

# The Witch and The Curse

Long ago, there was a young witch in Brambleford named Petrina, who lived in a cabin in the forest. She was fond of a girl living in town, Nicola, and they secretly became lovers. They met under false pretences, seeking every excuse to see one another, for society was not yet ready to accept love between women.

Petrina the Witch wanted nothing but a child with Nicola, but her magic was not nearly powerful enough to create such a pregnancy, and the chance of finding a male who would give them an heir, without claiming it for himself, was very low.

One day, Nicola chanced upon a book about fairies in Petrina's cabin, which told of fairy magic that no witch or wizard could ever hope to perform. It even told of ways to summon one. Nicola, knowing Petrina's search was fruitless, wished to give her lover the gift of life, and so kept her discovery a secret.

Borrowing the book, Nicola gathered the ingredients needed, found a proper place at a pond for the ritual and set about to summon the fairy one day at dusk.

As she performed the last step of the summoning, blowing out a matchstick, the pond grew bright and rippled. The being that stepped out of the pond seemed like a regular man, with a wide-brimmed hat, long hair and thick lips, but what stood before her was no mortal being. He was a fairy. With a fanciful bow and a large smile, he greeted her.

Nicola told of her dilemma and he listened. Nothing could be easier, the fairy man told her, but he wanted something in return: the name they would give the child. She was to come back and tell him a month before the expected date of birth. At such a simple and low price, Nicola curtsied, swore on her life to fulfil her end of the bargain, and shook the fairy's hand.

Months flew by and indeed, Nicola's belly grew with child. Petrina, when she found out, was furious that she had made a deal with a fairy, even promising the child's name! Petrina the Witch told of what power a name could hold of its bearer: Manipulation, injury and wicked spells could all befall their child. After having calmed down, however, she eventually grew excited and overjoyed to finally have a child on the way.

The townspeople deemed the pregnancy utterly scandalous - being unmarried and with child was a taboo in such times and they thought the child belonged to any one of their bachelors - but Nicola cared not what they thought. She planned to raise the child with her lover, and she was blissful. The lovers continued to court in secret and soon came up with a name for their child: Adryan.

At dusk of New Year's Eve, one month before they expected the child, Nicola and Petrina returned to the pond together and summoned the fairy once more. From the rippling pond, the man with a wide-brimmed hat appeared as before and asked what the name of their child would be. This was the moment Nicola had feared and she trembled with anxiety. Nicola knew that she had promised the fairy a name, but also that doing so would give the fairy influence over the

child. She now knew that it was a price much too steep, and so with her heart beating loudly, thoughts jumbled and palms sweaty, she lied about the name.

The fairy man's initial mischievous joviality turned into confusion as he saw the contract break. You see, swearing an oath carries power and Nicola had sworn on nothing less than her life. Upon breaking the oath, the oath took what had been promised and the fairy saw Nicola immediately fall to never rise again. The fairy man watched in frustration as Petrina shook her lover's body, desperate for a spell to undo the damage, but she had none. She turned to the fairy, pleading for help, but he could not. Not even the fairy could bring someone back from the dead. Petrina's desperation turned into hatred and with her last energy, she cursed the fairy to never again set foot in mortal lands, banishing him to the lands from where he hailed. He disappeared into the pond with a ripple, but the curse did not ease Petrina's loss.

She could not carry the body, and so buried lover and child near the pond. In the following weeks, Petrina and her magic grew wicked from heartbreak. She turned on the townspeople, and the townspeople turned on her. For witchery and the supposed murder of Nicola and her unborn, the mob slew the witch in her own cabin and sealed the evil inside to never be opened again.

From fear or from curse is anyone's guess, but the fairy man never did return to our world in these hundred years come and gone. Though his name was called upon many times over, all his callers got was a ripple.

His story, however, is far from over.