



Flora Fleetbroom (Vol. 1)

A Magical First Day at School

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School stuff

Flora hops excitedly down the stairs. In the kitchen, she slips past Omimi. Flora grabs her witch's hat. "Where are you off too, little dormouse?" Omimi asks.

"I'm going to the shop with Mummy to buy school stuff!" Flora replies.

"Ah, that's right," says Omimi. "Get yourself something nice!"

"I will!" Flora cries.

The garden gate swings shut behind her. The wooden sign on it sways from side to side. It says: The Floribunda Family – that's Flora and her Mummy and Omimi. Flora has a Daddy, too, of course, but he lives a long way off in another valley.

And there are two more residents: Nux and Borax, the two ravens who live on the roof.

Flora waves to them: "I'm going to be a schoolgirl soon!" she cries out.

Mummy is already waiting outside the shop. The witch school has sent her a list of all the things the children in Class One will need.

Flora rushes into the shop. There are books and exercise books, quills, coloured chalk and school rucksacks. Flora already has a school rucksack – Omimi sewed it for her. And it's much prettier than all the ones she can see here! But Flora thinks the quills are beautiful. Particularly the black one with the big, white spot. That's the tail feather of a great spotted woodpecker. That's the one she wants! Finally, she has chosen everything she needs:

Books

Exercise books

Quill pen

Ink well

And of course, her own little witch's cauldron. Flora strokes the rim of it lovingly with her fingers.

The shopping is heavy. Mummy gets out her magic wand and taps it on the bags. Then she says:

"All these heavy shopping bags

Are really a terrific drag.

So up you float, into the air

And head off home – we'll see you there!"

At once, the bags float high up into the air and float off home to Rose Street. How very practical, thinks Flora. She's glad that she is soon going to learn how to do that, too.

Mummy looks at Flora. "Now we need to buy you a magic wand."

Flora's eyes begin to shine. Oh, how excited she is! She bounds wildly ahead of Mummy.

"Stop, where are you going?" Mummy laughs. "We need to go to the tower quarter."

Flora turns around. She is already flustered with sheer excitement! On the way, they pass by the broom workshop. Flora stops in front of the shop window. "And when are we buying my flying broom?" she asks.

"Oh, come on, you know flying lessons don't start until Halloween. And you'll practise on the school brooms," Mummy reminds her. "Then you'll get your own broom in the spring, at the Witchbroom Ceremony."

Flora sighs. But it's soooo long until then!

In the tower quarter, Mummy points to a black iron door with a sign above it. The sign has a picture of a magic wand on it. It crackles and sprays sparks. Flora thinks it's a bit creepy, but Mummy has already opened the door.

There is a steep staircase leading down. An old couple are sitting at the bottom, slurping cups of tea.

"Good morning, Anemona," they both say.

"Good morning, Robinia und Ilex," says Mummy.

"How can I help you?" asks the old gentleman.

"I'd like a magic wand, please," Flora says.

"Well, then you've come to the right place," says Robinia with a giggle.

Ilex moves his arms through the air. At once, the magic wands fly out of the display cases with a hiss.

"Choose the right one," Ilex says.

The magic wands hover around her. Flora grabs one, but the wand starts to struggle.

"I don't think this one wants me," Flora realises.

Then another wand flies up and ruffles Flora's thick hair, then tugs at it.

"Ow!" Flora cries out. "This one's too cheeky for me!"

Mummy tells her to close her eyes. "Feel the wood they are made of. Your fingers will let you know which one suits you best."

Flora puts out her hands. With her eyes closed, she walks slowly around the room. It feels like being in a forest made of wands. One is very smooth. The next is rough and prickly. And suddenly... Flora is quite taken aback at how good one wand feels. She opens her eyes. A smooth magic wand is floating in front of her.

"This is the one," Flora decides. The wand crackles softly when she puts her hand around it.

Ilex packs the magic wand into a beautiful box. Then he drips red wax over the edge of the lid. He presses a stamp into the hot wax.

"This is a seal," he explains to Flora. "So that you don't get the wand out in secret, on your own."

Robinia giggles. "That would cause trouble, alright!"

"You're not allowed to unpack your magic wand until you get to school," Ilex goes on.

Flora groans. If only she was at school already!

Ilex shows Flora how to seal a box with wax. But there are eight mistakes in the bottom picture. Can you find them?



