

The Witches of Pendle

by Rowena Akinyemi

(Adapted book. Beginner level)

Chapter 1. The Pedlar

The spring of 1634 arrives, but in the prison of Lancaster Castle it stays cold. The twenty women in the prison are dirty, hungry and cold. There are no beds or chairs and so they sleep on the cold floor. There are no windows, so it is always dark. The women want to get out of the prison; they want to go home. Sometimes the guards open the big, old door and put some bread and water on the floor. Then they close the door again.

My name is Jennet Device, and I am one of the twenty women in prison. Day after day, I sit on the cold floor and wait. I want to feel warm again; I want to see the sky again, and Pendle Hill, the beautiful hill near my home. But I am in the dark prison of Lancaster Castle, and I sit on the cold floor and wait.

One day, something happens. The guards open the big, old door. ‘Jennet Device!’ a guard calls. ‘Come here at once, witch! Somebody wants to see you.’

I get up slowly because I’m very cold and I walk across the dark room to the door. Perhaps it’s someone from Read Hall! Perhaps I’m going home!

‘Jennet Device, be quick!’ the guard calls again.

Someone is standing at the door with the guard. ‘Jennet,’ he says quietly.

I see him then: a tall man with brown hair and tired blue eyes. He is not from Read Hall. It is Mr Webster, from the church at Kildwick. My legs stop moving and suddenly I want to sit down.

‘Come on, come on,’ the guard says angrily. He begins to close the door.

‘Come out here for a minute, Jennet,’ Mr Webster says quietly. ‘Sit down and eat something.’

I sit down at a little table near the door. Mr Webster gives me some bread and some meat and I begin to eat hungrily.

‘Ten minutes,’ the guard says. ‘After ten minutes, she goes in again.’

‘Thank you,’ Mr Webster says.

‘How is everyone at Read Hall?’ I ask at last.

Mr Webster smiles. ‘Everyone is well. I was there yesterday.’

I close my eyes for a minute. ‘Mr Webster, it’s not true. I’m not a witch, you know.’

‘I know, Jennet,’ Mr Webster says. ‘Last week, I brought Edmund Robinson and his father into my church, and asked them about the boy’s story. Many people believed Edmund’s story, but some people didn’t. Edmund Robinson is going to London tomorrow with his father, and a judge is going to question them.’

The guard comes back and begins to open the door.

‘Time!’ he says.

Mr Webster stands up. ‘God is here with you, Jennet. Never forget that. You can be happy, when God is with you.’

I stand up too, and take the bread from the table. ‘Yes, Mr Webster. God is with me; I believe that.’ But happy? How can I be happy?

I go back into the dark prison, and the guard closes the door behind me. The women run to me. ‘Bread! Give us bread!’ they cry.

Quickly, I put the bread in my shirt. I don’t want to lose it. I walk across the room and sit down on the floor. I am crying, but I feel a little better. Edmund Robinson, of Newchurch, is only ten years old. Edmund told lies about me and about many women: he saw us at a witches’ meeting at a house called Hoarstones. It’s not true, but many people believed him. What is he going to say in London? The truth? Or more lies.

But now, in the prison of Lancaster Castle, I want to tell my story. It is a story about rich men and angry villagers; about old women and hungry children. It is a true story, and it happened to me.

I was born in 1603. My family was always very poor, and after my father died, we were poorer. In winter, I was often ill and I was always cold and hungry. In summer, I was sometimes ill and I was often cold and hungry. We lived some miles from the village of Newchurch, in an old house called Malkin Tower. It was dirty and cold. The rain came in through the windows and there were no doors. To the west, was the big hill called Pendle. Pendle Hill was beautiful. I loved Pendle Hill because it sat quietly all year and watched me.

My story begins on the eighteenth day of March in the year 1612. I was nine years old, and my life began to change on that day. My mother and my grandmother were ill and they sat on the floor, with their dogs, near the little fire.

My sister Alizon wanted to go out. 'I'm going to look for bread,' she said.

