

# Werelock Dakota Cassidy

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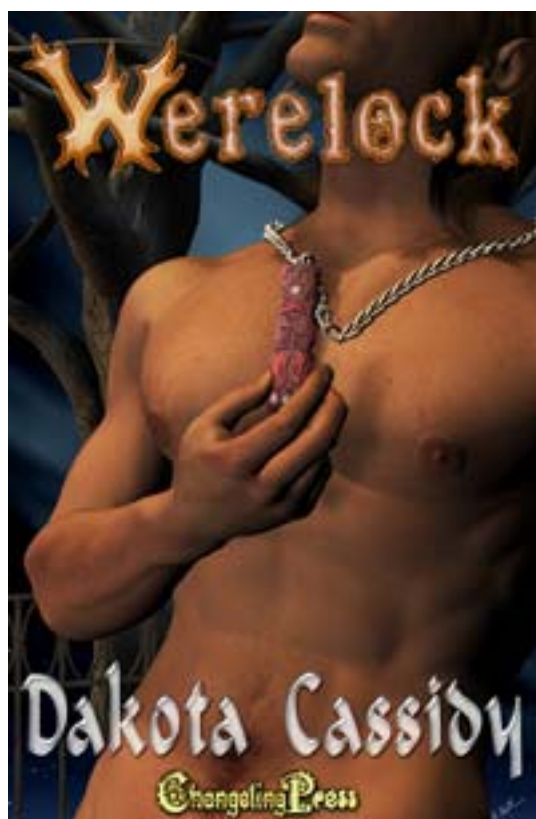
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## Prologue

Dear Nathan,

So I went pumpkin picking with my sister and her kids like three weeks before Halloween. I said it was much too early in the month. But my sister, Tricia, said that if those two spawn of Beelzebub spent one more second driving her out of her mind, she was going to hang a noose on her tree in the backyard, stick her head in it, and jump from the highest branch.

I told her that I didn't think her husband, Griffon, looked at all like Beelzebub, but she kinda did.

I also thought that was sorta extreme and the visual was kinda ugly in my mind's eye, but well, Joel and Sophia are spirited. Spirited is the polite word that stressed out, glazed-eyed parents use when they're describing their little heathens. Heathens that constantly move and chatter. I say, bring on the valium and slip it in their Kool-Aid.

Hoorah for whatever helps you preserve your sanity.

Plus, to make matters worse, lately Sophie has been driving Tricia nuts about getting a dog. At the ripe old age of six, she's decided -- after watching far too much Animal Planet in my opinion -- to become a veterinarian and she'd told us all quite proudly she needed a puppy to practice on.

According to Tricia, if Sophie mentioned getting a dog one more Jesus effin' time, she'd simply end it all.

Anyway, we've had a cold snap and the kids had been stuck inside for a week. So they were driving her insane. Clearly Tricia needed respite. And a reason to razz the shit out of me for doing nothing but work. They take me pumpkin picking and Christmas tree hunting every year, under protest, while they nag me about my social life.

Er, non-social life, that is.

They make me go because they think that Auntie Addison needs to get out more. I say bullshit. Well, I didn't say bullshit to the kids. Just so we're straight. They're only six

and eight. I'd never do that. I said bullshit to Tricia about the theory of me getting out more.

I get out. I do. I go from my townhouse to my car to my office, and then do that all in reverse at like six o'clock at night. Okay, maybe more like nine if I'm honest. Sometimes I get all crazy and make a trip to the grocery store for milk that never fails to end up sour because I'm always working and forget it's in the fridge.

My sister (and her kids too -- they've learned well from the master nagger) calls me driven and ambitious. Like the little shits even know what those words mean. I call my sister crazy for so purposely and intentionally having nose pickers with big mouths just like their mother's.

I mean, they're cute and all, and, yeah, I love 'em but, Jesus, they have way too much to say. Just like their mother.

Big mouths aside, I went anyway just to shut them all up and keep the peace. I hadn't seen them in a month and I was long overdue for a visit. I figured I could be in and out of that pumpkin patch in an hour flat and back home with the glow of my computer warming my face in an hour and a half tops given mini-van travel time. Well, maybe not an hour. I'd forgotten to include time for the apple cider and donuts.

