

A woman with long, straight brown hair is shown from the chest up, wearing a dark blue or black hooded garment. Her eyes are closed, and she has a serene expression. She is holding a small, ornate, blue and gold ceramic candle holder with both hands. A single lit candle is inside the holder, casting a warm, soft glow on her face and hands. The background is a solid, deep black, making the subject stand out.

In the Darkness

Leah Hamrick

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the author, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews.

Publisher's Note:

This is a work of fiction. All names, characters, places, and events are the work of the author's imagination.

Any resemblance to real persons, places, or events is coincidental.

Solstice Publishing - www.solsticepublishing.com

Copyright 2016 Leah Hamrick

In the Darkness

Leah Hamrick

“Aww, poor Anna,” Ginger teased, running her finger over my cheek in such a way that I want to smack her. “Is there going to be any scary—”

“Stop it!” I hissed, earning me glances from everyone standing around us in the packed hallways. “Don’t baby me. I told you, I’m not scared, and if you think I am, you are a fool.” I shove everything into my locker just as a piece of paper floated down from the top shelf. I grab it in mid-air. There is a drawing of a clown on it. Ginger giggled. I squashed it in my fist, growled, and threw it to the ground. The janitor would sweep it up later after everyone went home.

I knew that whole throwing thing probably made me look like a ranting five-year-old, but I didn’t care.

I tore off, walking in the opposite direction, and not once did I look back to see if she was following. She’d made me mad, and I wasn’t in the mood to see if she was lagging behind—I hope she wasn’t.

Every day for the past week she’d been torturing me about a text I sent her. She said I had a *clown stalker*. I claimed that I saw a figure standing in my backyard with big hair—which sort of resembled a clown, in a way. I know what I saw, and what I saw was someone that was just there to scare me. They were standing next to a tree, and I had just enough light from the moon to make them out. I’d lived in my house ever since I could remember, and I’d looked out those same windows millions of times at night, so I knew what the landscape looked like in the dark, and I knew where all of the shadows were, and what they were from.

This shadow was not something normal.

Nor was it something friendly.

Someway, somehow, I felt darkness rolling off it even though I was on the second floor, and about thirty or so yards away from the thing. My window was closed, but

that still didn't stop the dark mass of vile energy from seeping in through the glass.

The thing sent shivers crawling up my back, and caused my stomach to clench with unease. I didn't know who—or what—it was, but I wasn't going to think about it anymore because I was going to scare myself for nothing.

The only thing that I could think of is that it was a spirit—an evil spirit at that.

I totally believed in the paranormal and everything that went bump in the night.

Because... because that was who I am, and I was not mundane.



By the time I made it home, I was so ready for this day to be over, but that didn't stop me from texting my boyfriend, Killian. I never told him what the hell happened last week, and I wanted to keep it that way. Killian was over-protective, but that was okay—it just made me love him all the more—but this I needed to handle by myself. If this thing was out to get me, I didn't want to get my boyfriend and his family involved. I couldn't, and wouldn't do that. His dad died a year ago, and he had three little sisters—one with cancer.

Before I even got the text out, he called me. I smiled and answered. “Hey,” I said, lying back on my bed, propping a pillow under my head.

“Hey, what are you doing?” Killian asked. “I'm feeling ten times better today, but I'm still having nausea and bad headaches.”

“Nothing much, I just got home from school.” I rolled my eyes. Of course he would know that, he knows what time everyone gets out of school. I wanted to smack myself at my own stupidity.

“I think I'm going to take the rest of the week off. What's the point of just coming in on a Friday?” he said.

“That is true. You’re lucky you’re sick and didn’t have to come in today. Trust me, we had tests and a bunch of worksheets... it never ends, does it? You’re going to be so behind when you come back.” My boyfriend had mono, therefore hadn’t been in school for the past week.

He let out a small chuckle, and then coughed. “Yeah,” he said in a raspy voice. “I just wish I could see you, I’ve missed you, sweetie.”

I grinned widely. “I know, I miss you too.” I heard a banging sound on his end of the call and scrunched my eyebrows up. “What was that?”

“I don’t know, but I think my mom needs help, the sound came from her room. I’ll call you later. Bye!”

“Bye.” I hung up and closed my eyes.



