

**Ask Bridget Batson if she believes in ghosts, werewolves or vampires and she'll say, "Absolutely not." Ask her if she believes in witches, and you may get a different answer.**

**Bridget, who is ten, lives with her family – her older sister Emily, her younger sister Natalie, and their father and mother – in New York City, in a section of the Bronx called Riverdale. Houses in Riverdale are huge, and the Batsons live in an old Victorian house surrounded by trees. After the leaves fall off in October you can see the Hudson River if you go up to the Batsons' attic, or climb onto the roof, which their father never lets them do because it's so steep. Bridget doesn't like going in the attic; it's dark and creepy, and at night the old house groans and the floorboards creak.**

**One day – it was a Saturday in late fall -- Bridget, Emily and Natalie were sitting in the family living room. Emily and Natalie were looking out the window, watching the wind catch and twirl the leaves, while Bridget was staring at the fire in the fireplace, resting her chin on the palms of her hands.**

**“There’s nothing to do,” wailed Natalie.**

**“It is boring,” Bridget agreed. “I’ve run out of books to read and I’m not ready to start my homework.”**

**“Let’s play a game,” said Emily. “How about ‘I’ve got a secret’?”**

**“Okay,” said Bridget. “You go first, Emily, since you thought it up,”**

**“If this is about boys, I’m quitting,” said Natalie.**

**“It’s not about boys,” said Emily, sitting up straighter on the couch. “It’s about Bridget.”**

**“Sorry, Emily,” said Bridget. “I already know everything there is to know about me.”**

**“Everything but one little item,” said Emily with a smirk. “It’s that you have an evil twin.”**

**“A what?” said Bridget and Natalie together.**

**“An evil twin,” continued Emily. “You were separated at birth. Mom and Dad never told you.”**

**“What’s this evil twin’s name?” said Bridget, not believing a word of it.**

**“Her name’s Witchina,” said Emily, “and she has blonde hair and blue eyes.” Now Bridget’s hair and eyes were brown.**

**“Huh!” said Bridget. “If she’s blonde and blue-eyed she couldn’t be my twin then, could she?”**

**“That’s the difference between you,” replied Emily. “You’re the good twin and she’s the bad twin, otherwise you look exactly alike.”**

**“Where does this Witchina live?” asked Natalie.**

**“In Grand Central Station in Manhattan. She lives in the tunnels where the trains go in and out.”**

**”What does she do all day?” asked Natalie.**

**“All sorts of mean stuff. She puts spells on people so that they miss their trains. She also causes trains to break down. She’s responsible for everything bad that goes on in the station.”**

**“You’re making this all up, Emily,” said Bridget, getting up off the couch. “I’m asking Mom right now.”**

**Her mother was in the kitchen by the sink, peeling carrots for dinner.**

**“Mom, Emily says I have an evil twin named Witchina, and that we were separated at birth. She said Witchina lives in Grand Central Station in New York and causes all sorts of bad things to happen.”**

**Her mother looked very seriously at her middle daughter. “Now, are you going to believe everything Emily says? Why don’t you work on your science project? You know it’s due tomorrow and you’ve barely started it.”**

**Bridget walked into the dining room, where her project – it was on the life of field mice, and Bridget hated mice – lay on the table. As she sat down to write it occurred to her that her mother hadn’t, after all, denied that there was an evil twin in the family. But Bridget didn’t feel that she could go back and ask her. She tried to put it out of her mind as she wrote, “The field mouse lives in a nest of twigs and wild grass...”**

**Bridget thought about Witchina all week, and as she was going upstairs for bed the following Saturday Emily pulled her aside and said, “I was almost asleep last night when I heard a tap, tap, tap at my window. I jumped up because I was afraid someone was trying to get in.”**

**“That’s ridiculous, Emily,” replied Bridget. “Your bedroom is on the second floor. Someone would need a ladder to climb that high.”**

