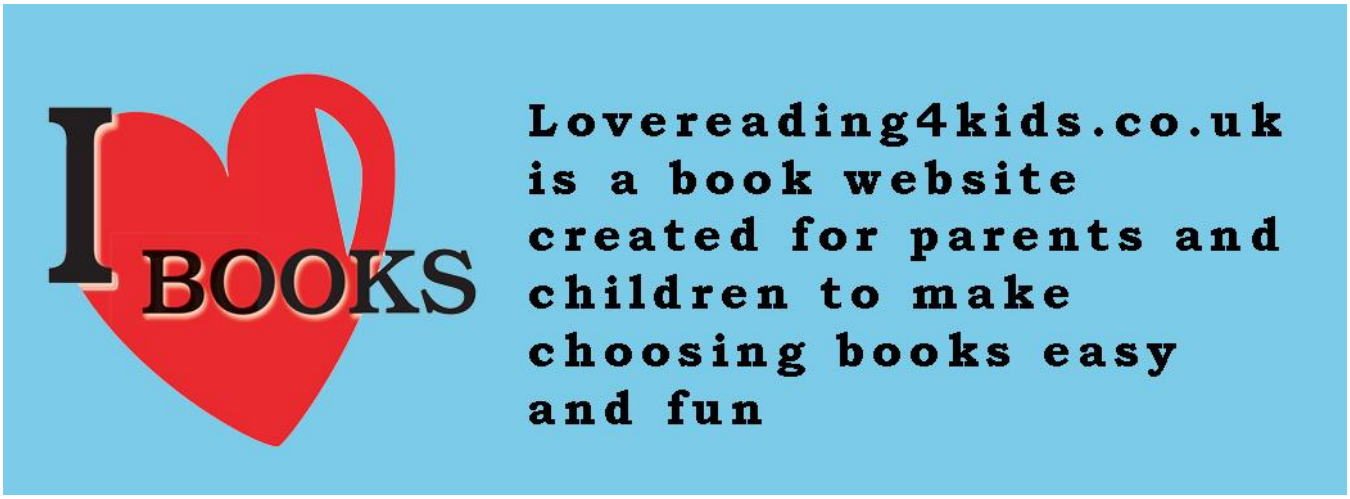


Opening extract from

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THE DOCKS
DRIPTOWN
THE LAKES
SILVER CITY
LADEN HOUSE
RITZY CITY
B
BREWS


SINKVILLE
THE COVES
PEARL PEAK
PEARL PEAK ACADEMY
FOREST
LITTLE LEAF RESTAURANT
WHERE THE FIRST WITCH LANDED IN SINKVILLE
BROLLYWOOD
THE CAULDRON ISLANDS
MARBLE BEACH
THE TOWERS

The Story So Far

Last time in Ritzy City:

Well, Felicity Bat and Aggie Hoof turned Peggy into a doll, took over Linden House and started undoing all her good work and making the place awful and evil.

Luckily Tiga and Fluffanora figured out what they were doing and – with a little help from Fran the Fabulous Fairy – foiled their plans and saved Peggy. They even saved some other witches too, like the fashion explorer Eddy Eggby, who had been turned into a doll by Celia Crayfish AGES ago and had been stuck as one ever since.

And Tiga figured out her mum is someone called Gretal Green, an inventor at NAPA (the

National Above the Pipes Association). Tiga's surname wasn't Whicabim at all; her evil guardian, Miss Heks – who kept her in a shed and made her drink mouldy old cheese water – had just made it up as a joke. All she had to go on was the fact she's actually from Silver City, Sinkville's second largest city, which has been deserted ever since the Big Exit. That's where she's planning to go next. That's where she thinks her mum must be.

Anyway, as they were all celebrating beating evil Felicity Bat, something weird happened. A wrinkly old hand emerged from the pipes and dropped an apple down to the dancing crowds, but everyone was having far too much fun to spot it.

It's the morning now, though, and Peggy has just spotted it …



That Apple

Tiga's big black patent rucksack swayed and sagged on her determined little back as she strolled briskly up Ritzy Avenue.

'Hi, Mavis!' she shouted.

Mavis waved as she unsuccessfully tried to stack one cat on top of another. Mavis had recently expanded her jam stall to include jam *and* cats. A fact Nottie, the only other jam *and* cats stall owner, was, frankly, livid about.

Some witches were sweeping the streets, clearing up the debris from the party the night before.

Onwards Tiga went, knocking on the window of Cakes, Pies and That's About It Really and waving up to Mrs Brew's studio window at the very top of the Brew's fashion boutique. Tiga knew Mrs Brew was tucked up

in bed with a very bad cold (and a gigantic toad on her face in a bid to cure it) and wasn't there. But she always liked to wave anyway.

'Tiga!' one of the Brew's witches shouted out of the window. 'Come on in for a natter!'

'I can't!' Tiga called over. She spun around and wiggled her backpack. 'I'm going on an adventure.'

The Brew's witch winked and began arranging some mannequins in the window.

