



Evil Comes Again

Dr. Douglas Courtney

Chapter 1

The rain poured. I watched. No emotion. No worries. It just was. Fascinating in its own way, the fall of water and strong winds gave a dance of nature observed through the windows of my home. Still, no deep emotion. Not even for the local doe that traversed the front lawn seemingly oblivious to the tropical storm angrily roaring about her. The doe stepped through the deep water in the swale and moved on. I saw metaphors for my current life. But I felt no emotions.

I waited for the electric to fail. It seemed to always fail in tropical storms and hurricanes. It was a facet of life in the tropics. It was one of the prices you paid for frequent sunshine and warm breezes. So far, no failure. So, I watched and waited. Hope. A small sliver of hope that maybe this time the electric would stay on built a safe place in my mind.

I didn't want to be alone in the dark. I didn't want to be alone in the rain. I wanted the pleasure of soft music or angry pundits on TV to fill the void. I didn't want to think about that day or that night. As sure as September fell into October, Halloween would come. With it the dark terror of what could happen. I would feel emotion then. Fear. I would feel fear.

Every year for fifty years it had come. Every year for fifty years she had held it at bay. But this year her mind had failed. This year, she wasn't here. Last year had been tough. Still, she prevailed, again. However, evil was patient. It was ugly, dark, malevolent, seeped into souls, and patient. Evil knew humans were mortal. Time was on evil's side. Year after year. It moved against her. Against us. Penetrating. Finding cracks in the defenses. Being repulsed. Then coming back again stronger, more determined.

I had fallen in love in high school. Typical puppy love. High school sweetheart trope that turned into something much more. It wasn't love at first sight. Gag. That would have been too tripe. No, we hated each other. She had such a darkness about her. Her deep brown eyes flashed hatred when she saw me. Even across the cafeteria, in the library, at school functions. We spent hours making each other miserable. Then days. Then months.

Finally, we found ourselves alone. We had spent so much time focusing on our hate for each other that we had driven off our friends and family. They left us to our agony while they went in search of pleasure and fun. With naught but each other, we reached out. An invite to the prom. A moment on a 'neutral' date. It was better to be with enemies than alone. But suddenly we weren't alone. We sought each other out for comfort, company. We shared friends, time, and stories. Personal stories. Stories of where we grew up. Stories of our families.

Time passed. Close friends came and went. But we remained. College, work, my gradation, hers, we sought more and more time together. Finally, it was inevitable. The ask wasn't unexpected. The response was. We married, not against our parents wishes, but not with them. They attended, both sides. As well as grandparents. Friends joined us at the reception. Life seemed difficult, hard, but good by her side. Except for the dark.

She always had a darkness around her. I have always been able to read people's auras. One of the reasons I seemed to always 'know' people on site. It was probably one of the reasons I hated her on site. She had a darkness around her. Not only darkness. Black. Deep void black. It was on her fringe. Never overwhelming. But definitely there. Especially during the Halloween season.

I loved Halloween. Always have. The naughtiness, the fun-filled scares, the candy were all so much fun. You could be anyone. Scare anyone. All in good fun. I dressed up. As we made our homes at various establishments through the years we decorated the house and the yard. One year I made a haunted house in our garage. Oddly enough, every year she was a witch. Always a witch. We laughed about it. It became the family running oddity. No sexy cat, no wayward nurse, no zombie, wicked queen, or evil sorceress. She was

always a witch. Nice looking one. Wore the best witch outfit. But always a witch. Our boys grew up expecting it. As boys will, they thought it appropriate about their mom.

Every year Halloween celebrations ended by 10 pm. Never really thought about it early on. Seemed time enough. City and town governments ended trick or treating at 9pm. Safety concerns. Clean up began quickly. You needed to get the pumpkins sorted if you didn't want them smashed on the driveway. Plastic goblins and ghouls of all types had to be put away quickly to avoid mischief or loss of property. Kids had to be in bed. School frequently was the next day.

