The Witches of Pendle

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The Witches of Pendle

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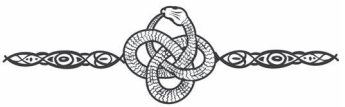
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For all the *Most Haunted* fans who have loved and supported the show for over twenty years. You're amazing!

CHAPTER 1



A Haunted House and Eerie Song

The little farmhouse stood abandoned in the middle of the countryside. It was obvious that no one had lived there for some time. The windows were grimy and cracked, and a square piece of splintered wood lay on the ground near the weathered front door. It was a sign, its black letters faded and the words *Malkins Cottage* just visible. An ancient, twisted oak tree tapped its long, bony fingers against the dark glass, *tap . . . tap . . . tap*. The sound was ominous in the December bleakness.

It was a small house, one storey. Originally the building had been just one room, the occupants of old sleeping and eating together. Over the years, people had come and gone, building in an extra room here and there, trying to live a happy existence in the place. But for some strange reason, no one had ever managed to stay for very long. The locals said the place was cursed, haunted even, by the ghosts of a family long gone.

Now the snow was coming down thick and fast; big powdery blobs slowly twisted and tumbled towards the muddy ground. The little cottage and the land it sat on were starting to look pretty.

Along the dirt track leading up to the cottage, a four-wheel

drive car rumbled slowly to a stop. Its doors opened and excited voices broke the wintery silence.

'Oh, look, Steve, doesn't it look perfect?' A woman with blonde hair pulled back into a ponytail clapped her hands together, her face lighting up like a Christmas tree.

She opened the back door of the car and helped a young boy climb out. He was about seven years old and looked just like his mum. He'd obviously been asleep in the car, as his hair stuck up at odd angles; he rubbed sleep out of his eyes and stared at the house, his new home.

'Well, we knew it needed some work. But d'you know what, Moll? I reckon we'll have it looking lovely for Christmas.' Steve was a big man, tall and muscular. He smiled over at his wife and son. 'What do you think, Jamie? Just look at the size of your new garden! C'mon, let's go and explore.'

Steve and Jamie ran together towards the cottage while Molly brought some bags and a box with food provisions inside.

The rest of the day was spent cleaning and unpacking. The removal van arrived some hours later, bringing the furniture and the young family's treasured possessions. And at the end of a long, exhausting day, the family settled down for their first night's sleep in their new home.



Jamie woke with a start; the lightning cracked loudly above the house. The noise was so deafening, he thought the roof was about to split open. Thunder rumbled around like an

angry giant, crashing and stomping about. Lightning splintered above again, and Jamie screeched, throwing himself under the duvet.

Slowly, he counted to three, then whipped the cover back, hurtled out of the dark room and crashed into his parents' bed.

'I'm scared,' he announced.

His mum cradled him to her and kissed the top of his head. 'It's all right, it'll be over soon. It's just a storm. *Shhh*, *shhh*.' Jamie relaxed in the comfort of his parents' bed and fell back to sleep.

The storm raged all night. The thunder and lightning died down eventually, but were followed by an angry wind that whipped and bellowed through the countryside. The following morning, Jamie crept out of bed, trying not to disturb his sleeping parents. Still in his pyjamas, he slipped on his boots and ran outside to the back garden.

Everywhere was a mess. Trees, branches, bricks and slates scattered the slushed-up lawn. The ancient tree, which had reminded Jamie of an old, twisted woman, had fallen over. Its branches lay crumpled and broken on the wet ground. The tree's trunk and roots seemed so vulnerable lying there.

Jamie picked up a stick and began to whack it against the trunk, and as he did so, he started to sing out loud:

'Witches in the garden,
Witches in the tree,
Turn around, turn around, one, two, three.
Look inside the bottle,

You will see,
Five witches in the garden,
Will come to you and me.'

Jamie didn't know why he had just sung that strange song; he'd never heard it before. He began to spin around, slowly at first, but then faster and faster, and as he went, he sang louder and louder.

Suddenly he stopped and, after the dizziness had subsided, he walked over to the bottom of the fallen tree. The roots sticking out reminded him of his gran's knitting, all messy and knotted. Gnarled claws of twigs entwined each other, like hair that had never been brushed.

Jamie felt an urge to touch the roots; they were wet and slimy. He pushed his hands in between the stringy threads and plunged his fingers deeper and deeper down into the cold. He wasn't sure why he was doing this, but he found he couldn't stop himself. Suddenly his little fingers recoiled as he touched something cold and hard. Feeling curious, he took a breath and pushed his hands back in again. His fingers touched something, something that seemed out of place in a tree. It felt like glass. He pulled at the object, scratching his hands as he yanked them backwards. Placing one foot on the trunk of the tree, he leaned back and pulled as hard as he could.

Unexpectedly he felt himself falling backwards, landing with a gentle thud on the cold, wet ground, and to his delight the object he had pulled from the tree's roots lay on his chest.

Wiping away the mud and slime he could see he had found an old glass bottle. Around the neck, wound tightly several times, was an old cord of some sort, and hanging from the material were little white figures that jangled and danced about. At first Jamie thought they were teeth but upon closer inspection he could see that they were miniature carvings of men and women.

