

The Witch's Passing



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Chapter 1

She had died. That was certain. There was no disputing her passing. Still the family and surrounding community wondered what was next. Grief yes. But what was next. Sarah was quite the powerful witch. Those who challenged her in life regretted the actions quickly and thoroughly. She defended those she loved. But they were few. Sarah hated those she hated deep within her darkened soul of dense black shrouded enflamed anger. It was said the devil himself feared her passing as even he had no protection against her evil and cunning. Sarah would rule Hell or at least a good portion of it.

Her husband and companion of fifty plus years was the love of her life. Only he contained her most impulsive and fearsome actions. If left to her own devices nature itself would have left the valley she lived leaving nothing but desolation and hungry crows.

It was an odd balance, Ed and Sarah. He was simply common but held a love for her that few men ever held for any woman. Ed was slow to anger. Loved children, his and hers. He worked to make a good life for all of them. He laughed, loved, and rejoiced in life.

Sarah was born of anger, raised in anger, and lived with evil. On her first meeting her dark eyes held him in suspicion. Sarah hated him immediately and surprisingly he hated her. They fought for months. Yet even in her hatred Sarah never submerged into her deepest wells of power to destroy him. She toyed with him, cursed him, sought him out to torture his daily existence. He responded with indifference. He overcame the curses, taunts, and torture with his indifference. He had never loved an idea or object so much that he would hold unto death that which was not to be. If he did not need or want in passionate desire, Sarah could not fix her condemnations. This inability to strike at his core infuriated her even more.

Then after months of jabs, retorts, and outright vocal hatred he asked her on a date. No one knew why. In the middle of a rant, he looked at her and smiled. Then he asked her out. Sarah was caught midsentence. Her mouth held open at the moment of the request as if to speak or even breath, but unable to do either. She was confused, suspicious, but also curious. Sarah said yes.

They were an odd couple walking down the street cautious observers noted. No one confronted them as they engaged in their night out. Most kept to themselves and snuck quick glances as they passed by. Sarah glided past in a black gown, black heels and her raven hair pulled back and braided in black roses. He walked tall beside her, proud in the moment and his partner of the evening. He wore a simple jacket, white shirt, no tie and a pair of clean jeans with loafers. Good god he was such a common man.

They chatted as they walked. He held doors open for her. He opened the car door. He walked on the outside as they strolled down streets. He was such the gentleman a few wondered if he had been cursed to be so. But no. It was him. It was how he was raised. Sarah loved it.

They ate little at diner as conversation filled the appetite. He was interested in everything she said. Sarah was ebullient in her interactions. The couple were so pleased to be sharing the evening it permeated the diner. A waiter even ventured close in the midst of the event. It became apparent instantly the moment was hers not to be shared. Her eyes flashed at the intrusion. A hand raised and the room became instantly cold. All the guests held their breath in fear until he reached for the hand.

He grazed her palm, and Sarah calmed. Her attention immediately back to him. No one bothered them ever again when they dined.

The next year was difficult for her between the passion and potions, the covens and the curses, and the gentle moments in his eyes. It was as if the whole community was going through witches' puberty with her. Indeed, it only rivaled the changes young women endure as they come of age. But this change was in attendant with the actual supernatural powers each young woman coming of age wished to possess. That year shook the community and her to its core. No one ever wanted to endure that again. But eventually he did ask her to marry. The very asking reduced the disruptions to a mere murmur.

It was by all and every account a strange marriage. He never interfered in her witchcraft, for good or evil. He supported her life choice and her coven. Sarah never interfered in his life choices either. He studied, wrote, and made a life. His efforts supported a good home and produced two sons by her wishes. When Sarah would leave on her many haunts and hatreds, he remained. She could be gone for hours, days, or weeks and still welcomed home.

Home. Their home. It was by every measure of the natural and the supernatural their sanctuary. It was an island in the mediocrity of man and the turmoil and chaos of witchcraft. A few times. A very few times witch, warlock, or human would challenge the walls of their fortress. If witch or warlock could break the binding spells and enter, the torment Sarah wreaked upon them paled to Hell itself.

