

# Imagine

By Bob Lock

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Imagine. On your life's journey you have somehow happened upon a strange page of script, will it entice you to read on or just close the book and once again continue on your way?

Who knows?

Only *you* can decide.

Or rather, it *should* be you who decides.

However, imagine this, just for a moment!

Much like a camera hovering omniscient over a scene from some old black and white television show, late at night, you gaze down at a man hunched over a keyboard. His fingers shake as he struggles to type and his eyes narrow as they scrutinize the words that appear on his flat screen monitor. The room is dark, quiet, except for the almost insectile scrabbling of his typing and the occasional low mutter or expelled pent up breath from his mouth, which seems to be working constantly spelling out each word as it appears. It almost looks like an incantation.

Intrigued, the camera, or shall we say, *you* - for are you still listening? Alternatively, perhaps the story is unfolding with no witness to see or hear its conception? Whether or not it is observed or heard the story now unravels of its own accord as if knowing that someone somewhere will fulfil its need to be set free. The writer glances round, the camera pulls back but we are not seen and with a shuddering breath the man's attention is once again drawn to the glowing screen where his words appear as if by magic and not by the input of the keyboard. We are drawn down to the luminous square of light that absorbs his awareness much as a moth is drawn to the flickering dance of a naked flame, seductive but ultimately pernicious. Finally, we are close enough to look over the man's shoulder and are able to see his musings and we read!

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I despise myself for doing this to you, but it has become too much to bear. I thought I was a strong person, but my shortcomings have been shoved in my face. If there had been any other alternative then I

would have grasped it with both hands, believe me. But there was not. Please forgive me. Perhaps I should start at the beginning. I will try to explain why I resorted to telling you all this; why I just didn't let it run its course and let it all end with me. There is no excuse. I was too weak.

About four months ago, I would have been prepared to just sit at my computer and write with the hope of one day being published but that was before I walked into an antique shop in a very small village situated in a remote part of Wales. Rummaging through some of the items there, which were mostly rubbish, I came across an old book. It spoke of ancient Celtic legends and myths. There was no date on it, but by its method of manufacture, I guessed that it was aged. The covers were old black leather, cracked and mildewed with time. The spine of the book was broken and almost coming away; the pages were yellowed and age-spotted. I bought it for a very cheap price and the shop-owner seemed glad to get rid of the smelly old thing.

That night I set about cleaning it and checking that all the pages were intact. On starting to remove the spine-cover so that I could re-glue the pages, imagine my surprise when a slip of paper fell out. It was a hand-written note and started by begging the reader for forgiveness. Enthralled I could not do anything other than read further as it carried on explaining that the writer had imprudently disturbed *something* from its slumber; a *something* that was far beyond the writer's control.

The name given to that something or entity was *Samhain* and it was known as the Celtic God of the Dead. Fascinated, I read on as the writer explained that he was a Druid and had thought himself wise in the knowledge of the occult. So much so that he had a vast collection of books on the subject and would secretly experiment in magic. One night he had dared summon *Samhain*, thinking he would be able to control the entity or if needs be, reverse the process. It was not to be. Soon, he found that once summoned the being would remain until it consumed anyone who had invoked it.

The Druid at first thought the summoning to have failed as nothing untoward or strange had happened. However, it wasn't long before he started experiencing the sensation of being watched. Strange movements seen from the corner of his eye would make him turn quickly, but there was never anything to see. Time went on, and after a few months people commented on his loss of weight, the pale pallor of his skin. Day by day, he grew weaker as if his very soul was being ripped from his body. A darkness he could not fathom had begun to overshadow his life.

Then, one day, he found the answer. After much research, he finally found the only way to free himself from the curse. He wrote a note to a friend of his and begged him to read it to the end. The note explained what he had done and why he was suffering so. It explained that the only way for him to save himself was to pass the curse on by getting someone else to read the invocation; be it knowingly or unknowingly it did not matter.

The friend, not realising what he was doing, read the note, and unintentionally became the invoker.

However, he was not as psychologically strong as the Druid, and within days degenerated into a witless imbecile. His heart gave out after less than a week and the curse was lifted. *Samhain* was placated. The Druid had saved himself but at the cost of his friend.

Distraught and unable to forgive himself the Druid decided to write out a confession and submit himself to his order for trial. Somehow, I don't think he ever managed to find the courage to do so. How else could the confession be where it was? As I think the confession is the very note that fell from that book.

Amazed, I immediately started researching on the internet into the background history of Celtic folklore regarding this little known entity. I found that to most historians it was no more than myth. Being a strong-minded person, and not prone to believing in myths and legends too deeply, I accepted the writing as being the figment of a distraught man's imagination. Witchcraft and magic were rife in those times and people could easily convince themselves that they had been cursed or haunted. However, now we are in the golden age of science and technology; in the twenty-first century, such things are easily dismissed.

Then I started noticing strange occurrences happening around me. I could be writing at my desk, intent on getting my formatting correct, when suddenly I would experience a presence. Turning quickly expected to see my wife or perhaps one of my dogs behind me but there was never anyone there. Friends started remarking that I had lost weight or that my colour had become very strange. I looked strained as if over-worked or exhausted. Not feeling particularly well I went for a check-up, but my doctor found nothing unusual. The feeling of being constantly watched continued. My dogs, who normally sit near my desk in the evenings as I write have abandoned me and are reluctant to enter my bedroom, which serves as an office. If you could observe me now, writing this, you would see me alone and guarded. Even whilst writing this I feel as if someone or something is peering over my shoulder and I fight the urge to turn around.

It has taken me until now to realise what has happened. The *curse is still active* and somehow, unwittingly I have invoked the creature once more. I delved through the Druid's note and realised that somewhere within it lay the answer. Then it came to me, in his explanation he had somehow erroneously included the summoning words.

As I have explained, I thought myself a strong person, able to combat this terrible thing and not involve others, but I was wrong. The spectre that was just beyond my range of vision had grown and soon will no longer hide from me; it is terrifying and I am not able to fight it any longer.

So I beg your forgiveness as I finish telling you this tale, as within these few paragraphs, I have incorporated the invocation, and as you finish listening, I begin at last to register a lessening of the oppressive feeling that has plagued me since finding the Druid's note.

Now I am finally free.

Â But I am so, so sorryâ€â€™

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The camera pulls slowly away, but the screen does not fade to black, Rod Serling doesnâ€™t explain that what you have witnessed is just a story. However, we *do* hear a sigh from the hunched man as he stretches and smiles.Â It is as if a burden beyond human endurance has been lifted from his shoulders.Â And so, the story has run its course, the scene has been played, the trap set.Â If the story has been read or listened to then the trap has been sprung, only you, dear friend can confirm this.Â Perhaps the wind has picked up, is that why the curtain moved?Â Or the creak of the floorboard is just the settling of the house or the passing of your catâ€ oh, you donâ€™t have one.

However, in the beginning I did sayâ€ imagineâ€

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StoryImp Advertisement