**“But it wasn’t just anyone,” whispered Emily. “It was Witchina!”**

**“Emily,” said Bridget, sternly, “you know there’s no such person as Witchina.”**

**“Oh, but there is,” Emily said. “When I raised the shade there she was, floating on that miniature broomstick she always carries. She looked just like you, except with blonde hair and blue eyes. She was wearing a black cape and I could see the full moon over her shoulder. “Where’s that sister of yours? Where does she sleep?”” she said to me, scowling. ‘Tell me or I’ll put a spell on you.’”**

**“But I wouldn’t tell her.” said Emily. “No, I wouldn’t, so she reached back and threw a spell in my direction. I ducked and it went over my head and bent the lamp on my dresser in half.”**

**“You’re crazy, Emily, and I’m telling Mom,” said Bridget, and she started for the kitchen.**

**“Go ahead and tattle if you want, but come to my room first.” The girls ran up the stairs and went into Emily’s room, which had a big bay window that overlooked the park across the street. Emily took the brass lamp from the dresser and showed it to Bridget. It wasn’t bent in half, but it *had* been twisted into a strange shape.**

**“You did that,” said Bridget, “or else you left it too close to the fire.”**

**“I did not. I told you Witchina did it.”**

**Bridget ran to the top of the stairs. “Mom!” she yelled, “Emily is trying to scare me.”**

**“Emily, you’re too big to tease Bridget,” said their mother. “Now come down here and vacuum the living room. It’s an absolute mess.”**

**The three girls were looking forward to the next day, Sunday, because they and their mother were taking the train into Manhattan. Natalie was the most excited of all, because she had been on the train only twice before. She kept staring out the window, at the gray Hudson River, which looked especially chilly in the early light of November.**

**“I wish we had a boat,” she said, her cheek pressed against the cold glass. “If we had a boat we sail down.”**

**“If you were a witch you could fly down,” said Emily, looking mischievously at Bridget.**

**“Tickets, please,” said the conductor as he came down the aisle. He stopped where the Batsons were sitting. Bridget handed him her ticket.**

**“How much longer before we get to Grand Central Station?” asked Natalie.**

**“You mean Grand Central Terminal,” said the conductor, smiling. “Everyone calls it Grand Central Station, but when you get off the train you’ll see big initials carved in stone, GCT, which stand for Grand Central Terminal.”**

**“Thank you very much,” said Bridget, looking at her punched ticket.**

**The train curved away from the Hudson, crossed the East River and entered northern Manhattan. When it got to 96<sup>th</sup> Street it entered a tunnel. “This is spooky,” said Natalie as everything went dark. The train slowed to a crawl; the Batsons could make out a few deserted platforms in the dim light.**

Suddenly it grew brighter; the train came out of the tunnel and eased to a stop. The passengers heard a sharp 'ding' and the doors opened. "Grand Central, last stop," said the conductor over the intercom.

The Batsons joined the crowd rushing up the ramp into the lobby, where hundreds of people were scurrying back and forth. Margaret Batson made her daughters pause and look at the green ceiling, which showed the constellations of the sky. "Wow," said Emily. They admired the ceiling and the windows, which were as large as their house, and then went out into the busy world.

They shopped and had lunch, and when they were too tired to shop any longer Mrs. Batson got a taxi to take them back to Grand Central.

"That's the most fun I've ever had," said Natalie, while Bridget and Emily couldn't take their eyes off the silvery Chrysler Building, which was shimmering in the setting sun.

"Does anyone have to use the bathroom before we get on the train?" asked their mother. Questions of this kind always embarrassed Bridget, and she was glad to be able to say no.

"All right then," her mother said to her. "You wait outside for us. Can I trust you to do that?"

**“Yes, Mom,” said Bridget. Her mother disappeared into the ladies’ room with Emily and Natalie. Bridget sat down at one of tables in a nearby restaurant, but got up when a waitress came over and asked if she was ready to order. She wandered across the room to look at the gates that ran along the far wall.**

**She started with the ones in the corner, counting off their numbers -- Track 122, 121, 120 – as she went along. Each gate looked the same inside, the ramps curving gently downward and the platforms brightly lit. Bridget kept glancing over her shoulder to see if her mother and sisters had come out of the bathroom, but there was no sign of them. She was ready to turn around and go back when she saw the entrance to Track 100.**

**She opened the door and peeked in. This entrance was different from the others; instead of a brightly-lit, gently descending walkway, steep, narrow steps led down to a platform she could barely see. The lights seemed dimmer, and everything was a little dingier. A sign in red letters said: RESTRICTED AREA.**

**Something made Bridget go through that door and walk down the metal staircase. The steps clanged a little, and she looked behind her to see whether she was being followed. But she was all alone.**

Bridget had reached the bottom step when she saw, ahead of her, at the end of the platform, a girl about her size, with blonde hair that curled to her shoulders. The girl had her back to Bridget, but Bridget could see that she was carrying a small broom.