Darkness came quicker that night. It *was* fall, by the way. The air was crisp and sweet—like apples. The smell of rotten leaves and rain tickled my nose as I walked down the driveway to get the mail. I never knew why the mail always ran late on Thursday. It was past seven at night.

When I got to our mailbox, I noticed weird, lengthy holes in the mud, leading back behind my house. I pulled my phone out of my pocket, and turned its flashlight on so I could see what the shapes were.

My breath caught in my throat. I whimpered.

The shapes were footprints... *long* footprints. Holy crap! Did the person wear size twenty shoes or something?

I held up my phone in front of my face, trying to see how far back the tracks went. I wondered if this was the guy that was in my backyard last week. I wanted to follow them but decided against it. I wasn’t going to be like those brainless girls in horror movies who always call out “hello?” and then leave the safety of their house to go look around. No thank you, I was a little smarter than that.

I hurriedly grabbed the mail and made myself be aware of my surroundings as I started the hike back to the house. My eyes darted every direction, trying to spot any movement in the darkness of the night. Leaves crunched under my feet, when suddenly I heard a peculiar sound... it was almost like a coyote or something, but it was deeper, more sinister. It sounded like it came from the woods. I was sure it was just an animal. It might be injured, or maybe it was their mating season. The males always fought over females. Right?

Living up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, any kind of animal could be out there. I've seen bears and mountain lions and giant bucks and all that good stuff.

When I got back inside the house, I slammed the door and locked it. I pulled on the handle to make sure it was totally closed and secured—it was.

“Anna? Can you come in here for a moment?” My mom asked.

I threw the mail onto the counter and went out into the living room. She was watching TV, and eating peanuts. When she saw me, she smiled, and waved me over. I didn't feel like sitting, so I stood in front of the couch and crossed my arms over my chest to ward off the evening chill... No, the chill came from those footprints and the sound I heard outside.

“Dear, do you think you could go outside and get the ladder out of the shed? I think there is a mouse or something living up in my windowsill. I heard scratching and chewing all night long. It drove me half out of my mind. I didn't get any sleep. Maybe you could set a mousetrap? I would really like to catch it.”

She wanted me to go into the backyard... after what I had just heard and seen and what I witnessed last week? No thank you, but I wasn't going to tell her that. I was going to pretend to go outside.

I smiled as warmly as I could manage. “Okay,” I said in a fake cheerful voice, and went to the back door. I opened it; shut it. Hopefully, my mom believed I went and did what she asked me to. I stood in the dark of the foyer silently, and listened to the tick-tock of the clock in the hallway, which I could hear all the way out here. My heart pounded in my ears, and my breathing was actually normal, which was a miracle all by itself.

I shifted my weight from foot to foot while I waited to “come back in.”

What my mom heard... was it anything to do with the muddy footprints? I should really ask her about those. Since the evidence was right there, she wouldn't think I was going crazy.

When I was sure five or so minutes had passed, I opened up the door again. As soon as I was getting ready to shut it, something slammed into the storm doors glass, causing it to make a loud, crashing sound. I jumped and shut the other door with a loud slam. I swear to God I almost threw up from the fear of it all.

My hands were shaking, my breathing was uneven, and I thought I was going to hyperventilate or something along those lines that could involve me passing out and being carted off to the hospital by my over-worried mother.

“Honey, what was that?” she called.

My heart was pounding so hard I could have been having a heart attack. I held my hand over my chest, willing my heart to slow down. There was probably some reasonable explanation for the noise. There were wild animals around here, kids that lived down the street—who would most likely take an opportunity to egg my house, or to throw a rock at it, because that's just what kids did... they think they're so fucking smart. All. The. Time.

I peeked out the window in the door, but I didn't see anything. I wasn't going out there to check. What if it was

that thing standing there? What if it was someone with a knife or a gun?

I trembled.

“Honey?” Mom’s voice rang out again. I had to answer her before she came in here and found me in a mental mess.

I swallowed. “Yeah?”

“Are you okay? Did you fall or something?”

I walked out into the living room, and toed my shoes over to the carpet that started in the hallway. My mom hated when I left my shoes lying around, but whatever, it wasn’t hurting anyone.

