

Years 5 & 6

3rd Place: Audrey Bolton

Year 6, Challis Community Primary School

Betrayal

Dull light sliced through the ragged treetops. The soft drum of rain was as rhythmical as my footsteps. I crept swiftly through the towering woodland, feeling diminutive as I was shadowed by scarred, ancient birch trees. I parted a soft clump of ferns to one side, welcoming myself into a wide clearing. I hastily evaded the group of puddles, taking my seat on a fallen log.

"I thought you'd never come!" The warm voice seemed to silence the rain. A red-haired girl emerged from the shadows. Her cool green eyes soothed me as she stood with her hands on her hips. Farrow.

"Well, I've missed seeing you!" I laughed.

Minutes turned into hours, and slowly the moon had scraped the peak of the sky. After a never-ending conversation, Farrow squeaked in realisation.

". . . Oh! Ashton! Before I go, I forgot to mention Brandon! The *really* nice new warlock in my camp."

Jealousy rippled through my veins.

"What?!" I groaned.

Farrow gave me a quizzical look. I grinned. Then I took her hand.

"Do you have to go?"

And with that, Farrow was nodding her head, galloping through the darkness, fading out of sight.

I paced the familiar clearing that I had mentioned earlier, sweat plastering my dark brown hair to my forehead. Suddenly, the jagged brambles roared.

"Farrow!" I exclaimed. But the voice that replied was not Farrow's.

"An elf!" shouted the unfamiliar voice.

Then I found myself hacking as dust billowed around me, tickling my silver-studded ears. I tried to push myself up off the dusty ground, but I didn't get very far as I was trapped under an impenetrable grip. When I glanced up, an amber-eyed, tan-skinned boy was hovering above me, the sun cowering behind him.

"HELP!" I shrieked, thrashing helplessly under the boy's sturdy grasp.

"Brandon!" This was Farrow's voice, but I ignored that. I took no notice of what she said. Except, wait, Brandon . . . I bolted upright, thrusting Brandon's arm off me. I hissed in disgust.

"A warlock! We're enemies!" I roared.

Farrow rolled her eyes, lowering her voice noticeably, so maybe not as many birds would evacuate their trees.

"I'm a witch?"

Well, she had a point. Meeting a witch was kinda against the code. But so? I shook myself, then rounded onto Brandon.

"She's mine!" I lunged at him. Brandon knocked me away with ease.

"Meeting an elf is forbidden!" he pointed out to Farrow.

I leapt to my feet, glued to the spot. Brandon growled. Then I retreated, tears leaking down my face. I reeled into the foliage of the forest, stalking back to the Elvin campgrounds.

Boredom prickled at me, making my eyes twitch. My face was painted with dark bags that clung to my eyes. I sighed. Farrow. Farrow . . . Brandon. The word was like salt in the wound. Weeks had passed since the incident with him. Too long. I needed Farrow. I stalked into the forest. I kicked up dirt. Then found myself at the all too familiar clearing. Flowers were blossoming in the centre of where I used to meet Farrow, and a thick, auburn slip of parchment slept between the sage coloured stems. It read:

Maybe this is for the best. It's not forbidden for me and Brandon to meet. But with you . . . anyways, Brandon and I are to be soul bound (it's a coven thing). But that means our powers are mixed, making the weaker as powerful as the stronger. I . . . loved you. But this better for us both.

Silence. Dead silence. Soggy blue and raging red blurred my vision, making it impossible to see. Then I hammered towards the Coven campgrounds.

I erupted into the Coven camp and didn't care how much racket I made. I scrambled through the camp, kicking up dust and tearing up grass. But everything was dead empty. Every corner bone dry. Wait. The Wisteria Tree. The one used for ceremonies. Farrow has to be there! I was pounding through the mouth of the camp, when sudden voices eliminated my movement. I silenced my other noise-making movements. The all too familiar voice that twisted my insides and made me sick echoed from the heart of a nearby ivy patch. When I crawled closer, Brandon's voice was as clear as a sunny day.

“. . . it's perfect! Utterly perfect. Everyone knows that Farrow is the strongest witch, and by soul binding and mixing our powers, I'll become unstoppable! You guys will rule beside me, and we will take over the Werewolves, Vampires, Witches and Elves!”

New, unfamiliar voices cheered in acceptance. Then a lower, crisp voice joined in. “First, we have to kill that obsessive Ashton. Then everything will work.”

I was stung. Brandon's evil. Evil. Scenes replayed like a video tape in my head.

“. . . we have to kill that obsessive Ashton.”

Farrow's mine. I have to protect her.

I tip-toed through the woodland, stalking past twigs and any other noise sources. Then I caught sight of it. The beautiful, flame orange hair swaying in the fragile breeze. I ran forwards, taking Farrow by the hand.

“Farrow – OW!”

I collapsed, pain flaring in my cheek. I had just been punched.

“Rotten dragon breath! Ashton, are you okay?!”

I felt hands raise me to my feet. Farrow looked stunned.

“What are you doing?” Farrow whipped around. “No one can know you're here!”

She dragged me behind a passive birch tree, the wispy leaves brushing my shoulders. I fumbled for words.

“Brandon's evil!” I blurted.

Farrow stared at me, her expression unreadable. I explained to her everything I heard. Farrow was dead silent. Then she brushed past me, bursting into the clearing that homed the Wisteria Tree.

