

DITCH WITCH
By K Bryson Perov

Pat Ragowski.

Age six.
Keeper of mice.
Collector of sticks.

Usually alone, by no fault of his own.
Such is the case today as he makes his way home.

"See you later turd!!"
"He's so weird,"
The kids say.

But Pat pays them no mind and just goes on his way.
He follows the wooded trail.

His feet kick up dust, avoiding his thoughts as so often he must.
The Autumn leaves dance and Pat almost smiles.
But then he trips over himself and lands in a pile.

Pat groaned his bad luck and gathered his things, when a shrill, shrieking voice
cried out with a ring,

**"Invader!
Intruder!
Pirate!
Fiend!**

GET AWAY FROM MY STEW, BOY, OR I'LL SHOW YOU MEAN!"

Down a long, sharp nose, two neon eyes glared.
Pat stood without moving.
This can't really be there.

"SPEAK, BOY, SPEAK!

**And say what you mean. This is MY ditch.
I've claimed it right, fair, and clean.**

**The monsters have the mall,
the vampires the spa,
goblins run the golf course,
the zombies...well, who cares about the zombies.
They're dead, after all.
Hmph. Anyhow...
This ditch, it is mine. I've claimed it most fair.
This is my home.
Explain yourself, if you care."**

**"I'M SORRY MAM...uh, Miss Witch...Miss Ditch...
I didn't mean to intrude.
I fell...well, I tripped.
I meant no harm to you."**

A noticeable change in her glare took place.

The neon melted to gold.

Her meanness displaced.

"WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?" The witch motioned to a chair.

"You've got no headphones.

No games.

No books.

Nothing to distract you but what's happening in there."

Her long, pointy finger pressed sharp to Pat's head.

And for just a moment, he wondered if he might yet end up dead.

Nonetheless, he spoke.

He answered her pitch.

After all, you can't say nothing to a witch in a ditch.

**"THEY ALL SAY I'M WEIRD.
THEY ALL CALL ME NAMES.
They say that I'm different.
I'm stupid.**

**I'm queer.
And I'm lame.**

**BUT WHAT IF I AM? WHAT IS IT TO THEM?
WHAT'S SO BAD ABOUT ME NOT BEING LIKE THEM?**

The witch twitched.

She squinted.

She sniffed.

Her anger waned.

Then she plopped down by Pat and began to explain.

"BOY, LET ME TELL YOU A THING ABOUT WEIRD.

I'm a girl and by nine I was shaving my beard.

I'm not even green the way most of us are.

I'm blue and I'm bumpy and have all these strange scars.

BUT I HAVE A PURPOSE, as all of us do.

But forging our paths presents a challenge or two.

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE FOLKS WHO HURT PEOPLE LIKE YOU.

It's cruel.

Unwarranted.

Uncivilized.

Inhumane.

Immature.

STUPID AND LAME.

But alas, it is true.

AND SOMETIMES, THOSE WE SEEK FOR HELP,

adults, teachers, LEADERS... SOME MAKE IT WORSE.

But YOU, Pat Ragawski, YOU must CHOOSE YOUR CURSE.

TO BE MEAN, CLOSE-MINDED, AND DUMB is a cruel existence indeed.

To spread anything but *love*, well that's just **hate** you feed.

This type of life...this blindness...to live with no care...it's a curse!

See? No one's lot is really fair.

**BUT TO BE DIFFERENT.
TO BE THE CHANGE.
TO BE TRUE TO WHO YOU ARE...**

Well that's even harder, but more rewarding by far.

**For in our true identities, we find what we can *give*.
In that gift to humanity,
a life of *joy* and *love* you'll *live*."**

"WHAT IN DEVIL'S STEW?!" A new witch, green and mad, appeared from thin air.

"HUSH!" The Ditch Witch hissed at her.

"WE'RE NOT FINISHED HERE!"

The new witch snarled and glared, but stood by patiently.

"YOU MAY FEEL ALONE," Ditch Witch spoke.

"BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE."

**"IF YOU SEEK, YOU'LL FIND PEOPLE LIKE YOU.
MAYBE EVEN SOME LIKE ME."**

**"YOU ARE NOT ALONE, IN PURPOSE OR IN LIFE.
LOVE IS WHERE YOU PLANT IT. YOU BE YOUR TRUTH.
RESPOND IN KIND. YOU'LL BE THEIR LIGHT."**

She winked one great, golden eye and in a snap she was gone.

Pat was again standing before the ditch, in the spot he'd tripped upon.

The Fall air swooped by.

The leaves danced for him again.

And this time, **HE DID SMILE.**

A real and heartfelt grin.

Boo!
Happy October.
More spooky bits to come...