Tiga began to pick up the pace. She couldn't be late. Peggy said she had to be there promptly …

'PEGS!' Tiga shouted as she reached Linden House. 'What the frognails are you doing?'

Peggy wiped her brow, straightened her glasses and grabbed the magnifying glass she had bewitched to hover over a strange little object on the street.

A couple of other witches had stopped to stare at it too. One of them was shouting, 'IT'S EVIL MAGIC! EVIL!'

'I'm confused,' Peggy finally said, as Tiga bent down and picked the thing up.

It was an apple.

She sniffed it.

It was definitely an apple.

'What?' Tiga said, tossing it back to Peggy (who dropped it and scuttled after it as it rolled slowly down the road). 'It's just an apple.'

'Is it?' Peggy asked.

'Definitely,' said Tiga.

More witches began to gather around and ooh and aah at it.

'Is this a joke?' Tiga asked. 'IT'S JUST AN APPLE!'

One witch tried to reach out and touch it. Peggy snatched it away.

'Look closely, Tiga,' Peggy said. 'Or just look, not even closely. What is strange about this apple?'

Tiga barely looked at it. 'That it's making you all NUTS?'

Peggy shook her head. 'Think about it.'

Tiga plucked the apple from her grasp and looked at it again. 'I just see a green apple.'

She gasped.

Peggy nodded knowingly.

'GREEN?!' Tiga cried. 'It's green! But all the colour went from Sinkville during the Big Exit.'

Peggy nodded as the apple, weirdly, began to glow. 'But now, for some strange reason, it seems to be coming back …'





Above the Pipes TV

In a crumbly old sitting room in the world above the pipes, sitting next to a moth-eaten armchair was an ancient TV set. It crackled and groaned as it struggled to stay switched on. The image on the screen blurred every so often and was struck through with irritating digital lines that broke up the image and made it jiggle.

Past the TV and outside beyond the window stood a crumbling shed that complemented the crumbling interior of the sitting room perfectly.

'Ooh,' said a woman outside. 'It's all very crumbly and matching, isn't it?'

Around her buzzed a camera crew – two cameramen and one sound guy. She cleared her throat and held a

microphone up to her mouth. She was the same reporter who could be seen on the TV inside.

'We're here at the home of Miss Heks, a woman not many people in the community were friendly with. Only the cheese shop owner seemed to know anything about her. And the only thing he knew about her was that she was very fond of cheese.'

The camera shifted to the shed.

'This shed was where she kept her cheese. The cheese has in fact disappeared now, no one knows to where, but it is suspected it has gone wherever she and all the other women on this street have vanished to. And the twenty or so streets beyond it. Police forces are out and on the lookout for a couple of hundred or more old women, who dominated this area of the neighbourhood.'

The picture on the TV shifted to various photographs of old women with crooked noses and warty faces. And then back to the reporter outside Miss Heks's shed.

'Speculation is rife as to where they may be. However, we ask the community to remain calm. They

can't have got very far … because their legs are very, very old.

'More on this story as it develops. Now back to Arthur in the studio.'



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The Return of Miss Heks

'Cooey!' came a voice.

'I wonder why the colour is back?' Tiga said to Peggy, as Fluffanora strolled up to them.

'Ready for our Silver City adventure?' she said with a smile. 'Wait, GREEN! Why is the apple green?'

'Cooey!'

Peggy shrugged. 'I have no idea. Nothing else seems to be in colour, just this apple … and it's glowing … like magic.'

'Most things are magic in this place …' Tiga mumbled.

'COOEY.'

Peggy put it in her pocket. 'I'm going to hide it in Linden House until I can figure out what it is and why it's glowing.'

'COOEY! HOW MANY TIMES DO I NEED TO SAY COOEY?!'

Tiga spun around and then fell over. Her legs had buckled when she saw it.

Standing there like she had been there all along was someone completely terrible. A vibrant dash of fluorescent orange in a garishly glittery dress, topped with a clashing gold hat.

It was Miss Heks, her old evil guardian.

'More colour!' Peggy gasped.

'Oh,' Miss Heks said, changing her voice to the littlest little whimper in an attempt to sound sweet. It sounded like something evil squashed in a small hole.

'Oh, my Tiga. You have been lost for so long!'

'*Lost*?' said Fluffanora, as she bit into a Cakes, Pies and That's About It Really pie. 'You let us adopt her. I was there.'

'Ah, this must be why the colour's coming back,' Peggy said, her eyes darting from colourful Miss Heks to the green apple tucked in her pocket and back again.

'Go away!' Tiga blurted out.

Miss Heks's face scrunched up, like it always did before she screamed and shouted. But she just swallowed, like she was swallowing a lump of something spiky.

'Oh well,' she said in a strained voice. 'I suppose you did adopt her, but I've changed my mind. I miss her, you see.'

Tiga's eyes widened and she took a step backwards. Fluffanora and Peggy linked arms with her.

A glittery ball BURST on to the scene.

