Blind Marnie breathed deep of the good air and let out a long exultant sigh. She addressed the animal companion who stood beside her as she crouched at the small fire they had made.

“A cornfield under a full moon. Could a witch ask for a better night to lay down a curse?”

“You’re brother won’t know what hit him,” answered Ferdinand the Wonder Pig.

“A simple Banishment spell. Everyone will think Buford just got wander lust like he used to do before he had Wes. Mosie won’t even be mad, certainly not at me!” Blind Marnie laid a few more sticks of wood on the fire. “Don’t know why I didn’t do this long ago.”

“Buford’s been a distraction, alright,” said Ferdinand. “With him out of the way, you can turn your attention to all the important matters you’ve never had time for.”

“Yes,” said Blind Marnie. “The mystery of the orchard. I’ll finally get to the bottom of it and discover the fortune Dad intended to leave me.”

A bulbous moon hung overhead and cast a near-daylight glow on them as they waited in a small clearing they had made in the middle of the cornfield. Marnie regarded the fire with her blind eyes.

“How’s it looking,” she asked. “Has a nice bed of coals formed?”

“Needs a little more time,” said Ferdinand.

Marnie let out another sigh, this one less blissful and more impatient. She collected herself.

“Well, this is a good thing. Sitting here by our fire. De-tethered from modern society and all it does to draw us away from ourselves and into its web. Here, we are connected with an ancient sisterhood and an art that goes back to the dawn of man.”

The fire burned. Marnie pulled a package of candy from a pocket and tore it open. She shook free two brightly colored candy items and offered one to Ferdinand.

“Chewy Gloop?” she asked. “They were two-for-one at the Quick Stop with a tank of gas.

Ferdianand accepted the treat. “You’re a shrewd woman, Marnie Hooper.”

In silence, they chewed at the fire.

“They sweeten these with corn syrup,” said Blind Marnie. “Did you know that?

Ferdinand did.

“They sweeten everything with corn syrup these days. Think about it. Here we are, sitting in a corn field, eating candy made from corn that may have come from this very field, gone to some plant, been treated with chemicals to turn it into syrup, and now back in this cornfield by way of the Quick Stop being consumed by us.”

“The fire is ready,” said Ferdinand.

“A cornfield under a full moon. A witch in the cradle of a witches power, yet unable to detether from the modern world and the industrial processes that are the antitheses of her art.” Marnie pitched the package into the fire. “I renounce you, Chewy Gloops!”

“Are you ready,” Ferdiand asked.

“Yes,” said Blind Manie. “You can start shaping the rune.”

Blind Marnie closed her eyes and sat motionless while Ferdinand pulled ears of corn from the nearby stalks and laid them out on in a perimeter large enough to contain the fire and Blind Manie. As he did so, Blind Marnie swayed and chanted.

When Ferdinand finished his work, he took his place beside Blind Marnie. Continuing to chant, she reached into a satchel and drew from it a doll made of corn husk and held it toward the fire.

“Cast out the one we so abhore,

“To jungles dark and far-flung shore”

“be off remote and back no more!”

Marnie tossed the doll onto the fire and it burst into flame. Despite her blindness, Marnie was able to see the ball of silver-blue energy that rose from the fire. A ball of energy rose from the flames, hovered briefly. Tho then sped off in the direction of the farmhouse.

“It’s done,” said Blind Marnie. “Buford will get up and immediately leave.”

“I’m not sure that was exactly right,” said Ferdinand. “I think it was supposed to be “”.

“Not right? Didn’t you see the silver-blue energy thingy?”

Buford at that moment was seated on the couch watching college football. He did not see the silver-blue energy thingy either, was unaware of it even as it struck him full in the chest. He experience a moment of uneasiness and attributed this to events unfolding on the field. He did not get up and immediately leave the farm. But he did notice the back was missing from his remote. Indeed, al lthe backs off all the remotes in his home were now missing, banished to some far-flung shore, and from that moment on, no remote control would enter his home but that the back to it didn’t go permanently missing within a few days. This would become yet another source of conflict between he and Wes.

Blind Marnie and Ferdinand the Wonder Pig hurried through the cornfield.

“We can still catch the last half of Survival At Love Island. I wanna see if they finally vote off that Crystal tonight!”

Blind Marnie stopped suddenly. “Wait! Where are my Chewy Gloops?”

“You threw them in the fire.”

“I had another package. They were two for one, remember? Come on, we’re finding them.”

“But you renounced Chewy Gloops.”

“I renounced THOSE Chewy Gloops, not the ones still in my pocket.”

They retraced their steps back to the fire without success.

“We’re not leaving without my free Chewy Gloops,” declared Blind Marnie.

“They could be anywhere,” said Ferdinand. “We need more help. Maybe you can persuade an owl to look for them?”

“Owls are an indigenous species. My influence is over invasives. You know that. Maybe we can find some House Sparrows?”

“You could raise the starlings.”

Marnie thought.

“Starling power is nothing to mess around with.”

“You’re right to show discretion. You can always go back to the Quick Stop and pay full retail for more Chewy Gloops.”

Marnie lifted her arms and spoke a spell.

A few starlings appeared overhead, just discernable in the pale light of the moon. More joined them. Then more.

“Is anything happening?” asked Blind Marnie.

The starlings began to fly in unison. The formed a great black robe that in its billowing, would sometimes pass over the great moon and block out its light.

“Yes,” said Ferdinand.

The starling robe now gave off a light of its own, pinkish in hue. It shaped itself into human form. Menacing eyes formed within a cowl. Taloned hands grew from sleeves.

“Oh! I can sense the magic energy. It’s pink!” said Blind Marnie. “Are they looking for my Chewy Gloops?”

The starling wraith lifted its taloned hands high over its head, clasped them together, and brought them down on the cornfield. Where it did, cornstalks broke and ears scattered. The wraith lifted its hands again.

“We should go,” said Ferdinand.

“Maybe so,” said Blind Marnie.

They left the starling wraith to its business.

“I guess it won’t stop until it finds the Chewy Gloops?”

“That’s unlikely,” said Blind Marnie. She displayed a brightly colored package. “They were in my other pocket. Want one?”