

# AN INTERVIEW WITH... THE WITCH OF WATER STREET

*by Kit Rood*



Last Thursday, energized by brewing anticipation, I raced up the coast to the dream-haunted shores of misty Kingsport and quickly made my way to that narrow stretch of damp pavement called Water Street. After all, it isn't every day that one gets to interview an artist the caliber of Dēidre Sablewind!

Some people consider Kingsport to be Arkham's more respectable cousin. Or maybe a slightly snobby aunt. Either way, it's got plenty of original strangeness. The mist for which Kingsport is infamous sits

in Water Street longer than anywhere else in town. It lasts well into the afternoon, and only fully burns away just before evening. The buildings are so close together at certain points that the roofs block out the sun, and the shadows are as deep as underground pools. Worse, it's about three degrees colder than everywhere else, which meant I was freezing my... well. I was a tad chilly, let's leave it at that.

Water Street winds along the waterfront in the aptly named Harborside neighborhood. An area of mostly warehouses, a few of which have been retrofitted into tenements

by opportunistic landlords. I was looking for one in particular that once belonged to the Waite Shipping Company, back before the government had seized all their assets in relation to certain illicit operations. Apparently, no one had wanted it after that, so it was let go cheap to Miss Deidre Sablewind—the self-proclaimed Witch of Water Street.

Since you are no doubt an avid reader of our illustrious publication, you are probably already familiar with the sublime work of Miss Sablewind, which has graced our cover on more than one occasion. She's even consented to provide art to accompany particular stories and poems, for which the art director is eternally grateful.

Even better, she agreed to an interview, conducted by yours truly—provided it was a quick one. To say I was excited is something of an understatement. I've long admired Miss Sablewind's work—I'd even attended the infamous showing at the Welks Gallery, where she and that Pickman fellow from around Boston started throwing canapes at one another.

Pickman, of course, vanished a few years ago. But Deirde is still hard at it. She turned the old Waite warehouse into her Kingsport studio. As far I know, I'm the first person to get a look inside Sablewind Studios—and you all are the lucky recipients of my dark knowledge!

It looked like any other rundown lump of a building, save for the side-entrance which had been painted up in vibrant colors, and had a weird sigil carved smack dab into the center—the Sign of Koth, according to our mag's ever helpful editor-in-chief. It's an apotropaic marking, similar to the



witch-marks you find on some of those old farmhouses out on the Aylesbury Pike. Who or what was Deidre intent on keeping out? She never said, and I thought better of inquiring—even my curiosity has its limits!

Deidre was a short woman. Rubenesque. She didn't dress like her title suggests. No black dress, no odd jewelry. Simply trousers with a tucked in blouse and a single silver ring, set with jade, on her left thumb. She greeted me with a hearty smile and a handshake that nearly cracked my knuckles.

Her studio was an odd space; at once too big and yet somehow too small. Canvases,



some used, were stacked in ill-balanced piles that made for a haphazard labyrinth in places. Sculptures in various stages of completion stood sentinel over unfinished metalwork projects that made my skin crawl, but in a good way.

I decided to get to it as we headed up the stairs to the second floor, where she maintained another smaller studio than the chaotic jumble on the main floor.



**Kit Rood:** So, first let me thank you for this opportunity to...

**Deidre Sablewind:** To talk about myself? Oh darling, no need to thank me

for that. If there's one thing I love, it's an opportunity for self-aggrandizement. Speaking of which, what did you think of that last cover of mine?

**KR:** It was certainly unique. A bit unsettling, honestly. Your other pieces are, well, not joyful exactly, but this one was something else. I wasn't expecting it.

**DS:** Honesty is a virtue—not that I know much about those (*laughs—I should point out that Deidre's laugh is exceptional. Not booming, exactly, but very loud. It echoes for some time, and sometimes, it makes it seem as if there's an audience having a giggle, just out of sight*). But an artist always likes to surprise her audience, so I'll take the compliment, darling—and any others you have to spare!

**KR:** This place is unique. I see you're interested in more than one form of—wait, are those scorch marks?

**DS:** Still learning my way around a welder's torch, I'm afraid. Here we are! Take a seat anywhere. *(Deidre has filled the former manager's office with sumptuous furniture, bookcases, and an easel. Whatever is on the latter is covered by a drop-cloth. The whole space smells of paint thinner, incense and burnt metal.)* Welcome to my home away from home. Cheaper than what passes for a hotel in Kingsport, but that's the best I can say for it.

**KR:** Normally you reside at Sablewind House just outside of Arkham, right?

**DS:** Is that a question, darling?

**KR:** Call it fan interest. You've attracted quite a following among our subscribers. You should see the letters we get!

**DS:** I have! Your editor kindly passes them on. I do love to read the reactions to my work. My father often said art was simply a quest for response.

**KR:** He was an artist as well, wasn't he? Landscapes?

**DS:** Yes, dear old papa is often spoken of

in the same breath as Grimshaw. Which he absolutely hated, mind. Almost as much as he hated my work. "Blasphemous" is how he phrased it, I believe. And he would know, the old devil!

