

‘À Sa Place’



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Translation: In Her Place

Genre: A Mythic Semi-Historical Period Fantasy / Dark Fable

Anthology Submission: *Horror Witch Anthology*

Length: 8 Pages

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Logline/Pitch: In the ruins of a besieged village, an orphan is taken in by a shape-shifting forest witch who assumes the form of his dead mother. She takes him in amongst her enchanted brood as the old magic reclaims what war has sundered.

PAGE ONE (One Large Panel)

Panel 1 (Splash Page - a Moment from the Hundred Years War):

[Establishment Box: Southern France, near the Dordogne River, c. 1356]

Establishment page. An expansive battle scene unfolds in the distance — a great citadel stands at the epicenter of rolling fields, under siege by a chaotic army. The battlements are holding but crumbling in places. Smoke billows from behind the walls insinuating the start of fires as men clash along the tops of the walls. Ladders and siege equipment decorate the vast facade of the fortress.

In the foreground, a devastated farming village lies in ruin. One hut partially burns. Corpses are strewn across the dirt road. At the center lies a woman’s bright-colored, crumpled form — the reader’s eyes are drawn to her by contrast and placement.

Only the sound of distant battle and the flicker of fire animates the stillness.

PAGE TWO (6 Panels)

Panel 1:

An impossibly large bear pads into the ruined village. Its size is unnatural — massive. Two or three regular bears follow it, hesitant.

Panel 2:

They approach the corpses. The smaller bears begin to feast like carrion. The largest bear (Mother) lowers its muzzle toward the brightly dressed woman.

Panel 3:

Its jaws open wide — then pause at the sound of a whimper.

// SFX:

Whimper...

Panel 4:

Mother cocks her head in a canine, inquisitive way.

// SFX:

Sniff sniff...

// SFX:

whimper...

Panel 5:

Mother nudges the woman's body aside with her snout. The others peer in.

Panel 6:

A small human child lies beneath her — a slightly older toddler, eyes wide with terror and awe.

SFX (Child):

AHHH!

PAGE THREE (6 Panels)

Panel 1:

The child panics and shields its eyes with its hands, as if that would do anything. It is innocent, vulnerable, and afraid.

Panel 2:

If possible, the panel should be as if you were drawing your fingers over your eyes. Only little slits of light between supple flesh can be discerned. We are looking from the viewpoint of the child peeking between its fingers. Light spills through slits of flesh.

Panel 3:

The fingers part slightly — the world begins to come into focus. We see what seems to be a woman dressed in furs and leather and various moss and fur adorning her figure, a large gnarled staff in her hand. The image is reserved and fleeting, just enough to make the imagination run wild with conjecture.

Panel 4:

The view is unobstructed. Now, standing before her, is a perfect replica of his mother, hand reaching downward towards him, smiling. Where there were smaller bears are now children like him, but they are all looking up at her, all in unison with calm expressions. It should seem *slightly* unnatural and unnerving.

Panel 5:

Wide shot. The faux-Mother guides the Child away, hand-in-hand. He sucks his thumb with his free hand. Behind them, two “children” drag the actual woman’s corpse, and some of the others, around a corner and out of view.

Panel 6:

The group walks through the tree line. The castle burns in the valley below, one wall collapsed. They move in single file into the shadows of the forest, not looking back.

PAGE FOUR (6 Panels)

Panel 1:

Establishing shot: A small cottage that almost seems carved out of stone and trees - more organic than man-made yet inescapably identifiable as a home - rests in the epicenter of an intimate clearing with a patch of sky sending light downwards across its facade. Some kids mill about playing in the front, though from the smoke billowing from the ramshackle chimney of the cozy abode, life truly stirs within.

Panel 2:

Interior. The reader enters into the space as if through the front door. A warm home, hobbit-like in scope as it feels like a den fashioned into the trappings of what forest creatures would think human homes would be like without fully seeing one - walls are curved rather than fully erect. There's a closeness to the space, yet still warm and happy as children within play or look up at Mother as she sits in a chair and knits. The Child sits near her, his head resting against her legs. A cauldron boils away with food on top of the hearth that is the source of warm light across the space.

Panel 3:

Interior, but the view has flipped somewhat towards the opposing side. A child stands, silhouetted against the open door of the dwelling. He ran in quickly, almost bursting in with his need to deliver a message: He gesticulates towards the opening, pointing at something not yet discernable from where we are.

Panel 4:

The others freeze. Mother looks up sharply. Tension enters the room.