They're a must, according to nose picker number one, er, my nephew Joel, and when you're eight, it's an experience you don't wanna miss.

I'd soon come to find there were several experiences at the pumpkin patch I didn't want to miss and it wasn't just the apple cider and donuts. I just didn't know I didn't want to miss them until I almost did, ya know?

I know. You're confused. I was too. Bear with me.

Here's the thing. I skipped along behind those two little buggers and Tricia, between those rows of that damned pumpkin patch for like forevah until we finally found suitable pumpkins for them.

Little Sophie's pumpkin coup was the hardest of all. Christ, you'd think we were shopping for friggin' life support machines rather than a pumpkin. Sophie took choosing one to a whole new level. It had to be round, perfectly so. It had to be *reallllly* orange. "Cuz that's how punkins should be, Auntie Addison," she'd reminded me in all of her six-year old wisdom. It had to be *reallllly* big. Big enough that she could fit three candles in the base so it would be *reallllly* spooky at night after it was carved. I remember smiling down at the top of her chestnut brown head and saying, "*Reallllly?*" and making her giggle.

Everything was *reallllly* something or other with Sophie. That word was synonymous for Sophie with anything needing solemn description or anything seriously cool.

When we'd finally settled on one for each of the kids, they decided I needed one too. I didn't want to tell them it would most likely rot away, sitting on my kitchen counter because I'd forget about it. Not to mention, I turned off all my lights and locked my doors come Halloween night. Trick-or-treaters are a persnickety, snobbish bunch these days. They want the big candy bars and they call you crappy names if you don't cough up the good stuff.

Shit on that. I don't need a bunch of ten year olds in Darth Vader costumes calling me cheap. I have my niece and nephew around to abuse me plenty, thanks.

Fine, I said. Auntie Addison needs a pumpkin like she needs a spiral perm, but sure, let's blow twenty bucks so I can see just how long it really does take a pumpkin to rot. It'll be like a science project.

My sister nudged me hard in the ribs and gave me the "mommy" look. The one that says I was being a mean, cranky, old auntie, spoiling all the fun -- who was going to end up all alone in a nursing home someday because she wasn't nicer to her sister's demons.

I rolled my eyes and grudgingly agreed. Auntie Addison did indeed need a pumpkin.

I guess that's where the trouble all began for me.

That fucking pumpkin.

And what was under it.

I should have stuck to my guns and refused to buy one, but I honestly do love the little heathens and I sure would like someone to visit me come my twilight years if my life keeps going on the path it's on. I really am absorbed in my work and I haven't dated in well over three years.

So I picked a pumpkin.

A humdinger of one.

Joel began jumping around like he always does. He's prone to constant motion. It's as if he's had an overdose of his daily gummy worm intake and the sugar was rushing to his skinny, little legs. Thus, creating a River Dance-like effect. He makes me dizzy and my head swirls from his endless chatter.

So I didn't pay attention to all the noise he was making after I'd yanked my pumpkin up.

When I saw him pointing to the soft dirt where the pumpkin had been and realized he wasn't just jumping around for the sake of making us all bonkers, I stooped to check it out.

And there it was. A little statue on a rope imbedded in the dirt. It looked like a totem pole to me.

Joel thought it was uber cool and Sophie thought it was *reallllly* weird. Imagine that, eh? Very predictable my Sophie is.

So since we found this -- this -- er, talisman is what I'm told it is -- shit's been a little crazy around here.

That brings me to why I'm writing this letter. I mean, in case I don't come back, I'm going to assume that eventually my sister will come looking for me. Damn, I hope she doesn't bring the nose pickers here to my house before you can contact her. They might get upset if Auntie Addison is dead.

I really do love them. In fact, part of the reason I'm doing this is because I love them. Well, it's not the only reason, if I'm honest. I kinda like the guy that started this whole talisman thing. No, I mean I really like him and if I don't help him, he might not come back either. I think the world won't much miss me if I end up dead trying to help him. My sister has her family and husband to keep her busy. They all have each other.

