

I was eleven when I told my ten year-old neighbor that I was a witch. Or a warlock I should say, since guys can't be witches. Chalk it up to too many reruns of Bewitched on television. I told Jimmy I was friends with Samantha, Endora and Doctor Bombay.

'They're just a TV show,' he said to me, squinting with skepticism, so that the tiny wrinkles around his eyes, not unusual for a California kid, deepened.

'Not those people,' I replied, 'those are actors, acting out the real witches' lives. I'm talking about the real Samantha, the real Endora, the real Doctor Bombay.'

Jimmy had the whitest-blond hair of any kid I'd ever seen. In summer it turned green from all the chlorine in his family's pool, where we would swim unsupervised for hours, sometimes even days. Taking occasional breaks for Kool-aid and bologna sandwiches. I told him that the green hair meant he had the potential to be a warlock too. I would be like his Jedi Master, teaching him his craft.

How I proved to Jimmy that I was a warlock (the first time):

We were one of the first on our block to get a Clapper—one of those lamps that turn on and off when you clap. My family was like that. The first to get bean bag chairs. The first to get a VCR. We kept the lamp on an end table in our living room next to the couch my grandmother called the davenport. I showed the lamp to Jimmy. He marveled at the heavy gold base, the silky

white shade. I clapped it on and off. His eyes grew wide, his mouth open, lips shiny with spit. I clapped it on and off again. Told him I would transfer my power to him so he could do it. I touched the palm of my hand to his head. His hair was soft and his scalp warm. He ate it up—though clapped hesitantly at first, I was surprised it went

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on. Then he clapped harder. Clapped that lamp on and off, off and on, for twenty minutes. I thought his hands would fall off. We played Atari, and every couple of minutes he would clap the lamp back on or off and smile that stupid smile. When he went to take a pee I switched the button on the lamp—turned off the clapper so it became just a regular lamp. Jimmy came back and tried to clap it on again. It didn't turn on. He clapped again harder. He clapped close to the lamp, right above the lamp, below it; still nothing.

'Don't abuse the power,' I said.

How I proved to Jimmy that I was a warlock (the second time):

Two words—Sea Monkeys.

‘Being a warlock,’ I told him, ‘means you have the power to create life. Whole villages in fact.’

I dumped that packet of crystallized brine shrimp into the jar of water and stirred vigorously and pretty soon those ugly little buggers were swimming around on their own. Of course I can’t take all the credit. The packaging is pretty mesmerizing, with its buxom lady Sea Monkeys and buff, King Neptune like guy Sea Monkeys.

‘Will they get any bigger?’ he asked, his nose touching the rim of the jar.

‘They might. Depends on if I want them to get bigger.’

We checked their progress every day. To see if the Lady Sea Monkeys had grown breasts or the Male Sea Monkeys muscles. Looked for the hint of a smile, the wave of a hand. I’m not sure if I wanted them to grow for me or for Jimmy. The water grew cloudy, the Sea Monkeys listless, sinking to the bottom. Jimmy’s fingerprints on the glass where he pleaded with them to stay alive.

The Sea Monkeys died within two weeks. Cursed, I told him.

How I proved to Jimmy that I was a warlock (the last time):

I was spending the night at Jimmy’s house. We slept on the floor of his room, in sleeping bags. On his walls he had

Star Wars posters. A vinyl ET—the Extraterrestrial doll was on his bed propped up against the wall.

We zipped our sleeping bags together. A satin and down time-traveling machine. A portal, taking us to the land of witches and warlocks.

I told him that Tabitha was a close, personal friend of mine and that sometimes she visited me in my sleep. That Tabitha was no longer a little girl but now she was around our age or maybe older and really pretty. I said that since I was training him to be a warlock now, he would also be visited by Tabitha. Jimmy slept with a blanky—it smelled sweet, like piss and oatmeal—and it lay, like an uncoiled snake between our bodies.

Now I’m fifteen and Jimmy’s fourteen and we’re in the same Spanish class in high school. I haven’t seen Jimmy in three years—his family’s machine shop business boomed and they bought a nicer, bigger house about ten miles away. Maybe they even got a clapper lamp. Our teacher, Mr. Franklin, calls his name, but now he’s James, not Jimmy.

Mr. Franklin—or Señor Franklin as he wants us to call him—has been teaching this class for eons. His white oxford button-up shirts have crusty yellow stains in the armpits and he always has a chalk line across his butt from leaning up against the chalk board. I didn’t take Spanish my freshman year so now I’m suffering through it with a bunch of idiot kids who are still

going through puberty—greasy faces and squeaky voices eager to answer questions. In the second week of class Señor Franklin calls on me and I say, *Yo no comprendo*—I don't understand. The class laughs. Jimmy looks back at me with that same squint. A look that says, *I know you*, and then turns back around to the front of the class.

Jimmy comes up to me after class. He's taller now, and tan, his neck is really long and he's wearing a pooka shell necklace. He must be a surfer, I think. His hair is spiked on top, but through the thick, shiny gel I can see he's still really blond. He wears pants that look like pajamas—too big and puffy for him and with lightning bolts in wild colors.

'Hey,' he says to me, holding his Spanish book and a PeeChee folder under his arm. 'You used to live across the street from me, right?'

'Yeah. Jimmy, right?'

'That's right. Well, uh, James,' he says, tugging on the collar of his T-shirt. He looks around the room, watches the last few students filter out the door. 'So, like, you remember you used to tell me you were a witch, and stuff?'

'What,' I say, 'What are you talking about?'

'A witch. You know. Like on that TV show, with the blonde woman who was a witch. You used to tell me you knew her. And that you were a witch too.'

'You mean a warlock?' I ask. I can see his collar-bone and a wisp of white-blond hair peeking out from the neck of his stretched

t-shirt.

'Yeah, witch, warlock. Whatever. Remember, you used to do magic?'

'I don't know what you're talking about. Are you sure it was me?'

'Yeah, yeah, it was you. Remember? Sandra the witch on the tv show?'

'Samantha, you mean,' I say to Jimmy. 'Right. Samantha. You remember? She was that hot witch on the show.'

'I've seen the show,' I say. 'But I don't know anything about being a witch.'

I turn away from Jimmy. 'I gotta go to my class,' I say.

I can hear him exhale.

'Warlock,' he says behind me to no one, and then he says it again a couple of times under his breath, 'Warlock, warlock.'

I wonder what he really remembers. Samantha, Endora, Tabitha. The sleep-overs. Soft kisses in the middle of the night when his eyes were closed. Tabitha's kisses, I told him. Soft kisses, warm breath. The smell of peppermint toothpaste. His arm across my waist like a seatbelt as we sleep.