

Helping your children choose books they will love



Lovereading4kids.co.uk is a book website created for parents and children to make choosing books easy and fun

opening extract from

The White Wand

written by

Martin Howard

published by

Pavilion Children's Books

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading .co.uk

Contents

	Prologue	VI
1	It's All Soooo Unfair	1
2	Smelly Black Clothes, Some Hardly Washed.....	10
3	Foul Play	17
4	The Ghastly Threat of Befroggination	27
5	Eat the Witch	30
6	Inside a HaG 3000	36
7	Spankbaskets and Toad Bums.....	44
8	A Night At The Goblin's Elbow	51
9	The Most Superior High and Wicked Witch (Acting)	60
10	Manx Snoutley Investigates	68
11	Sam & Esmelia Undercover	75
12	Diabolica's Army	87
13	Escape From the Bleak Fortress	90
14	Weird Séance	98
15	Once Upon a Time.....	107
16	The Valley of The Witches	115
17	CopWeds and Deadly Venom in the Dark	121
18	The Fall of the Witch Queen	129
19	Unravelling the Scroll of the Black Wand ...	138
20	A World of Darkness	145
21	Digging Up Dreadful	157
22	The Whittling	160
23	Dance of the Cranes	165
24	The White Wand	174
25	The Battle of Sawyer Bottom	181
26	Curse of the Mummy	190
	Epilogue	200

Prologue

Click clack, clickety clack. The sound filled the dark throne room of the Most Superior High and Wicked Witch. *Click clack, clickety clack.* It was accompanied by gloomy sighs and the whispers of a chill draft that crept under doors and through cracks in the cold, stone walls. Violent bursts of hail and snow rattled against tall, arched windows, but still the clicking went on... *click clack, clickety clack.* On the other side of the cracked glass, a gale wailed through the mountains, kicking down trees here, blowing a roof off there, and shaking the thick grey walls of the Bleak Fortress. Tiles were torn from turrets with loud cracks and whirled away on blasts of wind.

In the needle-sharp peaks of Transylvania, winter doesn't arrive with a cheerful jingle of sleigh bells and a quiet puff of fluffy snow. No, Transylvanian winters arrive with a scream and explode like an angry cannon. In Transylvania, winter makes people chew through their bedclothes in terror.

Click clack, clickety clack... Click. The Most Superior High and Wicked Witch, Cakula von Drakula,



stopped knitting and the sound of her knitting needles died away. She sighed, shivered, held up her work and patted her enormous hair-do – which, as usual, had been styled to look like someone had fitted a big, grey bum to her head. Then she nodded slightly and began humming the old vampire song ‘I Vanna Suck Your Blud Yeah Yeah Yeah.’ She was pleased with what she had been making. Her new woolly cape was black and worked through with a design of great hairy beasts. With a nice pair of mittens, a scarf and some ear muffs, it would help keep her nice and cosy. The Bleak Fortress was colder than a zombie’s heart, and at 756-years-old Cakula was beginning to feel the chill in her bones.

With a start, Cakula von Drakula dropped the almost-finished cape into her lap and checked the big, old-fashioned watch fastened to a chain round her neck. She had been so caught up with the knitting that she had almost forgotten that Great Events were about to unfold. She had seen the shape of things yet to come, peeked through the net curtains of time and had a quick glance at impending doom and today was definitely the day for Great Events. Cakula shook the watch. In fact, Great Events were running a bit late...

The great doors of the Bleak Fortress’s throne room

slammed open in a glittering burst of magic. Wind screamed into the hall, bringing with it snow, ice, dead leaves and a bewildered chicken that had got caught up in the storm.

Really, thought Cakula to herself, *the draft in here is terrible*. She looked up and saw the figure standing in the doorway. A woman. She was tall, proud and slender, with a shining mane of black hair whipping around her face.

“Goot eeffening Deadly Nightshade,” said Cakula. “I haff been hexpecting you.” And then, because she *was* a vampire and the weather was perfect for it, she added, “Mwah ha ha HA HAA!”

Diabolica – or ‘Deadly’ – Nightshade walked across the floor slowly, her stupidly high heels clicking on the bare stone. Only a power-crazed evil sorceress out to take over the world would wear heels like that, and, in fact, Deadly Nightshade was a power-crazed evil sorceress out to take over the world. So that was alright.

Ignoring the traditional vampire laughter, Diabolica came to stand at the foot of the throne. “I’ve come to take what’s mine,” she said quietly. “Give me the wand.”

“Ze vand? Vut vand?” Cakula gave her a toothy grin. There was a red glow in her eyes like a fire at the

end of a long, dark tunnel. Her fingernails drummed on one arm of the throne like jags of broken glass. She looked *all* vampire.

“The Black Wand of Ohh Please Don’t Turn Me Into Aaaaargh... Ribbett, of course.” Diabolica held out her hand, palm up.

“You know vat? I haffn’t seen zat old sing around for aaages. I vonder vere it got to...”

“One last chance. Give it to me or I’ll be forced take it from you.” A frown flittered across Diabolica’s beautiful face.

“Oh yeah?” jeered Cakula. “You and vitch army?”