Bridget walked slowly towards her, a little frightened, but curious as well. She could hear the other girl singing a song to herself, and as Bridget strained to understand the words the girl with the broom suddenly turned around.

“So, you’ve come at last!” she snarled at Bridget. She stamped her foot upon the dusty platform. “Bridget Batson, you’re so good you make me sick!”

Bridget looked into a pair of scowling blue eyes. Except for the hair and the eyes, it was the same face that looked back at her in the bathroom mirror each morning.

“So you *are* real,” said Bridget.

“Of course I’m real,” said Witchina. “Didn’t Emily tell you you have a twin sister?”

“Oh, she told me, but I never believed it,” Bridget said. “I’m not sure I believe it now.”

**“Oh, I’m your evil twin, all right; I’m Witchina,” said the girl. She moved closer to Bridget and stared into her eyes. “When we were born I knew you were so good I couldn’t stand to be in the same room with you.”**

**Bridget folded her arms across her chest. “And how did you get out of the hospital without anyone seeing you?”**

**“Oh, we witches have our ways,” said Witchina. “Your mother thinks she may have had twins, but she’s not really sure.” Witchina laughed. “I fogged her memory. I’ve lived here in the terminal ever since.”**

**“That’s ridiculous,” said Bridget. “You would have been seen by the police.”**

**“Whenever someone gets too close to me I just become invisible, or I change into a bat and fly up to the ceiling.” She did just that, and Bridget was so startled she jumped backwards.**

**“See?” said the bat. It flew down and changed into Witchina again,**

**“People buy me food sometimes. They think I’m such a nice little girl. Sweet Amanda May, that’s me.” Witchina giggled wickedly.**

**“Bridget! Bridget! Are you down there?” It was Mrs. Batson, calling from the top of the stairs.**

**“Quick, Mom!” cried Bridget. “Hurry!” She ran to the bottom of the stairs.**

**“What are you doing down there?” said her mother. She came running down the stairs. Right behind her were Emily and Natalie, and a Metro North policeman. “I asked you to wait for us.”**

**“It’s Witchina! She’s down here!” Bridget shouted.**

**“Witchina? Who’s Witchina?” said Mrs. Batson.**

**“My evil twin,” said Bridget. “She’s right – “ she turned around, but the platform was empty. She felt her mother grab her arm and pull her up the stairs, past her giggling sisters. “I’m sorry about this, officer,” said her mother to the policeman.**

**“That’s all right, ma’am,” he said. “Glad to help.” He tipped his hat and walked away. “Hurry, or we’ll miss our train,” said her mother, still pulling Bridget by the arm, and waving her other daughters along. Bridget looked back as they went out the door, just in time to see a bat flutter down from the ceiling.**

Two weeks after that Bridget had another opportunity to go into the city on the train. It was a cold Saturday morning, and her father announced that he had to go to the office for a few hours, and would anyone like to come along? Emily had a party to go to, and Natalie was watching cartoons, but Bridget said she would go. They took that familiar ride into the city, and Bridget read while her father worked in his skyscraper office.

When he was finished they went to Rockefeller Center and walked around. “We’ll play tourist today,” her father said. They looked into store windows already decorated for Christmas, had lunch, and then walked down Madison Avenue to Grand Central. They were early for the next train to Riverdale, so her father took Bridget downstairs.

“Maybe I’ll get a cup of coffee before we get the train,” her father said. He walked over to the counter where Bridget had sat while waiting for her mother and sisters. To her surprise there sat Witchina; she was daintily sipping a milkshake through a straw.