Me? I don't have much that needs me here.

But if I'm left behind after this mess is over, I'd sure miss Caleb if he ended up six-feet under. He's the guy I mentioned. Anyway, I've grown attached to him. Like seriously attached. So I hope you'll understand why I had to go with him. He fulfills something in me I didn't know was missing. I like the way he calls me Addy. He makes me smile. He makes me nuts. He makes me wish I'd spent less time at work. He made me realize there's a whole lot going on out there that I didn't know about. He made me value the here and now.

And so what if Caleb isn't your typical idea of a knight in shining armor? He's mine. At least I think I want to find out if he can be anyway.

I'm leaving this note in the event of my death and I've followed it up with a message on your service that you won't get until November first.

I was of sound body and *reallllly* close to sound mind when I wrote this. Please tell Tricia there's a more detailed account of the events since that day at the pumpkin patch in my top right-hand dresser drawer. Oh, and tell her I love her and I'm sorry I didn't go pumpkin picking without bitching about it for all these years.

As for you, Nathan, my legal-eagle, well, you'll know what to do after you read this.

Addison Ross

## Chapter One

"I said quit being a *mensch*. I know you have lots of cool powers, but you'd better stop showing them off all the time." Addison pointed to the beer that floated mid-air across her living room. "Just because I'm a mere human doesn't mean I don't know when someone is showing his ass, Caleb Marsden. Oh, and could you do the disappear, reappear thing outside? I don't know what that smell is when you do it, but it's got to be the leak of ozone." Addison sauntered over to the spot on her couch that Caleb had grown so fond of in the past two and a half weeks and crossed her arms over her chest.

"I gotta give you credit, Addy. You took it like a real trooper." He smiled, reaching up to link his forefinger with hers, catching the beer with his other hand. Over the course of the past couple of weeks his little gestures -- like linking his finger with hers -- had begun to create a total sum of heart-crashing emotions Addy didn't want to address. Their time was limited, after all.

"Yeah?" She cocked an eyebrow at him and winked, hopefully hiding the fact that her heart had lodged in the middle of her throat. "And don't you let anyone tell you that people who cry in disbelief and carry on upon meeting a werewolf -- who's also a warlock I might add -- shouldn't be locked up for behaving so unreasonably. The instability of some folks simply astounds me."

His chuckle was deep, resonant, and as rich as German chocolate cake. It sent little tremors of awareness up her arms. "Well, you didn't cry, but you didn't exactly believe me either."

"Oh, color me remorseful for thinking you were an asylum escapee without his pharmaceuticals. How in thee hell did I end up with you just because I did something as mundane as go pumpkin picking?" she teased with a smile.



How in the hell had she lived *without* him until now was more along the lines of what she was thinking, but wouldn't dream of saying. At first she'd thought it was simply loneliness for someone of the opposite sex that had left her smiling and longing for his sudden appearances each day. Or maybe it was that the circumstances surrounding Caleb's arrival were so dire, they'd made her emotions go into hypersensitive mode. Yet, a week after he showed up, she'd dismissed those reasons as justification for her attachment to him. They just clicked. That was all there was to it. She liked him. He made her laugh. She wanted more time to explore their relationship.

Naturally, only Addison could click with a guy who wasn't just a werewolf/warlock, but had a potential death sentence hanging over his head like a neon sign on a Piscataway diner. Time wasn't exactly on their side.

"Don't go blaming me, miss. If you hadn't dug the talisman up I'd still be a non-entity to you. You only made it worse by rubbing it. If you'd just left it in the ground..." He grinned, making the deep grooves on either side of his lean, rugged face deepen.

That much was true. She'd thought the little statue she'd found while pumpkin picking was unique. It looked like a little man carved out of wood. So she'd cleaned it up and set it on her kitchen counter, right alongside the pumpkin that was, as she'd promised her niece and nephew, definitely rotting. That's when all hell had broken loose and Caleb Marsden had shown up at her door with his crazy story about being half werewolf, half warlock and needing the talisman for the thirty-first of October. Halloween to be precise.