Cleanup all done, kids tucked in, TV off and scary music silenced all by 10pm. She would give me a kiss, turn off the lights, and I fell asleep as my head hit the pillow. Never saw her take off her costume. Married men are used to women moving around in the night. Trips to the restroom. Last minute dishes to wash. The cat fed. The domestic things women do when her tribe is abed. It is expected. It was often her time. Time to be by herself, do her thing her way. Married men never question it. We just snore away. We learned early on participating in these moments led to arguments, housework, or existential discussions about relationships. Every subject we wished to avoid. Sleeping soundly at these moments led to a very happy marriage.

Years passed. Toddlers became teenagers. Teenagers became young adults. Young adults move out of the house, at least twice in their lives. You look around and all of a sudden you have been married 25 years. You are not yet old, but no longer a youth baseball coach. The house is at one of those times where it is empty. The boys haven't moved back yet, and you are thinking about maybe being an empty nest. Halloween is still fun. Moreso, perhaps. You actually have money to get that jumping large spider. The animated zombie is not out of your range. You still giggle at dressing up and giving out candy. Not feeding two extra boys saves a lot of money.

This is the year you carve four pumpkins. You buy big ones and take your time on the carving. A dark tent is placed in the driveway. A black rug is laid down, black lights, smog machine, and a real fire in a fire pit is blazing in anticipation of the small ghouls, fairy princesses, ghosts, and the latest Jason mask. But this year you decorate alone. The boys can't help. They are far away making lives of their own. The wife pitches in but you begin to notice the dark raven hair is not as dark. No grey. Just it doesn't simmer with the energy of youth. She is also tired. You wonder if she was always tired at Halloween. You realize you never noticed before. The boy's excitement and yours drove the energy of the season. Did you not consider her enough? Did you not care when she needed care? You begin to watch and worry.

She begins to get a bit angry at your constant attention to her health and enjoyment. Testy is the word. She assures you she is all right. She tells you that she has always been all right. As a husband you wonder is she just being a 'wife' doing the 'mom' thing. Unnecessarily carrying the burden, being a martyr to make sure her brood, her family is safe and happy. So, you do your 'dad' thing. Your 'husband' thing. You shut up and carve the pumpkin. You put up the decorations. You buy way too much of the 'right' kind of candy, heavy on chocolate less on suckers.

But you also watch. Time together has taught you how. Mom's get sick. But don't go to bed. Dad's send mom to bed. Mom's get tired. But don't rest. Dad's make mom rest. Dad's, husbands know the signs when she is trying to hard, expending too much. Because moms will. Her face turns a ghostly white. Her head tilts to the side. She throws the sponge in the sink instead of putting in the tiny basket. The signs are subtle. She tries to hide them because if she succumbs to her sickness somehow, she isn't a good mom. So, Dad's have to step in, get yelled at, and cursed until she falls asleep in the bed. Until she goes to the doctor, takes the medicine, and gets the rest. Until once again she can easily kick him in the ass and does while she giggles.

This is where I found myself on that Halloween 25 years ago. Watching for the signs. Carving a pumpkin on the counter while she swept the floor. Putting together the animated skeleton in the living room so I could catch glances into the bedroom while she straightened it up. Offering to make dinner or order out to see if she gave that 'too' tired look and acquiesced to spending the extra money that we really didn't have.

What I saw was tired but something else. A burden that didn't want to be lifted. An obligation that was becoming too heavy. Her aura was becoming brown the dark growing darker, getting larger.

Halloween came and she started to giggle in anticipation of the small urchins dressed in ghoulish attire. Her aura lightens just a bit from brown to yellow, but the dark was just as large. The trick or treat hour approached and she went to the closet for her witch's costume. She hesitated for the first time in a long time before pulling it out. The gown had been worn for at least 20 years, but seemed more ghoulish than before, not worse for wear. In fact, the gown seemed a bit alive, full of anticipation. I watched from my perch on the edge of the bed as she pulled it out. I wondered how no matter the weight gain or passage of time that gown always fit perfectly.

