

WITCHES AND GHOSTS AND ASSORTED ODDBALLS

A DRAMSMIT CHILDRENS ADVENTURE

A crack of thunder punctuated the flash of lightning that brightened the entrance to the old haunted manor, illuminating the youths standing there.

“So, what do we do now?” asked Sharron of her two cousins. At five foot two inches she was a tall, twelve-year-old. Her dirty-blond hair fell straight and long down her back.

“I am sure aunt Abadelle would recommend we leave this to others,” answered her younger cousin Chip. Eleven years old and shorter than Sharron by a few inches he had unruly sandy brown hair and greenish grey eyes.

“Thank goodness she isn’t here. Then we would miss all the fun,” said his older brother Wally with a big grin on his face. Quite strong for his age of thirteen Wally was only an inch taller than his cousin Sharron and had medium red hair and brown eyes.

“Besides this is something we can’t leave to others and you know as well as I that it can’t wait another day,” continued Sharron as she pushed open the door. “Little Timmy has been missing now for two days. If a ghost keeps him for three days he may be lost forever. Since there are no other witches in the area it is up to us three to find him.”

“Hey I am with you guys,” replied a petulant Chip. “I was only saying if. Anyway, Aunt Abadelle knows we have the power to take on a measly ghost.

“Then it is settled. We go in and investigate,” Wally said over his shoulder as he followed Sharron into the manor. Chip was close behind.

The manor was musty and dark, a typical haunted house. They faced a large circular stairway and beyond that was a corridor that should lead to the kitchens. To their immediate left French doors stood ajar leading to a library, and to their right was another corridor that could conceivably lead anywhere.

“Why is it that all these haunted places are so predictable?” asked Wally with a sneer on his face. “Any minute now a ghostly presence will make itself known with weird noises and a glowing presence. Ho hum.”

“Well, that is what we want after all,” snapped back Sharron. “We need to draw out a ghost of some sort. Even if it isn’t the one who has Timmy, it will know all the other ghosts in the neighborhood, and should lead us to the right one. I figure it must be Redeye. According to the bio I read on this house he had a fondness for little boys in real life. He never did anything with them, but didn’t like to let them leave. There was an old dungeon-like place somewhere in the sub-basement where he kept them, sometimes for years.”

“You could be right Sharron, but I heard another tale in town.”

“What tale Chip?” asked Wally.

“They say that the original mistress of this manor lost her only child in an accident when he was ten years old. Since then, she lures any young boys that come near the house so she can have a son again.”

“Whichever it is this ghost sounds like a keeper, and will not release Timmy without some persuasion,” Sharron laughed as she shook the bag she had in her hand. “The spells are all prepared and no ghost can resist us.”

“Then let us call forth a ghost,” said Wally.

“And how do you propose to do that?” returned Sharron.

“Like this,” answered Wally as he pulled a hammer out of his belt and started banging it against the wrought iron portions of the banister.

After a minute of this Chip reached over and grabbed Wally's arm in mid swing.

"All you are succeeding in doing is breaking our eardrums," he complained.

"Watch and learn," was the response.

Sure enough a few moments later they heard the regular tell-tale noises of an approaching ghost, the tinkling of wind chimes, the creaking of stairs, and the rattling of chains. This was followed by the usual oooooooooohhhhhhhhh sounds.

"Why do these ghosts always try to sound like they are in pain?" asked Chip. "Any witch worth their salt knows that ghosts can't feel physical pain."

"It appears to be a female ghost," said Sharron. "And she has a ghost child with her. It must be the one you were talking about Chip. Do you want to question her Wally or shall I?"

"You do the honors Sharron. She may answer another female with less bother. Maybe we won't have to use all of our prepared spells that way."

"Okay then let's get to work."

The three separated and formed a triangle, setting a bottle of greenish fluid on the floor between them. They started the words of the spell in perfect unison, having had much practice working together. The ghostly presence was drawn forward and soon was positioned directly over the bottle and unable to move away.

"Okay Miss Ghost," started Sharron. "I am sure you recognize a standard ghost entrapment spell. You also know that with it I have the power to vanquish you forever. So, you will answer my question. Do you understand?"

The voice that responded surprised the three youths; in that it didn't sound ghostly at all. If they had not been able to see the presence, they would have sworn it was just a regular mistress of a manor in today's world.