Diabolica’s frown disappeared. She smiled brightly, stared into Cakula’s fiery eyes, and raised her hand. “I’m glad you asked that question. I really am,” she giggled. “As a matter of fact, *this* army.”

She clicked her fingers. Instantly, a huge Invisibility spell popped and fell away. Behind her stood twenty witches. Every one of them had a dazed, faraway look in her eyes and every one had a wand pointed at The Most Superior High and Wicked Witch.

Cakula was fast. Your average vampire makes a striking snake look like a poorly old lady with heavy shopping. And the Most Superior High and Wicked

Witch was no average vampire. She’d also learned enough about magic in her 756 years that she could turn your head inside out before you had a chance to say “ewww.” All in all, Cakula von Drakula was an awesomely, jaw-droppingly powerful vampire-witch. But even she wasn’t quick enough to battle twenty witches, all of whom had their wands at the ready and a spell on their lips.

She had just started to raise her knitting when the spell hit. Flashing ropes of purple evil poured from twenty wands and wrapped around her, curling and tightening. The Most Superior High and Wicked Witch was locked in a twisting, sparkling net of pure magic so strong she could neither move or speak. She could glare though, and continued to do so.

Diabolica took another step forward on those ridiculous heels. “Now isn’t that interesting,” she sniggered. “You tried to defend yourself with some knitting. I wonder why?” Reaching out, she took the knitted cape from Cakula’s hand.

There was a faint sparkle from inside the folds of black wool. “Oh no,” Diabolica sighed. “You *haven’t* been using it as a knitting needle, have you? Oh, you *have*... How vulgar.”

THE WHITE WAND

Diabolica grasped one of the needles, and pulled it out of the wool, which she let drop to the floor. “Well, well, well, what have we here?” she purred, turning back to Cakula. “If it isn’t the Black Wand of Ooh Please Don’t Turn Me Into Aaaaarghhh...” she stopped. “Do you know Cakula, I’ve forgotten the last bit. How does it go again?”

Deadly Nightshade waved the wand. The magical net disappeared and Cakula was surrounded by a swirl of black light. As it ebbed away, a small creature appeared in the shadows.

“Ribbett,” croaked The Most Superior High and Wicked Witch.

1 It's All Sooooo Unfair!

A young girl sat with her chin in her hands at the kitchen table of a twisty old cottage in the darkest depths of Pignout Wood. She was dressed in black jeans and a black jumper and her slightly greasy black hair had fallen, unnoticed, in a cup of tea. A black beetle, named Ringo, was doing star jumps on the brim of her black, patched, and bent pointy hat. Where other witches kept cats or ravens or rats as familiars, this girl had a beetle. A beetle who liked to keep fit.

The girl was frowning and having an argument with a book. Lots of people argue with books. Usually crusty old professors and annoying know-it-alls who say things like, “Of course, Pilkington’s *History of Trouser Rotation in the Sixteenth Century* is absolute balderdash and hogwash.” This is a bit unfair, because most books can’t argue back. But the book the girl was reading, which was called *Think Yourself Witch: 101 Steps Towards Becoming a Crone*, was haunted by the ghost of its author, an ex-witch called Lilith Dwale. Lilith may have been as dead as a spoon, but she wasn’t the type of witch who’d let a piffing little thing like not being alive stop

her from dropping in for an argument with her granddaughter now and again.

Gritting her teeth and glaring at the book, Lilith's granddaughter asked for the three hundred and sixty-eighth time, "So, if you're my grandmother, who's my mother?"

On the yellow page, scratchy writing wriggled and changed, as if by magic – which, of course, it was. The girl read:

Peeky pokey nose parker aren't you? I've told you three hundred and sixty seven times already Sam, I can't tell you that. And by the way, your hair's in the tea.

"But that's not fair," Sam hissed, then pulled her hair out of the mug and sucked on it.

Life isn't fair all the time dearest, but let me tell you this instead. And it's important. The first and highest and most serious of witching laws says that witches aren't allowed to have children. There are horrible punishments for anyone that does. But for thousands of years...

"Tut," tutted Sam, spitting out hair. "The last thing

I need is a history lesson, thank *you*."

Above Sam's head the cobwebbed wooden ceiling sagged suddenly. There was a clonk and a shuffling noise and the muffled sound of someone complaining about snails nesting in her hair while she was sleeping. Sam slammed the book shut with another "tut." Esmelia was getting up, and Sam definitely didn't want the old witch knowing about her little talks with Lilith Dwale. Pushing the book aside, she pulled a crumpled letter from her pocket and pretended to be reading that instead.

A door slammed, making the whole cottage shake. Spiders ran to hide in cracks in the walls and one of the windows fell out. Sam rolled her eyes. It sounded like Esmelia was in a one of her moods again.

There was a footstep on the stairs, then a "Mioooowwww" and an "Aaaaarrrrrggghh" as Esmelia Sniff tripped over her cat, Tiddles. With a series of impressively loud bumps, the skinny old witch bounced down the stairs head first, then elbow first, then feet first, then bum first, and came to a stop in a smelly heap of rags at the bottom. Something small and hairy rolled out of the heap and across the floor. A bony, not-very-clean hand reached out and grabbed it. "Drat, drat, DRAT!" screeched Esmelia. "That's me favourite wart. Knocked

clean off. I've had that wart for years. It was a part of me, that wart."

