Helping your children choose books they will love

I reading

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

Opening extract from

Candle Man 2: Society of Dread

Written by

Glenn Dakin

Published by

Egmont Books Ltd

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

Please print off and read at your leisure.

Lovereading4kids.co.uk



Theo's trailing hand made contact – the barest whisper of a touch – with the man's cheek. The attacker could not move. He stared down at his own body as it began to glow a luminous green.

Theo watched the stranger's skin bubble and smoke. Then, the angry, frightened face of the man smeared downwards, a gaping skull shining out from the ruins of the flesh.

With a whooshing *hiss* the man melted into a big steaming pool.

Acclaim for *Candle Man*

'Fast-paced action, gleefully ghoulish monsters and intrigue keep the narrative flowing . . . A bright light in the fantasy genre' *Kirkus Reviews*

'Up until now Britain has lacked its own credible superhero and those looking for feats of supernatural prowess tended to turn to the United States, but *Candle Man* may be about to change that' *Reuters*

'Kids and adults alike will be rooting for Theo and whichever allies he can trust at that moment' James Patterson's ReadKiddoRead.com

'This is a gripping, thrilling, unusual story – quite dark in places – full of weird characters that will keep you guessing to the end' *Primary Times*

'A cracking adventure in the best comic book tradition, with dashing heroes and dastardly villains, a terrific read for children aged 9+' *ABC Magazine*

'. . . a tense and gripping thriller' Love Reading 4 Kids

'Some of the ideas are so imaginative that it feels as though you are watching a movie, not reading it . . . I highly recommend this book and will be looking for others by the same author' *Northern Life Family*

'The atmosphere is creepy and enthralling – Dakin's characters move like shadows and the overall effect is indeed Gothic' *Books Monthly*

'From the very first scene this book grabbed my attention . . . From that moment on I never lost interest in the young hero's adventure as the story rushes on at a pace, stuffed full of action and humour' Kids' Compass

'Dakin's sparkling action/horror writing and his cast of intriguing characters give this fantasy – energetic, cheeky, unrelentingly suspenseful, and oddly good-natured – a flavour all its own' *The Horn Book*

'I like the world of this novel – its smoky darkness, its descent into pitch-black sewers, its mysteries dripping with intrigue and the bizarre' Bookbag

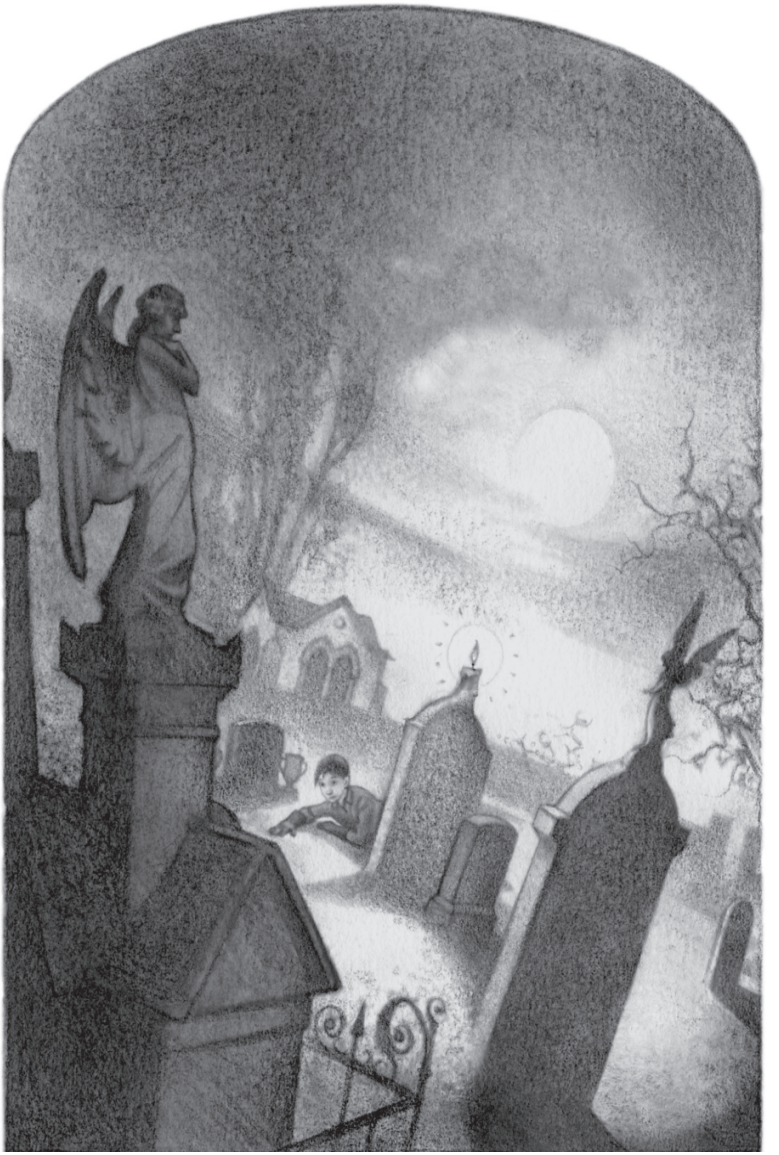
'Unique in a world full of copycats' *Deseret News*, Salt Lake City