My brother James sat near the fire, his mouth open. 'Go and look for bread,' he said. 'Go and look for bread. 'James often said things again and again.

Alizon ran out of the house and I followed her.

'Go and look for bread! 'James called.

Alizon began to go east, up the hill and past the big trees behind Malkin Tower. Alizon walked fast. She was eighteen years old and she was tall with long, dirty brown hair and a white, hungry face. It was cold, but there was no rain. Alizon wore a coat and some shoes, but I had no coat and no shoes.

'Please wait a minute!' I called to my sister. 'I want to come with you.'

'No!' Alizon cried. 'Go back, I don't want you.'

Suddenly, a dog ran in front of Alizon.

'Good dog, good dog!' Alizon called. The dog ran to her and she put her hand on its head. It was my sister's dog and it liked her. It was a big dog with big teeth and I didn't like it because it was always hungry.

I followed Alizon and her dog along the river to Colne. But before we arrived at Colne, we met John Law. John Law was a big fat man, about fifty years old.

‘Can I have some money, please?’ Alizon called. ‘I’m hungry- ’

John Law didn’t answer. He walked slowly because he was fat and because he carried a big bag on his back. In his bag were a lot of beautiful things. He was a pedlar and he walked across the hills and visited all the villages.

‘Can I have some money?’ Alizon called again. ‘I’m very hungry!’

John Law stopped. ‘Stop following me,’ he said. ‘I’m not going to give you money.’

‘Give me money!’ Alizon said.

‘I don’t want to give you money,’ the pedlar said. He took his hat off. There was not much hair on his head. ‘I don’t like you and I don’t like your family. A lot of bad women, you are, and your father was a bad man, too.’

Alizon was angry. ‘Don’t talk about my father - he’s dead now! Give me some money, old man!’

John Law’s face was red. ‘No!’ he cried. He began to walk up the hill to the village. ‘Go back to your dirty family!’ Alizon began to laugh angrily. ‘A dead man! A dead man!’ she called. ‘Dead before dark, John Law!’ She looked down at her dog and put her hand on its head. ‘Go after him, dog,’ she said. ‘Go after him and get him!’

The big dog began to run after the pedlar. John Law stopped. He looked afraid and his face was very red. ‘Call your dog back, you bad girl!’ he shouted.

Suddenly, his mouth opened and his face went white. Slowly, he began to fall, and his big body hit the road. The dog came up to him, but the pedlar did not move.

Alizon watched John Law for a minute. Then she said to me, ‘Go and call someone from the village.’

I felt afraid, but I ran along the road very quickly. ‘Help! Help!’ I called to the villagers. ‘The pedlar is ill!’

The villagers came out of their houses and followed me down the hill. A young man looked at John Law carefully.

‘He’s not dead,’ he said, ‘but he’s very ill. Let’s move him to the nearest house. Someone must go and call his son.’

Just then, John Law began to talk very slowly. ‘I can’t move!’ he said. ‘I’m alive, but I can’t move!’

I went back to stand near Alizon. The dog sat at her feet.

‘That Device girl...’ John Law said slowly, ‘she - she cursed me! She wanted me to die! And her dog came to get me.’

All the villagers looked at Alizon.

‘I’m sorry,’ Alizon said quickly. ‘I’m very hungry and I wanted some money, that’s all.’

‘Go away!’ the villagers cried. ‘You’re a witch, and we don’t want you in our village.’

Alizon began to run away down the hill and her dog followed. I watched the villagers. They carried John Law slowly up the hill to the nearest house. And then I followed my sister down the hill. I was hungry and tired and Malkin Tower was many miles away. I was nine years old and I was angry. I was angry because the pedlar was ill. I was angry because the villagers didn’t like me. And I was angry because my sister was a witch.

Chapter 2. Roger Nowell

John Law was ill because Alizon cursed him, and his son wanted Roger Nowell to question Alizon. Roger Nowell was a rich and important man in Lancashire, and he was the judge for all the villages near Pendle Hill. He lived at Read Hall, seven miles from Newchurch.

