



ASILISSA

the BEAUTIFUL

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Witches




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Once upon a time, long winters ago, at the very edge of the world, was a village which God had forgotten.

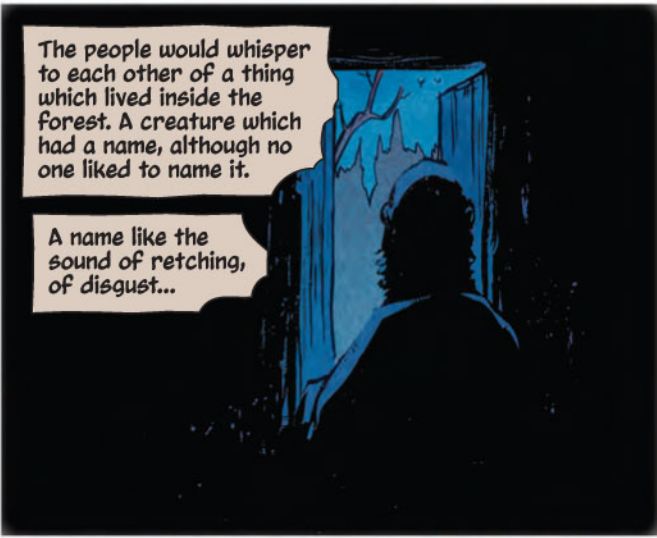


A few lonely houses stood there, fenced by a forest so deep and so dark that the sky stopped above it for fear of getting lost.

Oh, from time to time fools wandered in, trailing string behind them...



But they never came back.



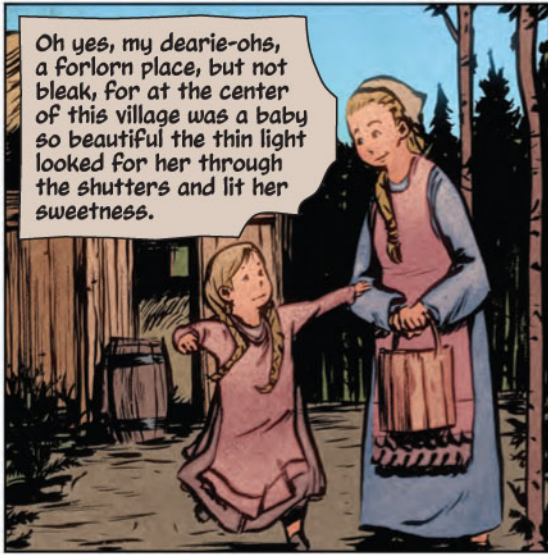
The people would whisper to each other of a thing which lived inside the forest. A creature which had a name, although no one liked to name it.

A name like the sound of retching, of disgust...



Baba.

Yaga.



Oh yes, my dearie-ohs, a forlorn place, but not bleak, for at the center of this village was a baby so beautiful the thin light looked for her through the shutters and lit her sweetness.



There she is with her smile of honey and mother and father, and never was a family more family.



And this love warmed the village and kindled it. Spreading happiness.


Such a precious thing, all child, all wonder.



The village child...



...LITTLE VASSILISSA.



AND SO IT GOES, THIS HARVEST CHILD BLOSSOMING, HAIR THE COLOR OF THE CORN. A CHILD WHO SINGS, UNTRoubLED, SPILLING OVER WITH JOY.


OH, YES. MARVELOUS.



UNTIL ONE DAY INSIDE OF THIS WARM HOME...



...SICKNESS COMES AND LAYS ITS COLD HAND ON THE MOTHER'S FOREHEAD.



The father and child sorrow through the nights-long vigil.

For this is a place God has forgotten and nothing good may flourish long.



FATHER WILL LOOK AFTER YOU.

YOU LOOK AFTER ME.

ALWAYS. ALWAYS.



THIS IS FOR YOU. KEEP IT CLOSE.

WHENEVER YOU NEED HELP, FEED HER. SHE'LL BE YOUR GUIDE.



BUT I DON'T WANT A DOLL. I WANT--

COME AWAY NOW, LOVE. YOUR MOTHER'S GOT TO REST HERSELF.

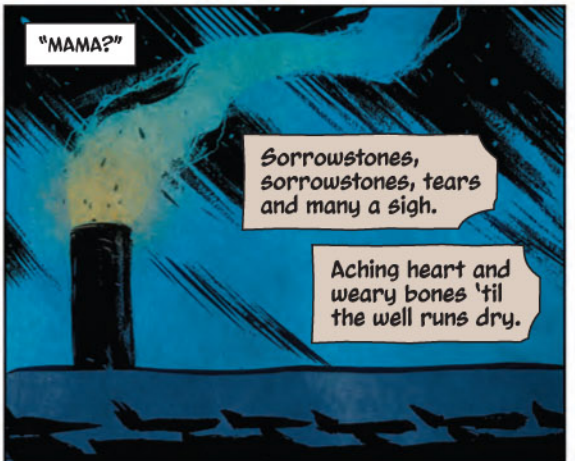
NO, NO. IT'S ALL RIGHT. COME CLOSE, BOTH OF YOU, AND SIT BY ME.

THAT'S NICE. IS IT COLD?



I FEEL SO COLD.

MAMA?



"MAMA?"

Sorrowstones, sorrowstones, tears and many a sigh.

Aching heart and weary bones 'til the well runs dry.

Such cruelty makes you wonder, where it comes from.

Vasilissa gazed out and decided cruelty lived there, in that damp and black forest.

The years passed on but she hardly noticed. All drifting by as so many clouds, until one day...

Her father met a widow.

He had done with grieving and he wanted a wife again to warm his back at nights and to mind his daughter.

But what a choice, my dearies!

A bat and her two daughters flapped into Vasilissa's life.

With them the cold walked in, and underneath their honey and treacle and "Darling Vasilissa," our pretty could feel their poison leaking out.

