

# The Witches Hollow

*S.A. Scarlet*

—♦—  
*A NOVEL  
OF SIN, SEDUCTION,  
& SALVATION*

*Lonely Lighthouse* 

Copyright © 2019 by S. A. Scarlet

All rights reserved.

Published by Lonely Lighthouse Publications

Editing, design & layout by StandoutBooks.com

Cover lettering by John Stevens [www.johnstevensdesign.com](http://www.johnstevensdesign.com)

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, businesses, places, events, locales, and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

ISBNs:

Hardcover: 978-1-951237-00-4

Softcover: 978-1-951237-01-1

eBook: 978-1-951237-02-8

## Contents

Prologue.....	1
Chapter 1.....	5
Chapter 2.....	11
Chapter 3.....	20
Chapter 4.....	30
Chapter 5.....	37
Chapter 6.....	44
Chapter 7.....	52
Chapter 8.....	59
Chapter 9.....	66
Chapter 10.....	79
Chapter 11.....	88
Chapter 12.....	100
Chapter 13.....	112
Chapter 14.....	118
Chapter 15.....	124
Chapter 16.....	131
Chapter 17.....	136
Chapter 18.....	142
Chapter 19.....	149
Chapter 20.....	158
Chapter 21.....	166
Chapter 22.....	173
Chapter 23.....	179
Chapter 24.....	186
Chapter 25.....	196
Chapter 26.....	209
Chapter 27.....	218
Chapter 28.....	224
Chapter 29.....	237
Chapter 30.....	246
Chapter 31.....	254
Chapter 32.....	265
Chapter 33.....	270

Chapter 34 .....	277
Chapter 35 .....	286
Chapter 36 .....	292
Chapter 37 .....	300
Chapter 38 .....	308
Chapter 39 .....	315
Chapter 40 .....	321
Chapter 41 .....	330
Chapter 42 .....	334
Chapter 43 .....	340
Epilogue.....	347
Afterword.....	350
Thank You.....	351
About the Author .....	352

## Prologue

---

Aldrix Carter pushed round, brass-rimmed frames up on his nose with nervous fingers and gazed into the shadows of the forest with a creeping feeling of dread. Somewhere out amongst the trees lay the creature and, unfortunately, his task for the evening. Anticipation was getting the better of his imagination, for he felt he could sense the beast's malevolent presence emanating from somewhere out amongst the trees. Carter suspected the thing had some method of quickly locating intruders within its domain—the Grove of the Dead was certainly evidence of that, and he shuddered at the memory of his passage through it some weeks ago. Carter also knew that which lay in wait, like some rotting heart, slowly pulsing within the silvery moonlit shadows of the forest, was no wolf, no bear. It was a creature that couldn't be reasoned with, couldn't be outsmarted, and he suspected might even be impervious to firearms—not that any were present in the village, at least as far as he knew.

It was night. Above, a rare clear sky was filled with stars, and a full moon shone brightly. Carter half turned and looked back towards the town, where several windows were already lit with the golden glow of candlelight and smoke rose from numerous chimneys. Laughter drifted out from one of the windows, and he could smell savory food cooking. He longed to return to the warmth of that safe haven, that sanctuary, but he had business in the forest: a business that could not wait, a business for which the reward was worth any danger.

He turned back towards the forest, forced himself to cross the threshold, and was all too soon amongst the trees. The evening was cool, though it was still summer, and an earthy smell surrounded him now; the comforting, acrid smell of chimney smoke fast faded away. His eyes adjusted to the dim light, and he could clearly see the path he'd been told of, the one that

would lead to his goal. He walked along and noticed that it meandered with a randomness that was difficult to predict. Because of this, he soon lost his bearings and was unsure which direction he now traveled. In the dim light Carter estimated he couldn't see very well past fifteen to twenty feet in the darkness. There were just enough breaks in the canopy above for the moon's light to penetrate and illuminate the forest floor in a ghostly fashion. Not enough to see into the distance, just enough to set him even more on edge, for were he to stumble upon the beast it would be so close that there would be no escape.

He could hear nothing but the sound of his own movements, and this unnerved him, for he imagined more than once that something moved along with him, masking the sounds of its movements within his own. Though he knew it was just anxiety caused by the knowledge that the creature was out there, he still stopped periodically in erratic intervals to listen. He forced himself to remember that he had been given the assurance that the creature would be drawn away from this area. As such, should he not tarry, he would have ample time to complete his task and return to whatever diversions might amuse him in the hamlet. Perhaps he might even bring that bitch Vanessa to heel, with her overripe sexuality that she shoved in his face at every opportunity, all while spurning him. He'd heard her none-too-quiet whispers, had seen her poorly masked derisive stares. He was no lackey, though she treated him as such, but once he completed his task this night, his status would rise far above hers. This was something she likely did not know or suspect would be coming, which would make it all the sweeter when he brought her under his boot, brought her to her knees—her rightful place. Such thoughts buoyed his spirits, and for a time he forgot the danger and concentrated on following the path, until a few moments later when he finally he saw it, his goal.

