

# LITTLE

HORROR  
BESTSELLER



TEDDY  
GUTIERREZ

# ONES



# Little Ones

Teddy Gutierrez

*Also, by Teddy Gutierrez*

*The Orcas Series*

Tobias

Family Ties\*

*The Dehumanisation Series*

[Just Another Number](#)

[I Will Find You](#)

*Other Works*

Ace of Hearts\*\*

[My Mate](#)

Trans Turmoil\*\*

[Creatures of Hyfern\\*](#)

[To the Person in My Attic\\*](#)

*\*Work in Progress*

*\*\*Yet to be Rereleased/ Yet to be Released*

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Samhain came and went, and as always – it was amazing. The food, the decorations, and the people were fantastic.

For those who don't know, Samhain means November. It starts at Sunset of October 31st and finishes at Sunset of November 1st. It was Christianised, which is how Hallowe'en happened.

Samhain is pronounced SAH-win or SOW-in, depending on where you're from.

Why am I writing this in the acknowledgements? Because it's Samhain that gave me the inspiration. Why is the book so short? Because I wrote it during Samhain (in 24 hours!)

Nevertheless, I hope you enjoy it.  
Happy Samhain.

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# Introduction

As the darkness rolls in, the mist begins to set in the night sky. Streetlamps switch on; dimly lighting the frosty roads and decorated gardens. Samhain has begun; the darkness has arrived in the town of Willowdale.

The children flood the streets in their costumes, torches and candy bags in hand. Each child rushes to different houses to receive sweeties and treats.

As the witching hour draws closer, the children scurry home with bags filled with sugar, ready to remove their costumes and be put to rest until the next day.

The tradition lives on, being passed down through generations as a way to keep the children of Willowdale safe.

To be safe: the town must share; the town must celebrate together; and above all, the town must remain happy.





# Chapter One

## Two Days Before Samhain

The sun rises as the moving van arrives outside the previously vacant house; men begin unpacking the vehicle, taking furniture and boxes into the building.

Soon after, a car arrives and pulls into the driveway; a young couple climbs out of the jeep with a small boy before walking up to the house, waiting on the porch as the movers finish with the last piece of furniture. “We’ve put all the furniture in the designated rooms as you insisted,” one of the men tells the woman, a cheery smile on his face.

She nods, taking her purse out of her handbag and handing over some money. “Here

you go,” she says, her tone and accent indicating that she isn’t from the area or even Ireland for that matter.

The man takes the money his smile fading; as he begins to walk away, he stops in front of the small boy. “What’s your name, kid?”

“Dale, sir,” the boy says, his accent being much like his mother’s.

“Well, Dale. Happy Samhain; make sure to stay happy and have fun, okay? We don’t want anything bad to happen, now do we?” The man declares, staring down at Dale.

“What are you insinuating?” The woman says, her arms tightly crossed over her chest.

The man with the woman puts his hand on her shoulder in an attempt to calm her. “Don’t worry about it, it’s just the locals,” he explains.

The woman shakes her head, turns and disappears into the house. The mover man raises his hands into the air, as if in surrender. “I didn’t mean anything by it.”

The young man shrugs. “Don’t worry about her; she just doesn’t understand.” He pauses, turning to look at Dale. “C’mon, wee fella’. Let’s go give your Mam a hand.”

Dale smiles, taking the man’s hand as they approach the front door. Dale looks over his shoulder at the mover man. “Goodbye.”

“Goodbye, little man.”

As Dale enters the kitchen, his mother sits down at the breakfast bar. “Lorcan, can you help Dale unpack his stuff?”

Lorcan nods, still holding Dale’s hand. “C’mon, fella.” He gestures, with his head, for Dale to go upstairs. Dale let’s go of Lorcan’s hand, heading up the stairs but stopping just

out of sight, waiting for him. “Love, we need to let him be a part of the festival,” Lorcan announces, his voice low and croaky. His rich, Cork accent fills the air.