"You do not need your spells to trap me. I came to you of my own volition. I know why you are here. I suggest that you leave here as fast as you can and never come back, if you value your lives."

"I don't think you understand who we are Mistress. We are witches, and quite strong and knowledgeable in what we do. No ghost can harm us. We will not leave here without Timmy so you might just as well tell us where he is."

"It is you who don't understand. I am not the one threatening your existence, and I am not the one who has Timmy. He is lost to you now so please leave here as fast as you can before you are lost too."

"Look Mistress Ghost, whoever you are," interrupted Wally, "If it is not, you it must be Redeye, and no ghost, no matter how strong, can stand up to us. So, either tell us how to get to Timmy or prepare to be vanquished."

"You are probably right, that no ghost can stand up to you three. I can feel your power and you are very strong for your ages. But I am afraid you do not know what you are dealing with. Very well, if you really want to be lost forever proceed. You will find him down in the dungeons. Just go through that door to the left there, push the secret panel open, I am sure you witches will find it, and go down, until you can't go down any more. You will find him in one of the cells there."

"You were right Sharron, it must be Redeye," said Chip.

"Okay ghost, you are free to go," gestured Sharron as she released the spell.

Instead of leaving right away the ghost turned once more to Sharron. "You have been kind and I hate to see harm come to you. I still think you should flee this place before it is too late, but I can see in your eyes you won't. So just a word of warning. Prepare your spells well, but not for ghosts," and with that the ghostly presence disappeared.

“What do you think she meant by that?” asked Chip.

“Oh, she is probably just trying to play games with us,” answered Wally.

“I don’t think so,” returned Sharron. “There was something in her voice, like a real concern for us. There also seemed to be something she wouldn’t or couldn’t say. Like someone was holding something over her.”

“Now that you say that Sharron, I think I felt something out of place too” said Wally. “What other spells did we bring with us?”

“Well, I think I remember packing a super vanquisher spell that should work against most supernatural and spiritual creatures, replied Chip. “As well we have most of our powers at full strength so we have the levitation spell and all its variations. And there may be a few others in the bag. I grabbed a number of items off our shelves. That should do us against anything we will find here.”

“Still, I think there is something else we are missing,” said Sharron. “I want us all to clear our thoughts and open our senses. We have to be prepared for anything and to use any modified spells we can think of in a pinch.”

“What’s that noise,” asked Wally, as the tinkle of broken glass followed the sound of a crash.

“Over there,” said Chip his voice a bit higher pitch than normal.

Emerging from behind a wall desk was a black cat.

“Nothing to fear here.” laughed Sharron. “It’s only a witch’s best friend. What are you doing here little creature?” she asked as she bent over to pet it.

“Since it’s only a cat let’s proceed,” said Wally putting action to words as he strode towards the door. “If this is like most of these houses the secret doorway should open like this,” and with a twist of a wall brick the panel opened inwards and the light from behind showed a narrow stairway.

Muttering a spell under his breath Wally produced a globe shaped light, reminiscent of a will-o-wisp light though much brighter, that floated in the air above him, what is commonly called a witchlight. He then led the way with Sharron right behind him, then Chip, and trailing right behind the black cat.

Although narrow, the staircase soon opened up to a wider corridor. On the left was only a solid brick wall, but on the right spaced fifteen feet apart were three solid steel doors, with grate windows. What was unusual was that there was light coming from the windows. Turning to Sharron, Wally was about to ask which door, when he noticed that his brother was no longer with them.

“What happened to Chip?” he exclaimed.

“He was here a minute ago,” answered Sharron, her voice trembling a little. “Chip where are you,” she yelled.

“Prepare a seeker spell, Sharron. I will try to do a sense of the area to see if I can pick up any vibes. Shoot even the cat has disappeared.”

“That’s it,” yelled Sharron. “That’s the missing link.”

“What do you mean?”

“Well how would a cat survive all this time here without being fed.”

“You’re right. Do you think there is a person living here?”

“No Wally, I suspect something much worse, and much more dangerous. It is all coming together now, the ghost saying it is something more than a haunting, the disappearances happening the way they have and this cat showing up when he did. Chip disappeared because he is almost the same age as the others. No I fear something much worse. Hand me the spell-bag over there where Chip left it. I want to see something.”