I pulled on my monk robes and hideous mask and looked forward to the night's stage of frightening decorations. I looked once more as my wife pulled on the dress. It was if she was reluctantly accepting the role. I watched in the vanity mirror as she zipped up the back. The dress transformed her. She became taller, stronger, more vital. Her raven hair grew darker, a bit longer. She reached down to put on the hat. Once on the veil was pulled over the face. Her white complexion shown through as her lips became full red without needed lipstick. She looked a bit as death. I receded even more and made my way to our outdoor stage before she could observe me looking at her in the mirror. I knew the darkness of the night would hide the transformation. I wondered why I had never noticed before.

I did notice the added decorations on her hands and neck. She was wearing what appeared to be antique and very expensive wrist bracelet and necklace. The bracelet was more of a jeweled glove without the glove part. It was a fine small chain after small chain embedded with jewels that anointed her wrist and ended in a focal point on her middle finger. The necklace was subtle but impressive about 2 and a half inches wide and looked like fine lace but was made with silver. It hung just above her chest and was woven with the finest craftsmanship. It too was embedded with jewels.

I asked where she got them. She laughed it off and asked if I liked them. She explained she had bought them at one of the renaissance fairs we attended years ago. She just found them in the back of her jewelry box and thought they would add to her ensemble. I was set to look more closely at the new additions when the first little witch with her adorable little brother ghoulish announce a loud 'trick or treat'. I forgot the moment and the jewelry as I handed out candy after candy, told stories and scared little ones just enough.

The night was a success, again. I got more than one good scare. A lot of laughs and some of the biggest eyes of wonderment from the smallest of cherubic faces. She and I closed down promptly at 9 and I made haste in getting all the gear in the garage. A proper cleanup would wait until tomorrow. With a heavy sigh and a handful of left-over candy I went to the lazy boy and stretched out. Soon my eyes closed, and I had a good rhythm of breathing going. For all intents and purposes, it appeared I was fully asleep. A not too unknown position in that chair during fall football games on television.

It was close to 10 pm when my wife lay the blanket over my reclined body. I stirred nary a muscle. She turned off the lights save for a small one in the kitchen in case I awoke and wanted to head to bed. Then she did something I had never noticed in 25 years of living with her. She, with her witch costume on, grabbed a witch's broom from the decorations and went out the front door into the night. I rose quietly from my lounge and look out the window to watch her make her way to the end of our property. There at the end she met a number of other women, all dressed as witches. Everyone gave a short bow or curtsy as she approached. Then they all formed a small group and walked toward the forests and fields at the edge of our community.

I exited the house quietly and followed at a discreet distance. No one noticed. It was hard to see a man dressed in dark monks' robes at this hour. It was also obvious the small group wasn't really concerned about hiding their stroll among the houses. Their walk was more meandering and familial than a direct march. They chatted and exchanged gossip as they walked. They took first one road, then the next. They picked up

more and more ladies, all dressed as witches, including hats and brooms. After almost an hour their number had grown to a bit more than a dozen. Then they walked into the woods and suddenly it became serious.

The mood changed, gossip and chatting ceased. The walk became determinant. There was a goal and a destination. At about 11:30 pm they came to a small clearing in the wood. It had to be more than a mile from the nearest population. In the center of the clearing was a circle of rocks. In the center of the rock circle was a pyramid of stacked wood. The ladies all took positions around the stone circle facing in toward the stack of wood. It became quiet. Very quiet. Neither cricket nor bird squeaked or squawked. Then it became strange.

I had taken a position behind a large fallen log. I could sit and watch while keeping my cover. I was close, but still discreetly back enough not to be seen. As soon as I and all those gathered had taken their positions. I saw my wife, my homemaker, the mother of my children, step forward and raise her broom. With a command in a language of which I had never heard the stack of wood burst into flames. Just burst. I was startled, but it was so unexpected I was glued to my seat. I didn't even utter a sound. All I could think of was 'damn'!

