

Just Whisper to the Were-Ghost

by Aurette

An aged patriarch finds peace with his family.

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Chapter 1 of 1

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Clustered like chicks around his feet, his great-great-grandchildren fed on his every word like tossed grain.

"And that's the story of the were-ghost, and why he watches over us all," he rasped.

There was an awed sigh from the moppets on the floor, and then one little girl, her name escaped him, whispered, "Tell us again..."

He gave a wheezy chuckle.

One of the older boys scoffed. "There's no such thing as were-ghosts. I looked it up."

"Isn't there? You've never whispered your wish to the full moon and had it taken care of?"

The boy blushed and mumbled, "Coincidence."

"Oh?" the old man replied with a knowing smile.

"All right, all right... bedtime," said redheaded Evie. "Grandpa's voice needs rest."

He watched her collect two of the tykes and tried to remember if Evie was actually a granddaughter or had married into his wild, wonderful tribe. There were so very many, and his memories seemed to be slipping away like beads on a necklace come unstrung.

It didn't matter. She was one of his. As were all the little ones protesting and bargaining for five more minutes as they were toted out of the sitting room.

"A bit of tea?" That was Theo, his youngest, looking so old.

"That would be lovely."

He closed his eyes and dozed, and when he opened them again, he was alone by the fire. They knew he never slept during a full moon. The house settled and grew quiet as all who were staying sought their beds. He sighed into the peaceful silence, feeling a final peace whispering around the edges.

He stayed and listened and waited.

Eventually, the chill came, and he smiled up at the ghost he'd been awaiting. He grimaced again to see him. So young. So incredibly young. "Hello, Father. How's Mum?"

"You can ask her yourself."

"Tonight?"

A gentle nod. "Tonight."

He sighed, his heart caught between those he'd leave behind and those who'd left him.

The old man nodded into his beard, rearranged a fold in his robes, and then said, "*You will* keep watching over them, won't you? Once a month?"

This was answered with a breathy chuckle. "Of course."

He nodded. "Good. Good." With a last look at his untouched tea, the warm fire, and the cozy home that had been called the Shrieking Shack, he said, "Then there's no use dawdling, is there?"

His father laughed. "That's my Teddy." The ghost drifted closer and clasped the ancient, gnarled fingers, his touch no longer freezing. "I've always been so proud of you, son."

Relishing the new energy that coursed through him, he stood and pulled his father into an embrace that he'd waited his entire life for. Eventually pulling away, he turned toward the light. There, on the other side, he saw his dearest Victoire, as beautiful as the day he'd married her.

Another form shifted behind the veil, and for the first time since he was an infant, he saw his mother.

Prompt: An improbable family legend is, surprisingly, based in fact.

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