



A HALLOWEEN SPELL by S. Bee.

[This text is read aloud at the beginning of this video:]

Welcome to Stories for Lipreading. If you haven't used our website before, we suggest you look at our 'How to Use' page before you begin. We hope you enjoy this magical story, which is called 'A Halloween Spell' by S. Bee.

A Halloween Spell by S. Bee.

I'd recently bought a new a laptop. The pink colour had caught my eye when I'd browsed the aisles at a big technology superstore. It was October 31st, Halloween, and the friendly salesman had been dressed as a wizard. Despite the spooky make-up, costume and wig, he was warm and welcoming. His name badge said 'James'. I explained what I wanted.

At bedtime, I logged off and placed my laptop under the bed. However, before I drifted off, a lost earring swirled through my thoughts...

The next evening, I arrived home exhausted. I worked as a medical researcher. Our team was struggling with a challenging problem and getting nowhere.

After I had eaten, I logged on to my laptop. However, instead of seeing the familiar desktop icons, a video began to play. I assumed it was a pop-up advert. A shiver of alarm crept up my spine when I recognised my living room. Had someone broken into the flat? Should I call the police? I watched as the camera zoomed in under the sofa... Oh! I could see my lost earring.

"This is so weird!" I thought.

If someone had broken in (and there was no evidence to suggest it), why bother to film this? How had they uploaded the footage onto my laptop? To check it out, I peered under the sofa. Sure enough, there was my earring!

As I retrieved it, an idea struck me. Last night, I'd thought about my earring. It sounded crazy, but it seemed that the laptop had solved the mystery. "In that case," I resolved, "I'll put it to the test!" At bedtime, I concentrated on my work problem before closing my eyes.

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"I'm awarding you a bonus, Nicola! You deserve it!" my line manager said.

"Thanks!" I stammered.

I'd found a possible solution to our team's problem. Yet this success wasn't down to me – a second video on my laptop had pointed me in the right direction. What if James the salesman was a real wizard and had cast a spell over the laptop?

I chuckled.

Then something awful happened. The laptop stopped working.

"What if I return it to the store?" I thought. If the wizard takes a look, it might bring back that extraordinary problem-solving ability.

My heart leapt when I spotted James.

This time, he was in normal dress. His neat hair and muscular, slim frame got my vote.

"Hello. You've brought the laptop back. What's the problem?"

I floundered as I cast about for a reason.

"It's very slow to boot up," I gabbled. "Could you check it over?"

He smiled. "Sure, er -"

I returned the smile. "Nicola."

James couldn't find anything wrong with the machine, but he'd taken it home to run further tests. That's what he told his colleagues, anyway. James hoped Nicola had sensed the spell he'd cast over the laptop... Then he'd made it stop because he wanted to see her again. She was bound to call in when she noticed the error.

He smiled. What would his colleagues say if they discovered he really was a wizard?