



# The White Wand

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[Rebecca Butler](#) [3]

~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This book is a sequel to Howard's **The Wickedest Witch**. Esmelia Sniff is an aged and decrepit witch with a strong attachment to the grubby side of magic. Sam is her apprentice. Sam is a very talented young witch with a stronger interest in the wholesome side of magic. Both are hostile to a witch named Diabolica or Deadly Nightshade, who holds the enviable title of Most Superior High and Wicked Witch. Yes, that's it: this is a comical book about magical practitioners.

Esmelia and Sam must find a wand to compete with the Black Wand of *Ohh Please Don't Turn Me Into Aaaaaaargh? Ribbett*, a presumed parody of the Elder Wand in Harry Potter. The book now becomes a quest narrative as the witches set out to find the formula to create a wand to rival the Black.

Howard maintains throughout both the narrative pace and the level of comedy. In a book like this the characters are always pastiches, but these are pleasing and well sustained. As the story unfolds it employs more and more deliberate allusions to familiar fairy-story motifs. In 'Hansel and Gretel' for example the wicked witch gets locked inside her own oven. Sniff's oven is a Hag 3000 that is advertised as having space for 'even the gangliest teenager'.

However there are innovations: every witch should have a familiar, and Sam is no exception. But her familiar is not a cat or a bird but a beetle named Ringo. There is a twist at the end of the narrative which took this reviewer entirely by surprise.

The illustrations by Colin Stimpson are as quirky and appealing as the text and lend much to the narrative. This is a book that young readers will enjoy. My only quibble is that it doesn't really stand alone and probably can't be enjoyed to the full by anyone who hasn't read its predecessor.

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