An encounter by the river

The day before school starts, Flora and Malte are playing by the river. Malte is Flora's best friend. He points over at the other bank. That's where the witch school is. There are some children standing outside the gate, peering through the bars.

"Come on, let's go and see what's so interesting over there!" says Malte.

Flora and Malte run across the bridge. When they get to the school gates, they see something that makes them laugh: there are brooms whizzing about all over the playground. A spell is making them sweep all by themselves. Cloths are busy washing the windows. It looks funny.

"Everything has to be clean and tidy for the start of school," Malte says.

"That's witchtastic!" says Flora.

"It's a shame I don't have my magic wand with me," a boy says. His name is Marjoramus, and he lives in the water quarter. "Then I could magic open the gate," he claims.

"Pff, you can't cast spells yet," Flora says. What a show-off!

Flora walks home along the river. She wonders whether her teacher will be nice. The little witch stops and throws a stone into the water with a plop.

Then she hears a "Miaow," behind her. Flora turns around in surprise. A cat comes toddling towards her out of the reeds. A kitten, in fact!

"Oh, what a sweet little thing you are!" Flora cries. She puts out her hand very carefully. "Where do you come from? Don't you have a home?" The kitten is a little boy cat. Flora strokes him for a while.

"Come on," she says then, gently. "Let's go home."

And the little cat actually trots along beside her, until they get to Rose Street.

Under the cherry tree, Mummy is unpacking the picnic basket.

"It's a special day, and so we're having a special dinner," she says. Then she spots the little tomcat in Flora's arms. "Well then, where did he come from?"

"He doesn't have a home," Flora says. Her voice sounds extra-specially sympathetic. "I can keep him, can't I?"

Mummy makes a serious face. "We need to find out if he belongs to someone, Florakins. But until then, you can look after him."

Flora sticks out her bottom lip. She never wants to give the little cat up! She is already very fond of him.

After dinner, Flora rummages around in her toy box. She wants to find a toy for the cat. But there's nothing suitable. "I could make a cloth mouse," Flora thinks, "but what with?"

On the shelf, beside her witch's hat, there is an old woolly hat and a pair of gloves. Flora looks at a glove. She draws two little black eyes on it, and a button nose. But the glove doesn't really look like a mouse. Flora is disappointed. She really wants the little cat to have a toy!

"Why don't you just cast a spell on the glove?" Nux caws. The two ravens flap in through the open window. They perch on Flora's shoulders, left and right.

"You do have a magic wand now, after all," Borax whispers in her ear.

Flora shakes her head. "I'm not allowed to cast spells yet."

"But it would be for a good cause," says Nux. "For the little cat!"

Flora hesitates. Then she pulls herself together. She could just give the magic wand a little try. Surely no one will notice!

In an instant, the box is on the desk. And Flora's fingers are stroking the red seal. It breaks open with a crack. Flora gets out the magic wand. Her fingers tremble a little.

"Go on, do some magic!" the ravens caw, encouraging the little witch. "Just remember, the spell has to rhyme."

Flora thinks for a minute. She swishes the wand wildly through the air. Then she says:

"Woolly glove,
Now be a love:
Turn into a mouse,
And not a louse!"

"Rhyming really isn't very easy," she says. The magic wand hisses. And then it starts to give off clouds of smoke.

Yikes!

Flora is a bit freaked out.

Slowly, the smoke starts to clear. Flora looks at the glove in excitement. Yes! It really does look more like a mouse now! Then Flora spots something else. Her witch's hat on the shelf has caught some of the magic, too. Oh no, there are two gaping holes in it! The hat looks very charred.

"You must have done it wrong," Nux remarks.

"Oh, really? You think so?" Flora says, crossly. She quickly puts the wand back in the box. But what about the broken seal? No one must see it. Flora thinks for a while. She rummages in her drawer and finds a pack of chewing gum.

"Now, watch this," she says to Nux and Borax.

She chews the gum eagerly. It's a red, cherry-flavoured piece. Then she sticks it over the broken seal.

"It's all fixed!"

"Witchtastic!" the ravens caw.

Well, not quite. The hat looks terrible. Flora needs to think of a way to fix that, too. But first, the little cat is going to get his cloth mouse. Oh, how pleased he is with it! Flora watches him and laughs.

The cat wants to play with the cloth mouse. Can you show him how to get to it?



Off to witch school!