She shakes her head, standing up from the breakfast bar. “No, we won’t be taking part in the festival. He’s not Pagan, or whatever these loons are. He’s not going around the street begging for candy.”

Lorcan shakes his head. “Sarah, this isn’t about begging; it’s just a tradition in the town, it keeps the kids safe while they have a little fun. All he needs is a costume; he’ll be fine.”

Sarah scoffs, “he’s *my* son. I’ll say what he gets to do or not, okay?” She growls, storming off, into the living room.

Lorcan frowns, a sombre expression on his face. After being a father to Dale for six years, it still comes down to him being the

stepdad. He turns and heads up the stairs, finding Dale sitting on the landing, waiting for him. Lorcan smiles up at him as he walks up the stairs. “You okay, wee fella’?”

“Why does Mum keep saying you’re not my Dad?” he mumbles.

Lorcan sits down next to him on the top step, wrapping an arm around Dale’s shoulders. “I stepped in. I’m not biologically your father, and that annoys her. Maybe it’s not me that she’s angry with, but your real father for not stepping up and being an adult.”

Dale sighs. “Why are you defending her? She’s horrible to you.”

Lorcan chuckles, pulling Dale closer and kissing the top of his head. “Because I love her, and I love you. Now, tell me – where did you get your wisdom? You’re eight, not eighty.”

The comment sends Dale into a fit of laughter, his grin widening and showing his pearl white, crooked teeth. “You’re funny.”

