



THE
LICHGATE

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**A Tale of Arthan the Bear Man by
G. W. Thomas**

Illustrated by
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Arthan smelled her long before he saw her. She was walking with the breeze to her back, carrying her odor downstream to the bear lying in a small dell. He took human form and met her in a glade near his sleeping spot. He wondered how she knew he was there but it didn't really matter.

“Witch,” he said to the old woman who stood in the open sunshine.

“Bear man,” she returned, cupping her forehead so she could see him in the dappled shade of the surrounding trees.

“Why do you seek me?”

She didn't answer right away. She looked at him, studying his human appearance. She had never seen him as a man before. He was tall, brown-haired, heavily muscled. He wore a small leather pouch around his neck.

“I need your help.”

“I assumed that. What is wrong?”

“We have lost a child, a young boy.”

It was Arthan's turn to look her over before speaking. Her name was Hana. She was the witch of Dunain, the village a few miles to the east. Arthan had seen her before, walking the single street the hamlet possessed, administering to the needs of her flock. An herbal remedy for boils, syrup for a child's cough, an elixir to put a little excitement into an old man's body. She was harmless, a good person, he thought, but he didn't trust magic-wielders. Rarely, if ever, had magic ever been

on his side.

“You have men, dogs. Why can't you find him?” asked the bear man.

The old woman paused, not sure if she should answer the question.

“Your bear nose can track where our dogs can not.”

Arthan knew this was a lie.

“Where did he go?”

“Jach was playing along the river with a few other lads. He fell in, but he didn't drown.”

“How do you know?”

“The other boys saw him make the far shore and go--”

“Where did he go?”

“Into the ruin-wood.”

Arthan grunted. He had never bothered with the far side of the river. It was fast-running and narrow. On the other side he could make out nothing but empty brush. The berries and the fish were good on this side, so why risk the rough water?

“What is in the ruin? Why won't your men go there?”

“The dogs refuse. They'd rather drowned themselves in the river.”

“Magic.”

“Yes, far stronger magic than any I have. But you--”

“As a *were*, you think I'll be immune? Far from it.”

“Take this,” the withered hands lifted, offering a small amulet. Arthan took it gingerly.

“What is it?”

“The little I can do. If you find Jach, place this around his neck. You may win out. He might come back to us.”

The bear man stared at the necklace. Did he want this? Why place himself in jeopardy for people who had caused him no harm, but had offered no hospitality either. He preferred to keep things that way.

The witch mistook his hesitancy. “You need payment? You can have any of our young women, the unmarried ones. Or boys, if you prefer. We have no gold--”

Arthan dropped the amulet, and stepped away shaking his head. He was not interested in plunder, of any kind. “No, I won't accept any fee. I am not a mercenary, some sellsword.”

“But you have a sword? You could go and bring Jach back. He is my grandson.”

“Yes,” admitted the bear man. “I have a sword. Salamander, it is called. But this is not my affair. I don't know you, don't know what lies over there in that ruin. It is best to leave such things alone.” He stepped farther away from the abandoned necklace.

The witch-woman fell to her knees, her hands covering her wrinkled eyes as they filled with tears. “He is all I have. Just little Jach.”

Her gnarled old hands pulled clumps of forest dirt and needles up and poured the mess over her long, gray hair. This was a funeral rite. She thought Jach dead already.

Arthan turned away, was about to hamask back into bear form and flee the wailing oldster, when she sang out, “Ursus, lord of all bears! I pray to you! Bring our little Jach back. Ursus!”

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This was a dirty trick. Arthan could not run now. He could not deny his own god, the great bear in the stars. He had only two choices, comply, or kill the woman where she stood.

“Enough!” he said, picking up the amulet, placing it in his neck pouch.. “Damn you, wise-woman, I'll go.”

Hana rose from the dirt, brushed the clumps of needles from her grey locks. Arthan saw her face was dry. There was a slight grin there. She had gamble with death but won.

“Is he even your grandson?”

She laughed slightly. “I don't even have a child of my own.”

“But you know a few things about were-bears.”

“A little. What I have read.”

He nodded. When he came back he might just find this book that she had read and burn it.

“I will go,” he said, shaking his head. “And there will be a price.”
“Girl or boy?”

Arthan's lips curled in disgust. “I want a map. Of all the territory around here that you know of. Because I won't be staying.”

