

Lord Avalon's Book

By Tara Rittler

"We have to what?" Simeon stared at Constantine, his jaw hanging open as though someone had just asked him to multiply two times two. Across the table, Lavender rolled her tiny, tiny eyes.

"Typical," she said.

"Typical," I mimicked, from my vantage point above the mantle. They couldn't hear me, of course.

"The will explains it all," replied Constantine calmly. "In addition to what remains of Avalon Manor, Lord Avalon left you his Book of Spells, which, he assured me before his passing, is a great honor."

Constantine is a gentleman, if a lawyer. Of all the lawyers I've had the misfortune to work with over the centuries, he was one of the best. What he didn't say is how much passing my Book on to these two brats killed me. Well. If I weren't already dead, it would have. But the Book had to stay in the family, and these two were my best option, believe it or not.

"But you said," continued Simeon, speaking very slowly, as though his brain was made of molasses, "in order to read the book, we have to mix *our* blood with *his* ashes and perform some kind of weird ritual? Why bother?"

If I weren't an urn's worth of week-old ashes, I would have turned him into a stack of raisins. The best I could do was rustle myself up into some sort of minor gray hurricane, but no one noticed.

Constantine sighed. He didn't actually, he's too professional. But I could tell that he wanted to. "Lord Avalon's Book of Spells is valuable beyond imagination, and, if used properly, could quite possibly be the key to a very bright future for both of you. Consider: you would be the only two people in the realm who could make it literally rain cats and dogs."

Simeon looks like a gassy tadpole when he's confused. "Yes, Simeon," I wanted to say. "That was a joke. Just because it didn't make a rude noise and poke someone in the eyeballs..." But he finally gave up on Constantine's unfathomable hilarity, and got at the gist of what he'd said.

"Power," he whispered.

"Fame?" Lavendar asked breathlessly, finally deigning to join the conversation.

"Oh, barf me with a pillow," I would have muttered. These loobies were going to waste one of the seven wonders of the world on world domination and ego scratching. Blech. I quit whirling around. It was useless, and now I was just depressed.

Constantine stood up. "I believe that we are finished. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to call."

Simeon and Lavendar barely nodded as he left the room. Their eyes were transfixed by the Book. It is a stunning Book. Weathered, yet stately. Even in its unreadable state, you can tell that it is a work of power. Finally, Lavendar reached out her greedy little hand and gripped it. She wrinkled her nose.

“It’s kind of...stinky, isn’t it?” she asked.

Simeon gave the book a cowardly sniff. “It must be because of the accident.”

“Oh, yeah,” Lavendar said. They were silent for a minute. It wasn’t a respectful silence. It was a silence masquerading as a respectful silence while they weighed out whether or not world domination made having an intimate relationship with a stinky book worthwhile. I took the opportunity to berate myself, for the umpteenth time, for creating this whole mess in the first place. I thought I’d have an heir of my own. Okay, I kind of assumed that eternal virility would be a side effect of drinking the Draught of Eternal Youth, and that I’d have all the time in the world to produce an entire family tree’s worth of progeny. The foolish things you think when you’re twenty. Anyway, I’d put off marriage for too long, and by the time I met Elizabeth, it was too late. She’s been gone for a couple centuries, now, and thanks to one too many pinches of powdered wormwood, I’m an heirless, helpless heap of ashes. Through it all, I had to watch the Avalon line dwindle down to this pair of incompetents, but I’d already cast the Spell of Revelation, and it couldn’t be changed. Family blood, my ashes. It’d be funny if it weren’t so pathetic.

Eventually, Lavendar looked at Simeon and said, “Let’s check out the rest of this dump.” By which she meant my beloved Avalon Manor. Leaving the Manor to Lavendar and Simeon was nearly as gut-wrenching as leaving them my Book, even though only half of it was left standing. The north wing had been practically obliterated in the accident. I was just lucky they’d found enough of my body to cremate it. Without my ashes, the Spell of Revelation was useless. The Book was fine, of course—you don’t perform risky magic without taking every precaution to protect your most valuable possession. Now all I could do was wait to see what happened.

The next morning, I shook so hard when Simeon and Lavendar appeared, I’m surprised I didn’t knock my urn off the mantle and secure myself an afterlife in a dustbin. I don’t know what kind of books they’d been reading, but they were clearly dressed to do some Serious Magic. They’d gotten their hands on a couple of academic robes and were fighting over who got to wear the “pointy hat.” I’ll spare you the gory details, but suffice it to say: you do not want to be on Lavendar’s bad side.

