

A Witch's Storm

by Violet Sylvestre, grade 6

Friday the 13th, 1801. My birthday. The sole thing that makes me a devil, Satan, a *witch*. The witch trials ended a month ago, but everyone still believes in witches. They won't kick you out of a village for it, but they will treat you differently.

Ever since I was a child, I've been dressed in all black to signal to others that they should stay away from me as I am "dangerous", when in reality, I wouldn't hurt as much as a fly. Well, maybe that's a lie. I *hate* flies. I wouldn't hurt so much as a *butterfly*. I don't mind dressing in all black, though if I had the choice, I'd pick a more vibrant color, like baby blue, or *turquoise*. I've learnt these shades of blue from a book I've retained from the library, one of the few places I'm permitted to go. The park is off limits. The young girls dressed in pink and white and blue see my dark clothing and scurry off like a pack of rats. No one really visits the library, so that's where I typically go.

I am permitted to go to school, though I wish I was not. In fact, I am not permitted, I am *forced*. My mother and father do not wish to spend any time or money on me. The school can not refuse, as my father is a very famous publisher, and if he were to write anything even remotely bad about them, the news would spread through town like wildfire and they would be shut down in the matter of only a few days. They make me someone else's problem as quickly as they can, like a game of hot potato. Though, I don't get much of an education as the teachers refuse to help me and I often fail quizzes.

The second I open the front door to my house, the strong smell of whiskey hits my nose. I bolt for the staircase leading to my room. The smell of the alcohol is enough to make my eyes water. Halfway up the staircase, I hear my father yelling.

“Hey witch! Go back to where you came from!” He’s definitely drunk. He wouldn’t *dream* of saying even a word to me while he’s sober. He’s afraid I might curse him, or poison him or something. I can hear him and mother whispering about how they should just leave me out on the cold streets. It used to sicken me to think they spoke of me awfully behind my back but now it’s just normal to me. The whispering, the stealing, the drinking. It’s all just a part of my day to day life. I’m certain the only reason they don’t kick me out onto the ill-kempt streets is because I might use “witchcraft” and curse them. I didn’t get dinner that night.

On my way to school, I see people crossing the street to avoid a large dog. They must’ve taken note of my dark clothing.

At school, the other children's eyes stick to me like chewing gum to my hair on picture day, only temporarily breaking contact for a piece of school work, or a teacher’s attempt to make the children pay attention to their explanations.

When I first came to school in kindergarten, the other young girls would run and scream when I made attempts to speak to them. Now, I simply ignore them. Though sometimes I can still feel their eyes digging into my back like daggers when they think I don’t notice.

Mathematics class has just begun. Math is the only class I enjoy. Not only am I somewhat good at it, but the other students ignore me as they are too busy trying to figure out what “ $x+2$ ” is equal to, when it’s very clearly 5.

Driing! The final bell rings. *Finally free.* Well, sort of.

The walk home was relatively peaceful. No strange looks, or women ushering their children away from me. It was when I got home that the true trouble would

begin.

Whiskey. Mountains of whiskey. Father must've gotten a really good deal at the liquor store. I read some of the labels. *Elijah Craig, Laws Whiskey House, Markers Mark*. I mustn't make a single noise as father passed out on the sofa. *Balvenie, Bladnoch, Bentrach...Bingo!* "Buy one, get 20 free"... Really? They must've had a lot of trouble selling these. With mom out of the house, and dad passed out on the couch, now might be a good time to nab some food. I don't usually get the standard three meals a day that other children may be used to. As I open a cupboard, the rusted hinges squeak. All I can do is hope that my father does not wake. I open it only to see a few bananas and some canned fruit. I reach for the canned fruit... And drop it... Father sits bolt upright.

"Witch!" He screams. "Go back to where you came from!" That might as well be his new catchphrase by now.

"I don't have to listen to you!" Though I know this won't end well, I can't control myself. It's almost as if there is a flame within me, but once it is lit, there's no diffusing it. He hesitates, seemingly unsure whether or not he should respond.

"I am your father! You will do as I say"

"You have never been a father to me!" The living room seems silent. He doesn't dare move an inch. I feel the tears begin to sting my eyes but I don't care. I need to finish what they started. "You have been horrible to me my entire life!" My tears are hot as fire as they stream down from my eyes to the bottom of my chin down to my neck. I can see that father— or William, as that is his real name— is distraught, unsure how to react.

Just then mother— Talia— opens the door behind me. She looks from me to William then to the empty bottles spread across the living room floor. She puts two and two together and almost instantly understands what's happening. William begins to explain the situation, but before he could finish Talia grabs me by the hair and throws me out into the freezing cold rain. I stay at the walkway, an ear to the door, and try to listen to see if they feel even a little remorse for the years of suffering they've caused me. The starving, the poor living conditions, and now this. But all that I can make out are two sentences:

“Thank goodness” and “A storm so extreme, only a witch would have caused it.”

Now, As I stand here in the dark whilst the birds overhead sing to me their songs of mockery, I realize that I am, and will always be, alone.