Then my sweet wife began chanting a guttural chant. As on queue the rest of the group began chanting as well. It became a rhythm and the group swayed back and forth in time to the chant. A feeling took over the forest. It became very close and very warm inside the forest. It also became frightful. Not just scary, but downright terrifying. I didn't know what was going to happen, but I did not like it. With every bit of my body, I wanted to run in fear. But my wife was there. I wouldn't leave her, and I wouldn't interfere. I had learned long ago to let her do what she wanted when she wanted. I was the partner, not the master.

I watched and waited. The chanting continued. Then a mist appeared in the circle. A black mist outlined by the light of the bonfire. It grew greater and had more form. It became liquid and hardened somewhat like a gooey black tar. A howl came out of a hidden mouth as the chant got louder and louder. My wife stepped forward her broom shoulder high and parallel to the ground. She shrieked and shoved the broom into the black, oozing form. She fought with that disgusting evil. She kept it inside the circle of stone. She gave it no quarter.

The goo struck her and struck again. Over and over, it tried to move past the circle of stone. Over and over again my wife pushed back. She wrestled with the goo. She hit the goo. She tore at it. She beat on it. She also got as good as she gave. Then I heard it. The chimes of the city hall clock. First one chime, then we were at 9. Then on the stroke of midnight the goo broke into a mist. Part of the mist covered my wife. The group of women stepped forward and quickly brushed off all the mist they could. I am sure they didn't get it all. But the mist was finally gone. Back into the ground from which it came. My wife fell to the ground. Her sister witches held her and stood watch as the fire burnt out.

When quiet returned to the wood. The witches took my wife's hand and led her back to community. I let them get a head start then moved quickly on a more direct route back our home. I made my way back to our bed and slid under the covers. I allowed myself to lay quietly in the dark. I heard my wife come in and make her way to the bedroom. Slowly she slid off her gown and hung it up. She lay her hat on the top shelf of the closet. After a few moments she made her way from the bathroom to our bed. She moved under the covers to my side and snuggled close. I turned to hold her. She looked up at me quietly.

"We'll talk in the morning." She said and then fell asleep in my arms. She had known all along. She always knew where I was. I smiled and fell asleep holding her.

Chapter 2

“There have always been witches. But not every woman is a witch. But all witches are women.” That is how the conversation started the next morning. I knew I wasn’t going anywhere until I heard this story. I called into work and sat back to listen.

As she talked, I found out that witches are of nature. They draw their power from the land they were born. They are at their strongest in the place of their birth. But anywhere they make a home allows them to draw their power into them. There are wicked witches and good witches, just like in the wizard of Oz. More often than not a witch, like most people are a bit of both. It depends on their life experiences and who or what teaches them about being a witch.

She went into detail about witches. She explained some of the do’s and don’ts. She confirmed there are spells, chants and even books with spells and chants in them. She told me how and why Halloween is so connected to evils, spells, and witches. She told me lots of things. And I learned and waited. I waited as husbands do knowing that what has to be discussed hadn’t been discussed. Knowing she was delaying. She was hoping I wouldn’t notice or would forget. Or that the kids would come by and interrupt. But none of that happened and I just waited. She gave up.

“So, that was all interesting. But what about me. What about last night, huh?” She finally acknowledged the elephant in the room.

I just nodded my head, took a sip of my beverage, and waited. I just waited.

“It began with my mom.”

She really didn’t have to say much more than that to let me know how messed up this was. Her mom had been dead for a few years now. She had died young, not even making 55 years of life. To say she her mother had issues was to seriously understate the definition of issues. Her mother never knew her real father. She was a bastard and was told she was more than once by family and friends as she grew up. Talk about warping your mind. A child constantly reminded by family and friends as they grew that she was nothing more than a bastard at a time that word actually meant something horrible and dirty.

Her grandmother never told her mother who her father was even though she asked. There was much speculation it was because he was Indian, a native American. Her mother had been born in the foothills bordering the Cherokee nation in Appalachia. It wasn’t unknown for a tall, dark, handsome warrior to entice the forbidden fantasies of white women. It was well known native American men often contemplated a dalliance with a white woman. Both were prohibited of course, by custom, current morals, and the history of whites versus native Americans. All of which made it more tempting forbidden fruit to both young white women and young native men.