“I’m okay, Mom. Hey, did you notice any big footprints out in the yard? They’re leading from the mailbox all the way to the side of the house. I think they go behind it, but I couldn’t be sure.”

She scoffed. “Probably just your dad. Don’t worry about it.” She waved it away like it was no big deal. “So, did you find the mouse, and did you set a trap?”

I leveled my gaze with hers so she wouldn’t think I was lying. “I didn’t set a trap, but as soon as I climbed up to your window, the mouse took off along that small ledge on the side of the house. It squeaked all the way until it was out of sight.” I cringed. Mice were such gross, revolting creatures.

“I *knew* there was a mouse! Thank you, honey!”

I nodded and smiled. “No problem, anytime.”

I left the room after that, and made my way back up to my room. I needed to get some of my homework done before it got too late. Otherwise I would use the “I’m too tired” excuse on myself and it would never get done.



After about ten pages of math, I put everything back into my book bag and set it onto the floor. I went over to lock my door. I got on my hands and knees in front of my bed,

and pulled out my wooden box that held all my magical stuff. I was a spell-caster, or, AKA: witch. It was inherited from my grandmother, and my own mom didn't even know I had the gene. She didn't have it, and I bet she would freak out if she knew. She didn't like magic in any shape or form. She claimed nothing good could come from it, and she had lectured my grandma before on altering things in the universe... it was like, *what in the hell?* I didn't know where she got her philosophy from, but it was annoying at times, especially when I had to play along with her. Magic is *not* evil. People have always said that, when in reality, only a handful of people who use magic drip themselves into the dark arts. I on the other hand, used it for good and for my own personal enjoyment.

Nothing more, nothing less.

I popped my box open, and pulled out a red and a pink candle, a piece of twine, and a book of matches. What I was going to do was a simple spell to help Killian feel better. I moved my rug, and smiled when I saw my pentagram still drawn on the floor. Sometimes it got scuffed up and I had to re-do it.

I lit my pink candle, and then the red one. I sat in the middle of my circle, and closed my eyes. I let myself focus on sending love and warmth to Killian and envisioned him feeling better. I took slow, deep breaths, and chanted quietly:

*For the one I love, please feel your best
I send you warmth, light, and vast sight
Please know that I mean you no harm
I only mean to send you this magic charm.*

After I said that three times, I was ready for the second part of the spell. I held the piece of twine over the candle, and then gently dipped it inside the red wax. I waited for it to dry because I held the now waxed-up end in

my fingers, lighting the clean end on fire. I held up the quickly burning material, and gently blew on it before it reached my fingers that were slightly sticky with wax.

My spell was complete. I put everything away, slid it back under my bed, and unlocked my door just in time to hear my dad walking toward it. He knocked once before letting himself in. He seemed surprised to see me standing so close to the door.

“Hey, pumpkin, I was just coming to say goodnight,” he said, ruffling up my hair in a way I hated. I wasn’t a freaking puppy. I would never tell him that, though.

“Good day to you too, Dad,” I said with a smirk, planting my hands on my hips.

Dad sighed and ran his hands through his hair. “I’m sorry I’ve been working long hours... but I can’t do anything about it. The ER was crazy last night, and with all the drunk people getting into car accidents and drug dealers shooting their buyers for unpaid money. My day got bumped up from twelve to fifteen hours.”

“That’s okay, Dad. I know how crazy it can get.” My dad was a nurse, and he always had crazy hours and shifts... and he was always on call. “Have you been in the backyard lately? There are these big footprints leading from the front to the back...”

He shook his head. “Nope, sorry, Kiddo. It wasn’t me. Maybe it was a bear or something? You know we always have those running through our yard at night.”

It wasn’t a bear. Bears didn’t have feet that long, and their feet definitely weren’t extra-large human shaped.

I shrugged my shoulder slowly, “Maybe,” I agreed. I hugged him good night, changed into my pajamas, and crawled into bed. I passed out the second my head hit the pillow.

I was almost sure of it.



Sometime later, I was awakened from the sound of my window shaking. It was almost as if there was a really strong wind blowing. I sat up slowly, my hair falling like a curtain over my face. I pushed it all back with a huff. I really needed to get it cut soon.