“Understood. I will start on it as soon as I see you and Jach standing on this side of the river.”

The bear man ignored the woman's doubtful tone and made for the river. It was not yet noon. If he hurried he might have ten hours of daylight for this venture. He had no intention of being on the far side of the river at the sunset.

He took his sword from its hiding place inside an oak stump. He brushed off the bits of detritus then pulled the three-foot blade from its scabbard. The weapon had been forged in Tentui by a man who believed in metal spirits and fire elementals. Arthan hoped a little of that magic lingered in the blade. He had never seen it do anything other than what a blade does before but he hoped all the same.

He raised the blade. “Ah, Salimander! I missed you.”

He swung the weapon side-to-side, over his head in circle, made a few feints and jabs with an invisible opponent. The blade felt good and he was in no hurry to ford that river.

He sheathed the blade, slung it over his shoulder. He could not wear the belt around his waist. If he became the bear, the stout belt would prove most problematic. It felt good hanging over his left shoulder, slapping gently against his back. Whoever dwelt on the far side of the fast-moving water, they had better be ready for the man or bear.

The river was noisy and called through the pines that stood on either side. Arthan could smell the wetness even if he couldn't feel it yet. The light grew as he cleared the woods and stood on the short, rocky bank. A white, thrashing snake of water filled the narrow space between the two high walls of the stream-bed. *No wonder it moves so fast*, the bear man realized. *There is not much distance between these two banks. A few steps really.* Those few steps would be a plunge and a swim. He would end up farther downstream.

Knowing this, he turned right and walked a ways. The bank became sandier. There in the sand he could read the story of Jach and his pals. The small footprints went in here. Logically this was the spot where

he should enter the water, try and duplicate Jach's journey. He turned and looked back in the direction of Dunain first. Arthan thought he could make out a faint trace of a chimney fire. A dog barked, the sound fading away quickly. Life went on in Dunain, even if Jach's did not.

He took the sword from his shoulder, weighed it in his hands. He figured he could throw the weapon to the far bank. He'd have to back-track and pick it up after but that was alright a long as he didn't misjudge and throw the weapon irretrievably into the stream. His hand went back and the sword flew through the air. It struck the sandy bank on the other side and lie still. Good so far, he congratulated himself. Now for a swim.

He hamasked into bear form, his magical bearshirt transforming into the shaggy hide of a towering beast. The giant eight hundred pound bear slumped into the current and was moved quickly down the stream despite his enormous size. He kept his head up as his bear legs kicked and thrashed in the current. A large rock formed out of nowhere and he had to go under for a moment before throwing himself up out of the water and closer to the far bank.

Another rock with a rapid of foaming white water. The bear fought the current that wanted to draw it down into the depths. Kicking off a slime-covered boulder he touched the far side for a second before being pulled back in. Another leap and his forelegs were clawing with the inch-long talons. A last kick and the beast lurched onto the rocky bank. The bear roared his displeasure once before becoming a wet man.

Arthan got to his feet slowly, feeling more tired than he thought he could. The water had hungered for his flesh but he denied it. The sword glinted in the late afternoon sunshine down the beach. He stumbled over, claimed the weapon then sought a soft wallow of sand to rest in. He might even have napped.

When he woke he was hungry and the sun was closer to the horizon. He did not have time to hunt. If there was even anything around here to eat. He brushed the sand from his legs and butt before re-shouldering his sword.

Arthan checked the sand around him. There were his footprints. Nothing from Jach this far over. He would have come out of the water

farther off to his right. The ground became rocky and covered in brush. There would be no easy tracks to follow but the boy would have left some spoor. The bear man walked along the river bank, looking for any sign of a swimmer emerging onto the bank.

After a few minutes he had not found any such trail. He took bear form, carrying the sword in his mouth. It was awkward but he could drop the scabbard quickly and face any threat. Sniffing the ground, the belt dragging alongside his snout, he detected an odor at last. It was human. It led into the thin pines.

The ground changed suddenly. The sandy soil sank into a gigantic bowl-shaped concavity. Lying inside that crater was the ruin, three large disintegrating stone building around what must have once been a church or shrine. At the center of this was a massive boulder with a large, crooked cross standing over everything. Arthan eyed the odd marker, unsure of its meaning.

