

THE LAST WITCH I

Free Chapter I

[Full book available on Amazon](#)

It must be raining. The leak's always worse when it rains. I watch the water travel along the ceiling and drip off the glass light bulb above my head. Small droplets land on my bare feet and slide between my toes. The bulb flickers and the sound of electricity buzzes as it mixes with the runoff. Maybe it will make the bulb explode. Perhaps I'll get lucky, and a shard will find its way into my neck. Who knows. Stranger things *have* happened. It flickers again as I sit and watch it. Only that and the constant ticking of the clock hanging on the wall makes any noise.

That bloody clock.

Put in here with me for no other reason than to remind me of all the seconds I'm wasting away down here. It says it's nine o'clock, but I have no idea if that's nine in the morning or evening. This grey concrete box I currently call home has no windows. Being below ground, why would it?

God, I'm thirsty. My mouth's unbearably dry from the dirty cloth I have gagging me. It cuts into the corners of my mouth, peeling and rubbing away my skin with every bit of movement.

Roger peeks his head out from under the heavy wooden door ahead of me. His little ears twitch as he raises his nose and sniffs the air before scurrying over.

He's quite cute for a rodent.

The little brown mouse always comes to say hello. His feet tickle as they clamber over my legs. But seeing there's nothing here for him to eat, he returns under the door, making escape look so easy.

But I can't even get to the door, let alone go through it. The deadbolt on the other side is always locked.

I shift, hoping to ease the pain in my extremities. My arms ache like hell behind my back. The chains linked to the cuffs around my wrists are attached to the wall behind me, and they rattle as I shuffle. I can't move more than two feet from this spot.

The tickle in my throat that started two days ago is turning into a full-blown cough. I'm not sick. It's the spores I've started to breathe. The mould's getting worse. I can taste it as it creeps across the walls, getting closer.

Like me, the cellar's neglected and forgotten.

Like me, it's been left to rot.

The bulb gives one final flicker and then...*pop*. I'm plunged into darkness.

Great. And not a single shard in sight.

I continue leaning against the cold, wet wall with my legs stretched out in front of me. And I wait. Wait for food and water. Wait for the daily, silent glance from Mr Simmons to make sure I'm still alive. Wait for the mould to start growing on me. Or for Roger to begin eating my toes.

But I don't wait for freedom. Or kindness. Or forgiveness.

Not any more.

I think now I'm just waiting to die.

As my eyes grow heavier, the monotonous ticking and dripping begin to fade away.

BANG.

What the hell was that noise? It sounded like...

BANG.

There it is again. Gunfire I think, followed by the high-pitched screams of the women, and the fearful bellows of the men who all live above me. A few moments pass, then I hear footsteps. But they're not the heavy, slow, purposeful almost bored footsteps of Mr Simmons, my keeper who brings me food and water once a day. These footsteps are rushing. Running. Tripping over themselves.

The heavy clunk of the deadbolt is followed by the door flying open. The bright light from the hall floods the room blinding me for a moment. But I still manage to see who stands in the doorway.

It is Mr Simmons.

The heavily built man wears a simple black suit that barely contains his frame. And he is usually all business. Very stern and severe. But now he's sweating. Panting. Terrified!

'Up!' he orders, storming towards me and going straight to the lock keeping my chains connected to the wall. 'Get up, girl.'

Although my joints are stiff and my body's weak, I get to my feet. The screaming and shouting from upstairs continue. As does the gunfire. Followed by a loud animalistic roar. It's not like any animal I've ever heard. It's almost demonic. Mr Simmons watches the door, his hands halfway through getting the key in the padlock. He doesn't seem to be breathing as he just stands there watching with wide eyes.

He's waiting.

But no one comes through the door. Not yet. He finishes undoing the lock, takes hold of the chain and grabs my arm, pulling me in close.

'The house is under attack,' he tells me. 'I need to get you out of here before they find you.' I want to ask who's coming. I want to know what the hell is happening. But with this gag in my mouth, I can't say a single word.

The light in the hall suddenly goes off leaving us in less than no light. I feel Mr Simmons trembling. His quickened and frightened breath land on my skin.