A head appeared from out of the heap, and scowled at Sam. A head that looked like someone had stuck a straw in it and sucked. Sam scowled back, which was just asking for trouble. Esmelia was always a teeny bit touchy just after she'd got up. On a good day she was likely to pull the ears off anyone who even breathed in her direction, and she *never* had good days, especially since the Most Superior High and Wicked Witch competition.

Esmelia spotted the letter that Sam was holding. "I told you to stick that on the fire," she sneered as she creaked to her feet. "You ain't goin'. You're *my* apprentice and you'll stay here and do what I tells you. And today I'm telling you to go and dig a hole in the woods then bury yourself up to the neck."

"But *why*?"

Esmelia loomed over her and began counting on her fingers. "First, because it'll make it much easier for me to jump up and down on your head. Second, because you're my apprentice and you does what I tells you, and third... third is the same as number two: 'cos I told you."

Sam's scowl made even deeper lines on her

otherwise pretty forehead and she folded her arms. On the brim of her hat Ringo did the same, though you would have needed a magnifying glass to see his tiny scowl. "I *meant*, why can't I go away," she said sulkily. "Just for a little while. You can't keep me here *all* the time."

A nasty look crossed Esmelia's face, though it was difficult to tell as it was almost exactly the same nasty look as the nasty look that had been there already. "Witchin' law number 2,346, section 3, clause b," she spat. "Once apprenticed to a witch, the apprentice may not leave that witch for any reason whatso-blinkin'-ever, unless either given permission or the apprenticeship is ended by the Most Superior High and Wicked Witch. Furthermore, the apprentice must obey the witch at all times, including when the little cretin is told to go and dig a dirty great hole in the woods and bury herself. Failure to obey will result in the immediate loss of the apprentice's witch license."

Sam stood up and stamped a foot on the floor. Esmelia had discovered this witching law a few weeks ago and had used it about twenty times a day since. On the brim of her hat, Ringo shook a very small fist at the old witch. "But I saved your life," Sam shouted. "You'd

be dead now if it weren't for me. Don't you think you should be just a little bit *grateful*?"

Esmelia Sniff bought her face to within an inch of Sam's. "Grateful?" she jeered. "I could've bin Most Superior High and Wicked Witch if it weren't for you and yer peskiential meddling, so you can stick *grateful* in yer ear and wiggle it around." She pushed her face even closer to Sam's until their noses were squashed together and continued in an evil whisper, "And you can tell that little bug of yours if he shakes his fist at me again, I'll squash him like a... like a..." Esmelia struggled for words for a moment then finished, "like a bug," which was a bit lame.

Sam's face twisted in anger. "No," she shouted. "If I hadn't stopped her, Diabolica would have killed you."

"That's what you thinks, but for your information I ain't all that easy to kill. I got a few tricks up me vest."

"Huh, *tricks*," sneered a furious Sam. "That's *all* you've got. Tricks and swearing and meanness. You're so bad at magic Diabolica would have splashed you all over the walls."

"Bah, *magic*," spat Esmelia. "Your type thinks bein' a witch is all sparkles and spangles and hokey pokey. But all that glittery rubbish won't stop a finger in the dark.

Magic ain't no use when someone's poked you in the eye and is swirlin' your eyeball about."

The two witches glared at each other in icy silence.

"Well," Sam said eventually, as calmly as she could manage. "If I'm such a bad apprentice, why don't you just let me go?"

Esmelia's finger jabbed Sam's chest. "Oh yes, you'd *like* that wouldn't you? you little maggots!"

"Yes! Yes I *would* like it," shouted Sam, stamping a foot again. "In fact, I'd *love* it. It would be just fine with me if I never saw your ugly old face again, *especially* when it's eating soup."

"And I'd be happy if I never had to see you sulkin' and mopin' around the place like a sick toad again."

"You're a disgusting, mean and vicious old bag."

"Yes dearie, I knows," replied Esmelia leaning back. "I'm a wicked witch, see? The clue's in the name: *wicked* witch."

Sam turned and stamped towards the door. Esmelia shouted after her, "The spade's in the shed. Proper digging mind, you ain't to use magic. Workin' up a sweat'll teach you a valuable lesson... about sweat or something."

Slamming the door behind her, and with Ringo

THE WHITE WAND

gripping the brim of her wonky black hat, Sam ran into the trees. They had lost the last of their leaves and were prodding the cottage's straw roof with bare branches as if testing to see if it was worth eating. Running is never a good idea in Pignout Wood though, and the young witch soon tripped over a gnarly old root. She sat on a mossy log, picked thorns out of her legs and brambles from her hair. Once the blood had almost stopped and something with far too many legs had been snorted out of her nose, Sam put her head in her hands and groaned. All her life she'd wanted to be a witch, but now she *was* a witch she was stuck with Esmelia. It was all soooo unfair.

The conversation Sam had been having with her grandmother was completely forgotten. Which was a shame, because Lilith *had* been about to tell her something very important.