Lorcan half smiles. “You won’t be saying that when you’re a teenager.”

~~~

By the end of the day, the unpacking was complete. The house began to feel like home, as the three of them sat down to have food at the breakfast bar.

Dale looks down at his plate; a bright pink coloured curry slumped on a bed of rice. “Why are we having curry?”

“Because I didn’t feel like cooking,” Sarah snaps, handing a plate of curry to Lorcan. She sits down, with her plate, a sour look on her face. “If someone had helped me unpack the kitchen, we wouldn’t have needed to get a takeaway.”

The dig was toward Lorcan, who'd done as she asked and helped Dale unpack his things. Lorcan looks to Dale, finding a worried look on his face. Instead of snapping back at her, he looks at her and smiles. "Sorry, love. I'll give you the money back for the takeaway tomorrow," he tells her, calmly, trying to avoid confrontation in front of Dale.

She shakes her head. "That doesn't cut it." She pauses. "You can sleep on the couch tonight."

Sarah's comment leaves a foul taste in Lorcan's mouth. But, it's not enough for him to argue. "Yes, dear."

"Dale, hurry up with your food," Sarah growls, getting impatient by the fact Dale is staying up past 10 pm.

"You've only just given it to me," he mumbles, taking a bite of chicken.

“I didn’t ask for you to talk back to me, did I?” She roars.

“Stop!” Lorcan shouts, his voice being much louder than Sarah’s. Sarah is left speechless by the usually quiet Lorcan. He takes it down a notch. “Just let him eat, he’s not in school tomorrow. He can stay up a little later; it’s not going to harm him.”

His comment sparks fires in Sarah’s eyes. “He’s *my* son,” she snarls.

“Then treat him like a son, instead of a piece of shit on the bottom of your shoe – okay?” Lorcan asks, raising his eyebrows, causing his forehead to crease. He looks down at Dale, a slight smile on his face. “Take you time with your food, don’t rush, okay?”

Dale nods, taking another bite of chicken.

Sarah takes in a deep breath and exhales slowly, as she begins to eat again.

The conflict pauses. Lorcan sighs, knowing he'll get an ear full after Dale goes to bed. He smiles to himself, thinking that it will be worth it. She shouldn't talk to Dale like that.

A thirty minutes go by, and Dale says his goodnights, hugging Lorcan and going straight to bed, not giving a hug to his mother.

Once Dale is out of sight, hell begins; but, just because he's out of sight – doesn't mean he can't hear her screaming. He lays in bed, his pillow over his head, dampening the yelling, but not blocking it out. No child should ever hate their mother, but that's the feelings he's beginning to have for her now...



## Chapter Two

### One Day Until Samhain

After midnight, Sarah went to bed, and the house went quiet. The screams had left Dale shaken, but with the situation being a frequent one, he drifted off to sleep quickly while Lorcan stayed downstairs and slept on the couch.

In the morning, Dale is the first to wake up. He walks over to his bedroom door, peeking round to see if Sarah was there, before exiting and creeping down the stairs.

He finds Lorcan on the couch, sleeping with a pillow over his face. Dale audibly gulps as he looks at Lorcan's seemingly lifeless body. He didn't appear to be breathing. "Dad?" He

whispers, placing his hand on Lorcan's arm. "Dad?" He cries frantically, shaking him.

Lorcan sits up quickly. "Rawr!" He chuckles.

Dale gasps, clambering away as his breathing quickens. "I thought Mum had..."

With a sigh, Lorcan swings his feet off the couch, sitting on it properly. "She may be a bit wacky, but she wouldn't do *that*. Don't worry," he tells Dale, placing a hand on the little boy's head.

"Dad, can I ask you a question?" Dale probes, pressing his lips together as his mouth pulls into one corner.

Lorcan taps the couch next to him, gesturing for Dale to join him. Dale gets up from the ground, sitting next to Lorcan. "What's on your mind?"

“What is Samhain?” Dale asks, placing his hands on his knees.