From the end of the hall, someone begins to whistle. It's a child's tune. One I remember.

Somewhere over the rainbow.

It echoes down the long concrete corridor. It's a playful song. A sweet song. But whistled at us in the darkness by someone who has one of the bravest, strongest and most fearless man I've known trembling, has me filled with utter dread.

Simmons' hand grips me tighter. So tight, I think my bone will break. But the terror of whoever, or *whatever* is at the end of the hall has me backing closer to him.

The whistling stops as quickly as it started. The silence is deafening.

'They can't be allowed to get their hands on you,' Simmons whispers. I turn, but can't see his face. There's just the blackness of my prison.

Is it finally happening? Am I getting out of here?

In a quick move, he wraps my chains tight around my neck and pulls.

'They can never find you alive. I'm sorry.' The more I struggle, the tighter it gets. My hands are bound behind my back. I can't do anything but fall to my knees and try to get the slightest breath.

He's killing me.

Snap.

The chain tumbles from my neck and lands on the cold floor. They're followed by a heavy thud. I slump, landing on my side, panting and gasping for as much air as I can get while my eyes stream and my head throbs.

He just tried to kill me!

Bastard!

The light from the hall suddenly flickers back on and I see Mr Simmons. His body is facing me, but his head is completely the wrong way around. I scream and try to get as far away from him as possible.

Someone clears their throat.

I freeze, too terrified to turn. Too terrified to breathe.

They start to laugh.

Slowly, shakily, petrified...I turn.

A man is kneeling beside me, covered in blood. His clothes, his hands, his face, his lips are smothered. But there's no sign of any injury. His thick dark hair reaches to his shoulders and is a wiry, tangled mess which matches perfectly with his thick untamed beard. But it's his eyes that fill me with terror. They're completely black.

'Bit chilly for shorts,' he laughs, a malicious grin creeping across his lips as he runs his filthy finger up my leg and circles it around my knee. He takes in sight of my body. My bruised bare legs. My grazed knees. My chest. And when they settle on my neck, he licks his lower lip. I'm trapped between a dead man and his killer. His breathing gets heavier, and the lines and scars on his face become deeper and much more pronounced.

He traces his finger along my cheek and sweeps my matted red hair out of my face giving a low moan as he does. The sensation of red-hot needles being dragged across my skin erupts over every inch he feels. I jerk my face away. He doesn't like that. With an annoyed grunt, he grabs my chin and forces me to look right at him.

'What ya doing down here, hmm? Have I found Hooper's little chamber of terror? Or pleasure?'

I struggle to get my brain to communicate with the rest of me. I want to scream. I want to try and get away, but all I can do is lay frozen in terror as this beast of a man towers over me.

He leans in close and runs his nose up my throat sniffing me like some kind of animal, sending a cold shiver up my spine and forcing a whimper up my throat.

Oh, God...there's blood in his teeth!

They're not natural teeth either, but jagged and sharp. I let loose another involuntary scream and try to free myself from his grip. But of course, I can't. No matter how hard I try.

'Shhh,' he says softly as I thrash and kick. 'No need to scream, little lady. I'll be gentle. I promise.'

He bares his teeth, and goes for my neck.

I scrunch my eyes closed. This is it. I'm going to die.

But after a few seconds, I'm still very much alive. I can hear his breathing in my ear he's that close.

But he does nothing.

When I open my eyes, he's looking at the gag in my mouth with deep concentration and uncertainty. As he inspects it in more detail, his eyes widen and flick up to mine in surprise.

'Is that what I think it is?' he demands, grabbing my face and leaning in real close for a better look. 'Bloody hell. It is! Well, well, well,' he mumbles. 'It's your lucky day. Seems I won't be killing ya after all. There's someone upstairs that would just *love* to meet ya. Let's go.'

With that, he grabs my arm and drags me out of the room, the chain trailing behind me.

I thought that if I were ever to leave this damp and windowless dungeon, it would be as a pale, stiff corpse. It's been two years after all. But as I'm led away now, by a beast who almost tore the head off the man who just tried to kill me, I know I'm in far greater danger than merely being murdered.

Who the hell is he taking me to?

