

*To Frankie,
my little, furry writing companion.*



First published in the UK in 2025 by Usborne Publishing Limited., Usborne House,
83-85 Saffron Hill, London EC1N 8RT, England, usborne.com

Usborne Verlag, Usborne Publishing Ltd., Prüfeninger Str. 20, 93049 Regensburg,
Deutschland, VK Nr. 17560

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

ISBN 9781805316800 9443/1 JFMAMJJA OND/25

Printed and bound using 100% renewable electricity by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, CRo 4YY



WITCHLIGHT



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USBORNE

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE



**THE TRUTH
ABOUT THE
"ISLE-SPARK" MAGIC TEST**

THE LIE WE'VE BEEN SOLD
BY THE DEPARTMENT WHO
BINDS OUR CHILDREN'S MAGIC



MISS HEGOTTY'S
SOCIETY PRESS

THE WEEKLY SPELLCAST

THE FALL OF THE WHISTLEWITCH

For years, tales of the fierce defender of our seas, the infamous military sorcerer the “Whistlewitch”, have inspired countless adventure stories. So why, then, did she risk her position as one of the Magic Isles’ most prominent generals to kidnap Lord Persicaria Bury and attempt to steal a magical home? And what about her insistence that she didn’t work alone? If that is true, why hasn’t she named her accomplice? See page 3.

MAGICAL CREATURES DEMAND EQUAL RIGHTS TO HUMANS!

Troubles between magical creatures and the Department have escalated. Ever since the Great Quake released “isle-spark” (the magic that awoke dragons, wyverns and other mystical creatures from stone, forever transforming our

nation), ensuring harmony between all hasn't been easy. "Most of us just want to get on with our lives and be treated the same as everyone else, that's all we ask," said Knox, a dragon, and owner of a coffee shop and bookstore in Edinburgh. Edel Scareweed, Royal Isle-Spark Military (RISM) spokesperson, said, "It is not as simple as 'equal rights for all', which probably seems lovely to people who aren't in the habit of using their brains – we need to remember that these are bloodthirsty, dangerous beasts, who want to take over our world!" See page 9.

A SECRET SOCIETY OF WITCHES?

Miss Hegotty has long caused Departmental headaches with her banned magical-correspondence course. But now it appears that she is behind a new secret society of witches who are distributing "truth pamphlets" that accuse the Department of binding children's magic! Something that has hit a nerve with parents, as fewer children than ever are "spark-touched" these days. It is believed that now only one in a

hundred girls have magic, a big change from a decade ago, when it was around half of all girls. A Department spokesperson said, “We will not dignify Miss Hegotty’s accusation with an answer. But we will remind everyone thinking of joining her highly ILLEGAL society that you risk being branded Ungovernable and if caught face SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.” See page 2.

THE GREAT SPARK-CLOCK – A MARVEL OF ISLE-SPARK INNOVATION!

After the fire that broke out earlier this year, burning down half of the Palace of Westminster (where, mercifully, the only loss sustained was to a warehouse full of Departmental records) the lightning-fast restoration of the buildings has been hailed as a “marvel of isle-spark technology”. With the cherry on the cake being the installation of the Great Spark-Clock that some have begun calling “Big Ben”, which is actually the name of its great bell. See page 15.



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TROUBLE AT THE
HEADQUARTERS OF
MISS HEGOTTY'S SECRET
SOCIETY OF WITCHES
1834, HUSWYVERN, FELIXSTOWE

Autumn arrived ready to pick a fight. The wind took bites, the cold air slapped, and in a small fishing village, above the sea cliffs, an old gothic house shivered miserably in its boots.

Its name was Huswyvern, and right now it was trying *really* hard not to sneeze.

It wasn't going well.

This was particularly bad timing on Hus's part, as the weekly meeting for Miss Hegotty's Secret Society of Witches was about to start.

So far, apart from thirteen-year-old Eglantine, and Arthur the

wyvern-butler, who both lived in Huswyvern, only Princess Victoria, and Eglantine's cousin, Eoin, had arrived. They were still waiting for the other society members to come through the portal door that magically connected the quiet seaside home in Suffolk to the bustling city of London.

Thanks to the magical bond Eglantine shared with her sentient house, she could usually sense what it was feeling, and what she sensed made her panic.

“Batten down the hatches! Hus is about to *blow!*”

“Oh, no!” cried Victoria. “Not again!”