'It was very elegant in its imparting of messages and it was full of quick wit . . . I am really looking forward to seeing where these books are headed . . .' Raging Bibliomania

'*Candle Man* is a witty, smart, entertaining fantasy novel that left me quite, ahem, "vigilantly" looking out for the next book in this trilogy' Bibliophile Support Group

'This book was filled with interesting characters, the likes of which I can only compare to Lemony Snicket . . . Full of thrilling adventures, *Candle Man* pulls you into the story and makes you crave more' Bookworming in the 21st Century

'The humour . . . varies from quirky, to dark, to gruesome – "Sorry, sir, but I thought you might like to know. Your face is melting" is a one-liner worthy of a classic Bond film or *Carry on Screaming*!' The Book Zone



Theo crawled on grazed knees as he watched
the stranger's skin bubble and smoke.

CandleMan



By
Glenn Dakin

EGMONT

EGMONT
We bring stories to life

Candle Man: The Society of Dread
First published in Great Britain 2011
by Egmont UK Limited
239 Kensington High Street
London W8 6SA

Text copyright © Glenn Dakin 2011

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

ISBN 978 1 4052 4677 4

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

A CIP catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library

Printed and bound in Great Britain by the CPI Group

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher and copyright owner.

To Christopher Richard Dakin

'If you don't stand up for yourself,
you don't like yourself.'

Glenn Dakin

Glenn Dakin was inspired to write this novel while exploring the overgrown graveyard close to his old home in London. As well as writing for numerous cult comics and children's TV shows, he has spent the last few years seeking out crypts, sewer tunnels and sites of mysterious significance in his research for *Candle Man*. Glenn *claims* his book is a work of fiction, but if you look very closely at his pictures of the cemetery you may spot a smoglodyte lurking in the shadows . . .

