

The Crypt

October, 2016

T'WAS THE WITCH OF NOVEMBER COME STEALING

When I was in college, I spent one summer researching my family history. Several times a week, I went to the archives, searching through microfilm and taking in the delicious odor of musty old books. I recently

signed up for a popular genealogy website. In less than 30 minutes, I reconstructed everything that took me an entire summer 20 years ago. Plus, other people had posted pictures of my dead relatives! Technology.

In researching the myriad branches of my family tree, I discovered something I thought was really cool—my people are from Salem. *The Salem*. I quickly adopted the self-aggrandizing moniker “Descendent of Salem” and started looking for ways to tap into my own inner magic. As best I can tell, my people were there about 60 years before the famous witch trials and were long gone when all the hoo-ha went down – but still – *Salem*.

I know I’m not alone. Witches and supernatural terrors are a common obsession. Here at 45°N, there is a rich history of supernatural spooks and specters. In his 1856 book *The Hiawatha Legends*, Henry R. Schoolcraft describes the cultural traditions and lore of the Native Americans that lived in the Great Lakes region. There are accounts of ghosts (Jeebi), fairies (Puck Wudj Ininees), a toad woman (Mukakee Mindemoea), and a phantom “of human bones, without bones, without muscular tissue...”

(Pauguk).

I drew inspiration from these accounts when I wrote the 2016 *CryptKeeper, Forgive Us Our Debts*, a story about a field trip on the shores of Lake Michigan that goes horribly wrong. I hope you enjoy this short haunt, and Happy Halloween!

—RJ



Gothic Dreams, by Stacy Arrington.

The children screamed in unison – a desperate, high-pitched wail – and grabbed anything within reach. Jim looked at the five children huddled in front of him. He only had two life jackets left.

“Can any of you swim?”

—Forgive Us Our Debts

Robert James

Everyone has demons
www.rjfiction.com