The two idiots sat down side by side at the table, reading my will and occasionally grinding an elbow into the other’s arm. After a few minutes, Simeon sighed.

“I just wish it could have been money, you know? If the book has the power to grant you power and fame...wouldn’t Uncle Avalon have been rolling in it? With enough money, we wouldn’t need the dusty old book anyway. And the manor is just a money *pit*—we’ll never be able to live here.”

“Mama always said he couldn’t be trusted,” said Lavendar. “Especially not with money.”

Lies! I wanted to shout. *You* try living for eight hundred years, and we'll see if you can make it through without the odd gambling debt.

They went back to reading. I really missed being able to grit my teeth.

Finally, they looked at each other.

"Let's do it," said Lavendar.

"Can't hurt, I suppose. Or rather," Simeon grew pale, "I guess it will..."

"It won't be too bad," said Lavendar. "We just need two small vials worth of our blood. You're lucky. You can just climb a ladder and you'll get a fantastic nosebleed. I'll have to prick my finger or something." She stood up and walked toward the kitchen. "Good luck and happy bleeding," she called behind her.

It's hard to admit, but I felt a tiny amount of respect for her at that moment. Not enough to make up for the pointy hat, but at least she wasn't a coward.

I'd been amusing myself by improving my ashy acrobatics for about an hour when Simeon and Lavendar walked back into the room, Simeon holding a bath towel to his face, stripped not only of his wizardly robe but also his shirt. Wow, that kid was pasty. Must have been some nose bleed. Lavendar gave him "a look" and smirked as she held up her left hand. Every finger was wrapped in a neon band-aid.

"Might be awhile before I can use it again," she said, shrugging.

What a showoff. I wish I could've told Simeon that she'd been shrieking like a laboring banshee the entire time that he was outside death-gripping ladders, but she hadn't actually made a sound. Still. Showoff.

Lavendar's right hand held a glass vial filled with dark red liquid. Well, blood. It was blood. Simeon had stuffed his vial into a pocket so that both hands were free to smother his face with the bloodied towel. Lavendar was growing impatient.

"Quit being such a baby. And please, put a shirt on. You're hurting my eyes." Nonsense, I wanted to say, your eyes have been hardened to such horrors—you look in the mirror every day. Though, to be honest, I had to be careful about insulting her looks. Lavendar had inherited an impressive amount of Avalon genes despite the centuries my sister's disappointing descendants had spent diluting the pool. The few times I'd been forced to spend time with these two in public, people assumed I was Lavendar's older brother, and Simeon some random urchin. We both had sharp chins and blunt noses, small gray eyes and hair the color of a seasick moon. Believe it or not, though, I'd often heard Lavendar referred to as "very pretty," while I had had several lifetimes' worth to grow used to pitying stares. So what do I know?

Simeon pulled the towel away from his face and glared. He must be *really* scared of heights. Lavendar had brought a small mixing bowl, and they emptied the vials into it. Then, she told Simeon to fetch me from the mantle. He didn't have to look so disgusted as he gripped my urn. It's not like it'll kill you! I wanted to shout.

“Now what?” Simeon asked.

“The will says to sprinkle every page with ash and a couple drops of blood. You take the ash, I’ll be blood.”

That was a strange way of putting it, but nicely delegated. I didn’t know exactly how the spell would work. That verbal component for the Spell of Revelation went,

*Ink and meaning fled the page
When Death broke soul from body’s cage.
But kin may read the manuscript
If ash be scattered, blood be dripped;
Then will the ash become the book,
The words revealed; take a look.*

So I was supposed to “become the book,” whatever that meant. I was definitely nervous. Death hadn’t been so horrible, after all. Sitting on a mantle as a jar of ashes is no picnic, but it’s no fire and brimstone either. Whatever happened next had a pretty good chance of being worse.

Simeon reached into my urn with a teaspoon. Everything went blank.

Hours later, I opened my eyes. Or rather, whatever the equivalent is when you’re dead, and a book. I saw a world dull and gray, with a giant crack running through an unsightly brown stain. It took me a few minutes to realize I was looking at the dining room ceiling. The implications of this were overwhelming. Was this going to be my life? Staring at ceilings? What about when they closed me and left me on a shelf full of lifeless books? I had a sudden vision of being sandwiched among corpses I couldn’t see. Books always seemed so calm—my one source of comfort, especially after Elizabeth—but here I was, the greatest Book the world has ever known, having a panic attack.