If human made entrance to render or wreck their paradise Ed would challenge first. If his challenge wouldn't suffice, he stepped aside. Ed never looked back and never questioned the result. Even though others oft questioned the few fattened alligators at the close by swamp. The end result was that no one from anywhere challenged their refuge. All questions and actions by others ceased at the property line.

Oddly enough, this living arrangement allowed her to become a feared and terrifying witch. No coven, no demon, no human ever challenged her without serious injury or remorse. Her spells were binding. Her curses remained and grew. It was as if having a refuge, a safe place that neither judged nor hated, gave her freedom to pursue her destiny unencumbered. Knowing love, true love, at home, ended envy and gave her heretofore unknown strength in her spells.

They lived thus for fifty and more years. Her boys grew, one a warlock, one a human. Sarah doted on them both. But Sarah doted on no one more than her husband. Ed doted on no one more than her. Their love, however awkward to others, was deep and real to them.

Then Sarah died. Quite unexpectedly. It was a natural death. Also unexpected. By all accounts she lived with the paranormal. Therefore, it was believed witches lived supernatural lives. Which by simple logic would translate into very long-life spans well past the life spans of normal humans. But Sarah died quite simply after living what many would consider a common counting of life's years.

Ed was devastated. He believed he would have been the one to pass first. He was very unprepared for continuing without her. What was worse is no one knew what was next. A witch had died. A very powerful and vengeful witch had died. Her one true love was left to fend for himself. What did that mean? Were curses to follow? Would the sky fall? Heavens melt? Would life return to normal? What of him? What would he do?

Ed cried. He cried deeply, the pain encompassing his entire soul, until tears would cease to fall. Then after days and days of sadness he cried no more.

Chapter 2

It was early spring when Sarah died. Late spring came, then summer. No actions or issues came forth from the house they had shared. It was peaceful in the town. The town and neighborhood came to a daily normalcy unknown for fifty years. The house they'd lived in together he roamed now alone. When he was seen it was usually on mowing day. A simple John Deere rider mower prowling the few acres around the house. He wore a simple polo shirt and khaki pants. He waved as others passed by. They waved back. The town sank into a peaceful complacency.

Then the first leave fell in early fall. The feeling was subtle but felt. Many old timers in the town shivered as the feeling passed over the town. It was the dread of evil felt most often when Sarah was alive. Still nothing. Nothing unusual or terrifying happened. Until they started showing up.

First it was one. Then a couple of them checked into the local bed and breakfast. The odd, those dressed in black and dark. Some simple magicians. Others filled with the dark arts. Them. Those people. They felt compelled to come. Drawn as it were to this sleepy town next to nowhere. The last known epicenter of truly evil witchcraft.

John sat in a café window watching them arrive. John had come just hours after Sarah's death. He had attended the funeral rites. One of those invited by Sarah herself before her death. Witches' funereal rites were not in common with other religious rites. Their rituals and means of dispensing with the body and soul were much darker than other beliefs. So much so that to attend a rite one had to be invited and knowledgeable of what would happen. On the rare occasion a neophyte attended they were often horrified at the process. Attempts at calling the local constabulary were often made by such individuals and had to be very quickly silenced.

John had known Sarah before she married. He had known Ed as long as Sarah. Ed and John had become good friends. As a warlock himself, John had been expecting those in the community to come. He was surprised it took them so long. Usually those that wanted to pick at the bones of power came early. To John those that had recently come were not much more than the black-face vultures that populated the countryside. They could cause trouble, but for the most part they were harmless. It was the life practitioners, the legacy witches and warlocks, for which he watched. Sarah's powers could be a great prize if they could be gleaned from her bones.