Bridget stopped and her father, surprised, stopped too. He looked down at her. “We’ll only stay a minute. You don’t have to have anything.” They sat at the only seats available, which were right next to Witchina. Bridget’s evil twin gave her unknowing father a sweet smile, and Bridget a dirty look when her father wasn’t watching.

**“A cup of coffee, please,” said John Batson to the waitress. “What would you like, Bridget?”**

**“Nothing, thank you,” said Bridget, who couldn’t keep her eyes off Witchina.**

**Then Mr. Batson turned and spoke to Witchina. “Waiting for your parents, little girl?” he asked.**

**“Yes,” said Witchina in the softest, sweetest voice imaginable. “We’re visiting New York from California.”**

**This was more than Bridget could stand. “If she’s from California, she flew here on her broom,” she said.**

**“Bridget!” said her father, frowning. “You don’t even know this young lady. I want you to apologize to her.”**

**Bridget gritted her teeth, and managed to mutter, “I’m sorry.” Witchina just smiled and said, “I’m sure she has me confused with someone else.” She batted her eyes at Mr. Batson. “My name’s Amanda May.”**

**“Amanda May. That’s a nice name,” said Mr. Batson. “What’s your last name?”**

**“Tinkleberry,” said Witchina.**

**Mr. Batson put down his coffee cup. “Tinkleberry? What an unusual name.”**

**“Oh, it’s not that unusual,” said Witchina. “Both my parents have it.”**

**“Ha, ha! That’s a good one,” said Mr. Batson, though Bridget didn’t find it amusing in the least.**

**He stood up. “Let’s go, Bridget, or we’ll miss our train.” He turned to Witchina. “It was nice meeting you, Miss Tinkleberry.”**

**Witchina smiled and returned to her milkshake. As Bridget walked away she looked back over her shoulder and saw Witchina sticking out her tongue at her.**

**When Bridget and her father returned home Bridget told Emily and Natalie whom they had seen in Grand Central.**

**“I don’t know why you insist upon calling her Witchina,” said her father, a little mystified. “She seemed like a perfectly nice little girl to me.”**

**“That’s what she wanted you to think,” said Bridget. “You don’t know her like I do.” Emily smiled and shook her head, and only Natalie, who was seven, seemed impressed.**

**“I think being a witch is so cool. That’s what I’m going to be next Halloween, a witch.” Bridget sighed.**

**One day not long after that Bridget walked into the kitchen and found her father and mother talking in low voices. Her mother looked at her and said, ‘Would you mind going upstairs for a few minutes, dear? Your father and I are having a private conversation.’**

**“Oh, sure,” replied Bridget. She went upstairs into Emily’s room. She found Emily on her bed, reading a book, and Natalie playing with a doll on the floor. “I wonder what Mom and Dad are talking about,” said Bridget.**

**“I think they’re cooking up some kind of surprise,” said Emily.**

**“I hope it’s a good one,” said Natalie. “I’m still waiting to go to Disneyworld.”**

**They found out the next night, at supper. Their mother and father had been very quiet, and Bridget saw them looking at each other and coughing softly several times, content to listen to the girls talk in turn about their day at school. Finally there was**

no more to be said, and their father wiped his mouth with his napkin and cleared his throat.

“Your mother and I have a little surprise for you,” he said, and Bridget saw that both her parents had a faraway look in their eyes.

“A surprise?” said Emily, looking at Bridget and Natalie. “What kind of surprise, bad or good?”

“Oh, a very good one,” said their mother. “This family is getting a new member.”

“How exciting!” said Emily “I hope it’s a boy. Don’t you hope it’s a boy, Natalie?”

“Yes,” said Natalie. “I want a baby brother.”

“Well, it’s not a boy,” said their father. “It’s a girl.”

“You know that already?” said Emily, raising her eyebrows.

“No, I’m not having a baby,” said their mother, laughing. “We’re adopting a little girl.”

“That’s great,” said Natalie. “I can wheel her in my doll carriage.”