“It’s moving!” a voice shouted.

“Did it work?” a slightly more annoying voice asked.

In my agitation, I’d managed to rustle my vellum pages back and forth. Thankfully, the grating tenor of the voices brought me back from panic. Their faces suddenly loomed over me, breaking the monotony of the ceiling. I’ve never enjoyed those faces, but, well, I have to admit that I was a little bit grateful just then. Why oh why didn’t I repaint that ceiling before I died? I probably could have figured out how to summon Michelangelo or something. I was a wonderful wizard, if I do say so myself.

“Uncle Avalon?” Simeon whispered.

I gave a calmer rustle. Their faces grew pale.

“He’s there!” said Lavendar, stating the obvious.

I could tell that this was going to take some getting used to, for all of us. Surely I could do more than rustle pages. I was a work of power! I gave a useless effort to do something else...anything to feel less helpless. I'm pretty sure, if I'd had a body, I would have had that constipated, straining look. Most embarrassing.

I tried looking at my pages. They appeared to be blank. That was odd. The spell of revelation was supposed to live up to expectations and reveal what was written inside the book. What page was I on? Fifty-three? That would be...the Curse of Constant Tickling. Don't laugh. Of course it sounds ridiculous...but can you imagine anything more awful than being tickled without hope of relief? It drives the victim mad in a matter of weeks. It's a particularly awful spell, but my Book is a compendium of *all* the spells I discovered over the years, not just the ones for summoning poodles and moonbeams. I tried to remember the spell:

Rub your nose three times with a goose feather. Rub your wrist six times with a raven feather. Rub your feet nine times with an eagle feather. Rub your neck 18 times with a peacock feather. All the while, say these words:

*Whispy wicked weatherings
Ethereal featherings
Cursed till casket comes for you
And laugh till madness cackles, too!*

What can I say: I'm a wizard, not a poet. The spell works, anyway—tried it on a chicken, which I later ate for supper. It gave me that flittery feeling in my gut for weeks. But that's beside the point, which is: I'd like to see you do better.

"We probably could," said Lavendar.

Wait, did she just read my mind?

"No, I just read the book. You're right, it does sound ridiculous."

"You *ate* the chicken? After you cursed it?"

"Not one of my brighter moments, Simeon. Can we move on? Can you read *everything* I'm thinking?"

"How would we know?" said Lavendar. "We can read enough of it, anyhow."

I experimented by thinking something very insulting that I hoped would go unnoticed. No reaction.

"No, you can't read everything," I wrote, hoping it looked smug.

"Thank goodness for that," said Lavendar. "I'm sure that would be very dull."

This time, I let her read the insult. She grew red and drew back her arm as if to slap me. Would that hurt? I couldn't help but cringe, which just came off as a cowardly little rustle. She lowered her arm,

though. I suppose it might be dull, at that. Half the time, I don't pay any attention to my thoughts, so I can't expect them to. I allowed a bland but reconciliatory remark to appear on the page.

"Well, that's alright, then," Lavendar responded.

Simeon turned a few pages, looking for a more useful spell. They thumbed through the Book for the greater part of the afternoon, sometimes bored and other times a little too excited by what they read. It made me nervous. Occasionally, to break the tension, I'd insert a question about the broader world into the text.

"How are your parents liking the apartment?"

Lavendar glared at me. "There's nothing wrong with the apartment, but they're pretty ticked, as I'm sure you can imagine." I could. What I'd done was pretty insulting, but I didn't want Simeon and Lavendar's silly parents stepping foot in Avalon Manor. Thankfully, when you've got a lawyer as good as Constantine, you can work magic, in a manner of speaking. I left Avalon Manor to Lavendar and Simeon, but their parents weren't allowed inside. To smooth things over, I'd signed a five-year lease on a very desirable apartment in the neighboring town. The whole family could live there, and Simeon and Lavendar could come and go to the Manor as often as they pleased. It was quite a clever idea.

Finally, Simeon complained of a rumbling stomach, and Lavendar remembered she had something vital to do that evening, so the two left me in peace with that dreadful ceiling.

When a new sun had risen on what was, from my perspective, a dreary, gray morning, and Simeon and Lavendar had finally returned to the Manor after stuffing their faces with sugary breakfast bits, they had a Plan.