On the thirtieth day of March, Mr Nowell’s men came to Malkin Tower. Mr Nowell wanted to see Alizon at once.

We walked from Malkin Tower to Read Hall: my sister Alizon, my brother James, and our mother, Elizabeth Device. I followed them because I didn’t want to stay at home with my grandmother. My grandmother was a difficult old woman, and I didn’t like her.

Read Hall was an old house with a big garden and many old trees. Mr Nowell’s servant opened the door for us.

‘Come in,’ Mr Nowell said. He was a tall man with a lot of white hair. His black coat looked warm and expensive.

Alizon followed Mr Nowell into a room with a big fire. When I saw the fire, I wanted to go in, too!

‘Are you cold, little one?’ Mr Nowell asked me. ‘Come in, and sit near the fire.’

I went across the room and sat down on the floor, next to the wonderful, hot fire.

Mr Nowell sat behind a big table. Two or three men, in black coats, stood near the window. Alizon stood in front of Mr Nowell. Her long hair was dirty, and her old dress looked dirtier.

‘Two weeks ago, on the eighteenth day of March, you met John Law near Colne,’ Roger Nowell said. His voice was slow and careful. ‘Tell me about it.’

‘I asked for money,’ Alizon said. ‘The pedlar was very angry and I didn’t like him. I was angry, too, and I wanted him to die!’

‘Tell me about your dog.’

‘The dog is my friend.’ Alizon said slowly. ‘I wanted a friend, and I found that dog two months ago. I told my grandmother, and she liked the dog, too.’

‘Did the dog run after the pedlar?’

‘Yes, of course. I cursed the pedlar, and the dog ran after him!’ Alizon said. ‘I’m sorry now, because Mr Law is ill.’

‘She’s a witch!’ one of the men said quietly.

Roger Nowell stood up and walked across the room to the door. ‘James Device, come in. We want to question you.’

James came in and stood next to Alizon. James was thirteen years old, nearly a man, but he was afraid of many things. He began to cry.

‘Don’t be afraid,’ Mr Nowell said. ‘We want you to talk about your grandmother, Old Demdike.’

But Alizon wanted to talk. ‘Don’t ask him!’ she said quickly. ‘I can tell you about my grandmother because I’m with her every minute of the day. I go with her from village to village. I go with her across Pendle Hill. She asks people for money and food, and I help her.’ Alizon

stopped. She looked at James, and then she looked at Mr Nowell. ‘She cursed a child once, and the child died later that year.’

‘And you!’ James said. ‘You cursed a child, too! Somebody told me!’ James suddenly sat down on the floor and began to laugh loudly.

‘Be quiet!’ Roger Nowell said coldly. ‘Alizon Device, tell me the truth: did you curse a child?’

‘Yes, I did,’ Alizon cried. ‘The child called me a witch, and I was angry. I cursed the child, but I was sorry when the child died.’

James looked up at Alizon, his mouth open. ‘The child died, the child died,’ he said again and again.

‘Alizon Device, you cannot go home again,’ Roger Nowell said slowly. ‘You must go to the prison at Read.’

‘But I need Alizon!’ my mother shouted angrily from the door. ‘She takes care of Old Demdike, my mother.’

I looked at my mother, at her red, angry face. I looked at Alizon in her dirty dress, and at James on the floor with his mouth open. And then I looked at Mr Nowell: his brown eyes were warm, and his face was kind.

* * *

On the second day of April, Roger Nowell and his men came to Ashlar House, near the village of Fence. Mr Nowell wanted to talk to my grandmother, and we all went with her to Ashlar House. Fence was not far from Malkin Tower, and my grandmother walked there easily.

Old Demdike was a little old woman with a fat face and no teeth. She was nearly eighty years old and she was a difficult old woman. Without Alizon, she was more difficult because my mother didn’t take care of her.

When I saw Mr Nowell again at Ashlar House, I felt happy. I looked at his kind face and his warm brown eyes, and I wanted to be near him. But there were a lot of people in the room, and I was afraid to go to him.