Most everything that happened after her death had surprised John. The usual witch and warlock community celebrities had come for the funeral. Sarah was, after all the most powerful witch in generations. Worldwide her death had been spoken about, speculated upon, and dissected in all the best and least corners of the dark. Who would get her powers? Could they get her powers? What curses did she leave behind? Who would favor and falter at her death? It was a recipe for violent chaos. Yet nothing happened. The attendees were respectful at the funeral. No fights, curses, or malevolent attempts were made toward the body or any part of her remains. In fact, it had been most decidedly bland and simple. Not a witch's funeral at all. Especially with all that power that was there for the taking.

That is why John stayed. What was going on? Why no mischief? Why no subterfuge? There were no open efforts or even underground efforts to advance on her passing. What the hell was going on? What did the master witches and warlocks know that he did not? For John it was almost refreshing to see the riff raff called to the town. It seemed balance was being restored.

John saw the dead rat in next to the trash bin in the alley and smiled. He looked behind the bin and saw the leavings of a minor curse. Blood, presumably from the rat stained the pavement. John looked up and saw the leaves falling from the trees. The bereft branches starkly dark against the afternoon sky. He could feel the temperature dropping slightly, turning a hot summer into a chilly fall. Night came earlier each day and stayed longer each morning. The days became cloudy allowing less sunlight to fill the earth. The changes energized John. It felt better and better to him and those people as it became less comfortable to the community around him.

A small coven appeared in late September. Nine witches. They took up residence in an errant Airbnb just on the outskirts of town for the next two months. John watched each change with heightened excitement and expectation. It didn't pass John's thoughts that Halloween was just weeks away. That had to be the key to all the changes. He was sure of it. Even Sarah's great power couldn't withstand the sacred dark depths of Halloween's magic. It was the time when the veil between the living and dead was most thin. The time when the magic of the damned filtered through freely to the world of the living.

John loved Sarah and Ed, but he was a warlock. He had expected to gain and wanted to have a good portion of Sarah's powers when she died. Magic power was the lifeblood of his kind. The more you tasted the better your position. Yet, for reasons still unbeknownst to him nothing happened at her passing. No one, no warlock, witch, or demon fought for possession of her bones, her life's blood, or any remnants of her power before, during, or after the rituals. She was placed in her tomb. Locks, curses, and charms put in place and every being left in disgruntled peace. It was all so, well so common. He was fully expecting, fights, screams, blood, curses, spells, and vengeance. Nothing. Even John felt compelled to be respectful and leave after her funeral.

Outside the house, outside of Sarah's house grounds, John's mind cleared. He realized he had been in a state of confusion, some sort of charm or magic. He had watched as all the dark world luminaries left. Each seemingly in an equal state of distraction. Still the distraction shouldn't have been enough to stop the luminaries from seeking that kind of dark magic. Even after their minds had cleared, they chose to leave anyway.

Chapter 3

That is when he decided to remain and took up residence at the local hotel for the duration. He needed to know and wanted to know what kind of powerful magic could contain those powerful beings. He also wanted his share. He also wanted Sarah's magic for himself.

As the days passed whatever spell was cast at Sarah's funeral dissipated slowly, but it did dissipate. Each day John felt stronger, more himself. He took to wearing his traditional garb, black shirt, black pants, basically all black with silver dragon's amulet hanging from his neck. He placed his favorite fedora on his brow before heading to his seat in the coffee house where he could watch all that passed by.

He was there with a hot coffee when Marcus walked in. Things were definitely changing now. Marcus was not only powerful, but he was also a legacy and carried decades of experience with him. Marcus made his way over to John. Marcus had a short cape over his shoulders. The black exterior of the cape was offset by the dark blood red interior and a gold clasp at the neck covered in

diamonds and rubies in the shape of a skull. His hat resembled a black fedora but bedecked with a large raven's feather.

His clothes were of the finest kind all the way to his boots made of black leather and silver buckles. The description alone would make one think of an early American pilgrim. But the way it was styled was very contemporary. Marcus was a large man, white in complexion, and his seat creaked as he set himself upon its frame.

