

When he reached the gravestone, he peered around the corner, but she wasn't there. Then, suddenly, he sensed her behind him and felt her cold hands wrap around his neck. They squeezed, tighter and tighter, and drug him downward, toward the grave.

"What are you doing?" he gasped.

"Taking you to where we can be together, forever, as you wished," Annabelle answered.

As his eyes bulged out, he saw the name on the gravestone in front of him. Annabelle Carson. Born 1803. Died 1821, aged 19. Now he knew. They would be together... FOREVER!



THE WITCH'S BREW

A Ghost Story For Brave Souls



By Caitlind L. Alexander

A LearningIsland.org
15 - Minute Book

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LearningIsland.org

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The Witch's Brew/Caitlind L. Alexander

Summary: A chilling tale about a boy who seeks a potion from a witch.

1. Ghosts. Juvenile Literature. 2. Scary Stories. Juvenile Literature.

Created in USA

RL: 4.9

W: 2135

Without waiting for a response, she pulled on his hand and lead him into the woods. Moments later they came out onto the path that lead behind the house. He followed, his heart filled with fear that her father would see them and force him away. But luck was with him and no one appeared from the house but one of the kitchen slaves. She seemed not to notice as they made their way around the side of the house and toward the back.

At the back of the house, the path turned off into the woods again, heading toward the top of the hill. Annabelle lead him upward, going higher and higher up the hill.

Suddenly William stumbled. "I'm all right," he quickly reassured her when he saw the look of concern on her face. She quickly broke into a smile and raced on ahead, her laughter floating back to him on the wind. William climbed to his feet and hurried after her.

Suddenly the woods parted before them and they stepped out into a small clearing. A brook ran through it and grass grew abundantly. The setting would have been an idyllic spot had it not been for the stones perched in neat rows. They were gravestones.

William stopped, concerned, but then he heard her laugh coming from behind a tall tombstone, glowing golden in the waning light. Fear started to twist his heart, but he couldn't overcome the power of the potion and love forced him onward.

Then each of them took a bite.

William watched carefully, but he could see no change in Annabelle. He waited until she had taken several more bites, then carefully, softly, he called her name.

"Annabelle."

She glanced up toward his perch in the treetop and smiled. And her smile was filled with love. William felt he could float down from his perch.

Carefully he climbed down and joined her on the ground. His heart beat within him as strong and fast as it had outside the witch's cottage, but it was not fear that made it do so now. William was in love.

He couldn't stop himself. Quickly he reached forward and pulled Annabelle into his arms. She felt cold, much colder than he had thought a woman would feel. When he pressed his lips against hers, the coldness seemed to go right through him. But so did the thrill. His Annabelle loved him!

With a laugh that sounded like springtime, Annabelle took him by the hand.

"I've waited a long time to meet you," she said as they drew apart.

"I've been afraid," William admitted. "I've not quite as much money as this suit would lead you to believe.

"Silly," Annabelle said. "We don't need money were I live. I'll take you there."

THE WITCH'S BREW

It was a hopeless love affair and William knew it; but he couldn't stop his heart. Thinking about it kept William's mind from the path his feet were now taking. She was so beautiful. She dressed in the clothes of an earlier era, but that only made her seem more beautiful. He didn't even know her name at first, but he knew that he loved her, and that he always would.

But what chance did that love have. He was only an indentured servant. A lone immigrant from Ireland. Here she was, the nobility of America. Living in a large antebellum mansion with an older man. William thought he must be her father, though he seemed quite a bit older than that. But William knew he was Mr. Carson. And he had heard the woman call herself Annabelle Carson when she was admonishing herself for some trivial thing.

"I have to try for her," William finally decided. "I can't just go on worshipping her like this. Perhaps she can be swayed by true love."

And she had been. William worked hard at the relationship. And he worked hard at never letting her know who he was. It started with leaving her a bouquet of wildflowers on her doorstep. But, as he watched in the woods, it was her father who came to the door, not her. He read the note William had left on the flowers, then threw them disdainfully to the side. Anger was clearly visible on his face.

Now William knew he had to be more careful than ever. He began watching her wanderings. It seemed that when she needed time to think, she always made her way to one special spot in the woods. So that was where he left his next bouquet.

This time the reception was much friendlier. Miss Carson read the note, signed by her "secret admirer" and blushed. But her face showed happiness behind the color, and that made William happy too.

Still, he didn't dare show himself. What would she think if she knew she was being wooed by a man who wore rags instead of fine suits.

But as she sat, she worked one of the flowers with her hands. When she left, the flower was tucked inside the note, and left on the rock she had sat upon.