When her mother was born with dark raven hair and brown eyes, gossip ran wild. But her grandmother never said who. Haters and blue haired moralists passed rumors that it was because she really didn’t know which warrior fathered the child. Because there were so many. But her grandmother remained steadfast in her silence never revealing a name. Years later her mother came upon some old black and white photos of a native American woman that she was told was her grandmother on her father’s side. But by then my wife’s grandmother had passed and confirmation was never given to her mom. She remained a bastard as far as she was concerned.

Her mother grew up poor with a fair-haired sister and a stepfather that did love her dearly. But her mother’s treatment by others, the disparity in looks with her sister, and her poverty challenged her. She didn’t sit idly by. She fought back. She fought back her whole life. If it was a vice, she tried it. If it was prohibited, she engaged. Her mother ran full head-on into life, drinking, smoking, dancing, and living. She found the most handsome man in her senior class and seduced him. They married. Then fell in love. He went to war. She waited. He returned and then her mother and father had my wife.

My wife's mother and father's marriage was a series of dramas. At one point my wife saw my mother chase my father up a hill with a knife. Her intent was bloodthirsty, and this was before my wife was a teenager. There were two more children in my wife's family, both sisters. There was never enough money. Her mother worked. Her father worked. They lived in trailers. My wife's mother often competed with my wife as she grew from child to teenager to woman. Their relationship was fraught with tension more so than most mom's and daughters. To this was the added mix of two siblings and the sister issues that just came with being sisters. Let alone sisters with a seriously deranged mother.

But it wasn't the birthright, life, or the poverty that made me understand this was a screwed-up story. Her mother had invited evil into her life. My wife's mother had unexpectedly, just around puberty, discovered she was a witch. Now her grandmother or aunts never mentioned anything about witches or witchcraft. Her mother doubted they would because piety in the neighborhood and attendance at Wednesday and Sunday services were requirements in their society. It was how you were judged by others. It was how you created your station and therefore your family's place in the community. A poor judgement by others could lead to loss of jobs, income, or even friendships.

Since her mother doubted the lineage to witches and witchcraft was not on the white side of her existence. She believed it had to be on the native American side. The side of her life she had no knowledge or connections. She was prohibited from even contacting the tribe. My wife's mother found herself a witch in the middle of the Bible belt with no mentor, no support, and no understanding. To even be found a witch could lead to ostracism for her family or even worse, death for herself. This was early 1900's. Lynchings were not too distant a memory for many.

My wife's mother coped and chafed and lashed out in her circumstances. Eventually with her new husband they moved from her terror and shame to a large city some 40 miles away. A city still steeped in conservative religion, but with a generous helping of liberal tolerance. From here she met people. She made uncondemning friends. Eventually one of those friends recognized the actions and results of an untrained witch. This woman made friends with her and introduced my wife's mother to other witches.

The story would be a movie at this point if my wife's mother had responded positively to this revelation and the offered friendship. But by the time she met this group, this coven, she was already lost. She hated herself, her life, and most of all the family that shunned her, the community that reviled her. It was a hatred that burned in a black heart. What my wife's mother learned from this group was how to get revenge. She was opened to black magic and embraced it. She became more of a horror, more of a torment than one could ever have imagined.

It was in this mode, this frame of mind when my wife's mother decided to gain her revenge. She wanted revenge on all those that hurt her, or she perceived did her harm. This is the point at which my wife began her tale. Where she started to really explain what she was doing each and every Halloween.

Chapter 3

“She knew enough to know Halloween was the high holy night of witches.” My wife began and then continued. “She formed a rock circle and built a bonfire in the center. She took an ancient book of black magic she stole from some lost old witch about to die. She read the incantations on how to bring evil, true black hearted evil to the corporeal world. She wanted evil to manifest itself. Once manifested she wanted it to look into the eyes and hearts of the people that abused her. Then at their highest fear she wanted evil to take them for evil’s own. My mother wanted to destroy these people with pure evil. But terrify them first for her amusement.”

