

Mesmerised, Bram started walking through the reeds towards the glow. His boots sunk deeper into the mud as the light beckoned him over the water.

‘Bram, stop!’ Dory shouted. ‘It’s the lantern man!’

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‘There used to be a girl lived around here,’ the hermit said, scrunching her eyes at Dory. ‘Looked a lot like you. Kin of yours?’

‘No,’ Dory said, fidgeting with his tunic.

The hermit grunted and tugged on her fishing line. Her long straw-coloured hair hung loose and uncovered, the ends frayed and dirty. ‘Ever hear of the lantern man?’ she asked.

Dory shook his head.

‘There was a man lived here once, many years ago. Some call him Jack, and this Jack was so wicked that when he died his soul could not escape the fen. Doomed to wander for all time, he begged the devil for a single glowing coal to keep him warm.’

The sound of a splash in the water made Dory jump and yelp. The hermit, hands quick and keen, reached in and pulled out a huge shining fish.