"Nathan will be here tonight." Marcus offered as he sat, then signaled the waitress for two more coffees.

John knew Nathan. He didn't know any warlock that didn't know Nathan. Nathan was equally as large as Marcus. Marcus and Nathan were brothers from other mothers. Both possessed crushingly efficient dark magic and enjoyed using it. The only difference most warlocks noted between the two was in their heritage. Nathan was born of deepest Africa. His dark skin counterbalanced Marcus' fair skin. Nathan was also a legacy with decades of experience and ancient power. The countenance on his face as he measured his victims was often enough to gain any advantage. In plain spoken language Nathan was scary as hell.

"Why did you leave?" John got straight to the point. There was no need for pretense or clarification. Each man knew why he was here. It was to claim Sarah's power or a portion thereof.

"There was no advantage. Whatever magic Sarah had placed on her corpse was ancient. Deep, dark, ancient and very powerful magic. It was subtle. Elegant magic. Only a master at her craft could conjure such a spell, such magic. Few save those with long experiences could even sense its presence. Most would just leave confused, disoriented, unsure of why they had refused the opportunity." Marcus responded while drinking his brew and staring at the passing strangers.

"Do you know its origins?" John was very interested now. He had a passion for ancient powers.

"No. We do know, like all magics, while it is most powerful during All Hallows Eve, it is also its most vulnerable. We will solve the mystery and take what's ours." Marcus dead eye stare at John ensured the seriousness of his words.

"You will have competition." John spoke as he stared at the latest visitors to the town. They were all dressed in various stages of darkness and mystery.

"They can have the leavings that jackals take after the lions feast." Marcus cracked a sly smile as his eyes flashed in vengeful excitement.

As the dark community gathered in this little town more and more of its permanent residences decided vacations until after Halloween was the better part of valor. A cottage industry of temporary house rentals transformed the quaint quiet community into a den of witches, warlocks, demons, and any other entity drawn to powerful dark magic. Covens openly paraded in the streets. Warlock and witches wore the costume and garbs they were most drawn and comfortable. Bonfires and castings were performed in the nearby woods almost every night. The time waiting for Halloween became a festival of evil, magic, and darkness.

Meanwhile Ed raked his lawn. He waved hello to anyone that passed by. They waved back regardless of whether they were neighbors, warlock, witch, or demon. He shopped in the town, purchased his groceries, got his car serviced, and did all the normal things any normal human would do. No one confronted him. No one trespassed on his land or his house.

As Halloween approached Ed decorated his home. Twelve-foot-tall skeletons stood tall in his yard. A fake cemetery sat just inside the entrance to his land behind the white picket fence. Sheets made to look like ghosts hung from the branches. Jack-o-lanterns littered his porch along with strands of fake spider webs. Ed smiled as each decoration was placed. It was as if he was totally unaware of the myriads of dark creatures hovering around his home, land, and town.

The tomb Sarah was laid to rest was just yards away from the main house. It was surrounded by old oaks and centered in a soft circle of the finest grass. When leaves fell from the trees, they fell away from the tomb leaving a cleared circle surrounding the structure.

The structure itself was a grand gesture commissioned by Ed. It was the size of a small house. Its construction materials were of the finest marble and granite. It has two large iron doors with intricate designs most of the dark community assumed were runes and spells. However, even the most learned didn't recognize the writings. There was a pentagram above the door. Snakes, the creatures Sarah loved best, were carved around two columns that bore the roof of the portico. Ed embellished all with lighting that gave a bluish glow in the night. It was noted that the entrance was positioned facing east. In addition, there was a capstone on a dome that followed the cycles of the moon.

All in all, it was a remarkable building even for those not of the magical underworld. For those in the underworld it was a structure fit for a queen of darkness. It was said that inside Sarah's granite sarcophagus rested on a pedestal. It was positioned just to the left of another pedestal waiting for its tenant. Around the room were runes, ancient hexes, and carvings of some of Sarah's best work. There were even a few side rooms for whatever Sarah or the devil desired.

