

## Sebastian Swanson

### Rise of the Lycan

Sebastian Swanson, a twenty-nine-year-old resident of eastern England in the early 1600s, found himself thrust into a tumultuous era where the fear of witches gripped the hearts of mortals. It was an age where belief in witchcraft far surpassed that of werewolves or vampires, and the mere whisper of a witch's presence could send shivers down the spines of the townsfolk.

One fateful day, Sebastian's life took an unexpected turn when his friend Vincent urgently summoned him.

"Sebastian, you must come here!" Vincent's voice carried a sense of urgency.

Perplexed, Sebastian inquired, "What is it, friend?"

"The people of Northington have claimed that they have caught a witch. I have been sent to have you participate in the event," Vincent explained, a mix of excitement and trepidation in his tone.

Sebastian's eyebrows furrowed as he processed the information. The concept of witches, though prevalent in folklore, was not something he had encountered firsthand. He questioned Vincent cautiously, unsure of whether to believe the sensational news.

"Are you certain, Vincent?" Sebastian hesitated, grappling with the gravity of the situation.

S.K. Ballinger

Vincent's eyes widened with conviction as he responded, "I have seen the people surrounding her and overheard many shouting to have the witch burned at the stake. Now, please come, as I do not wish to miss this."

Reluctantly, Sebastian acquiesced, his curiosity overcoming his initial reservations. "Very well then. Let me grab my coat."

As they made their way to the scene, the air buzzed with a palpable tension. The townspeople, fueled by superstition and fear, had converged to witness the macabre spectacle that awaited the alleged witch. The scent of burning wood and fervent whispers filled the air, creating an atmosphere of unease.

Sebastian's heart pounded in his chest as he approached the crowd. He observed the accused woman, her eyes wide with terror, surrounded by the accusatory glares of those who deemed her a practitioner of dark arts. The flames of the stake were already kindled, casting eerie shadows on the faces of the onlookers.

As the events unfolded before him, Sebastian couldn't shake the feeling that this moment would mark a profound change in his life. The barbaric spectacle of a witch burning left an indelible imprint on his conscience, sparking a newfound awareness of the perilous times in which he lived. Little did he know that this experience would set him on a path fraught with moral dilemmas, as he grappled with the harsh realities of a society steeped in superstition and paranoia.

Upon receiving the urgent call from Vincent, Sebastian wasted no time, and both men embarked on their journey to Northington by horse and carriage. The wheels of the carriage

## Sebastian Swanson – Rise Of The Lycan

creaked along the uneven path, the fog gradually lifting as they approached the village. The distant cheers of the people grew louder with each passing moment, a cacophony of anticipation reverberating through the air.

After nearly forty-five minutes of a tense journey, the duo arrived at Northington. The village was in a state of frenzy, an uproar of chaos fueled by the fervor of the crowd. Gunshots echoed in the air, barrels aimed skyward, signaling the heightened tension. The mob, armed with stones, cabbages, and other objects, stood ready to unleash their collective anger on the perceived witch.

Sebastian, stepping out of the carriage, navigated through the agitated crowd, determined to witness the alleged witch with his own eyes. As he drew closer, the tableau unfolded before him — a young lady, her wrists bound behind her back, tethered to a wooden stake. Despite the hostile atmosphere, Sebastian couldn't reconcile the serene image of the accused with the sinister claims made by the villagers.

The lady, clad in an all-white gown that bore signs of wear, seemed to be around twenty-five years old. Her long, untarnished brunette hair cascaded down to her mid-back, and her complexion radiated an ethereal glow. Struggling to fathom how such an innocent appearance could be associated with witchcraft, Sebastian observed her as she kept her head low in the face of impending doom.

Determined to unravel the truth, Sebastian forged through the crowd, arriving at the front lines. Kneeling beside the accused woman, he peered into her face, a move that prompted a hushed silence among the onlookers. Rising swiftly, he addressed the crowd with a voice that cut through the tension like a knife.

S.K. Ballinger

"You all believe this woman to be a witch?" Sebastian's words hung in the air, a challenge to the collective judgment of the villagers. The crowd, momentarily silenced, awaited his next move, their eyes shifting between the accused and the man who dared to question their convictions.

Sebastian's challenging question hung in the air, silencing the crowd, as he continued to address the gathered villagers.

"What details about this woman would give you reasoning to believe so? Look at her; she is harmless and weak."

As the onlookers focused on the accused woman, Sebastian turned his attention towards her, hearing her uttering words in an unfamiliar language while tears streamed down her face.

"How dare you question the village of Northington!" an old man shouted, advancing towards Sebastian from the other side of the crowd.

"I will take no part in this slaying and abuse of this lady unless you can prove to me otherwise. Who was the first to see her?" Sebastian demanded.

