

Sarah the Witch

by Cerrid Wynn

Sarah always imagined herself as a princess when she was a child, lovely and kind, quiet and graceful. Secretly she suspected she was really a witch. She didn't have green skin or scraggly black hair, and certainly no flying monkeys. Maybe those came over time, the more bad things you did, the more ugly you became until all the world could see how horrible you really were.

Her magical talent seemed to be transforming seemingly ordinary people into monsters. So enraged were these people at the transformation she caused, they would often attack and hurt her. Try as she could to understand what was expected of her to be the princess she hoped to be, it always seemed it was a moving target, and she always did something wrong. As a child she couldn't be still, her voice was too loud, she talked too much, she had a terrible singing voice, she was too skinny, her nose was too big, and on and on she would be told about her faults. She believed every one of them. She tried to correct them. She tried to remember there were consequences for what she chose to do, but somewhere along the line she quit caring and began living in the moment. She became willing to suffer the consequences later, no matter how severe for just a little bit of enjoyment in the present. She would sneak cookies, and go into rooms she was forbidden from entering, look through things she wasn't supposed to... She would be punished no matter what, so what did it matter?

As an adult, it certainly seemed she'd transformed her husband George over time. He was a coward and she hated him for it. At the same time she pitied him and was determined to find some way to reverse the spell. He seemed so strong and brave when they first met, pleasant and outgoing. He was sweet and romantic, a real prince Charming, fit for any aspiring princess. Over time though, Prince Charming melted away, and he magically transformed into someone who was afraid of everything, convinced everyone had it in for him, even possibly Sarah. He covered all the windows of their

homes with thick dark curtains and blankets, always afraid of someone peering in their windows and spying on them. Their doors would remain locked at all times and windows were not to be opened for fear of thieves and home invaders. She felt like she was forced to live in a cave. During the times he had a job and was at work, she'd open every single curtain, and if the weather was nice, she'd open every single window to breathe some fresh air. She felt smothered by his presence, her punishment for being a cleverly disguised witch. Who else but him would want to live with a witch?

He had a fear of landlords. Whenever they ran into financial trouble, he would duck and avoid them like they were a plague. She was often the one who would go to them and explain their financial situation and ask for a little grace. Most of them were kind and understanding. They hadn't spent enough time around Sarah to become monsters yet. George always told her it was because she was a woman, and people were more prone to feel sorry for women.

George was afraid of large bodies of water, so Sarah was no longer allowed to fish or go boating, or even really swim for that matter. Every activity outside of their dank little cave became a threat that could cause George to lose Sarah in some way. Walking at night could get her mugged and killed. Walking alone in their neighborhood by day could get her raped. Working outside the home might mean another man would take an interest in her, and she might cheat on him. The women she worked with were whores and a bad influence on her. He was afraid people would think him less than a man if she were the one working and he wasn't. Driving could get her into an accident. And water... water she could drown in, like someone else he knew. The whole world was a danger to her safety and her love for him. Even friends and family held the possibility of turning her against him or seducing her away from him. He was afraid of everything, and nothing she could do, no matter how much she loved and reassured him, would ever assuage those fears. She began to hate him.

He was always worried about what people thought of him, always afraid they would perceive him as weak and afraid. He tried so hard

to be a warrior, even though many times, Sarah found it just made people giggle behind their hands because it made him look foolish. She could hardly be mad at them. His antics were quite foolish, but it still made her angry they just fed into his insecurities without realizing the damage they were doing. Every fear had a rationalization. His parents were to blame. His siblings were to blame. His teachers and his schools, his peers growing up, everyone was to blame for the way he was except him. He evoked an empathy from her for all of his misfortunes because she knew how cruel people could be. She'd seen it first hand. She'd caused them to be that way. But she also resented him for valuing his image over her. When they would argue it was always more important to him to note they were creating a scene, and people were looking than to address why they were arguing in the first place. His public image was more important than their relationship over and over and over again. He often accused her of talking down to him and trying to make him look stupid. She hated his insecurities.

She began to once again not care about the consequences, how angry he would be, the insults he would hurl at her, the threats he would make to his porcelain doll he was so afraid would be broken or lost. She began to do things anyway, and suffer the consequences later, if only to stubbornly demonstrate to him he didn't have to be afraid. She was fine. She was devoted to him and she wasn't going anywhere, despite her resentments. He hated her for her naivety and blind trust of the world around her, despite all the monsters she'd seen in her life. She knew very well what dangers lay about the world around her, probably better than most, but she refused to be afraid of them. The only thing she didn't refuse to be afraid of was him. She would only push her limits so far with him. Who else would want to be married to a witch?

But as time wore on the efforts became exhausting on all fronts. She gave up on being a princess, and stopped caring if she transformed into a witch. She suspected she was one all along. She knew it finally when she started having guilty daydreams about George dying in a tragic accident. Everyone would feel so sorry for

her, while secretly all she could feel was relief she was free. She had guilty daydreams about meeting THAT guy who would convince her he could give her a happier life, and she'd run away with him, someone who was bold and reckless and wasn't afraid of his own shadow. After they had children, she plotted how she would slip out one night and call her family, ask them if they would help her come back West. She would find a job, and a place to live, pay child support, and then fight for custody. These thoughts always left her feeling terrible, and only reaffirmed she was indeed a witch. Only a horrible creature would have such thoughts about someone they cared about. She just had to be better, to love him more, to show him he could trust her. She'd married him for better or worse after all, and there was still a chance at happily ever after, wasn't there? Even for a witch?

Over time she transformed. Fear began to freeze her, fear her life was slipping away, and she was destined to be unhappy, because after all she was a witch. She was afraid she would never do things she'd always talked about doing, and she would diminish away into nothing, into oblivion, utterly forgotten. Completely disappearing was the price she would pay for her inadvertent spells. People would say, "Oh her. I don't know what ever happened to her. Who even cares? She always brought out the worst in people." She was afraid she was trapped by George's fear for the rest of her life. She was frozen by fear of the unknown. She could no longer tell who had transformed who. But she had to be the one who was responsible. She was a witch after all. There was no sense in pretending otherwise.