"I think we should start with the Potion of Power, followed by the Spell for Financial Comfort," said Simeon.

"Definitely," said Lavendar. "And then we'll attempt the Draught of Beauty and the Curse of Belovedness. Although why being beloved is a curse, beats me."

"Haven't you heard about the paparazzi?" I shouted onto the page. Unfortunately, they weren't paying attention. Being loved by everyone is no walk in the park—and means no walks in the park because you can't move two feet in a public place without a hug, a handshake, or some other nonsense. I'd cast the Curse of Belovedness on myself once when I was trying to convince an auditor to forgive a minor oversight. After taking five hours to move five feet down the street, I ran back inside and hid myself in my workroom until I'd worked out a counter-curse. So at least I knew how to right some of the wrongs these two were about to inflict upon themselves, not to mention the world.

Finally, they were standing over me.

"Sounds like you've got it all figured out," I wrote.

“Of course,” said Lavendar.

“Why—is there something we should know?” asked Simeon, somehow picking up on my sarcasm.

“Is there anything you *do* know?” I responded. Lavendar ignored me. Simeon scratched his nose, frowning.

“I know that I’m tired of being picked on,” he said. “And I’m tired of people making fun of my clothes, and for being too skinny, and...”

“Shut up, Simeon. I don’t think he needs to know all that. After all, he could have helped us out before, you know? When he was still alive?” She turned to me. “We’re going to make our wildest dreams come true, and you can’t do anything about it.”

We’ll see about that, you cliché-spewing bubblehead, I thought. I’d have to figure something out. After eight centuries of wizardry, I’d discovered that the greatest power lay in knowing that you *had* the power. Actually using the power only brought trouble. The best course of action these two could take would be to let it slip that they possessed a powerful spellbook that only they could read, and then shove me onto a shelf and leave me there until they died. Not that that sounded terribly appealing. But the governmental authorities had a convenient way of looking the other way when magic was involved. Maximum respect, minimum interference. It really was their best bet.

On the other hand, *I’d* never been able to resist trying out a new spell, even if it inevitably led to disaster. If I were handed a book full of completely new spells, let’s just say that, compared to me, a kid in a candy store would look like a sleepwalker attending a lecture titled *10 Ways to Grow a Turnip*. Sigh. Who was I to judge?

“Page five-hundred-and-seven, I said. That’s the page with the Potion of Power. But I really don’t...”

I was silenced as Lavendar flipped to page 507.

“Excellent,” she said. Simeon was shaking with excitement. I could practically see the visions of Lord Simeon, His Magnificent Manliness hanging about his head.

“You might want to read the fine print,” I suggested.

“What fine print?” said Lavendar. “I don’t see any.”

“I’m writing it right now,” I said. “You should probably grab a magnifying glass.”

If I thought about it, I could make my thoughts appear on the page in teeny-tiny print. Very annoying, but fine print isn’t fine print unless it’s basically illegible.

“The Potion of Power,” I explained, “has certain limitations. Rather, it has nothing but limitations, with one exception—the Power.”

Lavendar and Simeon looked confused. I didn’t blame them.

“Look,” I continued. “When you drink the potion, you do become powerful—but only in a very specific sense, and there’s no telling what that will be. You could develop extremely powerful body odor, for example.”

“Ew,” said Lavendar, wrinkling her nose. She turned to Simeon. “Let’s skip this one. Once we have the money, we can buy power, anyway.”

“No!” said Simeon, quietly but firmly. Lavendar stared at him before shrugging and gesturing toward the book. “Fine. But if you end up smelling like a truck of decapitated fish, you’re moving.”

If the little fool was going to risk it, there was nothing I could do. I tried to remember the spell. It was fairly complicated, but Simeon had me to walk him through it. The ingredients were standard household items—all the best potions use ordinary ingredients, as it saves uncomfortable trips to unsavory shops. They were lucky that I and other wizards and witches had done the hard work already. The invention of potions and spells is only one part ingredients. The more important part is the verbal component, and the most important part is the will-power that forever links the verbal component with that particular blend of ingredients. Of course, sometimes the end result isn’t quite what you hoped for.

“Take one part vinegar, an eighth part baking soda and one and one third parts dead oak leaves,” I wrote.