“Everyone! Please gather. I have officially cancelled this occasion.”

A collective groan pierced my ears. Then my heart slowed its beats, dying down into nothing as I watched from the shadows. Watching, watching as a tan-skinned male evaporated from the dense brackens. Brandon.

"Farrow," he said slowly, glancing around with a confused glance.

"What's happening?"

Brandon's amber gaze locked onto Farrow. *Don't move.* My mind seemed to scream. Farrow showed no hesitation as she announced,

"As Overseer of the witches, I hereby announce you exiled due to attempted murder and power stealing. This occasion is dismissed."

I seemed to forget my life crisis for a split second. *Overseer? What's that?*

Farrow turned to leave, but Brandon was rooted to the spot. Then he suppressed a laugh.

"Who told you that?" Brandon pondered aloud. Warily, Farrow smirked.

"So, you don't deny."

It all happened in a blur. The round, full moon seemed to frown at Brandon as he acted first. He leapt at Farrow with the speed of lightning, his face crinkled in ambition. Farrow was unmoving as her lips twitched at top speed. Suddenly, Brandon was frozen mid-air. He hissed, "Nice trick. But unlike the cowardly witches you are, I've studied magic of The Damson!"

Nothing happened.

Damson?! But that's impossible! Damson is the most despicable warlock ever! He studied Dark Magic and killed many people!

Farrow suppressed a petrified gasp. "You've studied the magic of the evil warlock, even though it's forbidden?!"

Brandon was not amused. Within the blink of an eye, ominous, dull purple mist seeped from his scarred wrists and into the mossy floor below him. I felt my pulse race. Thick bramble vines erupted from below the earth, dangerously swinging and thrashing at the cold night air. Their target found, the brambles twined themselves neatly around Farrow's legs, a scarlet liquid grappling out of the brown vine's deadly hold. Farrow grimaced, screaming in pain. Brandon was on his feet now, smugness drowning his face.

"Not so mighty now, hmm, Overseer?" Brandon said with a smirk.

I felt anger and disgust rip its way through my veins, leaving me with an unsatisfying temptation. I exploded from where I had been waiting, taking Brandon by surprise. Summoning all my strength, and finally thanking my exercising classes back with the elves, I clawed at Brandon's wide face with my nails. The attack didn't last for long as I was thrust away from Brandon's body, skidding across the uneven ground unstopably. When I finally halted, something warm was streaming from my cheek. I winced as I scrambled to feet, finding Farrow sprawled across the floor. A solid, dizzying punch was delivered by Brandon, making my head bounce against the ground.

I found myself pinned on the floor, dazed. Brandon was gritting his teeth with the force of his hold. I slithered an arm outward, escaping Brandon's firm grasp, and attempted to beat him with it. After minutes, I slumped it back to my side. A white light flared through my vision. I was no longer thrashing. Wait . . . It's a full moon. I've paid attention to my classes enough to know that with the deepest desire, elves can summon power from within the moon. I huffed. Surely this was a moment of true desire. Brandon's grip on my chest was easing. Without thinking, I threw my free arm

up towards the moon. I was frantically muttering as Brandon wrestled to eliminate my power of a free arm.

“Give me power, moon, I summon power from the moon.”

My eyes leaked with tears.

“Please, for Farrow.”

I felt my heart race. My pulse roar. My head clear. My muscles unbunched themselves. In other words, I felt powerful. I pushed Brandon off me with ease, casting him spiralling to the grass smothered floor. I charged towards him, grabbing him by the shoulders and shaking him silly. The next scenes are moments I will never forget.

CRACK!

That marked the end of Brandon’s story.

Days passed. I offered to help with the small clean-up at The Wisteria begrudgingly. Yet Farrow made me regret that decision. She bubbled with frustration, refusing to even look at me. I mustered up the courage to pull Farrow over, speaking with her privately.

She was a ticking time bomb, counting down to her moments of explosion. That’s when it happened. Farrow’s eyes blazed with fury.

“You didn’t have to kill Brandon! He was just . . . wrong-sighted.”

I narrowed my eyes furiously. A muffled growl burst from my mouth, and I let fury take over.

“It was me or him – and if you were in the right mind, you would’ve chosen me.”

And with that, I was gone

I hung my head low as I emerged into the Elvin Camp. I couldn’t help but listen to the ashamed murmurs of everyone around me.

“What a disgrace!”

“I cannot believe he was meeting with a witch! It’s against the code!”

“He killed a warrior from the witches!”

I let my anger dictate my actions.

“He was willing to KILL ME!”

The clearing stayed silent. Then murmurs frustratingly continued. I felt wounded, dead even. What was the point of any of this, if I was going to continue miserably? I knew I had done the right thing, but no one will ever believe me. Finding it pointless to remain here, I entered the blossoming forest.

I picked at the chalky, fallen wooden log. Yes. I was back at the clearing, picturing Farrow beside me, despite the anger I currently felt for her. The meetings will probably end now. Maybe I was wrong, as on cue the brambles whistled.

“Farrow!”

It wasn’t Farrow. A wispy, sinister smoke twirled around the clearing, withering all life in its path. Something else was moving with the smoke. Something that could change the game. Amber eyes locked with mine, and a sturdy jaw clenched as it matched my gaze. I knew this was just the beginning . . .