Fall had fully come when the first intruders fell upon the land. The air was cold. All the leaves that cared to had already fallen leaving dark branches to whip in the night wind. The grass, except around the tomb was dry and crackled underfoot. The smell of damp and death permeated the air.

It was under a new moon with the only light available coming from a few flashlights and Sarah's tomb. By all accounts they were a minor coven trying to gain position and respect. Ed could be seen through the barren tree branches bent over the stove fixing a late meal. The group of 11 walked as quietly as they could over the grounds to the tomb. While what happened to the coven was never really discovered. It was noted by those in the community that the group did get on the grounds. Whatever curse or spell had been keeping them at bay was now reduced in power enough to let them pass.

Such was the desire for power that those in the dark community ignored the looks of terror in the eyes of the offending coven. The community couldn't be bothered that four of the coven were in the local hospital with wounds that wouldn't heal and limbs that wouldn't set. Those from the coven muttering and wandering around the town square were dismissed as weak and unworthy. Eventually the local constabulary found families and friends that came and took them home. Many were sent directly to mental help facilities.

There were two benches sitting in a semi-circle in front of the tomb. After the incident with the first coven some witches with more curiosity than desire came and sat quietly. They stared at the tomb, noted its delicate details, and the lock upon the door. They drew and took pictures of the runes carved into the tomb. No one. Not one could decipher what was written.

When they came respectfully and sat quietly Ed would usually come with tea or coffee to welcome them to Sarah's tomb. Often, he would sit with them chatting about the day or the

locations of their homes. He always deflected talk about Sarah and her witchcraft. He did speak lovingly about her. But never, ever brought up the dark side of her existence.

A second effort to gain her powers advanced just two weeks before Halloween. It manifested itself in a ritual dance around a bonfire just outside the entrance to the tomb. Twelve women dressed in naught, but cape and gown gathered wood and lit the fire.

Ed pulled up a chair from the porch and carried a cup of coffee in his hand. Ed liked a good dance and soft music keeping time with the beating of a drum. Ed kept a fire extinguisher close by just in case. The rite began just after eleven with the moon waxing. The fire grew and grew with each turn of the coven. More wood was placed on the pyre building to a huge bonfire easily seen from the town square. At its height the women dropped their robes. Ed got a full view. Apparently so did Sarah and Sarah was a very jealous witch.

A scream of anger bellowed out of the dome at the top of the tomb. A drenching of rain fell onto the bonfire extinguishing it immediately. In an instant an apparition filled with anger and the sound of fury fell upon the coven of twelve. It only took but a moment and all was quiet. The bonfire was out and a ring of twelve marble statues now filled the area before tomb. Each statue nude in appearance with the look of abject fear in their now stone-faced eyes.

Ed placed his coffee cup on the ground. Then Ed picked up the fire extinguisher. He rounded the place where the bonfire had burned and with meticulous attention put out any remaining flame. The next day Ed returned and cleared the bonfire mess from the perfect lawn. He raked all the debris into a wheelbarrow and piled in the now discarded and useless gowns. Ed moved the collection to his trash bins. Then he set the bins to the side of the road to be picked up by the town's garbage service. The new statues remained on display for the amusement or warning of any passing coven. It also permanently gave embarrassment to the consciousness still residing inside the stone. Sarah was nothing if not vengeful and evil.

Chapter 4

After the incident with the dancing coven, spells and mischief of the dark community began to falter. Bonfires became infrequent. The festivities and parties held by the dark community were now raft with suspicion, worry and much less joyful. Many in the dark community began to leave with the understanding that gaining Sarah's powers carried quite a high price.

John, Nathan, and Marcus watched them leave from their perch inside the café. Nathan spoke first. "Seems the pretenders are leaving. Makes room for the more serious folk."

Marcus snorted in agreement and took a drink from his cup. John just settled more comfortably in his seat. His steaming brew just at his elbow.