Not wanting to interrupt his cousin when she was putting together a spell, Wally handed her what she asked for and watched her weave her spell. With a toss of some back powder, a few words and some intricate movements of her hands Sharron called forth a vision. It appeared in front of them, an image

of the black cat, and as they watched it turned into something else, something hideously ugly.

"It is as I feared, a shapeshifter," Sharron sighed.

"I am sorry I am not fully read on these creatures. I do know they can assume almost any form, but only for a brief time, but other than they I don't know much."

"Well Cuz, Shapeshifters can be very dangerous. Their natural form is so ugly that they try always to change it. But each form they take can only stay with them a short time then they go back to their original form. Being that ugly has a tendency to drive some of them a bit crazy. They feel everyone hates them, and that no-one will ever care for them."

"How can we defeat this thing? Are they very strong?"

"When they shift, they take on both the appearance and strength of whatever form they take. So if it were to become a lion for example, it could tear us to pieces. And one more thing. Most spells are ineffective against shapeshifters. They have almost a natural immunity to magic."

"Oh great," exclaimed Wally. "Something that can kill us easily, but which our natural powers are useless against."

"Well not entirely useless. We might be able to levitate him for a couple of minutes."

"And then what?"

"And then we use our natural ability to think. But first we have to find him. Have you completed preparations for the seeker spell?"

"Almost. I just need your help here to spray the water as I do the incantation."

Wally did the incantation as Sharron tossed some water from their bag of magic articles into the air and watched as the drops of water formed into an arrow and pointed them towards one of the steel doors. Of course, any non-witch would have been amazed at this display. To these two young witches this was a normal, everyday occurrence.

"How can they be through that door? They never passed by us."

"Remember Wally, it can take on any form. It could have even become a ghost for a few minutes."

"Wow, I never thought of that. I sure hope you have something planned. This could get mighty dangerous."

"My real hope is that it is a young one, only recently come to its powers. But we will see. Lead the way."

The door opened easily to Wally's touch. No locked door could stand long to a witch. The corridor in front of them was long and narrow. Individual jail cell doors were spaced evenly on both sides. But to none of these was the water arrow pointing. Instead, it pointed to the end of the hall, where there stood, partially ajar, a massive wood door.

"I don't like this," said Wally. "It reeks of trap."

"That is exactly what it is, and that is why you are going to walk into it," answered Sharron.

"Say what?"

"Chip and Timmy will be in there, most likely chained to the wall or under some type of potion induced enchantment. The cell will probably have some type of spell inhibitor inside. You will have to be prepared for that and use the fortifier powder to break through the inhibitor and free them."

"And what, pray tell, will you be doing while I stick my head in the noose?"

"I will be busy with our friendly shapeshifter. Just trust me, I have a plan."

"Well, I certainly hope so. Aunt Abadelle will be very disappointed in us if we never come home again."

Wally prepared himself and then walked directly into the jail cell. It was just as Sharron described it would be, Chip and Timmy in manacles, and Chip obviously under some sort of spell to prevent him from using his powers, even should that have been possible. Wally felt the inhibitor surrounding him and it made him ill, knowing it was fighting to smother his magic, a part of him that had become like his own blood since he came into his power last year. There was one thing though that Sharron had missed. There were five other boys also chained to the wall, and not in the best of shape, although none seemed seriously hurt.

This would make things more difficult. While fighting the inhibitor spell he had to free seven prisoners, somehow release his brother from the potion enchantment, and watch out for any other surprises left behind by the shifter. He hoped Sharron would keep the Shifter well occupied, or they would all be in big trouble.

"Please let us go," said one of the boys.

"Don't worry I am not your captor. I am here to free you."

Wally saw the boy looking at him, at first with fear in his eyes, that changed to hope, and then to wariness that seemed surprising in one so young.

"How do I know you are not him. He changes you know?"

"It is okay kid. A shifter can't hold a human shape for more than a couple of minutes and then it takes him so much concentration he could not talk as I am now. No, I am a witch. There is another witch in the hall now ready to take on the shifter if he comes back. We came to rescue little Timmy over there, and the one beside him is my brother, also a witch, but of course we will take the rest of you with us. Now what I want you to do is yell if you see anything coming, while I start to release everyone. Can you do that?"

"Yes," said the youth his voice trembling.