I stared blankly as she told the tale. Having met her mother none of this surprised me. She was a hateful woman. Somehow, we had always gotten along. But that didn’t mean I didn’t see her deep anger.

“My mother did the incantations. Evil itself in corporeal form came to her in the circle. But it was an ancient book. Pages had been torn. Some had been eaten by rats. The whole incantation wasn’t there. She couldn’t control the evil. It went after her. My mother told me it was a terrible frightening experience. She beat and beat on evil. She tried so mightily to save her own life and reverse the curse she had laid. Finally, the bells of midnight chimed and Evil burst into black dust. Much of which remained on her.”

“You went back with her the next Halloween.” It was a statement. I already knew the answer.

“Well, yes. I had reached puberty a few years earlier. My witch powers were growing. But as much as I hated her, my mother let me know what was happening. She put me in touch with a local coven. They took me in and gave me training, friendship. I was introduced to other witches my age. It was here I learned that Evil would come looking for her every Halloween no matter where she lived. She was bound to it now by the curse and the black dust. Evil had taken residence in her soul.”

“That’s why her aura was mostly black.” I replied.

It was my wife’s turn to be surprised.

“You really can see the colors? It isn’t a trick.” Now it was her turn to make the statement.

I had always told my wife about my ability to see auras. She never dismissed this revelation, but I could tell she was never convinced, not until now.

“Well, my mother was now herself a victim of the curse she hoped to inflict on others. Every year she had to build a fire in a stone circle and fight Evil to hold it a bay. If she didn’t it would find her, consume her, and take her soul as well as her life. It was a fight to the death, every year.” My wife shrank back and took a drink as she related her tale.

“You got the dust on you.” Again, it was a statement not a revelation. I could tell because of the thin black aura surrounding her.

“The first year, yeah. I did. But my coven understood and the next year I was given the dress and hat.” My wife smiled at that memory.

“It protects you. Enchanted? Cursed?” I was a bit more than curious now.

“Well, a bit of both, I guess. Depends on how you frame it or define your words. They are made of powerful spells. The dust can’t get through. It can’t attach. Evil doesn’t penetrate. The dress also provides strength, power, a bit of youth.” My wife smiled at the last bit.

“So, it gives you an edge and protection. Also adjusts to the years, I see.” I teased just a bit. She returned the grin and tossed a dishrag at me.

“Yes. It does. But it can’t stop me from aging. It also can’t remove the evil that embedded itself the first year with my mother. Time, no matter what catches up with you.” Her smile faltered a bit. She sighed.

“That’s why your mother died so young. The evil ate her soul over the years.” I was beginning to understand.

“Un-huh. Well, that and the smoking. She did have serious issues with her smoking. But the evil is what claimed her. Doctors don’t put evil as the cause of death anymore. Her death certificate just refers to

her heart disease from smoking. But the physician new. He had seen it before. Plenty of witches had been to him over time.”

“What does this mean for us? What is next?” I was part of the conversation now. I was part of the equation.

“Hopefully many more years of torturing you and making your life miserable.” She teased but went on. “Really. I must fight every year I want to live. Each Halloween then is a battle. I will take my coven and fight the evil. Every year I win is another year to watch a sunset. Take a vacation. Be with you. If all is well then when I die the evil dies with me. We have no granddaughters. Doesn’t look like we will be getting any. The line of witches dies with me.” She said with a shrug.

“Wait, are you telling me that the evil could live after you if your lineage survives? Even if the granddaughter doesn’t come anywhere near the evil or evil’s dust?”

“It could. Evil is insidious, deceptive, and deceitful. A grain of evil, a micro-organism can grow into a full-blown curse. No one really knows thought whether it can be spread from mother to daughter. I read up on it when we had our first child. I was worried. The tomes and books tell of its existence after death in the lineage. But each was a special case or an odd characteristic of the carrier. None of which applies to me or us. Plus, the evil only lives in witches. We don’t have any. Still, I worried. Evil is a cancer. Evil is the cancer. Because of that I have always taken precautions.” She leaned over and kissed my forehead. Then she grabbed some leftover Halloween candy, her favorite beverage and headed to her perch on the back porch.