The multiple humps of old gravestones marked the graveyard beyond the mouldering stone buildings. The bear man thought they looked like the stumps of teeth. Along with the weird cavity of the entire ruin, the idea of gigantic mouth was hard to dispel.

Arching over this entire scene of decay was a towering yew tree with gnarled black fingers. The moss-covered branches bore no needles. The plant was as dead as everything here. Arthan knew yews were often planted beside graveyards. Their poisonous needles and bark were known to repel any stray cattle that might wander into the graveyard for a bite of grass. This ancient hulk could frighten off more than cows...

He stepped slowly, looking for signs of the boy. Jach had passed by but he did not appear to be here now. Arthan sniffed the air. All he detected was a bitter tang from the yew.

Arthan took a moment to look at the boulder with tits weird antenna on top. The black metal of the cross cast down a dim shadow in the failing light. The bear man's eyes noted the weird grooves etched into the steel. *There is an image here*, he realized.

He moved closer to examine the strange carving. It denoted a human-like figure but one with three arms and three eyes. Two of the arms formed the struts on either side while the third hung down like an enormous penis. Arthan's eye moved back to the face. The mouth

was frozen in a perpetual howl, exposing long fangs.

He turned his eyes away from the grotesque object. He needed to focus on what lie ahead, not this forgotten god emblazoned over a giant rock.

The bear man continued past the boulder and dilapidated buildings, peering inside briefly. Only leaves and spider webs there. As he approached the first of the headstones he could make out the writing on some. Blurred and lichen-filled, the letters were in a script he did not know. Arthan was never a scholar but he had lived long enough to recognize many styles of writing. This one was unknown. Who were these people, buried here long before the village of Dunain had even been erected?

There! Beside a fallen grave marker, a boy's sandal. The leather was new, wet from the river's water. The bear became a man again, stooped, picking up the shoe. Jach's, no doubt. There was nothing here that shone with such newness. The sandal was a bright anomaly among the greying gloom.

Arthan looked up again, surveyed everything again with human eyes. Had Jach crossed the graveyard and gone on? Without his shoe? It seemed unlikely but he had to know. He moved on, passing the last of the headstones and drawing near to the tree. He looked up into the black branches, many covered with turd-like infections. Black nought had killed this forest titan. Among the twisted branches were large snarled masses, possibility mistletoe-like infections.

Something pulled Arthan's eyes from the weird tangles in the branches above. To his right, under a bramble of black branches was some odd structure. Using his sword, he cleared some of the larger tendrils. They broke off easily, being completely dry. The kindling fell away to reveal an ornate rectangle. Only when the bear man touched what appeared to be a latch, did the thing swing open.

A gate. A gate without a fence. This had once been the entrance to the graveyard. It was a lichgate, bearing a small peaked roof over the swinging portal. That was what such was called. It looked odd now, standing on its own, like a doorway to nowhere.

The bear man looked up. The sky was darkening faster than he liked. Maybe two hours of light left. It was hard to tell through the gloomy trees that surrounded the depression but the open sky above told him

that he needed to hurry.

Arthan began circling the graveyard. His eyes sought any sign that Jach had left the ruins for the encircling trees. He saw none. He took the sword belt off his shoulder, lying the weapon down on a block of stone. Taking bear form, he sniffed in a wide circle. By the time he reached his sword again, he knew for certain that Jach was still here in the graveyard. But where?

He continued to sniff. The over-powering odor of the rotting yew made it hard even for his strong bear nose to detect anything. The little he found took him to the tree, three times. Standing with his fore paws on the vast trunk, the bear looked up into the tangled branches, wishing he could climb.

Becoming a man again, he retrieved his sword, placing it over his shoulder. If he was going to climb the tree, there was no way he could hamask into a bear and not fall to injury. He would go up as a man, he would come down as a man. Thus the sword needed to be out of the way so he could hang onto the branches better. The coating of mossy lichens on every branch spoke to slipping and falling.

Getting into the tree was his first challenge. The lowest branches were eight feet above him. As a bear he could reach but as a man he could not. Arthan returned to the stone block he had lain his sword on. Taking the heavy weight into his arms, he staggered the ten feet to the bottom of the yew, dropping the block without care. The stone thumped into the soft needles and rolled over slightly.