I squinted my eyes, and then gradually stood up. I wobbled slightly and had to grab onto my nightstand so I wouldn't fall over. I looked at the clock—3:33 in the morning.

I went to my window and looked out. I didn't see anything, but as soon as I was ready to turn away, my eye caught some movement from the left side of the yard. It looked like it was coming from between the trees. Like a pendulum—back and forth—back and forth. It was moving too fast to be any animal. I narrowed my eyes further to try and make it out. There was no way I was shining a light down there.

I slid my hand to the base of my window, and noiselessly pushed it up. I wanted to see if I could hear anything.

And I *could*.

The sound was like suction cups under water... that annoying little *pop-pop-pop* sound... but it was more eccentric and mysterious than anything I'd ever heard. The resonance was unique. After listening to it, I couldn't describe it very well. The little pops started sounding like something was slapping together... God, I was so confused. My mind was whirling with what it could be.

My phone rang, startling me.

I backed away from the window and felt around on my bed until I came across my phone. It was Killian.

"Hello?" I whispered so my parents wouldn't hear.

They didn't like when I was on the phone this late at night except in emergencies—which this wasn't. I hoped. I knew they couldn't hear me from their bedroom, but my

room is right next to the bathroom, so they could walk past at any time. Sometimes I didn't even hear them.

"Anna?" he said in a gruff voice that made my stomach do summersaults.

Those little fluttery butterflies were moving through my body. I gasped. I'd been with my boyfriend for two years, and we still haven't had sex. I wanted to, but I didn't think I was quite ready. Killian understood, even though I knew he wasn't a virgin. He and his ex-girlfriend, Gina, got caught under the bleaches in the gym, which I thought was funny at the time. He was sixteen then, eighteen now.

I sat down on the bed, and finally turned my body and gaze away from the damned window. "What's up?"

"I feel much better." He chuckled. I could hear wind coming through the speaker. Where was he?

I smiled. My spell worked. How could my mom think anything like this was evil? I helped someone. Shouldn't she be proud of me? I know my grandma would be. Wait until I told her tomorrow.

"Look out your window," he said with amusement.

My heart thudded... he was outside when there was something out there... I scrambled off the bed as fast as I could and flung my window open. I wasn't even worried about my parents hearing anything anymore. I needed Killian inside so he was safe.

I glanced down. He was already halfway up the trellis. I shut my phone off—I didn't even know he had disconnected.

When he got to the top, a high-pitched whine/squeal sound came from deep within the woods, causing Killian to lose his footing. He almost fell. I didn't think there was a spell for a broken neck. God, I couldn't even fathom him dying. I loved him so freaking much it hurt me sometimes.

"What the fuck was that?" he said slowly in a whisper.

I shrugged, gave him my hand, pulling him inside the house. My breathing was picking up again. I shut the window, latching the lock.

“How did you get here?” I asked, holding his hand.

“My bike. I rode my bike in this cold for over two-and-a-half miles just to see you. You should feel very special, which you are. You’re my little Anna Banana.”

I blushed slightly, glad that the room was almost dark so he couldn’t see my cheeks.

I glanced up at him and took in his features in the moonlight. From his strong jaw to his long, dark lashes. To his green eyes to his dark brown hair... everything about him was irresistible, and everything about him pulled me in like blood does for a vampire. The love I felt in my heart and soul poured out when I did the next thing. I hooked my arms around his broad shoulders, and pulled him to me. My fingers wound around the hairs on the nape of his neck, and I dug my fingernails into his skin slightly.

I kissed him on the lips, searching his mouth with my tongue. His hands were at the bottom of my back, running over the smooth, warm skin. He pulled me closer until our hips were touching, and I felt him through his pants.

“I love you.” I gasped out. “I love you so much.”

His lips trailed down my neck, to the top of my breasts. He groaned while he started to rock himself into me, causing me to clutch his shirt in my fists and let out an airy moan.

“As I love you,” he murmured softly, causing the little hairs on my neck to tickle.

He pulled away and was breathing hard. “We better stop,” he said, pulling me down so I sat on the bed. “Do you know what the hell that noise was outside? It sounded like a dying cat.” He smirked.

“Who knows what it was, probably a deer in heat or something of that nature.”