"It was me, and she is a witch. You yourself look confused by the language she is speaking, which is not that of any other language spoken here or in other places of this globe. When I approached her, she was speaking that language, and just as she turned around, a bloody wolf came from behind her. As it snarled, I shot the damn mutt in the head. It was then this witch began to cry and shouted 'NO,' so I know she can speak English. Don't believe me? Then ask her yourself, Sebastian... if she will speak,

## Sebastian Swanson – Rise Of The Lycan

that is!” the old man asserted.

Kneeling down once more, Sebastian, with a sense of urgency, approached the accused woman's right ear. Gazing into her deep blue eyes, he implored, "Is it true what the old man has told me of what took place?"

“The wolf was my pet, my companion, and protector,” she mumbled, her voice barely audible through the chaos.

“Why the spoken language?” Sebastian inquired.

“It is because of who I am; which is not that of a witch. I only do crafts, I am self-taught, and I was only speaking words that only my pet would understand. Please, sir, do not let them kill me,” she cried, her desperation evident.

Sebastian rose to his feet and addressed the crowd, “She says the wolf was her pet, and she had taught herself the language. She is no witch and poses no threat to anyone.”

The old man, unmoved by Sebastian's plea, issued a callous order to the crowd, “Who owns a wolf as a pet? This is obscure and a bunch of rubbish. Remove her clothes!”

“Please, people of Northington, do you not see that she is human? I am sure if she was a witch, would she not use her powers to free herself?” Sebastian shouted, attempting to reason with the enraged mob.

“Ignore him and let this witch burn!” the old man bellowed, further fanning the flames of hysteria within the village. The situation grew more precarious as the mob appeared poised to carry out their ruthless judgment, leaving Sebastian torn between the tide of superstition and his growing conviction in the

S.K. Ballinger

accused woman's innocence.

A chilling silence fell over the crowd as they closed in on the accused woman, intent on stripping her of any semblance of dignity. Sebastian, powerless against the frenzied mob, could only watch in horror as the crowd ruthlessly tore away her clothes, leaving her exposed and vulnerable to the biting cold in a matter of minutes. With her hands still bound behind the wooden stake, she stood naked, a symbol of cruelty and inhumanity.

Sebastian, struggling to rise from the chaos and desperately trying to shield himself from the onslaught, was met with an unexpected act of violence. The old man, fueled by zealous determination, stomped on Sebastian's back, forcing him to stay down and watch the unfolding tragedy or face a similar fate.

“Is there anything that you would like to say before you meet your death?” the old man callously inquired, the cruelty in his eyes matching the coldness of the air.

With a nod that conveyed a somber 'yes,' the accused woman raised her tear-streaked face, locking eyes with Sebastian. In that harrowing moment, her voice, strong and resolute, cut through the ominous silence.

“My beauty has chosen you, for you watched innocence and did nothing. You will feel the pain and agony upon the first full moon as my screams will be your howls. You will understand what it is like to be hunted, feared, and you will, in turn, cast that fear onto all,” she proclaimed, her words echoing with a haunting certainty.

The gravity of her ominous prophecy hung heavily in the air, leaving the crowd stunned. Sebastian, torn between disbelief

## Sebastian Swanson – Rise Of The Lycan

and the eerie resonance of her words, felt a shiver crawl down his spine. The old man, undeterred by the woman's chilling declaration, reveled in the unfolding spectacle, the crowd now eager to witness the gruesome act that was about to transpire.

As the accused woman stood exposed, her fate sealed by the merciless judgment of the villagers, Sebastian grappled with a profound sense of guilt and helplessness. Little did he know that the events of this day would forever alter the course of his life, thrusting him into a world of darkness and supernatural forces beyond his wildest imagination.

As the accused woman's ominous words echoed through the air, a surreal and unsettling event unfolded before Sebastian's eyes. A rose stem emerged from the ground, unfurling its petals with an ethereal grace. Yet, this wasn't a mere symbol of beauty; it carried an unsettling weight. The stem bore a single thorn that scraped the inside of Sebastian's index finger, as if sealing a dark pact.

In the wake of this bizarre occurrence, Sebastian's world tilted on its axis. Disorientation washed over him, and a wave of sickness gripped his stomach, forcing him to double over and vomit. The sudden chaos that ensued among the onlookers was palpable, fueled by a mixture of fear and superstition. The sight of a rose blooming seemingly in response to the accused woman's words had sent shockwaves through the crowd.

“Burn her now and kill this evil, banish this soul from Northington!” the old man bellowed, his voice commanding the villagers to take swift action against the perceived malevolence that now tainted their midst.

Panic rippled through the crowd like wildfire. The once-

S.K. Ballinger

spectators, now gripped by fear and hysteria, clamored for the immediate execution of the accused woman. The atmosphere in Northington had shifted from a fervent pursuit of justice to an unrelenting desire to eradicate an alleged supernatural threat.

Amidst the chaos, Sebastian, still reeling from the strange events that transpired, struggled to regain his composure. The thorn's sting lingered in his finger, a physical reminder of the otherworldly turn of events. His attempts to reason with the crowd were drowned out by the frenzied cries of those who sought to carry out the old man's decree.