To find out more visit www.glenndakin.com

Contents

Chapter One: A Walk 1

Chapter Two: Tricky 15

Chapter Three: New Age 22

Chapter Four: Unmasked 29

Chapter Five: Unlucky 40

Chapter Six: Rumblings 49

Chapter Seven: Old Friends 54

Chapter Eight: Pets 64

Chapter Nine: Orpheus 69

Chapter Ten: Dove of Peace 77

Chapter Eleven: The Capsule 85

Chapter Twelve: Level Five 96

Chapter Thirteen: The Man with No Face 104

Chapter Fourteen: The Larder 108

Chapter Fifteen: Refuge 116

Chapter Sixteen: Phase Two 127

Chapter Seventeen: Moss Break 136

Chapter Eighteen: The Fool 149

Chapter Nineteen: Canaries 158

Chapter Twenty: Spies 168

Chapter Twenty-one: On the Surface 178

Chapter Twenty-two: Nicely Situated 190

Chapter Twenty-three: Golden Words 200

Chapter Twenty-four: Harvesters 211

Chapter Twenty-five: Crimes 222

Chapter Twenty-six: Friends in Need 229

Chapter Twenty-seven: Lairs 239

Chapter Twenty-eight: The Society of Dread 252

Chapter Twenty-nine: Parasites 262

Chapter Thirty: In Command 271

Chapter Thirty-one: Surrounded 281

Chapter Thirty-two: Descent 289

Chapter Thirty-three: The Collectors 296

Chapter Thirty-four: Goodbyes 302

Chapter Thirty-five: Wonders 311

Chapter Thirty-six: Unseen 320

Chapter Thirty-seven: Doomed 329

Chapter Thirty-eight: Of Madness 337

Chapter Thirty-nine: Unearthed 348

Chapter Forty: Vigilant 358

Chapter One
A Walk

How hard can it be?

Theo had never been for a walk before – on his own – but he was pretty sure he could do it. He hunched deeper in his big winter coat, feeling the January chill. The wind ruffled his lank black hair. Cold air sparked tears from his grey eyes. He shivered – he was not used to being outside.

Don't panic, he told himself. *Thousands of people go for walks every day. You can do it.*

He took a deep breath and surveyed the dismal, damp street before him. In the past, he had only been allowed one walk a year – planned by his guardian Dr Saint. Now, Dr Saint was dead. There was no one to tell Theo what to do. In fact, he could do anything he liked.

That was scary.

Theo looked back at the dark shape of Empire

Hall, the vast mansion in which he had spent his whole life. Since the death of his guardian, he now owned the great house, even though he was still just a teenager. It was one of the biggest mansions in London, but the sight of it brought Theo no pleasure: it had been little more than a prison to him.

His cautious footsteps had brought him to the Condemned Cemetery, the graveyard that backed on to his house. Dusk was just beginning to gather among its tombs and woodlands. Theo liked dusk. It had always been *his* time, after the dreary routines of the day were over. In his imagination, anything could happen at dusk.

An old man, walking slowly, with a big stick and a plastic earpiece headed towards him. Theo panicked, thought of turning back – then remembered the words that he needed.

'How do you do?'

The old man frowned at Theo, grunted and moved on.

Theo's heart was pounding, but he was happier

now. He had faced a tricky encounter, but his book, *An Introduction to Introductions*, had saved him.

When meeting a stranger or new acquaintance, the traditional formula of 'How do you do' is all that is required, the book stated.

The wrought-iron gates of the cemetery were open, a thin mist covering the ground within, like a grey sea. He stepped inside, all senses alert. His long coat dragged through the dank nettles and outlandish weeds of the overgrown place.

Theo peered around. He eyed the stone figures and angels with fascination. He knew from experience that such things could come to life. But nothing like that happened now. In fact, on this drippy, slow, January night, the world seemed quiet and empty of excitement. Dead.

That was just how Theo liked it.

Turning back, he could see the lights were being switched on in Empire Hall. It was hard to believe that the daily routine of the household was going on without his presence.

A strange sensation stirred him from within, like

a breeze whispering in his heart. A feeling grew that he barely recognised or understood: freedom.

It was wonderful to know now that his evil guardian was dead he could start living a normal life for the first time. How delicious it was to breathe the soft, damp air and smell the curious scents of the overgrown cemetery. He walked through the rows of tombs, gazing at every weathered stone carving, solemn inscription and tattered bouquet. For someone who had never been taken to a beauty spot, a park or a garden, this graveyard was a world of wonders.

Just a bit longer, he told himself as he ducked under the ragged hawthorn trees and ventured deeper into the cemetery. Theo saw a narrow, almost invisible pathway between holly trees and followed it, taking delight in the sparkling cobwebs among the drippy thorns, the bright red berries, the brown and golden ferns curling in the chill air.

