

## **The Salem Witch**

(Jack Beat part 1)

In the heart of Salem, where paranoia was paired with ignorance and the scent of fear hung heavy in the air, Jack Beat, a time traveler of uncertain origin, emerged from the shimmering haze of temporal displacement. His eyes scanned the desolate landscape, a prelude to the infamous witch trials that stained the history books with the blood of the innocent.

A crowd had gathered around a stake, flames flickering in anticipation, and the accused, a young woman whose name was, to be sure, Abigail, was bound and helpless. In a moment of urgency fueled by an impulse he couldn't quite comprehend, Jack dashed forward, disrupting the macabre spectacle.

"Stop!" he shouted, raising his arms. "This is madness! There are no witches! They don't exist—made up! You can't do this!"

The crowd turned on him with suspicion, but in the chaos, Jack grabbed Abigail, untying her bonds with haste, and pulled her away from the impending inferno. The air crackled with tension as they vanished in a flash, leaving behind bewildered onlookers.

In the shimmering aftermath of the temporal shift, Jack found himself in a future Abigail could hardly fathom. Buildings touched the clouds, motorized wagons zipped by in a cacophony of hullabaloo, and people walked around looking at devices in their hands, seemingly oblivious to the spectacle of their surroundings.

Abigail, wide-eyed and bewildered, took it all in. "What kind of magic is this?" she whispered.

Jack, feeling the weight of responsibility for plucking her from the clutches of history, attempted to explain. "There is no magic, Abigail. This is the future. A time where people are enlightened and understand that witches weren't real, aren't real!"

She regarded him with skepticism. "Pray pardon me! Witches not real? You come from the future, and you say this nonsense? How do you explain your ability to travel through time, then? That's not a power given to ordinary folk."

Jack hesitated, realizing the contradiction in his argument. Before he could respond, Abigail spoke with a sly grin, "Of course witches are real. I knew you'd come. I made a spell—a pact with the devil himself, to save me from the flames. And here you are, my savior. Of course witches are real—I am one!"

Jack chuckled nervously, dismissing her claim. "They are not... It's not witchcraft or magic. It's... science. Advanced technology!"

Abigail shook her head, her eyes gleaming with an otherworldly knowing. "Science, technology. The devil's tools are varied and mysterious, are they not? But fear not, Jack Beat. I owe you my life, and as a token of my gratitude, I'll introduce you to the one who granted me this chance to live."

Jack, though skeptical, played along. Abigail led him through the city, weaving between the crowds with a preternatural grace. They arrived at an inconspicuous door, which swung open without a touch.

The room beyond seemed to defy the laws of space, swirling with shadows and whispers. A figure materialized—an entity of indescribable malevolence. Abigail bowed with an eerie reverence.

"Jack Beat," she declared, "meet the devil."

The entity regarded Jack with eyes that seemed to pierce the very fabric of his being. A voice, echoing from the depths of eternity, resonated in his mind.

"Jack, your actions disrupted the natural order. Abigail was meant for the flames, as decreed by the threads of fate. In saving her, you have invoked consequences unforeseen."

Jack, torn between disbelief and an unnerving sense of curiosity, stammered, "What consequences? What have I done?"

The devil's laughter echoed through the ethereal chamber, leaving Jack to grapple with the unsettling reality that his actions had unleashed forces beyond his understanding. The

future, it seemed, held more mysteries than he could ever fathom.

"Farewell, Jack Beat, fare thee well," Abigail whispered in his ear as he felt the world around him change. He was about to face the Earth transformed into his own personal hell.



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