"I think I will take a look at the tomb tonight. Sit with its new guardian sisters and observe. I want to know more about the spells and charms. I need information." John mused while he sat.

"I'll join you. Seems there is much to be learned before All Hallows Eve. I don't think either of us has a plan or challenging spell of which we hold confidence." Nathan agreed with John.

"I'll be there. If nothing else but to size up the competition." Marcus took another sip.

So it was that about a week before All Hallows Eve, John, Nathan, and Marcus found themselves walking up the driveway towards the path to Sarah's tomb. John knew Ed would be there. He had called to say he was coming. After all they had been friends for decades.

Ed met them on the front porch. He had a hot cup of coffee in one hand and a spread of drinks for them on a table next to the porch swing. John noticed Ed had on a black polo shirt. John had never seen Ed with any other color than white, blue, or grey. But here he was sporting a black polo shirt. John figured Ed was just getting into the spirit of the season and shrugged the odd dress off.

Ed walked all three of them to the tomb. Ed talked like he was a suburban dad pointing out some of the latest fixes he had made in his manicured lawn. In this instance though he was speaking at length of the materials and design of his Sarah's tomb. Ed was quite proud of the tomb. He had designed it himself and took care of all the landscaping.

When they got to the tomb Ed took them on a small tour of the exterior, ending up just in front of the large iron doors. He took a sip of the constant coffee cup in his hand then made his way to the benches placed just in front of the tomb. As he walked past a couple of the new statues he brushed some leaves from their shoulders. Ed sat down on the bench and smiled a self-satisfied smile as the late sun shone through the tree branches. Ed was at peace when he sat with Sarah. While he was at the tomb it was as if she was still there.

John joined Ed on the bench and chatted about their past and time with Sarah. Meanwhile Nathan and Marcus carefully studied the tomb, the runes, and the enchantments placed on it. Quietly they cast spell after spell and curse after curse testing and retesting the strength of the charms. After an hour both made their way back to Ed and John. They sat and chatted with Ed some more. Marcus asked pointed questions about the structure. Ed replied to each question with a smile and honest sincerity. Finally, they all stood, said their goodbyes and walked Ed back to his porch.

"Ed is the most vanilla, unassuming, ignorant human I have ever known." Marcus shook his head as they walked back to the town center.

"I don't know if ignorant is the word. He is quite aware the new statues were created with magic. It just doesn't seem to surprise him. He is totally non-plussed about it all." Nathan studied an errant stick in the ground as his mind thought about their recent visit.

"How did he ever get Sarah to marry him? There is so much disconnect between their lives. She was a violent, angry, dark magic witch. He is. Well, he is just plain." Marcus continued.

"Made quite a bit in the markets without Sarah's help. I know that much about him. He isn't stupid or naïve. He just always forgave all her sins. With him she was normal, safe. Best I can guess as to why they stayed married." John commented as his mind went back to the black polo shirt. Why black? It was all John could think about.

"Well, the runes are weakening. So are the charms. By my calculations at the witching hour, they will be at their weakest. I recognized the runes on the door. It was ancient. Very ancient. Powerful also. I wouldn't expect anything less from Sarah. There is a counter curse. But it only lasts about 30 minutes.

We would have to get in, get the bones, and get out. We won't have time to do any power transfer rituals. We'll have to do them offsite. Plus, we probably want to keep the bones. They'll help in future spells." Nathan revealed.

"We'll need a diversion. Ed told me he expected most of the dark community that night. He wasn't going to be in attendance because he was sure Sarah could take care of herself. Also, his boys will be home that night. He wants to spend the time with them. All we need to deal with is the dark community itself. We take care of them we get our shot." John added to the conversation.

"I'll get the counter spells ready. I don't need any mistakes. Marcus, you and John come up with the diversion. We need everyone to leave the site and stay away just before the witching hour. We meet at the café at nine on All Hallows Eve to firm up the plan." Nathan directed the actions.

With plans put in place they all made their separate ways and waited for the upcoming All Hallows Eve.