This wasn't the first time they'd suffered the consequences of one of Huswyvern's sneezes. The cold it had been battling over the past few weeks had caused no end of trouble. Everyone braced themselves, planting their feet wide and holding on to chairs and paintings. Eglantine patted the wall in a soothing sort of way, her heart twisting with worry for her beloved home.

Arthur went to fetch a bucket of sand to put out the flames in the fireplace. Eoin, who had a rat on his shoulder (who may or may not have been the poet Lord Byron cursed into rodent form), kept one hand on a vase, and another on a spark-typewriter from which Hus was busy typing “Woe is me” in a rather pathetic fashion.

At least that was what Hus *tried* to type. But the letter M and O jammed. This seemed to be one of the other side effects of Hus's cold, so what the jammed keys typed instead was:

We is e

Which no one could understand, much to Hus's frustration.

When at last Huswyvern couldn't hold its sneeze any longer, the house made the equivalent of an *achoo* sound, which played out in the chords of creaking wood, hissing pipes, and the rattle and tinkle of glass.

Eoin yelled, "Look out!"

Part of the floor was now snaking up the walls, the windows had moved to the ground, and most terrifying of all – the fireplace was raining fire from its new, rather mad, position on the ceiling, as Hus had sneezed before Arthur could put the flames out.

Arthur flew up with the bucket of sand, while Eglantine and Victoria screamed and scuttled backwards, narrowly missing the flames.

Rat Lord Byron muttered (in the language of rats) that it was far too early in the day for this sort of nonsense, and dived back inside Eoin's pocket.

"All hands on deck," hollered the carved figure of the one-armed battle hero, Sorcerer Nelson, from his post above the mantelpiece.

Hus had never explained exactly why the enchanted figure of Sorcerer Nelson magically appeared on the wooden panelling one day when Eglantine was a little girl, but she guessed that the house had somehow summoned an echo of the naval hero as a kind of mentor of sorts for her.

In a world that so often tried to tell her she wasn't good enough because of the way she had been born (with one hand), Sorcerer Nelson, who had lost his arm and one of his eyes early on in his career, was a daily reminder that being different didn't



mean you couldn't achieve remarkable things. To this day, Sorcerer Nelson was considered the greatest naval officer in the nation's history. He'd prevented the powerful French Emperor, Napoleon, from invading the Magic Isles, and stealing its precious resource – isle-spark – which gave the isles their power.

Whenever Eglantine felt down because someone had said something pitying or mean about her arm, Arthur, who like Hus was her biggest supporter, would say, “They would do well to remember that if it wasn't for a one-handed person, the Magic Isles might have been conquered by the French.”

But right now Eglantine wasn't thinking about any of that, as Sorcerer Nelson commanded them to, “Step lively and save the good ship *Victory!*” (he didn't quite understand that he wasn't aboard his battleship any more), she was too busy following his instructions. She wasn't the only one.

Arthur spread sand from the bucket onto the flames, and Victoria slowed the fire, using her magic which manipulated time. But she couldn't stop the heavy clouds of thick, black smoke that made them all cough and splutter, their eyes turning red.

Huswyvern opened up its windows, but as these were now on the floor, this didn't do much to clear the smoke.

Using her own powers, which combined her love of painting and flowers, Eglantine created several large, whirligig daisies by drawing them in the air with her fingers.

The giant flowers spun their petals and fanned some of the smoke from the room.

Eoin, who had just begun his magic lessons, and hadn't yet

discovered his Witchspark (a signature power that witches and wizards could unlock within themselves, given the right training), ran to the door and swung it open and closed, which was the best solution of all, proving that practicality really is a magic of its own.

But they had other problems to deal with, namely the topsy-turvy room they were left with.

Huswyvern was on it, though.

There was a scrape and a clang and a stomp as a coat rack, a chaise longue, an armoured suit, as well as a pair of old and worn magical shoes known simply as The Boots (who had long ago lost their heart to Arthur) rushed inside to clean up the mess.

The armoured suit rammed itself against the walls, which quickly straightened themselves out, while The Boots kicked at the floor until it slid back into place, and the windows, possibly feeling a bit ashamed of themselves, slunk back into position too.

When it was all over, the coat rack rushed forward to dust off Eglantine, who was covered in a fine layer of soot, while the chaise longue scuttled towards the future queen, eager to offer her a seat after her ordeal.