The boy was excited to have found some treasure. Just wait till he showed his dad! He ran inside, his cheeks rosy, his head brimming with mysteries and magic.

His parents were making coffee in the kitchen. Jamie plonked the bottle on the table and grinned.

After his mum had cleaned it up as best she could, they all sat around the table staring at the strange object.

'What do you think it is?' asked Jamie.

'I've no idea,' answered his dad. He picked the bottle up and turned it slowly one way then the other. 'It's sealed at the top with black wax. Very odd.'

'Well, I think it's weird. I don't like it,' said his mum, Molly. 'It gives me the creeps, all those little figures. What on earth is that all about?' She shivered and rubbed her arms as if someone had suddenly opened a door and let in a cold draught.

'Can I have it in my room?' asked Jamie.

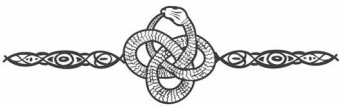
'Let's just keep it here in the kitchen for now. When we've got the place straight, I'll do some research and see if we can find out what it is. OK?' Molly smiled at her son.

'Who knows, it could be worth millions,' laughed Steve.

The rest of the day was spent unpacking and then clearing

up the debris the storm had left outside. Molly and Jamie raked up all the broken twigs and branches, and Steve began to chop up the fallen tree for firewood. They worked happily together in their new garden, little knowing that in a few hours their lives would take a dramatic and terrible twist.

CHAPTER 2



The Possessed Child and a Ghost

As darkness fell across the Lancashire countryside, the lights in the little cottage were turned off one by one, and the family settled down for a well-deserved sleep.

At about 2 a.m. Molly thought she was dreaming. She could hear Jamie singing. The tune was lovely but, in the dream, Molly was scared, she didn't like the words. She snapped her eyes open, only to realise that she wasn't dreaming at all and that the singing was coming from the kitchen.

Confused, she got out of bed and padded down the hallway, following her son's voice. She stopped short when she saw Jamie sitting with his back to her in the middle of the floor.

He swung from side to side as he sang. Molly had never heard the song before.

'Witches in the garden,
Witches in the tree,
Turn around, turn around, one, two, three.
Look inside the bottle,
You will see,

Five witches in the garden,
Will come to you and me.'

'Jamie?' She placed her hand on his little shoulder.

He stopped instantly but didn't turn or respond.

Molly walked around to face him and as soon as she looked at him, she recoiled in horror. His eyes were marble white, and his face had a sickly greenish tinge to it. She tried to pick him up, but he viciously slapped her away with one hand while clutching the strange glass bottle to his chest with the other.

Then, in an eerie woman's voice she didn't recognise, Jamie spoke: *'We are coming, we will have our revenge.'*

In that terrifying moment, Molly knew they needed help. She screamed for Steve. As she called his name over and over, she noticed that the strange blue bottle had been opened, the wax seal snapped off.

Steve ran into the kitchen and instantly saw what the matter was. To his horror he saw that Jamie's face, body and whole demeanour had changed. 'What the hell?' he whispered.

Molly had begun to cry. 'I don't know what's happened to him, but he's not right, Steve. We have to get him to the hospital or something.'



'It's all right, Moll, it'll be all right.' Steve went to pick Jamie up but was met with punches and kicks. The strange bottle fell from the boy's protective grip and landed on the floor. The little figures danced up and down as they clattered and banged

against the coloured glass. It rolled across the wooden floor, disappearing into the dark shadows.

'No! Leave me!' screeched Jamie. His voice was low and guttural. Steve recoiled in shock.

Then loud menacing banging noises began to vibrate throughout the house.

'What's that?' screamed Molly.

'I don't know! C'mon, let's get Jamie and get out of here.' Steve and Molly both made a grab for their son. The little boy screamed, kicked, bit and scratched. Terrified, his parents eventually managed to get him to the front door, but he kicked and screamed the whole way.

'It won't open, Steve!'

'Here, let me. Keep hold of Jamie though. Hold him tight.'

Steve pulled at the door, but nothing happened. The knocking noises were getting louder and louder, and suddenly Jamie stopped fighting.

'It's here!' he growled in his new sinister voice.

Jamie slipped through his mother's grasp and fell to the floor, his breathing coming in rasping waves. The knocking was now happening at a terrific pace, so much so that Molly could feel the walls beginning to vibrate — and then she saw it!

Steve followed his wife's shaking finger. A dark shadowy figure had come silently towards them. This thing, whatever it was, loomed over them all. It looked like an old woman, but Steve couldn't be too sure. He suddenly felt a pressure on his throat, it felt like someone was crushing his Adam's apple.

He stood up, choking, and grasped at his throat, trying desperately to breathe. He managed to pull in some air and staggered his way to the window. Taking a lamp, he threw it with as much force as he could muster and the window splintered into a thousand pieces.

'This way!' he gasped to Molly.

She picked up their son, and after Steve had climbed out first, Molly passed the boy to him. She took one look back and saw that the shadowy figure had disappeared. The family left the little cottage for the last time that night. They all knew they would never be coming back.