Chapter 5

The day before All Hallows Eve John spotted Ed wearing his black polo shirt, a pair of grey pants, and black boots. The boots were trimmed in red. Other than his new garb he was the same old Ed. He waved to the neighbors, chatted with the shopkeepers, and talked with the kids. He gathered pumpkins for jack-o-lanterns, picked up bags of candy for trick or treaters, and drank hot chocolate. He was an every dad having fun on a holiday. But the dark dress did give John pause. Something was off.

All Hollows Eve finally arrived. Plans were made. The new statues at the tomb and the broken spells had driven off all but the most desperate and most powerful of the dark community. What could have been hundreds at the tomb that night had dwindled down to a couple of dozen.

John had been sitting at the tomb since just before dark. His job was, to the best of his abilities, discern what spells, charms, or deviousness the others that remained had planned. His perch in the branches of a large oak gave him a good view. He was able to discover six spells cast and another four charms. He called each into Nathan and Marcus. They made note of each charm or spell, concocted a countermeasure, and prepared to their own plan.

Night fell and the witching hour crept forward. Midnight to one a.m., sixty minutes, that was all they had. After that the counter spells and charms on the tomb returned to full life. They could be nothing more than statues in the morning if all didn't work well.

John watched kids in costumes knock on Ed's door. Each was met with a happy greeting, more than one candy bar, and even a small scare to two. John's eyes narrowed. All Hallows Eve wasn't a happy time for him. It was dead serious. He found no joy in what played out before him. This was his time. He, like Sarah, created their greatest and most evil magic on this night. It was grotesque and ugly, but very powerful. Just what filled John's dark, dark soul. It was only because of his sworn vow and fear of Sarah he hadn't torn Ed apart to gain Sarah's power. He really liked Ed. But John's soul was sold to the dark decades ago. What or who he liked didn't enter into it anymore.

Sixty minutes before the witching hour those left had gathered before the tomb. Bonfires were lit. Drums beat steady rhythms. Cloaks were prevalent, but no one dared disrobe. They weren't there to challenge fate once again. Sarah's jealousy was now set in stone.

At thirty minutes before the witching hour John began to notice confusion among the throng. Plans set in motion, charms created, spells cast weren't working. In many cases they were backfiring. A panic was setting in. Suddenly bolts of fire burst from the sides of the tomb. Sounds of thunder fell from the heavens. One community member fell in the fire, limbs askew, and neck broken. Blood was falling from the eyes, ears, and mouths of those in attendance. Screams filled the air and those that could ran for the exits certain Sarah was reeking her revenge.

In moments the tomb was bathed in silence. The only lights coming from the spotlights Ed put in place and a few embers from the flames. Nathan walked forth from the shadows and with a

wave of his hand extinguished the remaining flames and sent the bodies to whatever hell they worshiped.

John jumped down from the tree and walked over to Nathan. Marcus came out from the other side of the tomb. The three stepped up to the first step leading to the tomb. John conjured up a small fire. Marcus put his hands forward and placed a dark pot on the flames. He poured in herbs, chemicals, and other odd bits of organic matter. Then all three cut their palms and drained blood into the mix.

Nathan stepped back and opened his mouth to chant. Nothing came out. Nothing. He grabbed his throat. His eyes filled with fear. It was becoming hard to breathe. The night then went dark. Totally dark. Not a star in the sky. The full moon was gone. The spotlights off and the fire cold. They could hear the ground collapse but didn't know where to run or even if they could.

Suddenly a large roar filled their ears as the ground fully opened before them. A cauldron of fire and lava sprung forth. Sparks flew from the pit. The pit hissed as if full of thousands of angry vipers. The smell of sulfur filled the air. It became hard to take even the smallest breath.

The blackness around them burst open as in walked two menacing and angry demons led by a warlock. The warlock's eyes burned of fire such was his anger. The demons were as minotaur's. They stood roughly 12 foot high. The heads were of beasts with large horns. Their bodies that of the most muscular man and their legs the like the largest bull with cloven hooves.