“What am I, chopped liver?” asked Eoin. The only assistance he was given was a kick by The Boots to get out the way so that the fireplace could hop back to its usual position.

Despite everything, Eglantine couldn't help chuckling when she saw Eoin's expression of outrage.

“You know Eoin is family, right?” she reminded her magical house. “You will have to eventually forgive him, you know?”

There was a *harrumph-creak* from the door, and this time it wasn't just Eglantine who laughed.

Eoin had made the mistake of not showing the right level of enthusiasm for the room Hus had decorated especially for him a few weeks ago, and Hus had been frosty towards him ever since.

(In Eoin's defence, Hus *had* papered the walls with giant, terrifying sketches of rats, having somewhat overestimated the boy's affection for Rat Lord Byron...)

As far as Eglantine was concerned, one of the best things that had come out of last year was finding her long-lost cousin, Eoin, and making an unlikely new friend in the princess.

Eoin worked in Kensington Palace, and had been the one to witness the moment Victoria discovered she had a magical power and had frozen everyone in the palace in time, apart from him. Royals in the Magic Isles were forbidden to have magic, but instead of turning her in, he had decided to help Victoria, and applied to Miss Hegotty's banned magical course for aspiring witches on her behalf so that she might learn to control her ability and keep it a secret. Victoria and Eoin became firm friends. Victoria helped him discover who his father was (Eglantine's uncle, Lichen) which had (along with Miss Hegotty's guiding hand) led them to Eglantine and Huswyvern.

Back then, Eglantine had her own problems. She didn't have magic, which was a major issue, considering that she needed a Witchspark to create the bond with her magical home and keep it out of the hands of her uncle.

It turned out that Uncle Lichen had secretly arranged for

Eglantine's magic to be bound when she was very young. Eglantine had grown up believing she didn't have any powers at all, something her uncle planned to use to his benefit so that it would be easier to steal Huswyvern from her after her mother died.

Last year, he'd almost succeeded. He'd partnered with a powerful sorcerer named the Whistlewitch, who kidnapped Eglantine's father and tried to ransom him in exchange for the house.

Luckily, thanks to Miss Hegotty's lessons, Eglantine was able to finally unlock her magic and make the unbreakable bond with her house. Together with her new friends, she defeated her uncle and the Whistlewitch, and got her father back.

That was when Miss Hegotty had told them about her secret society, which fights against magical crimes and injustice, and Huswyvern had volunteered to become its headquarters. But today, the thing that was most concerning the members was Huswyvern itself, and its worsening cold.

Arthur took a handkerchief out of his waistcoat pocket and began to wipe his face and his pince-nez free of soot. "You really know how to bring excitement to the weekly meeting, Hus," he joked. "At least this time we've still got the roof."

At their last meeting, the entire roof had blown *off*. While that had been scary, it wasn't nearly as bad as today.

Eglantine winced. "I think Huswyvern is getting worse."

Arthur nodded. There was worry in his eyes too.

Everyone looked at each other, feeling a bit helpless. Everything they had tried so far had failed.

“I really thought the last healing spell would work,” said Victoria sadly.

Eglantine sighed. “Me too.”

It was the third one they’d tried over the past month. The coat rack rubbed Eglantine’s back as if to say it was alright.

Suddenly, the spark-typewriter atop the table clacked out a word. But the letter E jammed as it did. Hus gave a little frustrated sigh.

Spll

They all turned to look at the spark-typewriter in surprise.

“Sp̄ll? Do you mean ‘spell’?” asked Eglantine.

The coat rack nodded.

Arthur brightened. “That’s the spirit, Hus. There must be another spell we can try.”

“Remember, it is always darkest before dawn,” agreed Sorcerer Nelson.

“I’ll check the Grimoire again later,” said Eglantine, feeling her spirits rise too. They were right. There was no reason to despair just yet.

Suddenly Eoin’s face looked puzzled as he stared at something behind them. “Do you think that’s a problem?” he asked, pointing to the portal door. “Considering we’re still expecting the other society members to arrive?”

Eglantine turned to see what Eoin was pointing at and frowned. The London portal door had *moved*.

In the pandemonium, she had forgotten about the other society members.

What if they'd tried to use the portal door when Hus sneezed?
“It's just a bit out of place, though, I mean, how bad could it
be?” asked Victoria.

Bad, as it turned out.