“Yeah, probably.” He laughed loudly. I punched him to shut him up. I really didn’t need my dad to catch him in here.

He and I talked a long while, until I fell into a soundless, peaceful slumber.



“*Anna Marie Bowden!*” I woke up to my mom’s loud shouting. I looked at the door, and saw her hands on her hips. Her face was red, and it looked like she would start spitting bullets any second.

“What?” I asked groggily.

Crap, did I forget to put my magic stuff away last night? I swung a look over the side of the bed. It was all out of sight. Thank God.

“You know what? I’m so mad I can barely speak. Why is he in your room? Why is he half *naked*?”

I looked to my left and found a jeans free, shirtless Killian only wearing boxers—*snug* boxers. I could see everything. He rolled over, and grabbed me around the waist.

“Oh, baby, I’m so hard for you,” he murmured with a groan, not fully awake. “I love you so, so much.”

He pressed a kiss to my chest. My mom just about died of a heart attack. I kicked him. He shot awake, looking at the door.

Killian’s face went from white to red in a matter of seconds. “Holy shit, I fell asleep,” he said, looking back and forth from between me and my mom.

My mom tapped her foot. Killian jumped out of bed so fast he almost face-planted himself on the floor.

“I think you should go home, Killian.” My mom said, holding her ground.

He nodded, and turned to me. “See you later, Banana.”

I waved a little and smiled.

As soon as I heard the front door shut, I knew I was in trouble.

Big trouble.

Fuck me man.



The next afternoon, after a long argument with my mother about Killian being in my bed, and going to school, I was sitting out on the back porch, sipping hot chocolate when a figure appeared about ten yards away from me. It was a man cloaked in shadows. His eyes were dark abysses. It was sort of like that demon guy from the *Haunting in Connecticut* documentary I saw a few years back. It was just like that. My heart pounded. I was so scared that I couldn't move. I didn't know if this was the figure I saw in the yard last week, but I knew this guy wasn't even a real person. I think he came from another dimension.

That was the only explanation for his sudden appearance. The way he just felt wrong—felt evil—was sickening.

He stood there and stared at me whilst I was gripping my coffee mug for dear life. I was surprised it didn't shatter yet from all the pressure I was putting on it. My whole body was paralyzed with fear. I could do nothing but stare at him; just as he was me.

When I saw his outline flicker in and out, I thought he might disappear, but *no*, he just came closer and closer. His legs moved, but I think he was floating. No one could walk that smoothly and flawlessly. Something was wrong here. I mean a big something. Whoever this guy was I had a feeling he was connected to the first shadow I saw.

Shadow. Figure. Whatever!

The closer his dark, blank eyes got to me, the more my body tensed up, and the more my heart hammered. When he made it to the porch, my body's instinct was to run. That was just what I did. Screaming, I flung myself out

of my chair, threw my mug at the guy's face, turned around, and ran into the house, slamming the door.

My mom was there within a second. I slid down the wall, hugging my legs to my chest. I didn't even know I was crying until I saw a dark patch appear on the material of my gray sweat pants.

"Honey, what's wrong? I'm sorry I yelled at you earlier, but you know I don't like guys in your—"

I cut her off with a look. "Mom, it isn't that. I just saw a guy outside. He had no eyes. Everything was like a dark abyss. Remember that *Haunting in Connecticut* documentary? It was just like that, but scarier because it was in real life." I hugged my legs closer and fought off the need to both shiver and cower, and to see if he was still out there. I was worried about my dad's well-being, seeing as he wasn't going to be home before it got totally dark outside.

My mom gave me a stern look. "You haven't been messing with witchcraft have you? You probably summoned it somehow. Please tell me you aren't!" She stared at me. "I'm going to have to call your grandmother and tell her to knock it off! She's tainting my little girl!"

"No, nothing like that!" I lied, looking at the floor, trying to focus on the warped wood from years of water hitting it.



I woke up with a start, and looked around my room. It was dark. Arms tightened around me. I tried to wiggle and break free, but they just held me that much tighter. I tried to bite them, but I couldn't reach any bare skin.

"Anna, it's okay." Killian said.

Wait, *what?*

What the hell happened? Why was he here? Didn't my mom catch him in my room? I was confused as I turned around in his arms.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