The warlock descended on Nathan throwing him with one flick of his hand to the smallest of the two beasts. The largest of the beasts fell on Marcus. When done with Marcus, this large beast with blood marked face stood to confront John. John shrunk in fear at his fate.

"Ed. No. Mike, Charly. No." A voice came from behind John. It was a voice he had heard many times over the years. Sarah glided down the tomb steps as an apparition. While her form was fading in and out her words were clear.

The two beasts stopped in their tracks. The warlock ceased his anger. It was as if they were chastised in the most loving way. John stood up slowly, unsteady, and faced the apparition.

"Oh, my dear, dear, John." Sarah's apparition eerily spoke. "My family was never protecting me from demons, witches, or warlocks. I was protecting the dark community from my family. As you see now, my magic had to be strong, because they are quite powerful. You're safe, for now. But I will not intervene again."

Sarah nodded her head. The beasts threw Marcus and Nathan into the pit. Sarah disappeared back into her tomb. The pit closed, the beasts left, and the warlock flew off into the night.

A distant church bell chimed twelve times. The witching hour had begun. In an hour the charms would return in force. After the demons and warlock had left the night sky returned and the spotlights on the tomb flickered on again. The moon shown down steady on the statues. John sat down on one of the benches. He was shaking as Ed appeared from the shadows. A cup of coffee in one hand. A strong drink for John in the other. Ed sat down next to John and looked at the tomb. It was as if he could see Sarah lying quietly inside.

"She always ruled the roost. This was her home. It always will be." Ed sipped his coffee as John took a long sip of his stiff drink.

"The runes and spells are from ancient Minoa. That's where I'm from. Well, at least my family. Worshiped the beast. The beast looked like a strong bull in their drawings. But well, it was something entirely different as you now know." Ed took another drink on his coffee.

The Witch's Passing

John just sat, listened, and drank his drink. It seemed Ed wanted him to know, and John was in no state to stop him.

"That's why no one can get in. That type of magic has been lost to the dark community for thousands of years. Only a Minoan knows those runes and spells now." Ed turned and looked at John as he made the last comment. The obvious inference hung in the air. Not confirmed, just hanging. John nodded his head.

"When I met Sarah, she had such great potential. I was just enthralled with her. It had been decades, centuries since I had ever met anyone like her. Oh, the evil and mischievousness just burned inside her. Being who I was her evil to others never bothered me. I reveled in watching her rise to her new powers.

Everyone was so obsessed with her it allowed me to be just me for the first time in a long, long time. You know, I don't think you could ever understand the thrill of creating a perfect front lawn. But I digress." Ed took another sip of his coffee then turned back to finish the story.

"When the boys were born Mike had the instincts of warlock. Charly turned at six years old for the first time. Sarah became more evil and more depraved with my help. We figured it had worked for me, why not the boys? So, Sarah became more powerful and took the spotlight off our lives. The reason no one bothers us is well, me, Mike and Charly aren't exactly without our own magic.

You are right of course. Even Minoan magic becomes more vulnerable at All Hollows Eve. That's why Charly and Mike are here. They don't want anyone bothering their mom. She sacrificed so much for them." Ed put his cup down and stood up.

"Now John. John. Look at me." Ed said.

John turned and looked at Ed.

"John if I were you, I wouldn't be telling anyone about any of this. Sarah made me promise because of our long friendship not to hurt you. But tonight, I think you heard that I wasn't bound by that promise anymore. I like you, John. The boys like you. You've been a good friend. Let's not mess that up." Ed picked up his cup and headed back to the house.

John shivered a bit at the warning. John noticed Ed was wearing his white polo shirt and khakis. He had on his sneakers. Somewhere a church bell chimed. It was one in the morning. The witching hour was over. John took his cup, walked to the front porch and placed it on one of the small tables sitting there. Then he walked quickly to his room in town. He had to be somewhere else today. Somewhere far from here.