**“She’s a little too big for that,” said their father. “In fact, she’s Bridget’s age.”**

**Bridget felt a chill run down her spine. “My age? That old?” she said.**

**“Yes,” replied her father. “In fact, she looks very much like you, only her eyes are blue and she has blonde hair. Her name is – ” Crash!**

**Bridget had fallen over backwards in her chair. Everyone jumped up to help her.**

**“Are you all right, Bridget?” said her mother. She and Emily helped her up. “What happened?”**

**“I felt dizzy for a minute,” said Bridget. “I think I’ll go up to my room. I don’t feel like eating any more supper.” She excused herself and walked toward the stairs, hearing her father say, “You’ll love her. She’s just the sweetest thing. Her name is Amanda May – “**

**“Tinkleberry,” said Bridget, half-aloud. She ran into her room and threw herself face down on her bed. So Witchina was coming to live in their house! And she had put a spell on her father and mother. That was the only possible explanation.**

**Bridget didn't sleep well that night, or the next night, for it was on the following day that Witchina was coming to live with them. Sure enough, at six o'clock that evening a taxicab pulled up before the Batsons' driveway. Out stepped her mother and father and the girl they called Amanda May. Her father got his new daughter's small suitcase from the car's trunk and started up the walk, leading the others. Emily, Bridget and Natalie met them at the door.**

**"Girls, here's your new sister," said their mother, but her voice seemed curiously lifeless.**

**"Amanda May, I think it's so wonderful that you could come to live with us," said Emily, who was always polite. She gave Witchina a big hug and kiss. Natalie also came forward, a little more shyly, and bestowed a kiss and hug on the girl.**

**Mr. Batson said, "Bridget, aren't you going to welcome your new sister?" Bridget gritted her teeth but stepped close enough to give Witchina the briefest of kisses. Bridget went to step back, but Witchina grabbed her arm. "Here I am," she whispered. Bridget saw one blue eye close in an evil wink.**

**"We're so happy you could join our little family," said Mrs. Batson, and Bridget noticed how dull her voice sounded, and that her eyes were glazed. "Still under a spell," Bridget thought. Her father looked and sounded the same way, but Emily**

and Natalie seemed unaffected. They didn't even seem to notice the little broom Witchina was carrying.

“Here, let me help you with your things,” said Emily, taking the small bag – which held Witchina’s wand, magic book and other evil things, Bridget supposed -- and going upstairs with it. “We’ve given you the best room, the one in the back. It’s got a working fireplace and everything, though we never use it.”

“We’re afraid there might be bats in the chimney, and they might become frightened by the smoke and come into the room, and we wouldn’t want that,” said Bridget, thinking of the bat she had seen in Grand Central.

“Oh, that would be so scary,” said Witchina in her Amanda May voice. “I won’t be able to sleep now.” Emily gave Bridget a dirty look.

“Bridget, don’t frighten our new sister.”

“I’m sorry,” said Bridget, angry because she had been forced to apologize to Witchina a second time.

They went into the back room, which had been Emily’s room. Emily had volunteered to sleep downstairs in what had been the maid’s room, when very rich people lived in the house. “I’m so lucky to have come to live with such a wonderful

family,” said Witchina. She shed a little tear, and hugged Emily and Natalie. She hugged Bridget too, and Bridget hugged her back with no enthusiasm at all.

“You’ll have to tell us all about your life at supper tonight,” said Emily. “I hope it hasn’t been too awful, you being an orphan and all.”

“I want you to meet Sebastian too, but we don’t know where he is,” said Natalie, referring to the Batson family’s Scottish terrier.

“A dog? How sweet,” said Witchina, but she did not sound as happy as before. “Let me put my things away and I’ll meet you downstairs.” She opened the closet and began to hang her dresses and blouses – suspiciously new, Bridget noticed – on the bar. Natalie and Emily went downstairs, but Bridget ducked around the corner of the doorway, watching to see what Witchina would do next. She saw Witchina look around before walking over to the window. She opened it to see how noiselessly it moved up and down.

“Don’t worry, you’ll be able to get out at night to do your evil deeds,” said Bridget, who was standing in the doorway.

“I’m sure I don’t know what you’re talking about,” said Witchina in her Amanda May voice. Then she laughed, the way she had laughed in Grand Central, and again Bridget felt a chill go down her spine.