Arthan turned the stone onto its smaller side, making the distance upward the longest possible. Stepping on this block he caught hold of the lowest branch, the size of a tree trunk in itself, and ran his feet against the bole until he found purchase. Soon he was sitting on the lowest perch, looking upward. It was much easier to find branches to hold onto now, though he had to avoid those covered in the grey moss. His fingers gave instantly when touching the lichens, coming away in a wet, black cake, exposing wetter wood beneath.

Arthan worked his way slowly upward until he came to the first of the weird snarled bundles. The outside was a spiky mass of branches. Busting away the dry and desiccated twigs exposed something inside. The bear man kept snapping twigs until he found the skeleton inside. It had been an opossum. The dry, white fangs of the skull snarled at

him from inside its cocoon.

The bear man looked around for a larger gnarl of branches. There! Above him was one that might be the size of a child. Upward he went quickly, almost slipping once, but righting himself. He forgot about the near-fall as his attention was on the bundle above him. His fingers tore at the black branches but this time they did not break away like dust. These one were like cables of oiled rope. His fingers could not break them.

Arthan drew his sword. This is easier said than done when you are in a tree. But he worked the weapon slowly from its scabbard then brought the sharp blade to the outer branches of the cocoon. Pressing with both hands he managed to cut away one of the large outer cords. The branch turned to cinders once cut, exposing a stub that oozed black blood.

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The bear man pressed on, cutting tendril after tendril. Soon he had a glimpse of white face beneath. It was a young boy of eight. The flesh of his cheek bled human blood where a sharp branch tore into him. Arthan worked faster and pulled the boy from the wiry net. Jach bled from numerous wounds. The bear man dropped his sword and then the scabbard, allowing them to fall to the ground rather than sheathing it again. Opening his neck pouch, he extracted the amulet and placed it around Jach's neck. For whatever protection it could provide, he was thankful. With the limp, unconscious child in his arms, he could not navigate both freed prisoner and blade.

Placing the boy over his shoulder, Arthan began the slow descent from the treetop back to the ground below...

The first thing Arthan noticed as he came to earth again was that

the light was failing. He thought he still had an hour at least. The sun should have been casting long shadows between the trees. Instead the air held a new gloom that spoke of chilling fog yet to come.

Jach groaned as Arthan placed him on the ground. That was a good sign. The numerous spots where the branches had leeched his blood were scabbing over. No doubt, Hana's amulet was responsible for this. The bear man felt the boy's neck. There was a pulse though it was erratic. *He needs the wise woman*, Arthan told himself. He'd have to hurry...

Everything was still. The wind had fled along with the light. The lack of motion made the next thing quite evident to the were-bear. A squeaking sound accompanied the opening of the lichgate that fell outward as if by an invisible hand. That hand became obvious as a tall skeletal form appeared exiting some unseen realm. A warrior! He turned his undead eyes towards the tree and ultimately, those standing under it.

Arthan went immediately to his sword that lie across a gnarled root. Taking the weapon into his hand he charged the armored figure that lurched from the gate. Behind him, unseen, new black branches dropped to the ground, reclaiming its prize.

The undead warrior met the oncoming swordsman with a skilled riposte then a sudden stab of his own. Arthan swung the blade for the helmeted head, though he could see the skull possessed no flesh, only the leathery tatters of a corpse. Despite the decay the lich had no problem defending itself. Arthan heard Jach gasp loudly behind him as new wooden spikes pressed into his young flesh, but the bear man was too busy to turn and attack the branches.

Arthan pressed his attack, kicking out a foot after a skilful blow. The skeleton warrior staggered but a second then came at him with its empty mouth hissing something from the grave. The bear man could make nothing of it, ignored the strange speech and fought on.

The two opponents lunged and retreated their way through the graveyard. Arthan noticed the lich collided with headstones as it lurched its way towards him. Arthan gave ground, observing how a thing without eyes could see. There was an advantage here. The bear man steered the undead thing towards a jumble of stones then leapt at him with a renewed series of attacks. His blade flashed past his

opponent's and the skeleton's head, helmet and all, flew off into the grass, rolling to a stop.

The body, its rusty chain mail heavy, fell into a pile of bones. These quickly mouldered before Arthan's eyes and soon were dust. Only the rotten armor and blade remained. The bear man might have cheered but he heard that squeaking sound again and saw two more skeletons coming from the empty invisible gate. He stole a second to look back to Jach. The boy was gone and the tangle of a new crow's nest hung from the branches of the yew.

Arthan ran for the tree. The skeletons would have a hard time climbing after him. He had to save Jach!