*

Upstairs is a massive contrast to what it is below. Clean to the point of obsession. Tidy and filled with expensive antiques all out on display boasting wealth and connection for the family that live here.

Christa and Harry Hooper own this eight-bedroom country home, complete with a hidden dungeon in the cellar. It's nestled safely away in the heart of Dartmoor where only those who would know where to look would find it. But usually, the polished wooden floors, floral rugs and priceless pieces of furniture aren't covered with blood and bodies. I seem to forget how to walk as the Beast pulls me past what's left of four men I recognise as house staff piled up at the base of the stairs. Their limbs all tangled up. Their eyes are wide and glassy. They're covered in so much blood. I can't look away at the horror in front of me as he pulls me closer and closer to their corpses.

I know each of their names.

But I couldn't care less that they're dead.

Inside my mind, I'm hysterically screaming and wailing. But outside, I'm silent. Fear has overridden everything. Fear that I'm soon going to join them. He's watching me and laughs to himself as my legs turn to jelly.

I'm taken to the main hall where the front door comes into view. The light from the lounge sneaks out through a crack in the door, and the shrill screams of Christa and the furious yells of Harry reach my ears from inside. They're alive and by the sounds of it, being tortured. Christa is hysterical. Howling and weeping as God knows what is happening to her. Harry's bellowing threats, warning someone to get away and leave her alone.

There's another voice. One I don't recognise. It's calm, polite and soft. A dramatic contrast to the others. The Beast stops by the door to the lounge, and his grip becomes even tighter making me cry out in protest. He silences me with an angry glance and a snarl before taking hold of the chain trailing behind me. The Beast busies himself securing me in place, wrapping the chain around the

leg of a heavy ottoman unit beside me. The soft voice of the stranger inside the lounge drifts through the air.

'Now, now,' says the stranger who remains out of sight. 'Calm down, Mr Hooper. You are upsetting your wife. May I suggest you just tell me what I want to know and I will tell my colleague to stop hurting her.'

His voice is eerily calm and has a hint of amusement within in. It unsettles me more than the Beast does. Every word is said with clarity and grace.

'Don't tell me to calm down!' Harry yells with a ferocity I know well. I can see his face as clear as if he was screaming at me. 'You tell your minion to get his hands off my wife, NOW! I know very well who you are and why you're here, but you're too late. It's gone.'

'Gone?' the stranger asks. 'What do you mean, gone?'

'I mean your chance is gone. There's no way I'll throw in my lot with you. And neither will my son. So, as I said. Your. Chance. Is. Gone!' His words are vicious and stern. He means what he says. 'You'll never succeed. You'll never find my son.'

The stranger continues, 'My men and I would welcome you back into the fold gladly, Mr Hooper. You and your son. Seeing as you and your boy are the last Hooper's left, and it's vital to me that that changes. Come with us. You'll have all the women you want. All the money and luxuries you could dream of. You will want for nothing.'

'And what? You'll breed us like common bitches? I have no interest in joining your cult. The Hooper's will never help you, and you'll never succeed. I've made sure of that.'

'What do you mean?'

'Ever heard the word...vasectomy?' Harry laughs. 'I won't further the Hooper line, and neither will Junior.'

Christa screams again, sending a cold wave of fear over me. What are they doing to her?

'STOP IT, YOU DERANGED PSYCHO!' Harry yells. 'HURTING MY WIFE WON'T CHANGE ANYTHING!'

'Oh, Mr Hooper. Less of the "*deranged psycho*" if you please. Let's try and keep our manners, shall we?' There's frustration creeping into the stranger's voice which only makes him sound more terrifying. 'You are lucky that vasectomies are reversible. If you wish to remain here, fine. But I will not leave until you tell me where your son Junior is. As well as the other man I was asking about. You will tell me-'

'I told you-'

'I know the lies that you have told me. That you haven't seen your son in more than five years and that you have never seen the other man I am looking for. If you were anyone else, I would have killed you for that. I truly do detest liars. You are lucky I need you alive. Your wife on the other hand... I do not. So, you will tell me where they are, and start talking to me with respect. Or she will suffer the consequences. Give me what I want, Mr Hooper, and I will let her live. Tell me where those boys are.'