Witchina talked a great deal at supper that night, telling all sorts of tall tales about her life as an orphan, and the hard jobs she was forced to do in order to survive.

“I thought you came here from California with your parents,” said Bridget, remembering her second meeting with Witchina in Grand Central.

“You must be thinking of someone else,” cooed Witchina.

“I suppose you’ll be changing your name, and become Amanda May Batson,” said Emily.

“Oh no, I couldn’t do that,” said Witchina, “I’m the last of the Tinkleberrys.”

“I hope so,” said Bridget to herself, sipping her milk.

The next day Emily and Bridget took Witchina all over neighborhood, showing her the shops and the walk along the bank above the river. Bridget kept waiting for Witchina to say or do something that would show she was a witch, but she was perfectly well behaved.

“I’m sorry you haven’t gotten to meet Sebastian,” said Emily. Sebastian had disappeared the day before Witchina arrived.

**“Maybe he’s afraid to come home,” said Bridget, softly.**

**“Don’t be silly,” said Emily. “Why would he be afraid?”**

**“Maybe he’s afraid of strangers,” said Witchina in her most simpering way. “I’d feel just awful if I were the cause.”**

**“I’m sure you would,” said Bridget, and the subject was dropped.**

**The next day was a Monday, and Bridget and her sisters were up early to get ready for school. Amanda May was slow in joining them, and Emily and Bridget went to knock on her door. Amanda May opened it, yawning and still in her pajamas. Bridget had expected that the room would be empty and that Witchina would not have returned from her mischief of the night before, for Bridget had heard the bedroom window slide open around midnight.**

**“Hurry up and get dressed,” Emily said. “You don’t want to be late for your first day of school. Sister Beatrice” -- she was the principal of St. Cuthbert’s -- “hates it when people are late, and you should be on time to make a good first impression. We only have a few minutes.”**

**“Oh, I’m not going to St. Cuthbert’s,” Witchina said. “Your mother is going to home school me.”**

**“That’s right,” said their mother, who had come up the stairs. “I’m going to teach Amanda May at home until she’s up to the reading level of other girls her age.”**

**Again Bridget noticed the lifeless tone of her mother’s voice, the blank look in her eyes. As for Amanda May’s reading abilities, Bridget had caught her evil twin reading the *Sunday New York Times* when she thought no one was looking.**

**There was nothing more to be said, however, so the three sisters went off to school, Emily to St. Cuthbert’s junior high, and Bridget and Natalie to the elementary school next door.**

**“Amanda May is so lucky,” said Natalie. “I want to be home schooled.”**

**“Yeah, we all should be,” said Emily. “We could take a break any time we wanted, and play.”**

**“Don’t you think Mom looks and sounds a little different?” said Bridget, voicing her suspicions at last.**

**“What do you mean, different?” said Emily.**

**“She sounds funny, and she has a look in her eyes, almost as if she’d been hypnotized, or, I don’t know, bewitched.”**

**Both Emily and Natalie laughed at that.**

**“That’s a good one,” said Emily. “Bewitched.”**

**“I’m telling,” said Natalie, “unless you give me your doughnut.”**

**“All right,” said Bridget, handing it over. “I should have known it was hopeless,” she added, to herself.**

**She looked at the cross on top of the school, and wondered if that was why Witchina had talked their mother into letting her be home schooled. “I bet she won’t go to church, either,” Bridget thought.**

**She was right. The next Sunday, when the family got ready to go to church, Witchina stayed behind.**

**“She’s not a Catholic, you know,” said their father, softly, “so it would be unfair to ask her to come with us.”**

**“Uh-huh,” said Bridget.**

Things were quiet in the Batson household for a few days, though Bridget sometimes heard the window in Witchina's room going up in the middle of the night, and coming down again before daylight.

"Hmmm!" said Mr. Batson one morning at breakfast, as he read the paper. "I see a train ran off the tracks last night going into Grand Central. Several people were hurt and thousands more were delayed."

"That's so sad," said Witchina in her Amanda May voice. She looked across the table at Bridget, and Bridget saw a smile cross the face of her evil twin.