It's still very early in the morning. Flora blinks sleepily. Her eyes fall on her packed school rucksack. Today is the first day of school! Hooraaay!

Flora feels the happiness rising through her. Beside the rucksack are her freshly-polished witch shoes. And on top of them, her witch's hat. The hat with the holes in it. At once, the feeling of happiness vanishes. Instead, Flora feels like a heavy stone has plopped into her tummy. Oh no! She can't go to school in the ruined hat!

Flora leaps out of bed. She looks thoughtfully out of the window. How can she patch up the holes? Down in the garden, the flowers are swaying in the wind. Then Flora has an idea.

She runs outside in her nightie and cuts a few large roses. She sticks them into the holes in her witch's hat. Wonderful! You can't see the holes at all now. But she still feels guilty. She cast a spell, even though she wasn't allowed to!

Flora goes back to her room. There's someone in there! The little cat is curled up on her pillow. Flora's heart leaps with joy. The cat really needs a name. Flora thinks and thinks. But she can't come up with anything.

Just then, there's a knock on the door. Mummy puts her head into the room. "Oh, you're awake already, my little dormouse," she says, sounding surprised.

"Of course," says Flora. "I don't want to be late for school!"

On the first day of school, all the witch children are taken there by their parents.

"I hope they give us some homework today," Flora says.

Mummy laughs. "Oh, I wouldn't expect them to give you any yet."

Flora is wearing her new rucksack. She can hear the chalks chinking together in her pencil case. She's so excited she has to keep hopping up and down!

In the playground, Flora waves to the children she knows. Viola runs over to her. "Oh, you've made your hat so pretty!" she cries out admiringly.

At eight o'clock on the dot, the head witch whooshes in on her broom. Fine shreds of grey cloud are clinging to her cape. She has come straight from the Misty Mountain.

"My dear children," says the head witch. "It's time to welcome in the new school year. You may ring the school bells."

Cheering, the children run to the bell tower. They pull on the four ropes. The four bells in the tower ring out, one for every quarter in the little town. Flora thinks they make a beautiful sound. What joyful music!

Afterwards, it goes very quiet. A lady with a kindly face steps into the middle of the playground.

"My name is Mrs Boswelia," the lady says. "I'll be teaching the Class One witches. Everyone in Class One, come over here!"

Flora, Malte, Viola and lots of other children run over to her.

"I've got a surprise for you!" says Mrs Boswelia. She points up at the sky. Flora looks up and can hardly believe her eyes. A whole swarm of brightly-coloured sweet cones are floating towards them. One for every child in Class One!

Two curious ravens are flapping around amid the sweet cones. It's Nux and Borax. They do like to know everything that's going on, thinks Flora.

When all the children have their cones, they follow their teacher into the school. Flora stops in the doorway to the classroom and takes a good look around. There is a large green board. And beside it, a huge witch's cauldron is hanging from the ceiling. And suddenly, almost all the seats are taken! Oh no, where is Flora going to sit?

"Over here, Flora!" Malte calls out. "Would you like to sit next to me?"

"Yes, please," says Flora. "Thank you for saving me a seat."

Mrs Boswelia reads out the children's names from her register. They have to put their hands up when their names are called.

"And now you may open your sweet cones," the teacher says, finally. The children don't need to be told twice.

"Yay, popping sweets!" Marjoramus shouts across the classroom.

There are a lot of gummy snakes in the cones as well. They are bright green and hiss when you bite into them.

There are coloured pencils, too, in lots of different colours.

"They're scented!" the children cheer.

"My pencils smell of strawberries," says Cosmea.

"Mine are peppermint," Borrigo calls out.

Flora sniffs her own pencils. They aren't scented. They just smell of the wood they're made from.

Flora is a bit disappointed. But right at the bottom of her cone, she finds a rubber. It's shaped like a goose. And when she uses it, it cackles loudly. Flora giggles.

Mrs Boswelia laughs, as well. "The rubbers only get up to this mischief on the first day of school. Otherwise they'd be very distracting during lessons."

Flora thinks that's a shame. But then her wish comes true: the teacher gives them their very first piece of homework.

She says: "Draw a picture with your new coloured pencils. It should be a picture of something you really love. And tomorrow, bring your drawings into school." Lessons are over for the day. The school bells ring and the witch children run out into the playground. Flora jumps for joy a few times. School is fun!

Flora can't find her hat. Can you help her? Which is the right one?

