

THE SCHOOL FOR SUPERVILLAINS



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Louie Stowell

FICTION
EXPRESS

What do other readers think?

Here are some comments left on the Fiction Express blog about this book:

"We're writing to tell you how amazing 'School For Supervillains' is. The best part is all of the cliffhangers that leave you hanging in suspense! [We] would love it if you could write another story with Mandrake in!"

**George and James,
Westacre Middle School, Droitwich**

"Just finished the last chapter of 'The School for Supervillains'. It was awesome but we want to find out what happens next – will there be a sequel?"

Class 5, Pulham Primary School, Norfolk

"I really love 'The School for SuperVillains'. It's great because it's interesting with a twist because she's landed randomly in this school for SuperVILLAINS when she actually wants to be a SuperHERO. Will she die a horrible death or live and face nightmares in that horrible school?"

DUN DUN DUUUUU! LOVE IT!"

Ellie McRorie, London

"'The School for Supervillains' is really cool! It had me on the edge of my seat all the way through."

Pigmyork, Hereford

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For Karen.

With thanks to all the young readers who helped to shape this book. I wish I could thank each of you individually.

Writing the original version of this story week-by-week, leaving Mandrake's fate in the hands of the readers, was nail-biting. But you all chose wisely, I think, and I now can't imagine the story turning out any other way.

Chapter 1

Welcome to St Luthor's

Mandrake DeVille sat in the back seat of her parents' armoured limo as it wound up the mountainside. A sheer drop fell away to the car's left. To the right rose a mossy cliff-face.

The bulletproof window reflected her face back to her: black eyebrows, naturally slanted into a scowl, a small, mean mouth, and a long, pointy nose. Her black hair hung over one eye in a sinister curtain.

It was an evil face. Mandrake wound down her window so she didn't have to look at it.

Far below lay a valley of dark trees, and she caught the faint scent of pine. On top of a distant mountain peak, she could see an ancient castle, with turrets and high, black stone battlements.

A loud BLIP BLEEP came from the car's GPS. Mandrake leaned forwards. "What's that?" she asked the chauffeur, sharply. "Are we close to St Luthor's?"

St Luthor's School for Supervillains was Mandrake's new school. She was looking forward to her first term

there about as much as a mouse looks forward to being ripped into mincemeat by a cat.

"I'm not sure what's going on," said the chauffeur, peering closer at the screen. He yanked on the steering wheel, but it didn't move. A note of panic entered his voice. "It's... I think someone's taken control of the car!"

What? Mandrake wondered. *My parents have excellent security. How could someone hack—?*

But then she stopped wondering.

She was too busy screaming.

The car was speeding off the edge of a cliff towards the wooded valley floor far, far below.

* * *

Mandrake knew in one part of her brain that they were plummeting downwards but time seemed to pause, hanging in the moment they soared off the cliff. Images flashed behind her eyes.

Then, a memory of her mother earlier that morning. Duessa DeVille was dressed for work in her Doctor Death costume, with its skull mask, long black cloak and spike-heeled boots.

"Just remember," she had said, as Mandrake climbed into the limo. "I checked your DNA carefully before growing you in the lab. One day, you could be as great a villain as I am. Who knows, maybe your telekinetic powers might even rival my own.

"Which means," her mother had continued, pointing a finger cruelly, "any failure will be entirely *your* own fault.