**Day 2**

**The Grand High Witch – The Witches**

**Read the extract below and jot down/highlight any words or phrases which you think are particularly good or effective**

**p.25-26**

All the women, or rather the witches, were now sitting motionless in their chairs and staring as though hypnotised at somebody who had suddenly appeared on the platform. That somebody was another woman.

The first thing I noticed about this woman was her size. She was tiny, probably no more than four and half feet tall. She looked quite young, I guessed about twenty-five or six, and she was very pretty. She has on a rather stylish long black dress that reached right to the ground and she wore black gloves that came up to her elbows. Unlike the others she wasn’t wearing a hat.

She didn’t look to me like as witch at all, but she couldn’t possible *not* be one, otherwise what on earth was she doing up there on the platform? And why, for heaven’s sake, were all the other witches gazing at her with such a mixture of adoration, awe and fear?

Very slowly, the young lady on the platform raised her hands to her face. I saw her gloved fingers unhooking something behind her ears, and then....then she caught hold of her cheeks and lifted her face clean away! The whole of that pretty face came away in her hands!

It was a mask!

As she took off the mask, she turned sideways and placed it carefully upon a small table near by, and when she turned round again and faced us, I very nearly screamed out loud.

That face of hers was the most frightful and frightening thing I have ever seen. Just looking at it gave me the shakes all over. It was so crumpled and wizened, so shrunken and shrivelled; it looked as though it had been pickled in vinegar. It was a fearsome and ghastly sight. There was something terribly wrong with it, something foul and putrid and decayed. It seemed quite literally to be rotting away at the edges, and in the middle of the face, around the mouth and cheeks, I could see the skin all cankered and worm-eaten, as though maggots were working away in there.

There are times when something is so frightful you become mesmerised by It and can’t look away. I was like that now. I was transfixed. I was numbed. I was magnetised by the sheer horror of this woman’s features. But there was more to it than that. There was a look of serpents in those eyes of hers as they flashed around the audience.

I knew immediately, of course, that this was none other than The Grand High Witch herself. I knew also why she had worn a mask. She could never have moved around in public, let alone book in at a hotel, with her real face. Everyone who saw her would have run away screaming.

“The doors!” shouted The Grand High Witch in a voice that filled the room and bounced around the walls. “Are they chained and bolted?”

“The doors are chained and bolted, Your Grandness,” answered a voice in the audience.

The brilliant snake’s eyes that were set so deep in that dreadful rotting worm-eaten face glared unblinkingly at the witches who sat facing her. “You may rrree-moof your gloves!” she shouted. Her voice, i noticed had that same hard metallic quality as the voice of the witch I had met under the conker tree, only it was far louder and much much harsher. It rasped. It grated. It snarled. It shrieked. And it growled.

Everyone in the room was peeling off her gloves. I was watching the hands of those in the back row. I wanted very much to see what their fingers looked like and whether my grandmother had been right. Ah!...Yes!....I could see several of them now! I could see the brown claws curving over the tips of the fingers! They were about two inches long, those claws, and sharp at the ends!

“You may rrree-moof your shoes!” barked The Grand High Witch.

I heard a sigh of relief going up from all the witches in the room as they kicked off their narrow high-heeled shoes, and then I got a glimpse under the chairs of several pairs of stockinged feet, square and completely toeless. Revolting they were, as though the toes had been sliced away from the feet with a carving-knife.

“You may rrree-moof your vigs!” snarled The Grand High Witch. She had a peculiar way of speaking. There was some sort of foreign accent there, something harsh and guttural, and she seemed to have trouble pronouncing the letter w. As well as that, she did something funny with the letter r. She would roll it round and round her mouth like a piece of hot pork-crackling before spitting it out. “Rrree-moof your vigs and get some fresh air into your spotty scalps!” she shouted, and another sigh of relief arose from around the audience as all the hands went up to the heads and all the wigs (with the hats still on them) were lifted away.

There now appeared in front of me row upon row of bald female heads, a sea of naked scalps, every one of them red and itchy-looking from being rubbed by the lining of the wigs. I simply cannot tell you how awful they were, and somehow the whole sight was made more grotesque because underneath those frightful scabby bald heads, the bodies were dressed in fashionable and rather pretty clothes. It was monstrous. It was unnatural.

**Now watch ‘The Grand High Witch Scene’ and add any more notes or phrases that describe the Grand High Witch.**

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