He leapt up the stone block he had placed there earlier. The sword he shoved into the branches above, allowing him to use his hands for climbing. This proved a mistake as the branches of the tree came alive, snaking his blade away and allowing it to fall to the ground. Arthan climbed anyway. The two liches were at the base of the yew now, their old but deadly swords hovering below him.

One of the skeleton's blades swung at his legs. Arthan leapt higher into the branches to avoid the blow, but received a shove from the limb above that. For a second he hovered in empty air before finding a branch to hold onto. He climbed slowly higher as an attack glanced off his bearshirt.

The skeletons dropped their blades, caring nothing for them. With bony fingers they came up the bole of the tree, forcing their way up like two spiders. Arthan tried to move higher but again the tree itself shifted, making this difficult. As he madly tried to stay aloft, his eyes made out more skeleton figures lurching from the squeaky gate.

Enough! Arthan called the hamask, turning from a man into an eight hundred pound bear. His weight alone insured that he would not stay aloft, breaking two large branches from the yew. His claws reached upward, smashing through the cage that held the boy, bringing that rat's nest down beside him.

The fall was painful but the bear grinned inside as his collapsing form crushed the two skeletons that threatened him. He had a second to catch his breath before the small army of liches came scuttling towards him. Skeleton after skeleton left the gate, rusty weapons held high. He sniffed the boy who lie in a pile of broken sticks. Still alive...

The bear didn't wait for the mob but roared into them, claws flashing and jaws snapping. One strike from a massive paw was enough to send a lich into a pile of dust and metal. But there were now dozens of them, each brandishing a sword or mace. The were powers healed the few wounds the bear had received but eventually the numbers would tell. He had to destroy the gate!

With a charge the bear tore into the crowd. Helmeted head and sword flew as he carved his way through the army of the dead. Soon he was at the lichgate, where another skeletal form appeared as if from nowhere. The bear roared and slammed his paws against the fragile wood and metal of the gate. No effect! Again he lunged, battering an emerging lich into powder. But still the gate stood.

It was only now that Arthan noticed the long cables of the yew roots

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that ran from the tree to the lichgate, like wooden pythons. The tree and the gate were connected. The bear changed tactics. Instead of the fragile portal, he tore at a long root that coiled around the base of the structure. Chips of wood flew but the snaky limb simply sprouted new tendrils to hold the gate in place.

This maneuver had cost the bear. His back was covered with crawling skeletal bodies, like a spider carrying its babies. Swords and dirks cut into the bear's back, making him roar. Shaking himself like a dog out of water, he threw off many of his attackers. He had to reach and bite for the few that held on. Smashing these, he paused for a second to see how many remained. Arthan had shattered a dozen but another dozen still stood in the dark graveyard, readying their swords.

And where was Jach? *The black branches had taken him again!*

Having moved away from the gate, Arthan saw the skeletons weren't moving in his direction. New ones appeared from the lichgate but lumbered over to join their fellows around the base of the tree. The yew didn't want the bear. It wanted the boy! The ancient evil that dwelt in that black guardian craved the energy of the innocent.

The bear stood off for a moment, allowing his were powers to heal the multiple stab wounds in his back. The night sky was almost dark now. Stay or flee? Could he abandon Jach? He owed the lad nothing. Arthan could run away from this terrible hollow, away from Dunain and the witch woman. He was a bear. But *Ursus* would know. Arthan would know...

Arthan gathered his strength before charging into the mass of sword points and hissing mouths. His paws swung side-to-side, smashing skeletal forms but there were so many. The liches leapt at him, thrusting with their rusty weapons. The bear tried to reach the tree but faltered, moving away in desperation.

The skeletons did not retreat to the yew this time but continued to stab and slash. The bear gave more ground until he was at the base of the boulder. There was safety. The eight hundred pound animal clawed at the rock until Arthan sat on top of the large stone. The metal cross pressed against his back. He breathed cold air for moment, while the skeletons hovered below.

He even looked up at the metal behind him. Such an odd marker. An artist, some metal-smith long ago, had engraved the rough crux with its inhuman form. The two intersecting arms were quite literally that, arms. The top piece bore an ugly head, with three eyes and screaming mouth filled with fangs. The point that drove into the stone below bore two narrowing legs. The thing was hideous, if cleverly made. And it gave Arthan an idea.