‘Old Demdike, I’m going to ask you some questions,’ Mr Nowell began.

Old Demdike was not afraid. She looked at all the men, in their expensive coats and hats. ‘What can a poor old woman tell you rich men?’ She laughed, and when she laughed I felt afraid. My grandmother was going to tell them everything!

And she did!

‘Twenty years ago, I met the Devil,’ Old Demdike said. ‘He was a boy called Tibb and he was my friend. Then a cat came to visit me - a beautiful cat - and then a dog. They were all my friends.’

Mr Nowell listened quietly to my grandmother, but some of the men began to talk angrily.

‘Be careful, you rich men!’ my grandmother cried. ‘I can curse you! I can kill people! I make clay pictures of people - man, woman or child. And when I break the clay, that man, woman or child dies!’

People began to shout.

‘She’s a witch! She must die!’

‘Say no more; she must die, with all her family!’

Roger Nowell stood up. ‘Be quiet!’ He looked at the guards near the door. ‘Take her away,’ he said. ‘Old Demdike and her granddaughter Alizon must go to the prison at Lancaster Castle.’

The guards took my grandmother by the arms and carried her out of the door and put her on a horse. Everyone ran out of Ashlar House. They ran after the horses and shouted: ‘Kill the witch!’

I looked for Mr Nowell, but he was on his horse, too, and he followed the guards quickly through the village.

Slowly, I followed my mother and James. Malkin Tower was my home, but I didn’t want to go back there. I was a little child, and I wanted someone kind to take care of me.

* * *

We stayed at home for days, because we were afraid to go out. James sat in front of the fire, with his dog, and talked. ‘Lancaster Castle, Lancaster Castle,’ he said, again and again. My mother hit me and shouted at me because she was angry with the rich men.

But after three days, my mother suddenly said, ‘James! We’re hungry and we must eat!’

James didn't answer.

My mother went across the room to James and pulled his hair. 'Get up!' she shouted. 'Go out and find food for us! Your father isn't here now; you must find food for us.' She hit him over the head.

James stood up slowly. 'Go out and find food,' he said. 'I must go out and find food.'

It was dark, and James was out for hours. But in the morning, he came back with a sheep.

'I went to Barley,' James said happily. 'I got this sheep, and now we can eat.'

'Get up, Jennet!' my mother shouted. 'Come and help me!'

It was Friday, the tenth day of April. My family had some friends, poor people, and on that day they came to Malkin Tower. They came and asked about Old Demdike and Alizon, and they stayed to eat and drink.

I helped my mother. We cooked the sheep over a big fire, and our visitors ate with us. At the same time, they drank. They sat by the fire and drank, and talked about Lancaster Castle.

'Let's go there!' an old woman cried. 'Let's go to Lancaster Castle and find Old Demdike and Alizon!'

'We can curse the guards, and break down the door!' my mother said.

'Let's bring them home!' said an old man.

'Jennet, bring the bottle! We need more drink!' shouted my mother.

I got up and took more drink to my mother. But I fell over one of the dogs, and the bottle broke on the floor. The drink was gone!

'You bad child!' my mother shouted. 'You're a witch, too, you know!' She got up and began to hit me. She hit me over the head and pulled my hair. An old man laughed, and then everyone laughed.

I ran back across the room. I wasn't a witch; I was a child, nine years old, and I hated my mother and all her friends! My face felt very hot because I was angry. I left the room and went out of the house. It

was afternoon, but the sky was dark with rain. Pendle Hill was dark, too. It sat quietly and watched me.

‘I’m going to Mr Nowell,’ I said quietly, to Pendle Hill. ‘I’m going to tell him about my mother and her friends.’

Chapter 3. A Family of Witches

I ran from Malkin Tower, down the hill into Newchurch.

James followed me.

‘I want to go to Read Hall, too,’ he said.

We ran through the trees to Sabden Brook. The noise of the river was beautiful in my ears. We went along the river to the village of Sabden, and then it began to rain.