“It’s a festival that marks the darkness arriving. It’s halfway between the Autumn Equinox and Winter Solstice. It indicates that until Imbolc, which is in February, it’s going to be much darker. For people who follow the tradition, it involves rituals, bonfires, and spirits,” Lorcan explains.

“Don’t fill his head with such rubbish,” Sarah growls as she walks down the stairs and into the kitchen.

“Why haven’t we celebrated it before?” Dale questions.

Lorcan shrugs. “Because your Mam doesn’t believe...” He pauses, looking over to make sure Sarah was out of earshot. He turns back to Dale, and in a whisper, he says, “I still do my rituals, it’s part of who I am.”

Dale smiles. "Thank you for telling me," he comments, quietly.

"No problem, wee fella'."

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After a few hours, Sarah sends Lorcan out on a food run. He goes to the local store, picks up a basket and begins shopping. While trying to decide which soft drink to buy for Sarah, a woman approaches Lorcan. "Hello." She beams.

Lorcan smiles back politely. "Hello."

"Am I right thinking you're part of the new family in the neighbourhood?" She asks, her thick Irish accent making him sound at home.

"Yeah, I'm Lorcan, I've just moved into number eighteen on Castlewell Grove with my wife, Sarah, and my son, Dale," he tells her; with Willowdale being such a close-knit

community, she would have probably found out eventually.

“Oh, wow. How old is your son?” She asks, sounding excited.

“He’s eight,” he chuckles.

The woman’s mouth drops open. “That’s great! Would he like to come with us for Samhain trick or treating? My twins are eight; they’ve been hoping to meet your boy ever since seeing him arrive at your new house yesterday,” she chortles.

Lorcan figures out who her kids are. “Your twins are pigeon pair that were playing on their bikes yesterday morning?”

The woman nods. “Yes, they’re mine.”

“Well, I would like for him to go with you, but my wife doesn’t want to carry out the tradition, unfortunately...” Lorcan says, a sombre expression growing on his face.

The woman's eyes widen as a look of shock appears on her face. "But what if he gets snatched?"

Lorcan's brows narrow, creasing the bridge of his nose. "Pardon?"

A man walks up behind the woman. "Nora, don't go scaring the nice man."

She turns ninety degrees so that she can look between her husband and Lorcan. "But what if their little boy gets snatched?" She says.

"Sweetheart, it's just mythology. It's not true," he laughs. "A child hasn't gone missing in Willowdale since the seventies."

"Because they all go trick or treating!" Nora proclaims.

Her husband shakes his head. "And what is the myth?" Lorcan asks.

The man raises an eyebrow, surprised by Lorcan's interest. Nora looks up at him. "Happy children mean a happy village. If the children don't trick or treat, they aren't seen as happy. The fairies snatch the children from their beds," she explains.

Lorcan's eyes widen. "How true is it?"

Nora's husband laughs. "Mate, it's all bollocks. Don't worry."

"Brendan, you just don't get it because you've only been here for twenty years. I grew up here; I lost three of my friends," she announces, crossing her arms over her chest.

Brendan takes a bottle of cola from the shelf, putting it in their basket. "You're bonkers, Nora," he declares as he begins to walk away.

Nora looks to Lorcan. "Bring your boy to my house; we're at number thirteen. Just

tell your wife that he's going to a birthday party. After that, we'll put him in one of my Cian's costumes and take him out with us. He'll be home around 9:30 pm. Don't let them take him from you," she tells him before following her husband toward the checkout.

Lorcan takes in a deep breath, turning back to the shelf and picking up a bottle of lemonade for Sarah, before heading down the bread aisle for a baguette. The thought of fairies taking Dale plays over in his head. If Nora had said any of that to Sarah, she would have called her a loon. But the thought scares Lorcan – he knows too much about the crossover between mythology and reality. Fairies may not be real, but a child snatcher who takes unhappy children; it wouldn't be the first time it'd happened.

