

Prologue:

SALEM 1794... IN THE WARM GLOW OF THE FIRELIGHT, THIRTEEN LITHE BODIES DANCED ACROSS THE MOOLESS NEW ENGLAND COUNTRYSIDE. THEIRS WAS A DANCE MACABRE... A RITUAL DANCE OF THE DEAD... AND THE GROUND THEY TROD WAS PROFANED BY THE PUISSANCE OF WITCHCRAFT.



KARYN HAINING, HER SOFT EYES DISGUIISING THE FERVID PASSIONS WITHIN, DANCED IN FRENZIED, EROTIC ABANDON... AS THOUGH THE FURIOUS MOTION WOULD SOMEHOW DRIVE THE HATRED AND BITTERNESS FROM HER BODY.



OH, HOLLAND WHY HAVE YOU FORCED ME INTO THIS? I COULD HAVE BEEN SO GOOD TO YOU!

HER THOUGHTS GO BACK! SHE RECALLS HOW ONE NIGHT EARLIER, THE DANCING WAS OF A DIFFERENT NATURE. THEN, THE VILLAGE SQUARE HAD GLOWED GENTLY IN THE GAS-LIGHT... ALIVE WITH JOULAR FACES AND FLUTTERING SWIRTS...

GOOD EVENING, MR.. WINGATE! ON A NIGHT LIKE THIS, YOU SHOULD BE DANCING, NOT TALKING. IT'S SO WILD, SO SENSUAL... WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN ME?

SURELY I COULD OFFER YOU MORE.. MUCH MORE...

I FIND YOUR MANNER OFFENSIVE, MISS. NOW WOULD YOU KINDLY STEP AWAY!




THAT HOLLAND WINGATE THINKS HE'S QUITE A LADIES' MAN! BUT SO FAR, HE HASN'T SO MUCH AS CAST A GLANCE MY WAY!




NOT NOW, MISS. AT THE MOMENT I AM MOST PLEASANTLY ENGAGED IN THIS YOUNG LADY'S COMPANY!



THE DRUMS CEASED AND THE DANCING WAS ARRESTED. SILENTLY, THE **COVEN** GATHERED AROUND THE ANCIENT STONE ALTAR, **EACH** WITH THEIR OWN **DARK THOUGHTS...**




YOU MADE A **FOOL** OF ME BEFORE THE WHOLE VILLAGE, **HOLLAND WINGATE** FOR THAT, YOU WILL **SUFFER!**




LET THE **RITE OF CONJURATION** BEGIN!

THE **LAMB** SQUEALED ONCE AS THE BLADE PLUNGED INTO ITS SOFT UNDERBELLY. THIS WAS NO **LAMB OF GOD** WHO WOULD **CLEANSE** THE WORLD OF EVIL... THIS WAS A **LAMB** THAT WOULD DWELL IN **HELL...**



LORD OF DARKNESS... WE, THE STEWARDS OF **SATAN**, ASK THEE TO SEND US...



...THY SERVANT THE **SIPHE**, TO AID US IN HOMAGE TO YOUR **WILL...**

THE **CHANTING** DRONED ON AND THE AIR PERMEATED WITH THE ODOUR OF SULPHUR AND BRIMSTONE!



ALL WATCHED IN AWE AND ANTICIPATION AS I WAS DRAWN FROM MY WORLD INTO **THEIRS!**

HOW DO I DESCRIBE THE **PAIN** THAT TORE AT MY BODY AS I PASSED THROUGH ETHEREAL **BARRIERS** TO THIS **WORLD OF THE LIVING...** A WORLD OF WHICH I HAD **ONCE** BEEN A PART!



THE **SUN-GOD** AND **PANTHA** ARE HARD ACTS TO FOLLOW! BUT THIS LITTLE TALE OF A **WITCH** AND HER PET **DEMON** OUGHT TO BE JUST THE CHANGE OF PACE YOU NEED, TO QUENCH YOUR THIRST FOR THE MACABRE...



GRADUALLY THE PAIN SUBSIDED AND I HEARD THE VOICE OF THE ONE WHO SUMMONED ME. IT WAS A **SOFT** VOICE... IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN **GENTLE** IF NOT TEMPERED BY YEARS OF **RESENTMENT** AND **SELF-PITY...**

AS THOUGH THEY WERE LIVING!

HER **COMMANDS** ECHOED IN MY MIND, FAMILIAR WORDS OF **HATRED...** ONES I MIGHT HAVE USED **MYSELF** CENTURIES AGO. BUT THEN THERE CAME **OTHER** VOICES... **ANGRY** VOICES... AND ANOTHER KIND OF **HATRED!**



SO, EVIL ONE, YOU HAVE COME AS I **COMMANDED!** THEN LISTEN... THERE ARE TWO IN THE VILLAGE WHO HAVE **WRONGED** ME... I WANT THEM **PUNISHED!**



THERE **THEY** ARE. **MINISTER**, JUST LIKE I **TOLD** YOU! THE **WITCHES!**

FOUL MONSTERS! WE MUST **DESTROY** EVERY LAST ONE OF THEM!

ALL THE **MADNESS** OF HELL
COULDN'T COMPARE WITH THE
HORROR WHEN THE **MINISTER**
CONFRONTED THE **WITCHES**...

BUT HER WORDS WERE
SILENCED BY THE THIN
SHAFT THAT JUTTED
FROM HER BREAST...

AND YET A COMMAND HAD BEEN
GIVEN! I **TURNED** TOWARD THOSE
PITIFUL MORTALS, AND...



SIPHE
STOP THEM!... STOP THE... AHK



MY **CAWD!**
IT IS SOMETHING
OUT OF **HELL**
ITSELF...



