

Witch

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“Burn her!” the villagers chant, pumping their fists into the air, faces filled with savage rage. I look at their raised blades and see my fearful brown eyes reflected upon them. Gripped by desperation, I use the sharp edge of the wooden frame to saw at the bonds on my wrist. Pain slithers up my arms like a snake being descaled, but I continue to saw away. When my bonds finally slip away, I immediately sprint towards the forest, the only place that might be safe. Villagers cower at the mist as those who got lost in it never returned.

I run through the misty, dark forest and the shouts start to fade. The trees lean over and watch as I stumble over my torn, bloody crimson dress. My heart stutters, my head pounds, and my hand starts to shake. I want to rest but a gust of cold wind makes me freeze. I whirl and see a young girl approaching, her hand reaching out. I see her eyes. Her eyes burn like incinerators of the soul, glowing like a river of flowing Ichor.

Without saying another word, the girl turns and walks away. Stunned, I start to follow but when I try to reach out for her, there is nothing there. A large lake appears through the mist, and I feel a swell of relief. As I near the edge of the lake, I feel a hand dig into my back and push me into the water.

Immediately, I know something is wrong. The water was too warm and dark, and a blanket wrapped around me, pulling me deeper.

A cold, bony hand clutches my ankles and yanks me further down. My eyes flash open. I stare down at whatever is pulling me and see the same keen yellow eyes staring up at me, its spectral face twisted into a wretched grin. The creature has long and spiky claws that could penetrate my bones. Its lower body resembles a snake with jagged black scales that has patches with nothing at all as if something ripped it off. Two claws sink into my leg, drawing blood. I scream soundlessly and try to swim upwards but as I get close to the top, its tail curls around my right arm, trapping me. I look up desperately, running out of air. A blurry silhouette of the girl flickers above me.

She kneels down. The monster yanks me. She reaches out a hand.

I take it.

Then, with unnatural strength, she pulls me out of the water. The monster thrashes, trying to hold on but its claws rip out of my skin. I shriek in pain on the shore and the girl smiles at me. I suddenly realize that I don't feel pain anymore. I don't *feel* anymore. I look into the water and

see my reflection. Reflected are my yellow eyes, a ghost of what it once was. I turn and look at the girl.

I reach out a hand.