

## Spells at Midnight

### Deleted Scene

By Jenna Castille © 2007  
(Not appropriate for ages under 18)

A loud crash echoed through the small, locked chamber as the fighting outside came perilously close to the ramshackle building. Dust raining down from the cross-beamed ceiling tickled Renee's nose but she held off the sneeze. Nothing must break their concentration. Too many lives depended on their spell work.

Twenty-year-old witch Renee McGowan held her mother's small hand tight in her own as they stood lending magical support to her father. Their two slight forms faced and sustained his greater power. Wendell McGowan focused his attention on the silver mirror hanging on the wall while pulling from the strength of Shannon and Renee. The surface rippled like a clear pool after a pebble had been cast. In it they watched the battle spilling out through the surrounding countryside, hidden from mortal eyes by magic and the vast Montana night.

The mirror showed things beyond human comprehension, a vision to drive men mad. Monsters fought for dominance and the right to continued existence. The battle raged for hours. The ground grew slick with mud formed from blood and dust mixing beneath trampling combatant feet. Howls, snarls, and whimpers filled the air. Smoke and fire melded with spell and claw.

No matter how many other wizards and witches stood watch, shielding the shifters and vampires as best they could from Fae magicks and demon scourges, the tide of battle turned against the human-descended paras. The non-human paranormals outnumbered them five to one.

A losing battle became a bloodbath.

Suddenly the silver mirror bowed outward under the pressure of an adverse spell and shattered. Tinkling shards sprayed the room in sparkling havoc. One whipped past Renee, slicing open her cheek. She felt the quick sting and blood flowing down her face as Wendell gasped crumpling to the ground.

"Dad!" Renee cried. She and her mother rushed forward and crouched down. Blood oozed out in a pool around Wendell's body, soaking through the hems of their white robes. Shannon sobbed. She fell to her knees and pulled Wendell into her arms. Her hands reached for pieces of glass and twisted metal.

Renee watch in wordless horror as her mother cried hysterically and her father bled out the last few ounces of his life's blood.

Noise pulled Renee's attention away from the tragedy unfolding before her. The cacophony outside the door to the hidden shack grew louder. The spell her father cast obscuring the building from perception fell with his death. They had moments until the opposing forces found them and ripped the old wooden building apart.

Shannon's head jerked up as something massive slammed against the door. Cries and pleas for mercy, muffled by wood, rang out in the darkness. With a wave of her hand, Shannon opened a portal. A whirling mass of nothingness appeared against the far wall. A gusting wind roared through the room, sucking dust and glass into the void. Renee tossed the silvery blonde hair that whipped around her face behind her shoulder and reached out to pull Shannon to her feet.

She jerked her wrist out of Renee's grasp. "No. I won't leave him."

Trembling, Renee looked down into the still, pale face of her father. "He's gone, Mom. If we stay here with him, we'll be killed too. He wouldn't want that. You know he wouldn't."

Shannon glared up at her daughter but couldn't hold on to her anger. Her scowl melted under the weight of despair. "I don't care," she whispered, cradling her husband's body closer for a moment. "I'll hold the portal open for you and any of our people who've survived this night's madness. At least I can help the survivors outside escape."

Renee knelt down beside her, reaching out to touch her father's cold face. "I should stay and help."

"No," Shannon closed her eyes and slid Wendell off her lap. Struggling to her feet, she pulled Renee up beside her. "No. I can't lose you too. This war is about the survival of our race. What good was his sacrifice if his only daughter dies? No Renee. You must go. *Now*. Leave this battleground. Get out and don't let them drag you back. This is insanity, killing over who a person's ancestors were. We'll all be gone soon, mark my words. Do what you must to keep free of it and tell the others to go hang. Promise me."

Tears clouded Renee's last vision of her mother as she hugged her tight, kissing her cheeks. "I promise," she whispered.

Shannon stepped back and reached for her hand, pulling off the ring Wendell gave her when they met so many years ago. She put it in Renee's palm and closed her fingers around it. Holding Renee's fist tight, she whispered, "Remember us. We will always watch over you, daughter. Be well."

With those words, Shannon shoved Renee toward the portal.

Renee staggered back, chest aching under the onslaught of emotion. All lost. With these last two lives gone, she had nothing left.

But she had to live on. She promised her mother. She would never break that promise.