THE **DEED** WAS DONE, I
LOOKED AT THE STILL FORM
OF MY **MISTRESS**, THE FIRES
OF HER HATRED QUENCHED
BY DEATH, YET IT WAS HER WILL
THAT BROUGHT ME **INTO** THIS
WORLD... HER VOICE THAT GAVE
ME A MISSION I WAS
BOUND TO OBEY...

AND SO I BECAME A **MAN!** CERTAINLY NOT THE ONLY
ONE WHOSE MORTAL SHELL BELIED THE **TRUE**
NATURE WITHIN...

AND **NOW** I **HUNT** THE ONE MY MISTRESS
ORDERED ME TO **PUNISH**...! THE MAN
NAMED **HOLLAND WINGATE!**



IN A VILLAGE THIS SIZE, IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR ME TO FIND THE ONES I SOUGHT. WE CHANCED TO MEET IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE, AND I INTRODUCED MYSELF AS **NATHAN BROWNE**.



HOLLAND WINGATE DID NOT REALIZE HOW PROPHETIC THOSE PARTING WORDS HAD BEEN! THAT NIGHT, I FOLLOWED HIM THROUGH THE TENEBOUS BACK ROADS OF THE VILLAGE AS HE WALKED HOME, **UNSUSPECTING**...

SOMETHING INSIDE ME **PITIED** HIM. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT **EVIL** HE HAD DONE THAT I MUST **SLAY** HIM, AND SOMEHOW I SENSED THAT HE DESERVED **BETTER** THAN THIS...



THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I MIGHT HAVE HAD THE WILL TO **RESIST**... TO **CHOOSE** BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL...

BUT THAT TIME HAS **LONG** PASSED...

THERE IS **NO** LONGER CHOICE...

THERE IS ONLY **OBEDIENCE!**




MORNING CAME, AND MY DARK DEEDS OF THE NIGHT BEFORE WERE BROUGHT TO LIGHT...

"OH, NATHAN! HOLLAND WAS FOUND MURDERED LAST NIGHT. IT'S SO TERRIBLE!"

"I'M SORRY SHELLY. HAVE THEY CAUGHT THE MURDERER YET?"

"NO, THEY THINK HE WAS ATTACKED BY SOME WILD ANIMAL! OH, NATHAN WOULD YOU WALK ME HOME, PLEASE? I PREFER NOT TO BE ALONE RIGHT NOW."



I FOUND MYSELF ODDLY ATTRACTED TO THIS GIRL, MY THOUGHTS GREW TROUBLED AND UNSETTLED, AS SHE AWAKENED IN ME FEELINGS THAT I THOUGHT HAD DIED CENTURIES AGO... WHAT WAS WORSE I KNEW SHE WAS MY NEXT VICTIM... THE LAST I WAS ORDERED TO SLAY...


WHEN WE REACHED HER HOME, I TOOK HER IN MY ARMS, SO WARM SO TRUSTING... I RECALLED ANOTHER MUCH LIKE HER... ONE I HAD ONCE LOVED IN SOME ANCIENT CENTURY... BEFORE I COMPROMISED MY HUMANITY TO A GOD OF SILVER... I DID NOT WANT HER DEAD... BUT I KNEW I HAD NO CHOICE...

"SHELLY, THERE'S SOMETHING I WANT TO TELL YOU!"

"NOT NOW, NATHAN. THERE'S BEEN ENOUGH PAIN ALREADY. JUST HOLD ME CLOSE..."

"I DON'T KNOW HOW TO THANK YOU, NATHAN. IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO HAVE SOMEONE TO TURN TO AT A TIME LIKE THIS!"





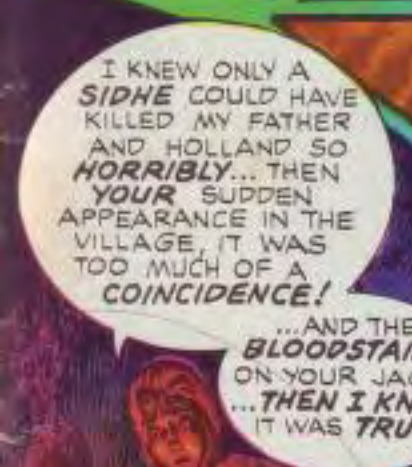
OH, **NATHAN**.
IF ONLY YOU KNEW
HOW MUCH I **HATE**
TO DO THIS.



BUT I
HAVE NO CHOICE!
MY **FATHER** AND I
DEVOTED OUR LIVES
TO **STAMPING OUT**
WITCHCRAFT...
WHEREVER IT
EXISTS...


MY **FATHER**
THE **MINISTER**...
YOU **KILLED** THE
NIGHT HE CON-
FRONTED THE
WITCHES!

GLIK
GLIK
GLIK




I KNEW ONLY A
SIDHE COULD HAVE
KILLED MY FATHER
AND HOLLAND SO
HORRIBLY... THEN
YOUR SUDDEN
APPEARANCE IN THE
VILLAGE, IT WAS
TOO MUCH OF A
COINCIDENCE!


...AND THE
BLOODSTAINS
ON YOUR JACKET
... THEN I KNEW
IT WAS **TRUE!**



I'M SORRY,
NATHAN, TRULY
SORRY!



BORN OF FIRE,
DIE BY FIRE... ONLY
FLAME CAN SEND YOU
BACK FROM WHERE
YOU CAME...



THAT WAS A **BRIGHT**
IDEA SHELLY HAD FOR
GETTING RID OF NATHAN!
GUESS SHE COULDN'T
TAKE ANY MORE OF
HIS **SIDHE** LIFE...
POOR NATHAN'S
HEATED UP OVER
IT, TOO!