It was large, far larger than he would have thought possible, and he felt his heart quicken at the sight of it. Carter scuttled towards it on limbs that moved with nervous, erratic energy. Once there, his hands found the hollow, then deposited the item. It was wrapped in such a manner that it would be protected from the elements for some time. He sighed with relief. Now all that remained was to get out of the cursed forest and back to the town, where a warm fire waited, as well as a future where he would partake of that which he'd lacked his whole life, that thing that would change his fortunes for an eternity: *power*. And not just any power. He was about to possess a

power undreamed of, at least for any mortal, and it was something that would be granted in just mere moments. He shivered momentarily at the thought of it.

He turned to leave and stopped, confused. His eyes scanned back and forth, performing a slow, measured inspection. Beads of sweat formed on his brow, and he felt his heart rate increase. His eyes now scanned about frantically, but it was no longer there, no longer visible—the path. It was gone, with no trace that it had ever existed. The leaf litter looked the same no matter which direction he looked. He took a few steps forwards in the direction from whence he believed he had come but still could see nothing. He froze with indecision, then heard a soft but distinct crunch of underbrush from a footstep. His heart now pounded in his ears, and a moment later he saw someone step out from behind a tree not far off. His heart froze for a split second, then began beating again furiously in anger.

*"You!* What are you doing here? You're supposed to be keeping the creature... No! Don't!" Carter said, then turned to run in horror.

His legs pumped furiously, and he felt he was no longer in control of them. He didn't know where to run, so his movements took on an erratic pattern as he crashed through the underbrush. Then he heard the clear twang of a bowstring and a second later felt a searing pain in his left calf. He screamed and fell to the forest floor. Carter grasped his leg in agony and felt warm blood pulse through his fingers. Then he heard a voice speak as though it were close, but he could see no one around him.

"You make quite a bit of noise in a place where it's unwise to. Were it me I should try to move more quietly. I hear there are troubling things present here in the forest, particularly so at night," the voice said.

Carter listened for a moment more but heard nothing else. The quiet was now unnerving—no insects, no birds, not even a breeze through the leaves above. He struggled to his feet and winced in pain from the movement. Trembling fingers unknotted and removed his tie, then tied it tightly around his calf to bandage the wound and staunch the flow of blood. He was already beginning to feel lightheaded from its loss. He then limped in the direction that he thought the village was. His movement was now excruciatingly slow, for he felt with each step that he tore the wound further, the pain a searingly sharp thing. The smell of copper was strong in the air now, and he was grateful there was no breeze to cast his scent about.

With each step the leaf litter crunched underfoot. It sounded shockingly

loud in the crisp air, each step he took, though he tried his hardest to move quietly. He traveled for a few minutes, then froze. He thought he'd heard a sound that originated outside his own movements. He stood dead still, trying to hear the surrounding forest over the beating of his heart—nothing. He began to move once more, and his shuffling footsteps now sounded like a repeating beacon that pulsed out into the darkness in a manner that horrified him. Then, in between steps, he clearly heard a twig snap from somewhere behind him. A whimper escaped him. It was a pathetic sound, something he imagined would come from someone else, for such a sound couldn't have come from him.

Carter turned with excruciating slowness, and in the dim light he saw *it*. The saliva drained from his mouth, and he felt his jaw begin to work spasmodically. No sound came forth, though he felt a scream beginning to claw its way up. The creature was massive and at the moment stood still, swaying back and forth as if moved by an unfelt breeze. Its appearance was such that he felt his hold on sanity began to loosen. Sounds came out of his mouth now, but they were incoherent, the words of a madman. But that couldn't have been him; he had a future—it lay just moments away in a small, sleepy hamlet.

The creature must have taken the sounds for some sort of invitation, for it moved forward far faster than he would have thought possible and in an instant was on him. Then he did scream. He screamed until his vocal cords ripped to shreds, but he did not die. No one heard his cries deep in the forest, no one but the beast as it performed its grisly work. In the end his cries were little more than wet gurgles.

Two days later Carter was still alive but only barely. The beast's face came terrifyingly close to his; its eyes gazed into his own, as if the creature would follow him down into Hell, for that was surely where he was soon bound. They were the last thing he saw, those horrific eyes—eyes that glistened like wet obsidian, like the black oblivion that finally rose up and mercifully claimed him. Then to his horror he discovered that the blackness was only a brief, fleeting instant in time as his soul departed his body, and he discovered that there are worse things than death.