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As Lorcan approaches the house, he sees a police car parked outside. He jogs over, shopping bags in hand, finding the police officers stood on the porch, waiting for someone to answer the door. “Can I help you?” Lorcan asks.

The officers turn around. “Do you live here, sir?” Lorcan nods in response. “We got some noise complaints last night, by the time we got here everything had gone quiet, so we’re just following up. A neighbour thought it was a domestic but only one person was screaming. Can you tell us what happened, please?” The female police officer asks.

“Yeah, not a problem. My wife is having a difficult time at the moment – we’ve moved from England, so she’s uncomfortable and on edge. She was shouting at me for the best part of two hours. I’m sorry for the disturbance; I

couldn't calm her down," Lorcan explains, pressing his lips together.

The officer nods. "And where is she now?"

"She should be in the house, but like I said – with her being uncomfortable and on edge, she may not have answered the door for being scared or uninterested. Sorry. My son isn't allowed to open the door; he's eight. So, you may have just walked up to the most vacant occupied house ever," he jokes, trying to keep calm.

She nods again. "Not a problem, sir. As long as you and your son are alright."

The door opens, revealing Dale. "Speaking of my son. Hi, wee fella'. You okay?"

Dale nods.

“Bet you’ll be part of the festivities tomorrow night, won’t ya?” The other police officer says, smiling down at him.

Dale shakes his head. “Mum won’t let me.”

The police officers look to Lorcan, the same expression on their faces as Nora had. “Why won’t his Mam let him enjoy himself?”

Lorcan shrugs. “I don’t even know myself. If it were up to me, he’d be taking part.”

The female police officer approaches Lorcan. “You do know what happens when children are unhappy, right?” She asks in a whisper.

“I’ve been informed. I’m going to try and get him out,” he tells her.

She nods. “I hope you succeed; I don’t want to be the one called over a child’s

disappearance,” she murmurs, keeping her voice down, so Dale doesn’t hear her. She walks past Lorcan, gesturing for her partner to follow her, get in their car and leave.

“What was that about?” Sarah snaps.

Lorcan walks in the house, putting the bags on the breakfast bar. “Maybe you would have found out if you’d answered the door. Where were you anyway?”

“I went to bed for a nap,” she mumbles.

Lorcan turns to her, his eyes widening. “You went to bed, leaving our eight-year-old on his own?”

“*My* eight-year-old. And yes, I did. Such a bad mother, I am,” she roars.

Lorcan shakes his head. “Oh, fuck off, will ya?”

Sarah storms past Dale, knocking him on his behind but continues up the stairs

leaving her son on the floor. Lorcan helps him up, making sure he's okay. "Mum's going crazy."

Lorcan shakes his head. "That's an insult to crazy people."



## Chapter Three

### Day One of Samhain

Lorcan passes Sarah a plate of bacon and eggs as he sits down to eat with Dale at the breakfast bar. She sits opposite him, calm for once in her life. The calmness giving Lorcan the opportunity to bring up the *Birthday party* at Nora's house. "When I was at the supermarket yesterday, a couple called Nora and Brendan came up to me, inviting Dale to their house for their twins' birthday party. Is he allowed to go? I can take him if you like."

Sarah ignores everything Lorcan said as she continues to eat her breakfast. "Isn't tonight Samhain?"

“I suppose,” Lorcan comments.

She sighs. “And what did I say about him going out on Samhain?”

Lorcan frowns. “He’d be going to a party, at a house. And he’d be with me.”

She shakes her head. “He’s not going out tonight.”

“Sarah...”

“No,” she snaps, breaking the calm atmosphere. “He’s *my* son, I have the final word, okay?”

Lorcan sighs, looking at Dale from the corner of his eye. “Okay...”

“Good. Now, what shall we have for tea tonight?”

“Sarah, your English is showing,” Lorcan jokes, referring to her calling their evening meal *tea*.

She laughs, shaking her head. “Oh, shut up.”