Suddenly, we heard the noise of horses behind us. We got off the road, and watched the horses. It was Roger Nowell with some of his men. They saw us, and Mr Nowell stopped.

‘It’s the Device children,’ he said. ‘What’s your name, child?’

‘My name is Jennet,’ I said. ‘We’re going to Read Hall. I want to talk to you.’

Roger Nowell looked at me with his warm brown eyes. ‘Very well,’ he said. ‘Come home with me, and we can talk.’ He lifted me up on to his horse, and the horse moved quickly along the road to the village of Read. James ran along behind us.

Very soon, we arrived at Read Hall. The servant opened the door for us, and we went into the warm house. James came in, too, and sat down next to me near the fire.

Mr Nowell put his black hat down on the table. ‘Bring a hot drink and some food for these children,’ he told the servant.

‘They’re cold and hungry.’

The servant brought bread and hot milk for us, and James and I ate hungrily. I felt warm and happy in Mr Nowell’s house. I wanted to stay there all my life; I never wanted to go back to Malkin Tower.

When we finished eating, Mr Nowell looked up from his book. ‘You wanted to talk to me,’ he said quietly. ‘Well, I’m listening.’

I got up, went across the room and stood in front of Mr Nowell. 'I'm afraid of my mother,' I began. 'I'm afraid because she's a witch and she can kill people.'

The room was quiet. Mr Nowell said nothing, but his brown eyes were kind.

'My mother and her friends are at Malkin Tower,' I told him. 'They want to go to Lancaster Castle and kill the guards. They're going to bring Old Demdike and Alizon home again.'

Mr Nowell got up and left the room. After some time, he came back with two of his friends. They all sat down at the table.

'Jennet, I want you to tell me again about your mother and her friends.'

'They want to kill the guards at Lancaster Castle and bring Old Demdike home to Malkin Tower,' I said. Then I began to cry.

'Don't cry,' Mr Nowell said kindly. 'We can help you, but we must talk to your brother first. James!' he called. 'Tell me about your mother. Is she a witch?'

'She's a witch. We're all witches,' James began. 'Old Demdike's a witch. One night, she went to the church at Newchurch and got some teeth from dead bodies there. The Devil talked to her and she brought the teeth to Malkin Tower. They're under the ground by our door!'

'Old Demdike's a witch; we know that,' Mr Nowell said. 'Tell us about your mother.'

'Mother's a witch,' James said. 'She killed Mr Robinson, from Barley village. She made a clay picture, and then she broke it, and Mr Robinson died a week later.' James smiled at Mr Nowell. He liked Mr Nowell because Mr Nowell didn't shout at him. 'And I'm a witch, too! I can kill people!'

'No, James!' I cried. 'You're not a witch! You don't kill people!'

'Yes, I do,' James said angrily. His face went red. 'My dog, Dandy, is the Devil and he killed a man for me. I wanted a shirt and Mr Duckworth was going to give me one of his old shirts. But in the end, he didn't give it to me and I was very angry. I nearly killed Mr Duckworth! But I called Dandy, and he killed Mr Duckworth for me!'

I began to cry. My brother was a witch, too! All my family were witches!

‘Don’t cry, Jennet,’ Mr Nowell said. ‘Someone must take care of you. You can stay here at Read Hall with me.’

When Mr Nowell’s men brought my mother to Read Hall, she said nothing at first.

‘Tell us about the pictures of clay,’ Mr Nowell said. ‘My men found pictures of clay at Malkin Tower.’

My mother said nothing.

‘Your mother, Old Demdike, is a witch. Your daughter is a witch,’ Mr Nowell said. ‘Your son killed Mr Duckworth because of a shirt. Now, tell us about the clay pictures.’

My mother said nothing.

‘James told us about Mr Robinson of Barley,’ Mr Nowell said. ‘Did you kill him?’

Suddenly, my mother’s face went red and she began to shout at James. ‘A good son, you are! You told this rich man about Jack Robinson of Barley. Well, you told the truth. I killed him! I made a clay picture, and then I broke it, and a week later he died. I killed him because I hated him.’