December came, and with it snow that settled on dead leaves and frozen grass. Bridget was having a hard time keeping her mind on her schoolwork, and her usual good grades began to slip. Her teacher, Mrs. Ferguson, noticed and asked if anything were wrong.

"Oh no, Mrs. Ferguson, there's nothing wrong, except that my evil twin has hypnotized my parents into adopting her, and every night she flies on a broom out of her bedroom window and causes trains to crash and other bad stuff. Except for that, no, there's nothing wrong." That was what Bridget wanted to say, but Bridget knew if she said that Mrs. Ferguson would send her to the principal's office, so she just smiled and said everything was fine, just fine.

**In addition to her problems in school, Bridget was finding it harder and harder to go to sleep at night. She lay awake for what seemed like hours, listening for the sound of the lock turning in the window next door. That meant Witchina was about to go out to work her mischief. Then, just before dawn, Bridget sometimes would hear the window slide down and the lock click again, which meant Witchina had returned.**

**“You must be tired,” Bridget said to her one day at breakfast.**

**“Tired?” said Witchina.**

**“I thought I heard you up late last night.”**

**“Nonsense,” replied Witchina. “I slept like a baby.”**

**“Of course she did,” said Mrs. Batson, and Bridget saw that her mother still had that lifeless look in her eyes. “Hurry, Bridget, or you’ll be late for school.”**

**When Bridget went down the steps with Natalie and Emily, she turned long enough to see a laughing Witchina behind the glass half of the front door.**

Finally Bridget decided she would try again to convince Emily that something was wrong. Emily was three years older and must have noticed how their parents had changed. And, after all, it was Emily who had first told Bridget about Witchina's existence.

So, one Saturday, when it was warm enough for the girls to play outside, and neither Natalie nor Witchina were around, Bridget said to Emily, "Remember how you told me I had an evil twin, and that her name was Witchina, and that she looked just like me, only she had blonde hair and blue eyes?" Emily nodded. "Well, you were right. I didn't believe you then, but I believe you now. Emily, Amanda May is Witchina!"

"But I was only joking," said Emily.

"You were?" Bridget's eyes widened. "Well, I don't know how you did it, but you guessed right. Have you noticed how Amada May –"

"Shhh!" said Emily. "Here she comes." Witchina had come around the corner of the house.

"What were you talking about?" she asked in her little girl voice.

**“Oh, nothing,” said Bridget. “I was just asking Emily if I could have one of her old dolls, that’s all.” Witchina nodded, but Bridget could tell she didn’t believe her at all.**

**And then there was the mystery of Sebastian’s disappearance. Emily, Bridget and Natalie had put up notices offering a reward for his return, but no one called to say they’d seen him, and the girls soon found the notices torn down and destroyed.**

**“I miss Sebastian,” said Natalie one day when she was overtired and ready to cry.**

**“I do, too,” said Emily. “We had such fun making him chase that ball. Remember how he used to run after us down the street in the morning?” Natalie sniffed and wiped a tear from one eye.**

**“I don’t think we’ll see Sebastian again, unless Amanda May leaves,” said Bridget.**

**“What makes you say that?” asked Natalie, but Bridget knew it would be useless to say, “Because Amanda May is a witch, and dogs don’t like witches,” so she said nothing at all.**

**The house two doors down from the Batsons’ was for sale, and, one day not long after, while she was walking past it, Bridget heard excited barking coming from the cellar. She got down on one knee and saw Sebastian behind a half-opened window.**

**“Sebastian! I’ve been looking all over for you.” Bridget decided he must have fallen in and not been able to climb out. She leaned over and tried to pick him up, but Sebastian violently resisted, twisting out of her arms and scampering back inside. He took up his position in the window again, turning his head toward his old home and emitting a low growl.**

**“I know, I know,” said Bridget. “You can’t go home because *she’s* there.” She reached inside the window and Sebastian licked her hand. “She won’t be there forever, I promise you that. I’ll send her back to Grand Central or someplace worse before I’m done.” She patted Sebastian’s head. “You stay right there and I’ll bring you some of your favorite dog biscuits.”**