What the hell are they talking about? Vasectomies? Furthering the bloodline? They're looking for Junior?

The Beast shoves me against the wall returning my full attention back to him and points a finger in my face.

'Stay!' he growls, before heading towards the room.

I pull against the chain, but I'm stuck firm. Tethered once more to this house. I need to get away from here. The stranger is torturing Christa. And if Harry won't give up the information they're after for her, there's no hope in hell he will for me.

The front door's in sight, but restrained like this it might as well be on the other side of the planet. I pull and tug, but it's hopeless. Even if I were at full strength, I wouldn't be able to break free. The

stranger continues to talk calmly beyond the door and seemingly pays no attention to the Beast as he gestures for someone to join us out in the hall. I keep trying, desperate to get away.

Soon, a tall man with ruffled blonde hair in his mid-twenties follows the Beast into the hall, closing the door behind him and cutting off the stranger's voice altogether.

Blondie tucks a knife into his jacket pocket with bloody hands as they make their way over. The closer Blondie gets, something odd happens. The air around him seems to vibrate. I can feel a pulse through me like a small wave of energy. It's unlike anything I've ever felt before and makes my hair stand on end. It's enough to distract me from pointlessly struggling. As he gets closer I realise, it's him! His presence alters the air somehow.

Blondie stops close. I feel smothered in this unnatural sensation. What the hell is this? What is he? His teeth are normal. His eyes are a very human hazel colour, not black like the Beast's.

'Where the bloody hell did you find her?'

'Chained up in the cellar behind a hidden door. That Hooper prick's been hiding her. First, I thought that maybe she was just his little plaything. She's cute under all that filth. But then I saw this.' He grabs my chin, manhandling me so Blondie can see my face and the gag in my mouth clearer. I try to get away from his grip, but he just digs his nails in.

'Holy shit!' Blondie whispers.

'Yeah.... and look at her hair. Only *they* have that red hair.' There's excitement in his voice as he lets me go with a little shove.

Blondie's scanning my face. Looking at the gag and my hair before his eyes finally lock onto mine. He gives me a kind little smile. Almost coy. There's kindness there. Odd, considering the situation.

'Maybe. Why is she so...battered? If you did this to her, he'll kill you. You know that, right?'

'I didn't touch her,' the Beast insists, holding his hands in the air. 'I saved her from his manservant who was trying to throttle her. I mean, I was going to bite her. But when I saw that gag, I brought her straight up to you.'

Bite me? Surely, he doesn't actually mean...

'Grayson needs to see her before we jump to any conclusions. He'll know for sure.' He points at the gag. 'Don't take that off, Hendrix. She's wearing it for a reason, and until we know *what* she is, I think it best we play it safe.' Watching me, he rubs his chin in contemplation. 'Grayson's still questioning the Hoopers.'

'Has he got anything from them? Do we know where the little shits are yet?'

'No, not yet but we're just getting started so...'

Blondie shrugs, still keeping his eyes on mine.

'Maybe Grayson should let me take over. I'm much better at getting people to talk than you are.'

'You end up killing everyone we interrogate, Hendrix,' Blondie replies tiredly, gesturing to the pile of bodies by the base of the stairs. 'Just watch her. I'll tell Grayson what you've found. That should cheer him up.'

'Yes, *sir*,' Hendrix replies dryly.

Blondie turns and heads back to the lounge with a final quizzical look to me over his shoulder. He closes the door and leaves us out in the hallway.

I panic.

I don't want to be taken in there. I don't want to see the man that I assume is their leader. I start tugging and yanking the chain.

Hendrix slams me back against the wall in a swift swipe without even turning to look, knocking the wind out of my lungs and stunning me as my head bangs the wall.

'Move again, and I'll break your skinny little legs,' he warns, slowly turning to look at me with his eyebrows raised and a condescending smirk. 'Would be a shame to batter that body of yours even more than it already is. So just behave.'

The lounge door opens wide, and we both turn to look.

'She's just out there with Hendrix, Boss,' Blondie says. 'Want me to bring her in?'

'Absolutely, Collins. I'd love to meet her,' the stranger replies.

Thank you for reading

[Full book available on Amazon](#)