**KR:** You didn't get along, then? And I wouldn't call it blasphemous—epiphanic, maybe? *(At this point, I heard a scuttling sound somewhere below.)* What was that?

**DS:** Rats. The street's got an infestation. Let's talk about something else, darling.

**KR:** My apologies. Is that a new work in progress on the easel there?

**DS:** Oh yes. Though my interest is running more toward photography of late.

**KR:** May I see it?

**DS:** You already have, if you're lucky. *(She taps the side of her head.)* The gardens of Celephais are known for their beauty. My poor efforts can barely match them.

**KR:** It's just that our readers would love to hear about work in progress and your process. Especially if you're transitioning to new mediums. You mentioned photography...



**DS:** Next question, darling.

**KR:** Got it, moving on. Your skill with the brush is legendary with our readers. But how did you become an artist? What made you first daub paint to canvas? Inspiration? Primal urge?

**DS:** Money. At least to begin with. Now, now, don't look so crestfallen. It's about more than filthy lucre these days, I swear. But money was the impetus. Dear old papa kicked me out after I did my stint at Girton, and I needed some dosh.

**KR:** That's awful!

**DS:** Hardship is the seed and creativity the flower. Or some nonsense like that.

**KR:** You call yourself a witch—any reason for that, or just a bit of artistic license? Was that why your father kicked you out?

**DS:** Oh darling, no. I am very much of the witchy persuasion. Runs in the blood, you might say. *(Here, Deidre begins rubbing the ring on her thumb, almost absently—or maybe it's a bit of theatrics for my benefit. Hard to tell, but appreciated by your humble interviewer either way.)*

I'm descended from a line of Salem refugees, who sought sanctuary in Arkham, Kingsport and anywhere else that'd have them. I have often visited those bleak times in my dreams.

**KR:** And how does that work, if I might ask?

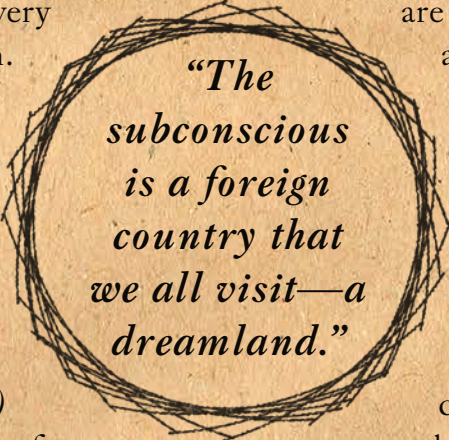
**DS:** You can ask, but I'll be damned if I could tell you. Then, that's the secret to my success, I suppose. I have always had the most vivid dreams, even when I'd prefer otherwise. *(We're interrupted at this point by a sudden rattling as a gull alights on the window and gives us the evil eye. Deidre studies the bird for a moment, and then makes an odd gesture. The bird flaps off. She sighs.)* I'd say I've seen things you can't imagine, but the funny thing is—you can.

**KR:** Just like with the painting there, the one you won't let me look at?

**DS:** Exactly. You've already seen it, even if you don't remember seeing it. All my work does is remind you of what you've already experienced.

**KR:** Maybe that's why our readers are so taken with it. You've often asserted that our unconscious minds are components of an enormous gestalt, constantly sharing information between us.

**DS:** Exactly. The subconscious is a foreign country that we all visit, whether we wish to or not. A dreamland, constructed by every sentient mind over millennia. It is the source of all inspiration—the true wellspring of art. And madness, come to that.



*"The  
subconscious  
is a foreign  
country that  
we all visit—a  
dreamland."*

**KR:** It's an intriguing theory, at the very least.

**DS:** How delightfully noncommittal darling! But we all visit the dreamlands, whether we know it or not. And what we get up to affects the waking world—for good or ill.

**KR:** Is that where you think your own inspiration comes from?

**DS:** Oh indubitably. Every artist drinks from the same well. It's the interpretation that differs.

**KR:** Tell me about yours. Your work is known for being—well...

**DS:** Go on, you can say it. Creepy? Sinister?

**KR:** Esoteric. Fantastic, even.

**DS:** Such politesse! I do like you, darling. Very well—esoteric, then. Occult, even. I like to think my work shows what's hidden beneath the day-to-day. The secret weave that binds us all, without our knowledge. I find it is easiest to grasp those uncertain threads here in Kingsport, though it's not without its perils.

**KR:** Could you elaborate on that?

**DS:** Your ten minutes is up, darling.

**KR:** Fair enough.

We chit-chatted for some time after that, but I could tell that the interview was truly over. Talking with Deidre left me with more questions than answers. As she showed me out, I noticed that the mist was starting to disperse and the town looked a lot less eerie. I mentioned this and Deidre chuckled. "Only in your dreams, darling." As she said it, she made another curious gesture. I felt as if I'd been blessed by a priest—or maybe a priestess. Overhead, a gull squalled. When I looked back, she was gone. The door was shut. My time with the Witch of Water Street was complete.



*Josh Reynolds*