Lich forms left the base of the rock, now that the bear was safely out of their reach, and returned to guard the bole of the tree. Arthan counted twenty, roughly, with more lumbering out of the lichgate every few minutes. Some how he felt that the tree was limited to the number of dead buried here in the graveyard. Looking around, he sighed at the many rotting headstones. He could not destroy the gate. He had tried.

What could he hurt? The skeletons fell but more took their place.

Only the tree. Only the tree had suffered under his claws. It was the tree they protected. Maybe to give it time to devour the boy. Or maybe not. Arthan knew his enemy. Now he had to figure a way to kill it.

He pushed his bear weight against the cross. The metal moved only a fraction. Again, he pressed his full eight hundred pounds against the weird metallic form. This time it gave a finger's breadth. Again and again, until the metal figure tumbled down the side of the boulder, ringing out a harsh bell-like chime across the misty graveyard.

Arthan had gone up a bear. He came down a man, laying his hands on the heavy cross. The bear had no trouble moving the etched metal but the man had to strain to lift the sigil. The black iron felt cold in his bare arms but he clutched it close to be able to lift it. He examined the point that had been pressed into the boulder. The feet of the weird man came to a sharp point that someone had driven into the rock long ago.

He turned the point towards the tree and the twenty skeletons guarding its base. Gathering his strength for a final, perhaps fatal, charge, he gave a war cry. On shuddering legs he ran as fast as the heavy cross allowed, straight at the yew's trunk. The cross knocked aside skeleton after skeleton, bones shattering under the point. The cross stopped with a dull thud as the man faltered at the base of his target. The point cut bark but fell out shortly after.

Arthan was buried under a pile of thrashing, stabbing liches. The cross fell from his hands as they covered him. He fought as best he could with the rusty blade of a fallen skeleton but there was so many. Soon he was covered, buried under a mound, just as he soon would be, buried alive.

The bear exploded from the pile as he hamasked. Skeletons flew in all directions as he swatted and snapped at the attackers. Stomping the rest under his massive feet, the bear stood over the cross, jutting out of a pile of mouldering bones. The animal embraced the cold steel as best it could, moving the point up against the tree's trunk.

With a jump onto its back legs, the beast rammed the black metal into the yew's bole. Branches tore at him but he swatted them away. Again and again he pressed the cross, driving the point further and further in until a loud crack filled the night air.

The towering yew shuddered then split in half, with tall branches falling to either side. One half collapsed to the right, falling with a shudder onto the lichgate, flattening the ancient wood and metal in a shower of pieces.

The bear searched quickly for the tangle that held the boy. Using his claws, he quickly shredded the tendrils that enclosed him. Becoming a man, Arthan pulled the boy from the wooden cage and held him in his arms. He felt his throat. Yes, Jach still lived.

There, he spied his sword tangled in the black branches. He picking up the blade, then saw the scabbard lying near by. He sheathed the weapon, shaking his head and saying, "I lose more swords--" He was glad to have this one back.

Turning from the shattered yew, he walked from the graveyard. All around he saw old helmets and swords, but no bones. The warriors buried here had turned to dust. The terrible thing that had held them in thrall, no longer towering over the misty hollow.

He saw the old woman on the river shore. He was amazed that she was not soaking wet.

"How did you get across?" he asked, placing the boy into her arms.

"There's a bridge," she said as if the answer was obvious.

He smiled. Of course there was.

Hana took the boy with little effort. He was small for his age, and somehow smaller after the depredations of the yew. She gave him herbs then pulled something from her dress awkwardly. She held it out to the bear man.

Arthan took the scrap of paper. It was a map drawn in charcoal. He could barely make out the rough lines in the dark.

"As agreed."

"Thank you," he said with a nod. He paced the scrap into the pouch he wore around his neck.

"Will he live?" the bear man asked.

"I should think so. But I doubt he will be the same stupid little boy he used to be."

"I suppose not."

"I will train him in the witch ways," admitted the old woman. "He

may have new gifts after such an encounter.”

“Like he was your own.”

She nodded, then turned away. “Good bye, bear man.”

“Good bye, witch.” Arthan adjusted the sword hanging from his shoulder, and walked into the dark woods. In the opposite direction to the misty graveyard. He would sleep in a clean, wooded glen tonight. After a good long walk. And after he killed a deer. He was so hungry...



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