I took in all that she said and was grateful we didn’t have any granddaughters to worry about. But I didn’t tell her that the dark in her aura had grown since we first met. I didn’t tell her the dark was so much more a void than it ever had been. She had a life to live. There was enough terror in it. She needed her rest. She needed to be happy for as long as she was able.

Chapter 4

That was twenty-five years ago. I found out she wasn't only in the coven; she was the head of the coven. I found out she not only led this coven but was a source for many other covens. Her time and experience had made her a patriarch in this region and many others. That was the reason for the ancient jewelry on her wrist and neck. It was symbol of her station given by others of her kind in respect.

I also found out that attending her in her yearly fight with evil was considered an honor. Many witches jostled for position to attend. It was weird I know. But it was their way. Having me know her secret made it much easier for her. Our yearly Halloweens became much better, happier. Sometimes she even looked forward to the fight because it meant one more year with me.

I also kept my own counsel. As the years flew by the aura got darker and darker. It began to infect the warmer colors next to her soul. Her bright yellow turned a shade of light brown. Her calm blue became darker. It was subtle, but sure. Evil had infected her.

It was no surprise to me then when the doctor informed us she had early onset dementia. That was 6 years ago. The doctor had given us at least 5 good years, then who knew? She had fought hard at Halloween for the first 4 of those years. I watched from a distance on the year 3 and 4. She was strong. But she was fading. Then during the fifth year of her diagnosis, something wonderful happened. But a something that also worried us terribly. Our oldest boy gave us a granddaughter. He was too old. So was his partner. This was never expected. But miracles do happen.

Oh god my wife was so happy. So was I. But she and I were also so scared. I read our granddaughters aura the first day I saw her. It was all joy, happiness and no darkness, no void. We were relieved. My wife used spells of protection on herself to keep her evil from infecting the child. Then she applied the same to granddaughter. She took all the precautions. Her covens did as well. The child could not have been more protected. But still evil is insidious. We worried. Still she and I did hold that sweet child and spoiled it as much as possible.

On the fifth Halloween after the diagnosis, after holding her sweet, sweet granddaughter my wife went to the fight once more. She won. But evil knew his time was nigh. Evil would soon consume her soul. Her coven knew as well. If not the next Halloween, more than likely the one after would be the end. I cried and sobbed by myself. I had seen the fight. It was not the witch, the woman, I had always known. She was weak and frail. But she fought so hard for another year with me and with her granddaughter.

After that Halloween my wife put her dress, hat, and jewelry in a large ornate hope chest. They lay on top of all her runes, spell books, nick knacks and enchanted instruments of her craft. On top of that she placed a letter. A letter I wrote for her as she could no longer control her hands. The letter was simple. It let her granddaughter know she was a witch and not to be afraid. The letter explained why and what that meant.

The letter also explained the evil that she had fought and why. It explained her fate. How she would lose her soul to evil. But she would not be afraid knowing her granddaughter was free.

Finally, my wife said she was sorry she couldn't be there to guide her. She expressed all her love for her granddaughter so well in just a few lines of script. Then at the end in a very frail hand she fought to sign her own name by herself. The only muscle motion still under some control of her diseased mind.

I placed the letter on top of all the historical artifacts of my wife's time as a witch. With the letter was placed a list of all the witches pledged to help our granddaughter in the journey she would take without her. I closed the lid and sealed the box with an ancient lock and key. With the last click an enchantment grew on the box. A simple worded message appeared on the top; "To my granddaughter on the occasion of her womanhood." As the message burned into the chest the contents became forever locked, only to be opened by her granddaughter. I gave the box and enchanted key to my son. He secured both knowing the significance.

