next, the troll stretched and sniffed the air. "Do I smell cucumber and onion ring sandwiches?" he asked hopefully.

"Yes," said Andrea, "and there are plenty left."

The spell Miss Twitchy had used to free the troll from stone would give him one hour before he had to get inside his cave and out of the sun. So this was plenty of time to dance across the bridge for a sandwich and a hunk of chocolate star pie.

Then the troll just had time to play a quick game of croquet, which he won, before he had to go back to his cave to get out of the sun.

After the game, he skipped over the bridge to home. The picnic goers waved to the little troll as he peeked out from behind the tall trees to wave goodbye to them.

As they were packing up the picnic leftovers, David said, "Maybe we can come back on cloudy days to play croquet with him."

"That's a good idea," said Miss Twitchy, "as long as there's no sun at all because the sun would make him turn to stone again."

After thinking for a few moments, Serena said, "Maybe we could have our next picnic by moonlight."

This was an even better idea, and right away, the group planned a moonlight picnic for the very next week so that the little troll would be able to join in their fun.



The End