This is a magical place, Theo thought. *I wish I could wander here forever.*

Suddenly he glanced down at his hands – at the leather gauntlets he wore at all waking hours. A pale, green light was flickering about his fingers. He frowned. His power was stirring. That was a sure sign of danger . . . but why now?

'At last!'

A booming voice crashed through Theo's thoughts. A giant figure broke through the holly bushes and loomed over him.

A pale man with a shaven head and strange bulbous eyes confronted him. He was dressed in a filthy, ill-fitting collection of rags. His immense, powerful hands were dark with ingrained dirt. As he approached Theo he lifted his broad, ugly nose in a sniffing gesture, like a wary animal.

'You don't know who – or what – I am, do you?' the figure snarled.

Theo held his breath but he tried not to panic. He didn't need to know who this was. He just had to find the words to say.

'How do you do?' he blurted out quickly.

The man lashed out with a big leather boot and

kicked Theo's legs from under him. Theo crashed to the ground, almost fainting with pain and shock.

'How do I do?' growled the man. 'How do I do, when you and your friends wrecked all our plans and destroyed our home?'

'I – we – what?' gasped Theo, astonished.

His mind raced. He *had* seen men like this before. Among the armies of Dr Saint, there had been many shaven-headed, powerful brutes: Foundlings, they were called. But this one seemed somehow different – almost like a wild man. Theo's hands were deep in nettles, and, unseen by the attacker, he began to work off his gloves.

'Don't act all innocent,' the man cried. 'You've had your fun, but it's all over now!' He paused, his protruding eyes glinting, as if savouring Theo's plight. '*He's* back,' the man said with a nasty smile. 'And he's more powerful than Dr Saint ever was. He's back and now you're finished!'

He's back? Who was *he*? Theo wondered as he tried to edge away.

'They told me you was special – you had some

kind of magic,' the ragged man said. 'Well, I've never believed in magic, and I don't think you'll have much left when I've pulled your heart, lungs an' liver out.'

He moved in on Theo, who was desperately scrambling backwards through the weeds. Theo had taken his gloves off and nettles were stinging his skin.

'I've bided my time,' the man said. 'I've come to the surface, kept a watch and waited for a chance to pay you back.'

He wrenched Theo up from the ground and swung him backwards, about to dash his head against a gravestone.

But he never did. Theo's trailing hand made contact – the barest whisper of a touch – with the man's cheek. The attacker could not move. He stared down at his own body as it began to glow a luminous green.

Theo fell to the ground. He scrambled backwards, on grazed knees, as he watched the stranger's skin bubble and smoke. Then, the angry,

frightened face of the man smeared downwards, a gaping skull shining out from the ruins of the flesh.

With a whooshing *hiss* the man melted into a big steaming pool.

'Theo!'

Theo had climbed on to a stone tomb, to avoid being touched by the hot slime. Through the bushes came a familiar figure in a navy greatcoat and peaked cap.

It was Chloe. She took in the scene with a glance, clapping her hands to her head in dismay.

'Theo, you idiot!'

The dark bookshelves towered above them on both sides as Theo and Chloe sat together on an old leather sofa, deep in the library of Empire Hall.

'He was a Sewer Rat,' Chloe said, still huddled in her enormous coat although they were back indoors. 'That is, if I can rely on your colourful description of the fiend.' There was a twinkle in her eyes as she said this. They both knew that Theo was remarkably observant. 'Part of a gang

that live beneath London – in the network of tunnels you love so much.'

'A Sewer Rat?'

Chloe put on her official face. As a member of the secret society that protected Theo she held arcane knowledge that never failed to astonish him.

'Your evil guardian, Dr Saint, sometimes used criminal gangs to do his dirty work for him. The Sewer Rats are a loose association of ne'er-do-wells that live in the tunnels and sewers beneath this city. Scuzzbags. You could call them urban pirates.'

'Pirates?' Theo's eyes suddenly lit up. 'Well, he did look a bit like one. But he did this funny sniffing thing,' he said, aping the Sewer Rat's upturned nose and his big staring eyes.

