**The Spirit of Skipton Castle Woods (Extract)**

The children climbed out from the cave and returned to the woodland path. The path widened and the children were scared of what they might find next. Tall trees hung overhead, making the woods dark and damp. Their leaves shook and rustled as they received the message from the listening beech tree further up the wood. Welcoming the children, the trees opened their branches to let in the sunshine, warming up the children and lighting the path ahead.

Suddenly, a loud cackling voice spilled out from the tree tops. Whoosh! Bang! A muddy-brown shadow zipped down the trunk of a wych-elm tree. A spiky-nosed, rotten, ragged witch on a creaking broomstick appeared in front of them. Grabbing Joe by the arm, she whizzed him straight back up the tree that she had come down. Peals of horrible laughter filled the forest as she went.

Rosie and Robin fell to the floor feeling hopeless and sad.

The troublesome witch flew back to her rickety treehouse at the top of a dying oak. She parked up her broomstick, which she called Bedknob, in front of her big bubbling cauldron. Joe tried not to cry.

Pushing him off her stick, Terwickety locked Joe in a hole inside the treehouse trunk and sealed it with hazel sticks. Then she got busy finishing off her magic brew, adding hairy bittercress and spicy toothwort to the stinking pot.

Alcedo, the kingfisher who had been watching the children during their journey, had followed the witch back to her treehouse. He was perched on the window ledge when Terwickety spotted him. She grabbed him by the tail and plucked a blue feather from one of his wings.

‘Ha ha!’ she laughed. ‘The final ingredient! I have been waiting for this one.’

She placed the bright blue feather in the magic potion and tossed the little bird out of the window like a piece of old rubbish. Bruised and battered, Alcedo gathered his broken feathers together and flew off to find the children.

The potion bubbled and spluttered. ‘Finally I will be queen of the woods,’ chuckled the witch. ‘This potion will freeze the Baron and cast him to his death into the pond of doom.’

She bottled the potion, which had now turned a horrible red colour, and placed it on a shelf next to X-Ray, her sleeping cat. She stuck a label on it that said: *Freeze to death*.

Terwickety hopped on her broomstick and flew out of the window to find a rare plant called lords and ladies for her next poisonous potion, which she would call Woodland Witchy Queen.