William waited until she had plenty of time to leave the area. It wouldn't do to spoil everything now. When he was sure she had gone, he stole forward and opened the note. There, tucked inside, was a flower

He quickly bought a jar, then raced down the street to the baker where he secured a loaf of bread. Then it was off to buy a suit. There was just enough left over for a nice one. William turned and looked in the mirror from all angles. It was the first store bought suit he had ever owned and he liked the look and the feel of it.

When he left the shop with his neatly wrapped packages, William was the happiest man on earth. On feet that barely seemed to touch the ground, William headed into the woods and toward the forest glen.

He quickly took a portion of the bread and honey for himself, and wrapped the rest for her. He left it where she would be sure to find it, but the squirrels and other forest animals couldn't reach it. Then he climbed into a tree and settled himself to wait for her.

He didn't have long to wait. Within an hour he heard her humming as she made her way down the path from the house. Tonight she looked more beautiful than ever, with her long, flowing dress, and her beautiful brunette hair done in ringlets which fell softly around her smooth neck. William gasped at her beauty, nearly giving away his hiding place.

When she read the note, she smiled. "Half this loaf is for you, and half for me. We shall both eat our halves, and share a supper together," it had said.

Annabelle carefully unwrapped the package and spread some honey on the bread. In his perch in the tree, William mimicked her movements.

"You're right," she said solemnly. "And nothing will stop you. Very well." With that she held out her hand. William turned all his coins into her upturned palm, praying it would be enough. The woman studied the money a moment. Then she returned a single five dollar coin.

"There's even enough for you to buy yourself a fancy suit," she said with a sigh. She pocketed the rest of the money and pointed to a nearby wooden bench.

"Wait here," she instructed. William took a seat as she disappeared inside.

He fidgeted and thought about Annabelle for over an hour before the witch came out again. But when she did, she held a tiny vial in her hand. It barely seemed like enough to do the job.

"You must mix this with something sweet, and then eat or drink it at the same time as your lady love. Then she will have no choice but to fall in love with you."

William reached eagerly for the vial. The old woman hesitated, but finally she turned it over.

"Thank you," William yelled behind him as he raced for the woods. There was no time to lose. Annabelle might be in the glen at this very moment.

William raced into town and headed into the general store. Something sweet that he could mix the potion with, that was what he needed. Almost instantly he found it. A display of honey was just inside the door.

whose stem had been fashioned into the shape of a heart.

His own heart sung with joy. Now he knew that he must do what he had been dreading. But it would be the only way.

Deep in the woods was a woman who practiced the voodoo. A witch they called her. A woman who could make potions that would cause someone to fall helplessly in love.

But William knew that the money could still be a problem. He would have to save up and buy a fancy suit. And he would need money for the potion.

So that's what he did. He pinched and saved every penny while at the same time wooing her.

They were just little gifts left in the forest glen, and always signed "Your secret admirer." She left notes pleading to know his name, but he dared not tell her. He didn't want the same reception his first group of flowers had gotten.

So they had gone on, leaving notes and treasures to each other in their special spot. William carried one of those special presents in his pocket now. His fingers ran lovingly over the surface of the small silver cross Annabelle had left one day.

Suddenly the cabin came into view before him, snapping him out of his reverie. It wasn't at all what he expected a witch's cabin to be, but then he had never really thought much about it.



It was actually a neat little cottage built of wood. It was well repaired and clean, and the side yard had been planted with a multitude of herbs and flowers.

It gave William courage, and he stepped closer. Suddenly the front door opened before him and an old woman stepped out. It was her. The witch. He could tell by the old, misshapen hands and the ugly face.

"So, you're William," the old woman said to him in a voice that sounded like the caw of a crow. "And you've come to seek a potion from me."

William froze in his tracks. How did she know this? He had told no one of his plans to visit the old witch. She laughed her cackling laugh at him.

"Don't worry, I know everything," she said, looking at him with an evil looking grin. "You're in love with a woman you've never really met. You're in love with how she looks. But looks aren't the only thing that is important in love, my boy. How do you know that this is what you really want? How about if I whip you up a nice bit of money instead?"

"No," William cried a little louder than necessary. His heart was racing. He forced himself to bring his heart under control.

"I want to buy a love potion. I have the money to pay for it. At least I think I have enough. If it's not enough, I'll get more. But I need that potion."

"Ah, the fear of youth," the old woman said. "The fear that they won't be loved and accepted for who they are. But how do you know she is truly who she says she is? Wouldn't it interest you to know if she really does live in the Carson mansion or not?"

That made William pause a moment. But then he thought about it. Whether she actually lived in the house or not didn't matter. She was Annabelle Carson and he was in love with her. And her finery and fancy clothes told him in half a heartbeat that her station in life was above his. That was why he needed the potion.

"I don't care where she lives. I don't care about anything. I want that potion, and nothing can stop me. You're not the only witch in the state, you know."