Panel 5:

Some children peer out the small window. From their POV: wounded soldiers — deserters — limp into the clearing. Ragged, armed, pointing toward the cottage.

Panel 6:

Mother is now outside, slightly outside the threshold. The children gather around her, including the Child. She glares at the men as they shamle forward. She points away towards whence they came, a clear message of refusal and rebuke. A warning, if they were wise enough to heed it.

PAGE FIVE (6 Panels)

Panel 1:

The men look at each other in unspoken debate. They're tired. They're beaten and hungry. Barely men any longer. More animals than anything.

Panel 2:

They draw their spears and swords and advance, looks of resignation and cold murder on their faces. They are no scoundrels or bandits. It is worse: desperate men, grim-faced, resolved.

Panel 3:

Mother walks forward alone, unarmed, without pause.

Panel 4:

She is amongst them instantly, faster than even the blink of an eye. She grasps one of the men by the neck with but a single hand and arm - he's so taken aback his sword isn't raised. Many are wide-eyed in shock as they stare at her appearing amongst them with such instantaneous speed.

Panel 5:

She **snaps his neck** in one motion.

// SFX (neck-snapping)

Crck.

Panel 6:

He collapses like wet cloth. She stands, staring at them as if she did nothing but remove the garbage of the day. The others stagger back in fear, weapons raised. One of them clearly urinates himself.

// Soldier that Pissed Himself

Nom de Dieu... une fille du diable!

PAGE SIX (4 Panels)

Panel 1:

Some of the men decide to charge and die on their feet. One in particular levels a spear and charges at her in blind defiance and terror.

// Soldier
Raggh!!!

Panel 2:

The spear drives through Mother's shoulder, spraying blood. She doesn't react. Instead, she grabs another soldier with the unbothered shoulder and crushes his head with her bare hand.

// SFX (head detonating in her grasp like a ripe melon)
Plurghk!

Panel 3:

She throws the corpse into the other soldiers and they tumble together.

// SFX
Fwump.

Panel 4:

She drops to all fours, howling as her body transforms — muscles bulging, fur growing, skin darkening. The air vibrates with magic and rage.

//SFX:
AAARRROOOooooo—!

Panel 5:

A larger frame and disquieting shot. The men twirl around in panic as all of the children have done the same, howling at the sky, encircling the men. Only the human child we met at the start stays human and near the door of the hamlet, watching onward silently, eyes full of awe.

// SFX (Various):
AAARRROOOooo!
RAWRRRoooo!
WooOoooOoo!

PAGE SEVEN (6 Panels)

Panel 1:

The men are now set upon by the wolves, with Mother dancing in the midst in a grand symphony of violence when engaged with the soldiers. Carnage, teeth, screaming. A violent, sacred dance.

Panel 2:

The battle ends. The clearing is strewn with corpses. A few wolves drag the bodies of fallen kin back toward Mother.

Panel 3:

Mother lies down, bleeding but still powerful. She sniffs the fallen wolves.

Panel 4:

The wolves howl in mourning, facing the moonlit sky, some of them already returning to a human form as the Child approaches their circle of lamentation and grief.

// SFX (Collective):

Aah-wooOOooo...

Panel 5:

The pack turns to look at the Child, who stands quietly. Mother however, who is nearby, is looking elsewhere: a path that leads towards smittering shards of light, and eventually, the forest opening, whence the men came.

Panel 6:

Mother turns her gaze from the Child to the forest's edge to look down upon him. This time, the delicate lie is finally shattered, and she stands before him as the sage mage of the old magic she truly is, grand staff in hand. She is covered in blood, but her face is kind.

The implication is clear: It is an invitation to return to that world if he wishes, now that he has seen the truth. The others look on.

PAGE EIGHT (Three Panels)

Panel 1

A close up shot of her waist. He embraces her as much as his small stature and limbs allow. She staggers from it a bit, her hands and arms out to steady herself - she, who just moments before, took a spear blow that would have staggered a lion.

Panel 2

Closer shot. Small panel. Her bloodied hand gently rests upon the back of his head.

Panel 3:

Interior of the den, now night. The hearth glows low, casting warm shadows.

Mother, in human form, sits among blankets and pillows. The children sleep curled around her.

The Child lies asleep in her lap. One of her arms cradles his head. Her other hand strokes his cheek with the back of her fingers. Outside a small window behind them, a few stars glimmer in the darkness. All is well. A choice is made. An ending. A beginning. A change.

[TITLE CARD]

[CREDITS]