By the time Simeon finished, an absolutely unworldly stench emanated from a common mixing bowl. My sense of smell wasn’t what it used to be, obviously, but there was no escaping that odor. From what I could tell, Simeon had somehow managed to get the potion exactly right. It looked like molasses, only an unappealing dark purple color, like the congealed blood of someone who subsisted on a diet of eggplant and plums.

“Now what?” he asked me.

“Drink it,” I wrote.

He didn’t hesitate.

I cringed. Lavendar looked away, disgusted. Simeon began hacking, holding his stomach with both arms and twisting back and forth. Finally, he gasped, “Water!” and Lavendar ran to the kitchen, returning with a glass full musty-looking liquid. Simeon gulped it down. “More!” he croaked. I’ll spare you further details, but the little scene repeated itself about seven more times, Lavendar growing a little less concerned and a bit more annoyed each time. Finally, she just threw the glass’s contents in Simeon’s face. “You’re fine!” she snapped. “Unless that potion gave you a powerful thirst along with a powerful inability to move your own feet, I’m done.”

Simeon stood there, dripping wet, but finally calm.

“How do you feel?” I asked.

“I feel...different,” said Simeon, his voice a little raspy. “But I don’t know how.”

“Try moving the dining table,” I suggested. It’s massive. I had it commissioned back in the 1800s when trees were trees and people really knew how to build a good table. As my taste progressed in a more modern direction, along with the rest of time, I’d grown to regret the carved cherubim that hung around every leg, but at least it was impressively huge, if a little ridiculous.

Simeon stuck out his right hand and pushed the table. It didn’t budge. He tried his left.

“Try kicking it,” I wrote.

He tried. Nothing.

“Pinky finger?”

“Impressive,” said Lavendar, cutting in. “Can we move on?”

Simeon looked so dejected, I had to pity him. He really was a scrawny kid. I hadn’t been in school for centuries, but I have a few boyhood memories that had never grown less painful. If there’s one thing I know, it’s this: kids can be just awful.

“Hey, something happened,” I tried to reassure him. “You got that potion exactly right, I’m sure of it. Did it taste like vomit eaten off a tarnished spoon?”

Simeon didn’t look at me. Fine, then.

“At least I don’t stink,” he said finally. “We can try the next spell, I guess.”

It sure didn’t take much for him to completely lose enthusiasm.

“What page do we need for the Spell of Financial Comfort?” asked Lavendar.

“Thirty-three,” I replied. This one I was eager to show them. I hoped they didn’t notice that my pages were slightly quivering as she turned them. That’s a book’s version of snickering, apparently.

“Is there any fine print to this spell?” Lavendar asked. She looked a little threatening, as though she might rip me in two if there were, but I couldn’t see how that would help.

“No, no,” I wrote. “This is nice and straightforward. Money always is. Cold. Hard. Cash. Right?”

Simeon had recovered enough to look suspicious. But he let Lavendar read as the words appeared on the page.

“Arrange nine large coins and eighteen small coins in a circle on the floor in a 2-1 pattern. Weave in and out of the circle while chanting the following:

*Never want for anything,
Except a belly hungering,
Except a cold night shivering,
Except a home less comforting.*

*Except for empty plates and bowls
Except for stockings stocked with holes
Except for misery and pain
Except for anything but gain.”*

“I don’t like it,” said Simeon.

“Don’t be silly,” said Lavendar. “It sounds pessimistic, but it’s just saying that you won’t have to worry about all those awful things.”

Simeon looked at me for confirmation.

“Go ahead,” I wrote. “Nothing bad will happen. Here, I’ll help you. On the bookshelf over there behind the table is a metal box. Inside that box are coins I’ve collected over the centuries. I was very careful when writing this spell not to specify a certain coin because things change so quickly. As long as nine of the coins are significantly larger than the other eighteen, you’ll be fine.”

“Brilliant, I’m sure,” said Lavendar as she fetched the box.

They laid the coins on the floor and began weaving and chanting. Wow. I hope I didn’t look that uncoordinated when I did it. The whole thing was a mess of nearly-bumping –into–each–other and kicking the coins out of the neat circle they’d started in. Plus, their chanting was pathetic. All told, this was some pretty unimpressive magic. Still, the spell *was* pretty straight-forward, and I expected it to work all the same.

They came to the end of the spell, and stepped back from the circle.

THUD!

THUD!

THUD!

THUD!

Massive objects were dropping onto the floor in no discernable pattern.