She stopped and looked at me. I wanted to run away but Mr Nowell’s servant stood in front of the door. Then my mother laughed. ‘Jennet Device, witch’s daughter! You hate us, I know that. Well, it doesn’t matter because you’re right: you are different. You’re my daughter, but you’re not the daughter of my husband. Your father was a rich man, but he never gave me money. A witch’s child, he called you. And when you were born, he never came near me again. Jack Robinson learnt the truth about your father. He told the villagers of Barley and they called me a bad woman, but they didn’t call your father a bad man! Nobody in Barley gave me food again, because of Jack Robinson. I hated him, and so I killed him!’

The room was very quiet and my mother laughed again.

My hands felt cold and my face was hot, but I didn’t cry. When Mr Device died, I cried for days. But he was not my father. I looked at

my mother, at her dirty hair and her ugly face, at her angry eyes. I hated her then, and I hated her for many years.

Chapter 4. Truth and lies

On the twenty-seventh day of April, the guards took my mother and James to Lancaster Castle, and my life at Read Hall began. Suddenly, it was spring. The sky was blue and there were beautiful flowers on the hills. From Read Hall, Pendle Hill looked different: it looked smaller, and it was not so important in my life. Sometimes I walked along Sabden Brook to Sabden, and then to Newchurch, and I felt happy to be near Pendle Hill again. But I never visited Malkin Tower again.

Spring changed into summer, and in August I went to Lancaster with Mr Nowell. Lancaster was thirty miles from Read Hall, and I got very tired because I sat on a horse for hours. It was a big, noisy town. I never saw so many people before in my life and I felt afraid.

The trial of the witches of Pendle began at Lancaster Castle on the eighteenth day of August, and the judge was an important man from London. Judge Bromley listened to many people on that day, because there were a lot of witches from Lancashire in the prison. Old Demdike was not there because she died in May, before the judge arrived.

I waited with Mr Nowell's servant, and when a guard called my name, I went through a big door and saw the judge behind a table. Judge Bromley was rich and important, but his eyes were cold. Suddenly, I saw my mother! She was dirty and very thin. When she saw me, her face went red. My hair was clean now, and I wore shoes and an expensive dress. I saw my mother's eyes: she hated me!

‘Are you a witch?’ Judge Bromley asked my mother.

‘No, I'm not,’ my mother answered angrily.

‘Did you kill Jack Robinson, of Barley village?’

‘No, I did not.’

‘Jennet Device is here,’ a voice said quietly. It was Mr Nowell. ‘She can tell us the truth about her mother.’

For a minute, my mother did not move. Then she ran across the room and shouted at me. ‘You know nothing, you bad child! And I’m your mother! Don’t forget that!’

The guards ran after my mother and pulled her to the floor.

‘I’m no witch!’ my mother shouted. ‘It’s all lies! Jennet, you’re a witch – a child of the Devil! You’re my daughter, and I know!’

I was afraid and I put my hands over my eyes. I didn’t want to see my mother’s ugly face. The guards pulled my mother out of the room and the noise stopped.

‘Jennet Device,’ the judge said. ‘Tell us the truth about your mother.’

Roger Nowell lifted me up and put me on a table in front of the judge.

‘My mother is a witch,’ I began. ‘She has a friend, a dog called Ball. When she wants to kill somebody, she tells Ball... ‘I talked and talked; I told the judge everything.

Judge Bromley listened carefully. ‘My child, is this the truth?’

‘Yes,’ I answered. ‘I’m telling you the truth.’

The guards brought my mother back into the room again. Her face looked tired and her eyes were red.

‘Elizabeth Device, your daughter told us about your dog, Ball. Your son, too, told us about the clay pictures. We know everything.’

My mother said nothing. She didn’t look at the judge and she didn’t look at me.

Next, the guards brought my brother James into the room. When I saw James, I wanted to cry. James was thin and dirty and his hair was very long. He looked at the judge and at all the rich and important men in the room and he began to cry. Then he sat down on the floor.

‘Stand up, James Device,’ Judge Bromley said.

