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about 1240 words

THURSDAY THE 12TH
By Paul Lambrecht

Witches are the brides of Satan, some say. They feast on the innocent blood of infants and spit out the clean bones. Or they worship the spheres and their anima and movements.

Whatever they do or whoever they are, I don't trust them. I think one killed my mother one Thursday the 12th of November.

She and I were cleaning up after a messy witch one summer day. A broom would have seemed out of place among her many evil implements.

All of the witch's things ended up in black plastic trash bags. It's like we were helping the absent witch pack her bags for a long holiday in Hell, and when she got back to her room in the duplex, she'd be all set to go.

But the witch was in jail at the time.

So we were going to give away the witch's things.

The jailed witch would emerge from the pokey and have to start from scratch. No tear-stained prayerful beseeching letters from her extended circle of family. No shiny patent leather boots, no syringes, no whips and chains.

Poor witch would have to accumulate these evil implements again.

The witch would have to track down her so-called friends, who hadn't been paying the rent while she was in jail.

They would tell her that the landlord and her kid had set the trash bags out on the curb on trash day.

She would put hexes on the kid and his mother. She was not a good-natured witch. Then her scuzzy friends would ask her titillating questions about the lock-up and

offer her a joint, and she would forget her ghostly poverty for a moment.

The witch's friends had a new apartment which they were already desecrating. The witch had a new address for the beseeching prayerful notes from her extended family.

The witch had a faculty for nosing out money by practicing the world's oldest, and most honest, profession. Sometimes she got paid in drugs or other gifts.

She built back up her witchly store of scandalous possessions. Whips, chains, leather garments, heels, vinyl skin-tight body suits, wigs, leather-printed thongs, and assorted other racy camp.

The witch saw some of her old things in a thrift store one day and flew into a blackened rage, knowing that her charms and implements were available for the whole secular world. She put a curse on all of her diasporic possessions.

She had to walk everywhere because her car had been impounded and auctioned off for court costs during her recent incarceration. The air was very cold and the streets were very dingy and dirty. She walked to the flophouse where her friends malingered. She started bitching about her things being gone again, but then did a line of meth and again forgot about her ghostly poverty.

She had a friend who was a stripper who had a kid and tried to keep a nice apartment and decided she didn't want anything to do with the witch. She was trying to get her life back together.

But the witch cried and prevailed upon the stripper friend with guilt and she was allowed to crash in the spare room.

Here she made a pile of magazines, dirty clothes, occult books, and syringes. These last got her evicted by the angry stripper friend because there was a toddler innocently clambering about.

The witch added curses and accursed persons to her list. The witch was walking, ghostly poor, and mad at the whole world and everyone in it. Curses spewed from her rotten mouth, crackled through her matty dyed skunk-swathed hair, radiated from her acrylic nails, frosted from her gaunt and distended belly with the dull pewter navel jewelry.

Rotting from every pore and orifice, cursing the world, the witch raised her hands to cast a spell on the frozen arctic city she inhabited. The grey air and sidewalks, the cold mud and slush everywhere further inflaming her icy-hot hatred.

The words of the spell echoed resoundingly in the cold caverns of the witch's heart. She felt a power she had ever only been dimly aware of.

She fully felt herself capable of cracking the vault of the sky asunder and letting in the seething dark underbelly of duende to reign in this universe.

But this didn't happen unless it happened in the addled witch's brain. But that doesn't make it real.

Doesn't mean it really happened.

The witch was kind of nuts. She walked fast, stormed down the street, in the vague general direction of her friends' apartment. But she passed by that particular den of iniquity and found herself standing, about an hour later, shuddering from the cold, in front of the old duplex where she'd been divested of her old witch-kit.

There was an old woman salting the path leading up to the witch's former side of the house.

"You the landlord?" asked the shivering witch, teeth clacking.

"Yes," said the woman, taken aback and standing up straight. "Who are you?"

"I lived here. I think you threw out my belongings."

"Oh yes. You must be the girl who was in prison."

"Right. Well, look lady, you don't know who you fucking messed with." She pealed off a glassy cacophonous and toothless laugh.

The old woman calmly reproached the girl, as if she wouldn't truck with such coarse language.

"Take it up with your friends, dear. They could have taken your stuff with them, but they chose to leave it strewn about the bedroom. What was I supposed to do with it?"

The witch sneered bitterly. The old woman's face remained stern and impassive.

The witch tried to focus her evil magic through the old woman's eyes, into the portals of her skull.

The old woman's expression never changed.

"Are we done here?" she asked.

The witch seemed lost in her eyes. Sad even.

"You're weird," said the old woman.

This snapped the malevolent mesmerized witch back to the moment at hand. A definite mismatch of potency.

"I'm sorry about your things, dear." *Weird things. Unholy articles, but who am I to judge?*

"Can I have some money?" asked the witch.

This caught the old woman off guard. She reached into her pocketbook and fished out a clean crisp twenty dollar bill. It was alone in the crease.

"Do you have change, dear?" asked the old woman lips pursed.

She frowned as the witch shook her head.

"No, of course not."

"Here you go," she said, handing the urchin a bill.

"And try to find a better class of friends, dear. Good luck."

She went back to salting the walk.

The witch muttered thanks and walked back towards her friends' apartment.

Her black magic had won the day.

The old woman clutched at her shoulder now that the witch had disappeared around the corner. The bag of salt fell from her arms and scattered grains over the sleek burnished concrete of the path.

A shrill cackle rained its fury and opprobrium on the palpitating old woman.

The air was clean and crisp as angels, tears streaming from their glassy eyes, flocked to the site of this sacrifice.

The witch felt a rush of thawing warmth flow into her frigid genitals, but it still felt mighty cold out, her fingers as blue as the breathless face of her onetime landlady.

The sky an unwholesome forever grey.

END.