“Run!” shouted Lavendar. They ran out of the room, dodging the objects as they fell. Honestly, I had no idea what was happening. Although it had been a few hundred years since I’d done this spell, I didn’t remember it being so potentially murderous. I did know that the objects dropping into the room were pillows and cushions made out of gold thread and filled with gold stuffing. I just didn’t know why there were so many of them, or why they were so huge.

THUD!

THUD!

THUD!

THUD!

Finally, it grew quiet. A few golden cushions lay on the table around me, but the cherubim-enforced legs kept it standing. Lavendar and Simeon crept back into the room, heading toward me.

“What. Was. That?” asked Lavendar.

“We could have been killed!” said Simeon, flailing his arms at me.

“I’m sorry,” I wrote. “It’s been so long. I only remembered having to dodge a couple tiny cushions, which I had faith you could do easily.” I was trying to butter them up a little. They looked awfully mad.

“They’re golden cushions!” I wrote. “Financial comfort. Get it? Haha?”

“You mean, we almost got killed by a magical *pun*? What about the creepy chanting?” Simeon demanded. This near-death experience seemed to have strengthened his backbone, I mused.

“We wizards like to have our little jokes. And that’s just how the spell works. Again, the cushions are *made of gold*. So what you’re looking at is enough gold to buy pretty much every country in the world,” I wrote.

“Except they’re cushions,” said Lavendar. “Is there a market for them?”

“There’s always a market for gold,” I said. “I’ll admit these are a bit unwieldy, though. Coins would be simpler, but that’s the way with magic. You can’t trust it.”

I hoped they’d take the hint and quit trying. Fat chance.

“Can we trust *you*?” asked Simeon.

Just not my memory, apparently. It was a little embarrassing, so I kept this thought to myself.

Lavendar rolled her eyes. “Let’s just assume we can’t, and proceed with caution.” She looked at me. “I’m not going to be frightened out of using this book. Actually...” She dug in her pocket, pulled out a lighter, and flicked it on. “I’m sure we can do without a page or two...but I don’t think you would like that very much. Would you?”

“Crap.”

She grinned wickedly. “I thought not.”

She wasn’t supposed to have seen that. Would she actually do it? She was bossy and a pain in my spine, but she wasn’t cruel. She read to shelter animals on the weekends, for crying out loud! She had to be bluffing, but I couldn’t be sure.

“Fine,” I wrote. “You can trust me.”

“Excellent.” Simeon was gaping at her. He, at least, wouldn’t even consider lighting me on fire, and somewhere, underneath his cringing self-loathing was a backbone that stood up for what he believed in. I’d have to work to get on his good side. Double crap.

“I think we’ve done enough for today,” said Simeon.

“You’re probably right,” said Lavendar, laying the lighter on table. I couldn’t see it, but I could feel it, hovering just an inch or two away, longing to consume me. I hoped I wasn’t going crazy, but I was starting to get that panicky feeling again.

“Hey,” I wrote. “Would you mind propping me up? The ceiling is *really* ugly. And while you’re at it, you could maybe put that thing somewhere else?”

They looked up. Lavendar wrinkled her nose at the ceiling and shrugged.

“Sure, we’ll prop you up. But this stays right here.”

She leaned me against the metal coin box then stalked out of the room.

“Simeon, please?” I begged.

Simeon looked toward the door to make sure Lavendar was gone, grabbed the lighter and left the room without a word.

Much better.

Now I had nothing to do but think, so I tried harder to remember exactly what had happened when I performed the Spell of Financial Comfort all those years ago. I was young, obviously—who but a young wizard wastes their time chasing gold? Try as I might, I couldn’t remember dodging a hail storm of golden pillows. In fact, all I could remember was a couple of smallish pillows gently popping into existence beside me. Not these bean bag-sized monstrosities. Maybe it was something that happened when two people did the spell at the same time? Or maybe...

NO!!! Oh, it was too unfair! Oh, why didn’t I have hands to punch things with? Or to drop my head into when anger gave way to despair? Oh, right, I didn’t have a head, either. It had to be Simeon’s Potion of Power. It must have enhanced his magical powers to the extent that any wizard alive would commit murder in order to possess them. Even dead, the thought was tempting. The idea of that little runt having more magical power than Merlin himself was too much.

And to think that, when I drank the Potion of Power, all I got was the power to grow nose hair quickly.

We do live in the cruelest of worlds.