Quickly Wally went to his brother, pulled a bottle out from his pockets, unstopped it, and forced some between his brothers' clenched teeth. Within seconds Chip's eyes opened and slowly but surely, they focused on Wally's face.

"Okay little brother are you with me now?" Seeing his brother nod Wally continued. "I am going to need some help with this uninhibitor spell. For it to be its most effective it is best with two witches. You just say the spells as I do the hand motions, since I can't undo the manacles until we can use our powers."

Just then they heard a noise in the corridor. It was a banging, followed by some shouting and a scuffle of some sort.

"We had better hurry. I don't know how long Sharron can hold that shifter alone."

"Shouldn't one of you go help her?" asked one of the chained boys.

"Don't worry if Sharron were to really need us, she would call. Right about now I would be more worried for the shifter," replied Wally trying to ease the youth's fears.

The two worked fast, and soon the spell was complete. Within seconds they felt access to their full powers return. From then it was only a matter of a quick passing around the room with their magical powers, unlocking all the manacles, and some minor amount of healing to the boys to make sure they could get up and walk out.

"Okay kids, stay behind us," commanded Wally as he and Chip prepared to open the door, only to discover that the door had been barred from the outside. Just then they heard something crash on the other side.

"Hurry Wally, Sharron is in trouble," yelled Chip. The two boys put their hands against the solid wood door, in unison said a spell, and with all the force of their power shoved on the door. Whether it was a weakness in the door, the power of the spell, or their fear for their cousin, they may never know, but

the door exploded into thousands of tiny splinters that flew outwards, most of them embedding into the back of the Shapeshifter that was standing between them and Sharon.

With a howl of pain, the shifter turned to face his new adversaries, changing into a large gorilla as he did so. The two brothers prepared to launch the worst spell in their arsenal, a super strength levitation spell to launch the shifter at light speed into the stone ceiling above them. Suddenly Sharron leaped between her cousins and the Shifter, yelling at them to stop.

“Move Sharron, you are going to get us all killed,” Wally’s eyes narrowed in anger as he faced her.

“I will not let you hurt Herman,” she said as she glared back at him.

Looking over Sharron’s shoulder Chip noticed that the Shifter had already changed back to his natural form and was now hunched flat against the wall, whimpering like a whipped pup.

“It’s okay Wally. Sharron is right. Look at him now.”

Wally looked to where his brother was pointing, and his look of anger changed to one of pity. “What has happened to it?” he asked as he turned to Sharron.

“It was as I feared. He only took on his shifter form recently and he is young. He was a normal looking boy, just like all these others. He was abandoned as a child and the couple raising him, kind though they were, did not understand his magical background. They probably saw him shift occasionally when he was very young but did not understand it. As you may know Shapeshifters retain a completely human form until they start to become an adolescent. He just changed to a shifter form a few months ago, and as you can see to most humans he is an ugly looking creature. Non-talented humans can’t see the beauty in him, only the outer ugliness. The loneliness was driving him crazy.”

“But why did he kidnap all these boys,” asked Chip.

“Because they remind him of his old friends, and in the case of two of the lads they used to be his friends. He thought it was the only way he could have friends still. He meant no harm and may never have hurt them, but then again when a Shifter goes through his crazy times one never knows what might happen. It is a good thing we came when we did.”

“Then what was that crash we heard,” demanded Wally. “You scared the heck out of us.

“You see that large piece of glass on the floor? That’s what is left of an old gas light hanging on the ceiling. It fell down and Herman stepped in front of it so it wouldn’t hit me.”

“What will happen to him now?” asked one of the boys. “He was once my friend and I would not want anything to happen to him.”

“Well, we will take him to a place where other shifters live so they can raise him as one of their own. As long as they are helped at an early age they can come to be as good as any people.”

“That is good,” said another of the former prisoners. He never really hurt us, even if we were scared.”

“Now all we have to do is to summon a member of the council of witches without Aunt Abadelle finding out,” said Chip; the worry easily read on his face at the prospect of facing their Aunt after the adventure they had just had.

“We may just as well call her ourselves and face our punishment,” answered Sharron. “She will find out anyway no matter what we do.”

“You are right about that cuz,” laughed Wally. “Let’s just call her now so we can go home.” And with that the small group marched back up the stairs, with the Shapeshifter being helped up by two of his former prisoners.