Apparently, when she'd yanked it from consecrated ground it had sent out vibes to the other world -- or some such crazy nonsense -- calling on Caleb. Because the talisman was his responsibility -- or the bane of his existence as he'd called it -- it had "contacted" him and he knew exactly where to go looking.

Addison's house.

Ding-dong, werewolf-slash-warlock who's under a death sentence, calling.

The talisman was also connected to a pretty scary demon. Said demon and Caleb were longtime nemeses, though they hadn't had reason to meet in a long time. Addison

gave them that reason by digging up the talisman. If she'd left well enough alone, the threat the talisman potentially posed might still be in effect, but all would remain status quo. In light of her disturbing it, well, she'd apparently stirred shit up -- overachiever that she was.

According to Caleb this demon would stop at nothing to get the talisman. But Caleb couldn't let him have it, or the world, as everyone knew it would suffer some serious mojo. Plainly speaking, digging the talisman up allowed this demon to walk on Earth for twenty-four hours on October thirty-first. Meaning, if he could get his hands on it when he turned up on Halloween, he could find unsuspecting victims and make a whole bunch of other demons while he was here on his earthly vacay.

Again, yay for her overachievements.

So Caleb was here to keep the very scary dude from getting his demonic hands on the talisman. In essence, he'd shown up looking for it at Addison's because her aura was tied to it. Or something like that.

She'd been skeptical.

For a time.

But after a very long week spent showing her he really was a werewolf/warlock, coupled with her utter terror after Caleb had shown her his disappearing, reappearing act, made inanimate objects float, and did what he called shift into a big, albeit nice looking four-legged beast, Addison was a believer. You just couldn't deny something like that when a man made a six-pack of beer soar out of your refrigerator, while sporting dog fur and canines.

"The important thing is I believe you now and I'm willing to help." And she was. Willing to help him.

"And I told you *no*, Addison," he snarled between clenched teeth, running a hand through his wavy, black, collar-length hair. His mood could change from one extreme to the next in the blink of an eye, and it might have frightened her if it wasn't so crazy sexy. It made her heart skip around in her chest and she had to hide a smile. She wasn't afraid of him when he became so adamant about leaving her out of this

stand-off. She kinda dug that he was so into looking out for her. "I don't need your help to protect the talisman from getting into Volac's hands. I'm here to protect *you* until October thirty-first."

Right. Volac. He was the bad guy and All Hallows Eve was when the big showdown would be. It had something to do with portals and evil caa-razy shit Addison didn't completely understand. If she hadn't dug up the thing in the pumpkin patch, none of this would have ever happened.

Yet, she couldn't be sorry she had. She'd met Caleb because of it.

With a roll of her eyes, Addison planted her hands on her hips and snorted down at him. "Yeah, yeah. I know. This ghoul can lurk somewhere, watching me for two and a half weeks now but I have no recourse. Not exactly my idea of justice served, magic man. He needs a good talking to and I'm just the girl to do it."

His mood broke again and the thunder cloud that had passed over his face was replaced by another cocky smile. "You know, you could have ended up with a talisman keeper who was a lot less cool to hang out with than I am."

What a pity that would have been, eh? "There are more of you? Talisman keepers? Jesus Christ. What other evils lurk out there that I'm not aware of? I really need to read the paper more often."

Pulling her down to sit beside him on the couch, he ran a finger over her bottom lip. "Oh, you would not believe the shit that runs rampant in dimensions you'll never even know exist while you sleep tucked safely in your bed at night. Look, all we have to do is keep him from getting the talisman, get to the pumpkin patch when the portal opens and feed it to the portal. Oh, and keep you away from him. Er, him away from you. If he finds you, he'll take possession of you. You won't know what hit you. I can't let that happen. You're not leaving my side until then."

Addison turned her brown eyes on him with a narrowed gaze, pushing her shoulder length, dark hair out of her face. "So what you're saying is, I can be persuaded to do almost anything? Silly, silly man. No one can make me do what I don't want to

do," she said again for the gazillionth time since they'd met and he'd convinced her this was real.