~~~

6 pm came quickly. Children begin to flood the streets with their turnip jack-o'-lanterns and scary costumes. While the three of them sit in the living room, there is a knock at the door. Lorcan clammers off the couch to answer it. Opening the door, he finds Nora stood on the porch. “Hello, Nora.”

“Hello, Lorcan. Is Dale ready for the *party?*” She asks, a sweet smile on her face.

Lorcan shakes his head.  
“Unfortunately, he’s not going to be able to attend. Sorry,” he tells her.

She takes in a deep breath, a sombre expression on her face. “I’m sorry to hear that. Take care, tonight,” she says, spinning on the spot and walking down the driveway.

Lorcan closes the door, turning back to Dale and Sarah. “Dale, why don’t you go upstairs and play a video game?” Sarah tells him.

Dale nods, getting up from the couch and heading upstairs. When Dale gets to the top step, he looks back down at Lorcan.

Lorcan nods, gesturing for him to go into his room. Lorcan walks over to the couch, sitting back down in his spot, watching Sarah as she flicks through the channels.

“Do you like that woman?” She asks.

Lorcan shrugs. “She seems pleasant enough; I prefer her husband - he swears.”

She turns to look at him, her eyes wide. “I meant sexually.”

Lorcan’s brows narrow. “In that case, no – I don’t like either of them.”

Sarah looks back to the TV. “I think you’re lying. You don’t love me anymore. You’ve been so distant lately.”

Lorcan nods. “Yeah, I’ve been distant because you kicked me to the couch for helping *our* son. You won’t let him enjoy himself. You also screamed at me for two hours straight on the first night in our new house. And on top of that, you keep telling me that *our* son is not mine – yet, last time I checked, I’m the only father he has. So, if you’re questioning why I’m so fucking distant, how about looking in the mirror to see the verbally abusive cow you’ve become. And it’s not just to me, it’s to *our* fucking son, too. You treat us both like a piece of shit, and it’s not okay,” he bursts, keeping his voice low, so Dale doesn’t hear the argument.

Sarah continues flicking through the channels as if nothing has changed, her

sombre expression turning blank. She picks a film to watch, sitting back against the couch and placing the remote on the arm of the sofa. “I like this film; it has a cute dog in it.”

