

Sisterhood

By
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Aberny held her brother in her arms as tight as the dagger she held in her hand. She found Teddy tied to the living room floor, freeing him just before his five little years of life were taken. Loose vines and thorny weeds lashed at her ankles as she fled through the woods enclosing the place she once called home. The vase she struck over her mother's head should have killed her, but grey Witches don't die easily. Male sacrifices granted the cultist longer life and as aging crept, Teddy's youth became her mother's salvation. Safety seemed impossible. Still, Aberny stopped at nothing to find a haven for her brother.

"I want cupcakes! I want cupcakes!" said Teddy.

Aberny ignored his demand and ran to the edge of the forest out onto a road. She waved down an oncoming car as its headlights grew brighter, turning her world white. The tires screeched a trail of smoke, and before it settled, the machine stopped before it could ram the girl's delicate body.

Out spilled a young man shaken by the commotion.

"Did I hurt you?" he asked.

Aberny rushed towards him absorbed in panic.

"My mother is trying to kill my brother! Please take us with you."

"I want cupcakes," said Teddy.

"to get cupcakes?" replied the driver.

"Quiet Teddy! – No. Anywhere. Take us anywhere," said Aberny.

A force pressed against her skin. The trees whistled and motioned in agitation, dragging living leaves off branches.

"We can't stay here we'll die. She tried to *sacrifice* my brother!"

Aberny poofed into the front seat Before the driver could respond, shoving Teddy in the back and strapping a seatbelt over his waist. Clouds from the night sky coated the surface in a thick haze. The driver glanced at the time.

“I can’t do this. I have to get home. I can’t miss curfew!”

The clock struck 11:55 P.M.

“Our lives are at stake and you’re worried about curfew?”

Aberny twisted her face in disgust.

“I have to get to the tunnel,” said the driver undermining Aberny’s shock.

“What about my cupcakes?” said Teddy.

“No cupcakes. We want to live,” said Aberny to her brother.

Something in the rearview glass caused her eyes to squint.

“She found us. Drive faster.”

“But the speed limit,” replied the driver.

“Go now!”

The witch shot through the air like a missile fired from a cannon.

“Uh-oh,” said the driver.

The clock struck midnight.

“Yeah, *Uh-oh!* Don’t slow down!” said Aberny.

Instead of picking up speed, the driver’s body grew tremors while his hands rattled like the end of a snake.

“Are you okay?” said Aberny lunging over and straightening the wheel.

“It’s too late,” said the driver.

His skin smeared then settled into silk green. Scales shimmered up his arms. His face became unrecognizable; a mouth filled with small pointed teeth. Unbeknownst, the witch bolted closer to the

car. Teddy, unphased, cried for a treat and stomped on the back of the driver's seat. Aberny held the dagger up.

"What are you?"

"Please, don't. I - Can you please tell him to stop kicking?" he said.

"What the hell are you?!" said Aberny again.

"I'm a Draden! I-We live beneath the earth's surface."

The Draden's voice dropped.

"I was supposed to be home before midnight..."

"Take us with you," said Aberny.

"I can't. I mean, I'm not supposed to bring *humans* home. Besides, there aren't any cupcakes where I live."

The car jerked forward with a sudden push. The Grey Witch grabbed hold of the car.

"What's with this lady?"

Footsteps patted against the hood of the vehicle. Aberny unfolded the cover of the sunroof. Her mother stood above the glass, eyes hollow black. As she stomped her foot, webbed cracks traveled like broken ice. Before she could release again, the driver crushed the breaks sending the witch flying. The mist moved about like a swatted fly. Silence bound Aberny, Teddy, and their new alien friend firm, until a figure rose from the surface. The witch appeared closer as if nothing ever happened.

"DRIVE!"

The Draden slammed his lizard-like foot onto the pedal, accelerating through Aberny's evil mother. The witch's body tumbled across the top of the car and plummeted to the floor. Leaving her behind, they all approached a tunnel lit with soft light.

"She's still alive. I can feel it," said Aberny.

"So that's your mother, huh? I can tell," said the driver. "You two have the same cold stare."

Aberny palmed her face. She gave up. The lizard sighed a deep breath. He twisted the rim of his watch till the clicking stopped. The floor turned to liquid and the car submerged into the earth. They came to a stop. Aberny stepped out of the car and walked to the edge of a cliff. Highways of life before her further into the distance. A city danced in an aura of yellow-green while wire roads mingled and danced. Cigar-shaped crafts hovered about, inspecting the space and objects which occupied it.

Buildings stood like pillars meeting with a rigid dome that shone like geode crystals. Warmth came from the deep fall ending in magma, or perhaps it came from the floating orbs of plasma comforting the Dradens like the sun would humans. Aberny could no longer feel her mother nearby. Her blood no longer boiled and tightened. She felt the equinox of change, so she settled over the cliff with her feet dangling the way she did on any cliff on Earth. Teddy approached behind her with tired slouched eyes and a single thumb filling his mouth. The child placed a hand upon his sister's shoulder, "I'm thirsty," he said.