The guards pulled James up, but he fell to the floor again.

‘You killed Mr Duckworth,’ Judge Bromley said.

‘I wanted a shirt,’ James cried.

‘Is your brother a witch?’ Judge Bromley asked me.

‘Yes,’ I said. My brother sat on the floor, his mouth open. Pie looked at me, but he didn’t know me. I was clean, and fat because of all the good food at Read Hall.

‘James told me about his friend, Dandy,’ I began. ‘Dandy was the Devil and-’

James heard the name Dandy, and he began to cry again. ‘I want Dandy! I want to go home!’

The guards pulled him up from the floor and took him out of the room. I never saw my brother again.

When the guards brought my sister Alizon in front of the judge, I said nothing. John Law, the pedlar, came into the room. He was a thin man now. He walked slowly and he talked slowly and his face looked ill. He told the judge about that day near Colne when Alizon cursed him and her dog ran after him.

‘I’m sorry!’ Alizon said. ‘I was angry with you that day, but I’m sorry now.’ Alizon’s eyes were dark and afraid, but she had no friends in that room and nobody wanted to listen to her.

Then Mr Nowell took me out and I waited with his servant in a different room. An hour later, there was the noise of many people shouting and crying.

The servant smiled. ‘The trial is finished,’ he said. ‘You’re a good child, Jennet. You told the judge the truth about the witches.’

Mr Nowell took me home to Read Hall. And on the twentieth day of August 1612, the guards took my mother, my sister and my brother out of prison, and hanged them in front of Lancaster Castle.

* * *

And so I lost my family.

When I was a child, I wanted to be happy. I wanted to be warm, to wear shoes, to eat good food. I wanted someone to take care of me. That’s all. My mother gave me nothing. She gave me no love. She never took care of me. Because my mother was a witch, my father ran away and I never knew him. My father was a rich man without a name, and I lived hungry and cold with a witch. And so I told Judge Bromley the truth about my family. Was I wrong? I don’t know.

I was happy for years at Read Hall. For twenty-one years, I forgot my family. I learned to cook for the Nowell family; I worked many hours every day but I was warm and I ate good food. Every Sunday, in my best dress, I went to church; every summer I walked over Pendle Hill. I never thought about my family, because I was happy at Read Hall.

In August 1612, the guards hanged my family in front of Lancaster Castle. But their dead faces waited for me there; and a year ago, in 1633, when the guards put me in the prison in Lancaster Castle, I met them again. Day after day, I see their ugly, dead faces and hear their cold, angry voices. I think of them all the time. God is with me here, in prison. I believe that. But my dead family is with me too.

Mr Webster, from the church at Kildwick, visits me again. His blue eyes are tired, but he smiles at me.

‘Edmund Robinson and his father told the truth in London,’ he says quietly. ‘The child told lies about you because he was afraid of his father. He wanted his father to love him.’

I say nothing. Mr Webster wants to be kind, but he cannot help me. Mr Nowell cannot help me because he is dead. Edmund Robinson is only a child; he tells lies one day, and the truth the next day. But the truth cannot help me. What can I do against hate, and lies? When Mr Nowell was alive, the villagers didn’t talk about me. But when Mr Nowell died, the lies began. The villagers are all afraid of me - because my name is Device. They hate me - because my name is Device. They say I am a witch - because my name is Device.

I come from a family of witches, but I am not a witch. Nobody died because I cursed them. I never made clay pictures, I never had a cat or dog. I only wanted to live quietly at Read Hall and watch the changing skies over Pendle Hill.

When I was a child, I was always cold and hungry, and I hated my family because they were witches. In 1612, I told the truth, and the truth killed my family. Now, twenty-two years later, lies are going to kill me, here in Lancaster Castle, and I am cold and hungry again.

Mr Webster gives me bread, and I go back into the prison. I can never go back to Read Hall; I know that now. I must stay here in Lancaster Castle, with my dead family.

They are watching me, and waiting for me. I can never be free of them.

This is my true story; and I want to finish it now.

- THE END -

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