The accused woman, bound and vulnerable, stood at the epicenter of the brewing storm, her fate sealed not just by the accusations of witchcraft but by a supernatural force that seemed to intertwine with her words. In the unfolding madness, Sebastian found himself caught between the harsh reality of the villagers' zealous beliefs and the ominous presence that now seemed to cast a shadow over Northington.

The gruesome spectacle unfolded with a macabre rhythm as the crowd, now frenzied and bloodthirsty, hurled projectiles at the accused woman. Heads of cabbage, stones, and various objects rained down upon her, creating a cacophony of hatred. Torches held by men in the crowd were tossed toward the pile of sticks beneath her feet, igniting the pyre that would soon consume her. Despite the relentless assault, she tried to conceal the pain, but it became increasingly apparent as the flames licked at the flesh of her feet.

The cheers of the crowd reached a fevered pitch as the flames crept higher up her naked body. Sebastian, unlike the jubilant onlookers, watched in silence, his expression a mixture of horror and disbelief. The heat from the growing inferno reflected



## Sebastian Swanson – Rise Of The Lycan

in his haunted eyes as the woman's screams echoed through the air. The ordeal persisted for nearly twenty agonizing minutes, and just as the sounds of suffering ceased, the rose that had bloomed in response to her words withered away, as if mirroring her demise.

Vincent, attempting to pull Sebastian away from the gruesome scene, spoke with urgency, "Gather yourself up, Sebastian. It would be wise for you to return home as fast as you can. The old man of this village might easily decide that you are now cursed and choose to burn you to a pole just as they did to her."

Sebastian, still in shock, muttered, "I should not have come. Those words she said, she looked at only me in the eyes as they left her lips," fear palpable in his tone.

"I am certain you are fine, Sebastian. I will come to visit you again to see how you are doing, but for now, it would be wise for you to leave. I beg of you, friend," Vincent urged, offering support as he helped Sebastian to his feet.

As Sebastian navigated through the crowd, making his way to his carriage with the people standing firm, an ominous presence awaited him. The old man, standing next to the door of the carriage, delivered a chilling warning.

"If I see you in Northington again, I will not hesitate to bury you. Even now, with what you witnessed, you still don't believe in witches. You are cursed by the words she spoke!" the old man declared.

"Very well, sir. I will say this in return... I do not welcome you in my town of Cambridge. As for the lady, yes, I am not a

S.K. Ballinger

fool to not acknowledge what took place," Sebastian replied, his voice carrying a mixture of resignation and a growing awareness of the dark forces that had intertwined with his life. With those parting words, he left Northington behind, haunted by the harrowing events that would forever change the trajectory of his existence.

Bumping shoulders with the old man to climb into Vincent's carriage, Sebastian sought refuge from the harrowing scene that had unfolded in Northington. Vincent cracked the reins, prompting the horses to surge forward, and the carriage began its journey back to Cambridge. The rhythmic clatter of hooves on the uneven road accompanied the heavy silence within the carriage.

As the landscape blurred by, Sebastian's mind was unable to shake off the haunting echoes of the accused woman's final words. The rose, with its enigmatic bloom, continued to linger in his thoughts. Questions swirled in his mind, creating a tumultuous storm of uncertainty.

"What did she mean by the moon, pain, and fear?" Sebastian mused, his gaze lost in the passing scenery. The words, laden with a prophetic weight, resonated with an eerie sense of foreboding. The memory of the woman's eyes, intense and sorrowful, bore into his consciousness, leaving an indelible mark on his psyche.

Vincent, sensing the weight of Sebastian's contemplation, chose to break the heavy silence. "Sebastian, my friend, what transpired back there was beyond our understanding. The ways of the world are mysterious, and some things are not meant for mortal comprehension."

Sebastian, his brow furrowed with worry, turned to

## Sebastian Swanson – Rise Of The Lycan

Vincent. "But the rose, the words she spoke... it felt otherworldly, as if a veil between the ordinary and the supernatural had been lifted."

Vincent nodded solemnly, understanding the gravity of the situation. "We live in times where superstitions and fears reign supreme. Northington is a place swathed in the fabric of beliefs that defy reason. Yet, you must tread carefully, my friend, for the old man's warning was not to be taken lightly. We do not know what forces we have meddled with."

As the carriage rumbled on, the familiar sights of Cambridge began to materialize on the horizon. The bustling town offered a semblance of normalcy, but Sebastian couldn't shake the feeling that he had ventured into a realm where the boundaries between reality and the supernatural had blurred.

Upon reaching Cambridge, Vincent bid Sebastian farewell, cautioning him once more. "Take heed, Sebastian. The events of Northington may cast shadows upon your path. Keep your wits about you, and perhaps, seek counsel from those who may understand the mysteries that entangle our world."

Sebastian, still grappling with the enigma that had unfolded, nodded in acknowledgment. With the carriage departing, he found himself standing alone in the midst of Cambridge, a town that now seemed both familiar and alien, harboring secrets that begged to be unraveled.