Lorcan’s expression turns to confusion. “You’re more interested in a dog in a film than our family...”

“You bore me,” she blurts, smiling at the screen as the dog comes on.

He shakes his head, getting up from the couch and going into the kitchen.

“Where are you going?” She asks.

“To watch TV in the kitchen,” he comments, turning on the small TV above the kitchen counter, sitting at the breakfast bar as he flicks through the channels until he finds the horror channel, a gory scene showing. *Even this doesn’t sicken me as much as she does...*

~~~

As the witching hour approaches, children start heading home from the streets. Sarah is asleep on the couch, and Lorcan is asleep at the breakfast bar, while Dale is upstairs, sat in his room, staring out the window at the hordes of children roaming the streets.

He gets out of the chair, putting his *Gameboy* on the table before getting into bed. Lying in bed, his eyes begin to drift shut, until there's a bang at his window.

The noise shocks him awake; he sits up staring at the window, taking deep breaths to stay calm. He gets out of bed and approaches the window. While Dale stares out of the window, downstairs Lorcan is waking up; wiping the drool from his face, Lorcan looks around the house, finding it in darkness with the only source of light coming from the

TVs. He clammers off the bar stool, wiping his face, as he walks into the living room, finding Sarah asleep on the couch. "I'll have the bed then," he sniggers.

Out of the silence, a high pitch shriek comes from upstairs, alerting both Lorcan and Sarah. They exchange a quick glance before dashing up the stairs and into Dale's room, finding Dale gone and his bedroom window wide open. "Dale?" Sarah screams out the window, their little boy nowhere to be seen. Lorcan rushes downstairs, opening the front door and heading into the street.

"Dale?" He yells, looking around at all the children and their parents as they begin to head home. He looks across the street, finding Nora, Brendan, and their twins stood outside of their house. Nora has her hand over her mouth, while Brendan is watching in shock. Shouting one last time, "Dale?" Lorcan looks

around, questioning how their little boy can be snatched from the second story window, without a single person seeing it happen.

Lorcan turns around, finding Sarah stood in the doorway, crying her eyes out as she wails.

Lorcan turns back to the crowd. “Help,” he mumbles, losing his voice as despair sets in.

Nora runs over. “I’m so sorry,” she tells him.

He hangs his head, looking down at his feet. “My wee boy...”

“You’ve got time to get him back,” Nora explains. “Samhain lasts until sunset tomorrow, if you can find him – you can get him back.”

Lorcan looks up at her. “How can I find him?”

“There’s a man; he’s the oldest resident of the village. Talk to him. He runs the Limerick Inn, go round there tomorrow, I’ll let him know that you’re coming,” she proclaims, taking a couple of steps back before turning and going home.

Lorcan heads back to his house, where Sarah has now collapsed onto the floor, sobbing. He reaches down, picking her up in a bridal fashion, closing the door behind him. “I’ll get him back, I promise.”





## Chapter Four

### Day Two of Samhain

After a long, sleepless night, Lorcan gets dressed and heads out to the Limerick Inn. On arrival, he's greeted by Nora and an elderly gentleman at the front door. "Hello, Lorcan," Nora greets him.

"Nora." Lorcan nods.

"This is Florence. He's helped people get their children back before," she explains.

Lorcan bobs his head. "Nice to meet you, Florence."

"Please, call me Flor," the old man says, smiling sombrely. "I hear your eight-

year-old has gone missing after not partaking in Samhain, is that correct?”

“Yes. His Mam wouldn’t let him participate, and he vanished out of his bedroom window.” Lorcan crosses his arms over his chest; his lips pressed together as he attempts not to break down into tears.

“You care about your boy, a lot. I can tell,” Flor comments, slowly bobbing his head.

“Shouldn’t every parent love their child?” Lorcan scoffs, an angry tone to his voice.

“They should, but I’ve seen children go missing and their parents leave them to the spirits.” Flor pauses. “For example, where is Dale’s mother? She was so worried about her child celebrating Samhain, but now she’s not here trying to find out how to rescue him?”

Lorcan frowns, seeing the old man's point. "She stopped caring when I adopted him. She seems to think a child only needs one actively caring parent..."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Flor mumbles, shaking his head. "I can help you get him back – but we're going to need a sacrifice..."

Lorcan eyes widen. "That's a bit old school, isn't there another way?"

"Unfortunately, not. The reason the children are taken is so they can be eaten and transformed. If you don't give a sacrifice, there is nothing for them to feast on and you won't get your wee boy back," he explains.

"What sort of sacrifice? Animal or...?"

"Human." Flor stops, looking away from Lorcan. "Though, from what you've divulged, it can't be you."

“Why?” Lorcan asks, his forehead creasing as his brows narrow.

Nora places a hand on Lorcan’s arm. “Because you adopted him, you’re not blood-related to him.”

“So, I can’t save my boy?” Lorcan cries.

Nora looks to Flor. “You can save him, but you won’t have a wife by the end of the day.”

Lorcan takes in a deep breath. *Can I sacrifice my wife?* He looks away from the pair of them for a second before peering back to them. “I haven’t been happy with Sarah for almost four years now; everything changed when I adopted Dale. She’s just not Sarah, anymore.”

“Get a piece of worn clothing and bring it to me, I’ll do a ritual to lure the spirits out. They’ll return Dale and take Sarah.” He

pauses. “I’m so sorry for your loss,” Flor gives his condolences before turning around and heading into the pub, closing the door behind him.

Nora walks Lorcan home in silence. As they reach his house, Nora places her hand on his shoulder. “I’m so sorry for the decision you have to make.” Without another word, she leaves him, heading back to her own house – leaving Lorcan on his own.

He enters the house, finding Sarah sat on the couch. He wanders over, sitting down next to her. “I know how to get Dale back,” he proclaims.

Sarah’s attention quickly shifts to him. “How?”

“We need to sacrifice someone to the spirits that have taken him... But they won’t take me,” he sobs, tears beginning to stream down his face.

“Blood?” She asks. He nods. “So, it’s him or me?” He bobs his head, again, in response. “And what will they do to me?”

“Kill, eat, and turn you, or at least that’s what Flor said,” he explains, wiping the tears from his cheeks.

“By turn, do you mean I’d become one of them?” She probes.

“Yeah, you’d become a fairy.” He looks at her from the corner of his eye, finding her taking all of this way too calmly.

“I found this in Dale’s room,” she says, gesturing to the notebook on the coffee table. “He loves you so much; but he hates me, to him I’m a monster...” She tells him, frowning, a solemn expression on her face. “I need to do this for him. Even if it does mean dying; it’s what a parent is supposed to do, right?” She looks over at him, her breathing becoming heavy.

“Yes.”

“Then let’s do it.”