'Thanks for sharing,' commented Chloe drily. 'Some of them have gone feral down there, half wild, and really do live like rats. They hate the surface world now. They take these funny potions so they can see better in the dark. Makes their eyes stick out. It's horrible.'

'But why did he hate me?' Theo asked.

Chloe looked thoughtful. 'It's not hard to guess. When you defeated Dr Saint you ruined the hopes of all the assorted scum that worked for him, including the dregs like the Sewer Rats. They'll probably never forgive you for defeating their paymaster.'

Theo looked gloomy. Being a hero was more complicated than he realised. Everything you did seemed to lead to more trouble.

'Looks like one of these thugs tried to make a name for himself by trying to get revenge on you,' Chloe concluded.

'I didn't want to melt him,' Theo said. 'I – I had no choice . . .'

'I didn't call you an idiot for defending yourself.' Chloe sighed. 'I just can't believe you went out on your own.' Her brow knitted into the fine lines Theo knew so well. 'Especially without telling me!'

Theo peered through the back window that opened on to a little courtyard. It was now dark outside. His breath made a cloud of mist on the

pane. He dabbed his finger in it, childishly, and drew a glum face.

'I thought it would be all right. I thought the trouble was over now.'

Chloe frowned.

'Don't be dense, Theo!' she whispered. 'Look, like it or not, you are the Candle Man, the latest incarnation of an ancient hero. Sadly, that means you inherit a lot of enemies too.'

Theo looked bleak. He didn't like hearing about his terrifying destiny.

'But, looking on the bright side,' Chloe continued, 'you also inherit an ancient society whose job it is to look after you: the Society of Unrelenting Vigilance. This crazy group of fanatics is one I'm rather proud to be a member of.' She gave a weary smile. 'You might at least help me a bit by telling me when you're taking a stroll with a bug-eyed assassin!'

Theo responded with a wary grin. 'And you also have a duty to protect me,' he said, 'because you're in the police.'

'Yes, our old leader, Mr Norrowmore, thought that would make me especially useful to the cause,' Chloe remarked. 'I suppose I'm a kind of double agent,' she added.

'And so I'm double protected,' Theo replied, feeling brighter. Now Chloe was there to talk to, he was already starting to forget the shock of the attack.

'But we have to face facts. There are sinister people out there who don't want a new Candle Man stalking the streets! Dr Saint may be dead, but he had allies, armies of villains at his command. I tried to make a list of your possible enemies last night, and guess what – I ran out of paper.'

'Ha-ha – good one,' groaned Theo.

'I'm not joking!' Chloe said.

She looked thoughtful. '"He is back",' she said, musing on the words of the attacker. 'That's what's bothering me. If only we knew who "he" was . . .'

Suddenly she jumped up.

'Wait!' she mouthed at Theo. She put a finger to

her lips, and, in a swift movement, she darted to the library door.

Theo watched. The doorknob was slowly turning. He crept to Chloe's side. They held their breath as the door began to creak open.

'Down!' Chloe nudged Theo, urging him to take shelter behind a bookcase.

A lumbering, dark form appeared in the doorway, along with a clinking and rattling sound.

'Hot cocoa, sir?' boomed a deep, musical voice.

The butler, Montmerency, entered with a tea-trolley. Chloe laughed and flopped back down in her chair.

'Bring it on,' she said eagerly.

'You see,' Theo said with a smile as the butler departed. 'Things aren't always as scary as they look.'

'Well, things are pretty bad,' Chloe insisted, helping herself to some chocolate biscuits. 'But there's one thing we do have on our side: you.'

Chloe wiggled her fingers in imitation of Theo using his powers. Theo sighed. He didn't

like it when she did that. He sat back and sipped his cocoa.

'We've also got you,' he said. 'So I'm sure we'll win in the end. Don't worry, Chloe. Dr Saint is beaten. I escaped from the Sewer Rat. The bad old days will soon be over.'

Chloe frowned into her steaming mug.

'The bad old days are never over,' she said.