'ALL THE GANG BACK TOGETHER!' Fran oozed. 'Oh dear, that is BRIGHT,' she said, pointing at Miss Heks. She waved her hand and some ridiculously fluffy sunglasses appeared on Tiga, Peggy and Fluffanora's faces. Fluffanora, without a moment's thought, whipped them off and threw them over her head. Tiga and Peggy kept theirs on for a couple more seconds, so as not to offend Fran …

'Listen, I don't want to be a pain. I'd just like to spend some time with Tiga,' Miss Heks went on.

'This isn't right,' Tiga whispered to Peggy. 'There's a reason she's back, I know it.'

Peggy nodded. 'What do we do?'

'I can't hear either of you,' Fluffanora whispered.

They huddled together.

'What if she follows us around everywhere?' Tiga asked. 'What if she tries to take me back up there?'

'And what about the adventure to Silver City?' Fluffanora added. 'Miss Heks can't know we're trying to find your mum. She never mentioned her to you in all the years you lived with her. She said she found you in the sink in the shed. She's a liar …'

They all turned slowly to look at her as some trumpets sounded.

'What is this silly show?' Fran said, pointing at the band that had materialised next to Miss Heks. They were obviously something she had bewitched because they looked like ghost witches. Tiga could see right through them. The music got louder and louder and Miss Heks began dancing down the street towards Tiga.

She was all elbows and ankles.

'Oh my sweetest Tiga, I have missed you ever so,' she sang in a creepy old voice.

She flicked her finger and the music paused.

'Many timeeeees I've cried a tear, at the thought of letting you goooooooooo.'

She flicked her finger and the music blared once more! Witches started dancing along beside her.

'OI! STOP MAKING US DANCE!' they cried.

'TIGA, YOU ARE THE GREATEST, I LOVE YOUR LITTLE TOES!'

'You have quite big toes, actually …' Fluffanora said.

'YOUR SQUISHY FACE, YOUR LOVELY HAIR, YOUR BUTTON LITTLE NOOOOOSE!'

'I'm scared,' Peggy said.

'TIGA, I HAVE MISSED YOU MOOORE, MORE THAN A GENTLE BREEZE!

MORE THAN A SPELL!

A FROG!

OR A CAT!

EVEN MOREEEEE …

THAN CHEEEEEESE.'

'Well, that's a lie,' Tiga said.

'IF YOU WILL NOT COME BACK WITH ME, BACK TO OUR LOVELY HOME.'



'I wouldn't call it lovely. Mouldy, perhaps. Or grim. Not lovely,' Fran said.

The reluctant dancing witches followed behind Miss Heks, mouthing 'Sorry', and 'She's making my legs move.'

The band began to slow.

'THEN MAYBE I CAN STAY DOWN HERE SO I WON'T FEEL SO …'

She tried her best to sound sad:

'ALONE.'

The band disappeared with a pop and Fran accidentally clapped.

'Although she is terrifying, *that* was an impressive show. Good choreography! Bravo!'

Tiga glared at Fran and she stopped yelling compliments.

Slowly, Tiga stepped closer to Miss Heks, eyeing her suspiciously.

'You can't stay here,' Tiga said firmly. 'For a start, there's nowhere for you to live.'

Miss Heks looked up and down the avenue and

tapped her foot. 'In that case, I think I'll just bring my old house back.'

She flicked her finger, and up above the pipes, the TV crew outside her house gasped as the entire thing vanished. The TV reporter leaned against the shed to steady herself.

'GOLLY! What is going *on*?'

And then the shed disappeared too.

'I'll just stick it … here,' Miss Heks said, as her tatty old house wiggled its way down from the pipe and squeezed in beside the Brews' house on pristine Ritzy Avenue.

'That's, well, OK …' Peggy mumbled.

Miss Heks trotted towards her house. 'Anyone for cheese water?'

'OH NOT THIS NONSENSE AGAIN!' Fran cried as a very familiar crumbly old shed landed with a bang in front of Tiga.

WARWOP!

The witches of *WARWOP!* magazine (Witches Around Ritzy Who Often Panic) have some PANIC-INDUCING news for you.

As you may have heard, colour is back in Ritzy City – Peggy found a green apple. THIS IS SERIOUS and can only mean one thing … DON'T PANIC, *but* rumours are rife that Celia Crayfish, the most evil witch ever to rule Sinkville, is planning a return to Ritzy City! Her fellow Big Exit witch Miss Heks has already reappeared, with cheese, and we think Celia Crayfish is going to arrive next.

There have been a number of sightings of her – most of them have been by panicking witches who keep seeing the old statue of Celia Crayfish near the market and mistaking it for her. We hung a sign on the statue that said THIS IS A STATUE to avoid confusion, but then we just got reports saying Celia Crayfish is back and has disguised herself with a sign that says THIS IS A STATUE. So … that didn't work.

If Celia Crayfish is on her way back, then WE

MUST FIND OUT WHERE SHE IS WHEN SHE GETS HERE SO WE CAN MAKE SURE WE CAN HIDE FROM HER!

MOST IMPORTANTLY PLEASE REMEMBER TO PANIC RESPONSIBLY!!!

For all panic-related enquiries, please contact Mavis, Jam (And Sometimes Cats) Stall Number 9.