**Bridget didn’t tell anyone about finding Sebastian. She knew Emily and Natalie would try to bring him back, and wouldn’t understand why he would keep running away. So she took her allowance and bought a box of dog biscuits at the corner store – they were a little expensive, but she couldn’t go to the supermarket without her mother -- and hid the box under her bed.**

**January came and went, and February did the same, and winter began to relax its grip on New York; the girls could see chunks of ice drifting down the Hudson, and the snow behind the house was disappearing day by day. The days were lasting a little longer, too: it was no longer dusk when the girls returned from school.**

**But Bridget was no happier; who could be, with her evil twin in the house, and her father and mother walking around like zombies? Emily and Natalie seemed like their old selves. Bridget just wished they weren't so friendly to Witchina.**

**"Today would be a perfect day to clean out the garage," Mrs. Batson announced one sunny Saturday morning. "Would anyone like to help me?"**

**"I have to go to Jen's house to rehearse our parts in the class play," said Emily.**

**"Bye!" There were no volunteers among the other girls, and Mr. Batson couldn't help, since he was in Atlanta on business, so Mrs. Batson said, "Very well, I'll be outside if anyone needs me." Bridget and Natalie went into the living room to play a card game, while Witchina went upstairs to her room and shut the door.**

**A small fire was burning in the living room fireplace, and it was very cozy. As Bridget and Natalie paused in their game of Crazy Eights they could hear Witchina overhead, pacing back and forth in her bedroom.**

**"Maybe she's lonely," said Natalie.**

**"More likely she's planning the stunts she'll pull tonight," Bridget thought. But it would never do to have Witchina complain about them when their mother came**

inside for lunch. Bridget got up and headed towards the hallway, and was about to invite Witchina downstairs when she noticed the broom leaning in one corner.

It wasn't at all like the little broom Witchina carried everywhere, the broom Bridget imagined her evil twin riding, but the sight of one brought the other to mind.

Witchina never let her pint-sized broom out of her sight, and rarely out of her grasp. She once became very angry – like her real self, and not like Amanda May at all – one day when she caught Natalie playing with it.

“You give me that!” she yelled, tearing the broom from Natalie’s grasp. She must have realized that she was giving herself away, for she added, as sweetly as she could, “My parents gave this to me before they passed away, and it’s the only thing of theirs I have left, so it’s special to me.”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” said Natalie, who took care to stay out of Witchina’s room after that.

But there was the broom in the hall, and the smaller one upstairs, which Mrs. Batson had predicted that Witchina would outgrow. Not likely, thought Bridget, unless she needed a bigger one to fly on. She headed up the stairs and found Witchina staring out the window at the blue sky.

**“Looks like it’ll be a perfect night for flying,” Bridget couldn’t resist saying.**

**Witchina looked at her, and Bridget was reminded of the mean face she had first seen in Grand Central.**

**“I’m beginning to think this house isn’t big enough for both of us,” Witchina said.**

**“I think you’ll have to leave, maybe go live in that cellar with your dumb dog.”**

**Bridget was surprised. “Yes, Sebastian is living in the cellar, Miss Smarty Pants.**

**Because of you he can’t come home.” She saw the broom in Witchina’s hand and, on an impulse, snatched it away.**

**“You give that back!” cried Witchina, not sounding at all like Amanda May.**

**“Here’s your stupid broom back, in pieces!” Bridget broke it in half over her knee.**

**Then something amazing happened: Witchina’s eyes rolled back in her head and she let out a loud scream. In the next instant she fell backwards on the floor, where she lay motionless, her eyes closed.**

**Natalie came running up the stairs. “What happened?” she said. She saw the broken broom in Bridget’s hand. “Did you hit her over the head?”**

**Bridget had an idea. “Never mind that now,” she said. She handed Natalie the two halves of the broom. “Run downstairs and throw this in the fireplace. Hurry!”**

**“O.K., but don’t get me in trouble,” Natalie said. She did as Bridget said, and in a minute the broom was ashes.**

**Upstairs, Witchina opened her eyes. She looked at Bridget and slowly sat up. “I’m just sweet little Amanda May,” she whispered. And she was, from then on.**

**# # #**