Shortly after delivering the box, what was Halloween had quickly become Christmas. Christmas turned to the New Year. We had another wedding anniversary, the 48th. Then Memorial Day came and went. Fourth of July passed quickly in the hot sun. Each holiday marked time as I lost more and more of her mind, more and more of her. It was obvious in September that she wouldn't even be able to remember it was Halloween.

I bought the candy alone. I set up the decorations. I carved the pumpkins. But my decorations were sparse. The pumpkins quickly cut with little design. I was so empty inside knowing her fate this night. She and I would be alone to give out the candy and make the scares. Trick or treat came and quickly ended. It was as if I was carrying a ton of burden as I went through the motions. Even though I knew what was coming, this Halloween had been important for me if not for her. It would probably be our last together. I walked her into the house and put on the television. As she settled in, I went out to put away what was left of our last Halloween. I was met with her coven.

They had come to stand watch. She had given of herself so freely over the years they did not want her to be alone. It was in this setting with witches in full regalia chanting in the moonlight, a small fire burning just outside the door I waited for midnight to come. The fight was to be no more. Once the final battle was lost, I didn't know how long I had, but I wanted as long as I could.

At a half hour till midnight though the mood changed. Warmth filled the house. A loud crackling came on the front lawn followed by a burst of sound. The front door slammed open. But it was not evil's darkness that entered. A bright orange and yellow glow entered the room. Then a shadow in human form passed in first, then another. Then a form followed. A form more solid, more defined but still opaque. I could make out a woman, but a soft distortion hid the finer details. It was as if the form was out of phase with this time and place. However, one could see a beautiful young woman. A young woman dressed in my wife's witches' gown, hat, and jewelry. The woman turned and looked directly at me, smiled, and spoke.

"Don't worry grandpa. We got this." The coven came in and with the help of the shadows they moved my sweet wife to the fire in the front lawn. A fire now encircled with stone. They sat my wife just outside circle and the young witch stepped inside with fierce determination. The chanting began and midnight approached. Evil arose in all its gooey form ready to take the prey so long denied.

As evil moved forward the young witch proclaimed. "You will not have her. Ever."

The fight began. But this time was different. Each blow of the young witches' broom diminished evil in a loud resounding boom. She drove it back to the fire and then into the fire. She hacked and hit blow after blow. Evil began to burn. A hissing scream could be heard as it dissolved into nothingness taking its evil dust with it. The midnight chimes began. The young witch screamed a curse on the flames. They burst into a ten-foot-high bonfire. At the final chime the roar of the flame, the chanting, the hissing all went quiet. You could here the horned-owl screech. Crickets chirped.

The coven fell quiet, then the young witch moved to pick up her frail grandmother. As she moved her into our home the coven knelt in respect and then slowly moved away. I followed slowly as old men are want to do. The young witch settled my wife before the television. I fell into my lounger. The young witch looked toward me.

"All will be explained grandpa. But it will take a few years." The young witch giggled. Then she gave me a peck on the cheek and handed me a piece of Halloween chocolate. As she moved to the front door, the shadows that came with her followed.

"I look forward to it, Kayla." I smiled as she headed out the door. She turned once more and smiled back. As she went out the door closed. With a clap of thunder and light she disappeared as quickly as she had come.

I looked at my wife as she slept in her chair. She was weak and tired. The disease of her mind was still there. She hadn't gotten a reprieve from that insidious illness. But the void was gone. Darkness was no longer hers to bear. It had been vanquished. She would pass. But in our time, not evil's. She would go as nature intended without her soul lost to evil. It was a great blessing. Her granddaughter had come through the

ages to save her. My granddaughters visit reminded me that a mother's love, and a grandmother's, only took a moment to take hold. I also remembered that this love was always greater than any evil. These thoughts warmed my soul.

I looked forward to holding my young granddaughter soon. Chocolate would be on the menu. Halloween chocolate if I had my way. But I did wonder if I could temper that attitude she got from her grandmother just a little bit.

"Nah. That's a lost cause." I thought to myself as I reached for one more chocolate before taking me and my wife to bed.