

Hedda Friends Once

by Sue Hitchcock

“Hedda’s room is on the first floor. I’d better tell her who you are, a relative maybe?”

“Just tell her ‘Phoebe’.”

He put his head around the door, saying her name. The reply came as an irascible scream, “Who...?”

Phoebe smirked as the door opened for her and stood waiting for the tirade. The small woman half-rolled out of her chair, then stood silhouetted against the window.

“You, you fucking cow. How did you find me?”

Phoebe realised she had one arm missing, “they had to amputate, then.”

“They bugged around with the blood vessels till it just died, so they took it off.”

Phoebe had succeeded in getting Hedda to talk on the phone with her daughter, while the doctors were planning a blood vessel transplant and this was the result – cut it off, cut her off!

“Make yourself useful, while you’re here. There’s paper and a pen on the table. Write something for me.”

The table was cluttered with breakfast plates and a variety of cups and glasses. A piece of redundant toast caught Phoebe’s eye.

“Are you finished? Only I haven’t eaten since lunch yesterday.”

“Waste not, want not, but hurry up or I’ll forget what I was going to say.” Hedda stood up and steered herself to the door with her one arm, surprisingly spritely in her footwork. She put her head out, “Ernst, bring us some tea, please.”

Phoebe stuffed down the toast and took up the pen, waiting for Hedda to dictate.

“Vilna, Is this your work? You’re wasting your time. I won’t change my mind, so bugger off.”

Phoebe waited, “is that it?”

“Yes. How did you get here? Oh, never mind. She’s sure to have something to do with it.”

“What do you mean. I came in a taxi, sort of.”

“That was no taxi. It was my grandson, Loki- he brought you.”

Phoebe puzzled. "I thought you loved him. You were his only mother till he was three."

"SHE got to him. He's her familiar now. Anyway how would you have found me, if SHE hadn't hexed you?"

"I remembered you were somewhere near Lapford. I would have found you, if you were still here. We stayed at the little cottage, don't you remember?"

"SHE lives there now, and Loki has the barn, where you slept."

"Have you got an envelope for this note? I don't know why you're sending it, it's just a curse."

“And Address it to Vilna , she's changed the spelling of her name, now it's "W.I.T.C.H.A.S.T.A.R", stupid cow. It's all Winchester's fault, her father's fault."

"He always seemed perfectly kind, to me."

"It's all his fault. I loved him so much, but he blamed me for getting pregnant while he was still a student. He would never say he loved me and I did everything to provoke him. That's why Vilna used to say she wanted to be a witch, even when she was only seven years old."

"I remember, I thought you used to tease her too much."

"Everyone blames me, even you, but look what she's done to me!" Hedda flipped her empty sleeve.

"Come on! I remember when it happened, when you were kicked in your upper arm at a karate class. It was very gradual that your hand went numb, and the surgeon’s tried to graft a blood vessel into the artery. You remember, Vilna tried to make peace with you at the hospital."

"She was just a drug addict, planning to spend everything on drugs. I won't do it."

"But she's old now, she must be nearly sixty..."

"That's why she calls herself a witch now, a green witch, but it's all the same. Her cures are strangely addictive. It's a good thing Loki sticks to cannabis. He's totally lost, but pretty harmless."

"Is that why I slept so soundly all night in his car?"

"Unless you were hexed, from a distance. Anyway, what do you want?"