~~~

Lorcan and Sarah wait in the pub for two hours while Flor performed the ritual in the basement with a group of other locals. After the two hours, Flor emerges from the basement, giving the piece of clothing back to Sarah. “When the sunsets, your son will be given back to you, and when Sarah is out of sight, they will take her,” he explains to Lorcan.

“Thank you, Florence,” Sarah utters, her throat closing in on itself as her nerves begin to act up.

“When they take her, what happens then? I moved in with my wife and son, what are we supposed to say when she goes missing?” Lorcan probes.

“She won’t go missing. You’ll find her body in the house, somewhere. Call the police, they’ll see it as a suicide,” he comments.

“Where will I be buried if it’s pronounced a suicide?” Sarah looks at Flor, her eyes welling with tears.

“Either in a non-Catholic or Pagan cemetery. Whichever you choose, but make sure Lorcan knows.”

She nods, standing up from where she’d been sitting at the bar. “Let’s go,” she mumbles. Lorcan gets up. “Thank you for all your help, Florence.”

“Not a problem, Dear. I am so sorry.”

The two of them exit the pub, walking home as it begins to rain. “Don’t let Dale see my body,” she stutters.

Lorcan looks down at her as they reach the porch of their house. “I won’t, I promise.”

Lorcan opens the door, revealing Dale in the living room. Lorcan dashes forward, landing on his knees and embracing him. “Dale, my wee fella’.”

Sarah runs in behind him, hugging the two of them.

“I was so scared,” Dale cries, hugging Lorcan.

“It’s okay, my wee boy; it’s okay.”

“Dale, Mummy’s going to have to leave, okay?” Sarah says, kissing the top of his head.

“What?” He asks, pulling out of his hug with Lorcan. “Why?”

“It was the only way we could save you, sweetie,” she tells him.

Dale looks at Lorcan. “You’re staying with me, right?”

“Yeah. And your Mam isn’t going to leave you either; she’s going to be right here,” he comments, pointing to Dales' chest.

Dale hugs Sarah. “I love you, Mummy.”

“I love you, too, my little angel.” She steps back. “Dale, go upstairs with Daddy, okay?”

He nods, taking Lorcan’s hand and going upstairs. They sit in Dale’s room, watching the sunset. As it sets, and the sky goes dark, Lorcan knows it’s time. “Stay here, wee fella’, okay?” Dale nods.

Lorcan gets up and heads downstairs, finding Sarah hanging from the living room ceiling. “Oh, love...”

He takes the landline, calling the police. “Hello, I need to report a suicide...”





# Epilogue

## The Days After Samhain

The day after Samhain, Sarah's body was taken and investigated before her death was announced as a suicide. The neighbours were extremely comforting for both Dale and Lorcan in the days leading up to her funeral.

At the funeral, most of the village turned up. Before Sarah had died, she'd left a note asking for a traditional pagan funeral – and that's exactly what they gave her.

On their way home from the funeral, Lorcan became curious. "I know it's only been a couple of weeks since all of this happened, but I was wondering... What made you scream?" He asks.

Dale looks up at his father, a sombre expression on his face. “They were children. They were all rotting and disgusting but were children. I think the children that were taken stopped ageing when they died, and just rotted away like their corpse. I imagine Mum will do the same.”

“I’m sorry you had to go through that,” Lorcan comments, his grip tightening on Dale’s hand.

“I’ll be okay; I just miss Mum.”

Lorcan nods. “I know you do, wee fella’. I know you do.”

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The week after the funeral, Dale started school – attending with Cian and his sister, Róisín – while Lorcan started work at the local newspaper.

While at work, Lorcan receives a call. “Hello?” He answers.

“Hello, my name is Adam. I’d like to talk to you about my son, Dale,” the caller says.

The acts of him calling Dale *his* son sickens Lorcan. “There is nothing to talk about.”

“He’s my boy – I have a parental right over him,” Adam growls.

“I think you’ll find you handed all of those rights over when you allowed me to adopt him. Now, I’m going to get back to work, then go home and be the father that I have been for the past six years. And you’re not going to hear anything about Dale until Dale wants you to hear it. And until that time comes, fuck you.” Lorcan hangs up, putting his phone back in his pocket and continuing his work.

When Lorcan picks Dale up from school, he waits until they get home to talk about Adam.

Sitting Dale down on the couch, Lorcan sits next to him. “I got a call from a man today; it seemed to be your biological father.”

“You didn’t say I’d meet with him, right?” He asks, his eyes widening.

“No. I told him to f-himself; I wanted to see what you wanted to do first.”

Dale shrugs. “You’re my dad. I don’t need him.”

Lorcan smiles, wrapping his arm around Dale’s shoulder’s and hugging him. “Thanks, mate.”

“What are we having for tea?” Dale asks.

Lorcan releases a hearty laugh from his chest, his belly shaking as he leans back on the couch. “Dale, your English is showing.”