

WALTON

Zaeta walked through the forest, looking for witches. Not those of wicked appearance, green skin, and a broomstick, A witch is a name given to elusive spirits that wander the wilds around places people live. People often only get a glimpse of one before they vanish almost as quickly as they appear, others tell stories of the blessings they were given by such divine spirits. These stories are only recounted by the oldest in their village, tales from their youths.

The crunch of fallen leaves and sticks that lay on the forest floor filled the silence with every step. For some reason other than Zaeta's own footsteps the wilderness was hauntingly silent, no owl made a single hoot, nor wolf cry a distant howl, nor mouse make the littlest peep along the forest floor.

After a long time wandering in the dark forest, Zaeta began to lose the spirit she had when she'd started looking, and so thought of turning back to go home, the tiredness was starting to set in along with mild hunger growing.

Suddenly a gust of cold air blew from behind Zaeta, she shivered and crossed her arms to warm up, feeling the goosebumps on her skin. She turned her head to look back to where the wind had blown from, there before her stood a figure, its pale grey tattered cloak flowed disproportionate to the amount of wind in the area, as if some other force was causing each section to writhe like eldritch tendrils in the air. Its form illuminated by the moon more than its surroundings, as if the light favoured it, the space around looking dark as a result, creating a sight that reminded her of a Goya.



“A witch’s dance sought by a mind still untainted, taintless minds free from burden, fear no consequence from this meeting.”

The witch leaned forward slowly; the graceful arc of motion exaggerated by its flowing cloth. Two sections of its drapery slowly moved from their flowing positions, offering something to Zaeta who had been standing there, stunned, amazed, and partially nervous.

The witch held out an apple, its red skin reflected the moon light as it was presented to Zaeta. The apple was unblemished, it had no marks or signs of rot.

“Untouched gift for an equal face. Hereafter its destruction will stand for a soul’s refrain. To take a bite without thinking is great folly.”

Zaeta looked down at the apple in her hand, the words the witch had said did not make any impression on her mind and they left her head as quickly they had been spoken. With those fleeting words the witch was gone too, without a sound. Zaeta peered into the face of the apple, and bowed slowly, for a bite.