"Addy, do you have any clue *who* we're dealing with here?"

"A really, bad, bad dude. I know. And again, I say, no one can make me do something I don't want to do."

Now Caleb rolled his eyes. "Addison, you have no idea the persuasive powers this demon possesses and you won't even know it's him anyway. He's not going to say, 'Hey, how's it goin'? Seen any talismans lately?' So could you just trust me when I tell you Volac's going to come looking? If I keep you and that damned talisman with me, and we get to the portal he opens in time, nothing bad can happen."

Poking a finger in his hard chest, she clucked her tongue. "Who the hell hides a talisman in a pumpkin patch anyway?"

"When I hid it there, smart ass, it was a church. You know, holy ground?"

Addison wrinkled her brow. *A church, huh?* She couldn't remember a church ever being where the pumpkin patch was.

"Yeah, a church. I hid it centuries ago. I've been around a loooong time."

"Been doin' this talisman babysitting a long time too?"

"For what seems like forever," he acknowledged with a grimace.

"Sucks, huh?"

"Big, fat wankers."

"Can't you give it to someone else? Take a break or something?"

"No, Addison. It doesn't work that way. Here's how it goes. In the wrong hands the talisman can become a conduit for evil. What Volac wants is for everyone to be just like him. If he gets the talisman on Halloween, it opens an even more powerful portal to evil. I hid the damned thing. You found it. Here we are. Bada-boom, baby."

"How did you get it anyway? What makes you so special you're a talisman watcher?"

"Keeper."

"Whatever. There's a story I assume?"

"I dug it up, just like you."

"Great minds and all. So if you dug it up and I dug it up, why is it that I might end up possessed and you didn't?"

"In a nutshell, I almost did, but I was saved by another werelock. He bit me to save me from possession, told me I had to hide the talisman and taught me how to use my cool new super powers." He grinned again.

"That means you were once human too?"

"You shoulda been a brain surgeon. Your talents are wasted as a stockbroker."

Addison made a face and stuck her tongue out at him. "You were human? Do tell."

"I was. Back in the eighteen-hundreds."

"Wow. You're old."

"Indeed."

"So where does the death thing come in again? Yeah, I know. This Mr. Volac can suck my soul out of me, but you're immortal."

"Not if he gets that talisman. If he does, I'll revert back to my former status. A human. A human from the eighteen-hundreds is what might create the problem for me," he said somberly.

It dawned on Addison then that he'd be hundreds of years old. It wouldn't just be arthritis plaguing him if Volac got the talisman. "Well, shit. Why the hell didn't you just dig it up, call up this Volac and throw the talisman back into the portal? God knows you had plenty of Halloweens to do it since the eighteen-hundreds."

"Because I was no longer human. A *human* has to dig it up."

"Does it matter who throws it into the portal? Does it have to be you?"

"As long as it isn't Volac, I think we're good."

"Think?"

"I've spent what seems like forever trying to figure out the history of this thing, but to no avail. I only have some loose generalizations to go on and very little fact.

There were a million variables to this scenario that she couldn't let herself dwell on. Who friggin' knew shit like this really existed? "Who made up this damned game anyway?"

With a shake of his head, Caleb squeezed her arm. "If I had the answer to that, none of this would be happening. I only know what the man who saved me told me and I really didn't think fucking around to test the waters was a good idea."

Laying her head back on the support of his arm, Addison closed her eyes, finally asking the question that had haunted her since they'd met. "Do you have to leave after we do the ceremonial talisman toss? Is that like some otherworld rule?"

Resting his head on the top of hers he said, "I dunno. I've never had to defend it. I do know I don't want to leave..."

"Me," she finished. "That's because you liiiiike me," she said smugly, sinking into his arms and slipping down his hard body to rest her head on his chest. There had been many almost moments since they'd met. Moments where she thought he might make some sort of move to let her know he was interested, but he'd always seemed rather hesitant. Now that the time was drawing near, Addison wanted to savor him. So she buried her nose in the warmth of his sweater, inhaling the odd, but pleasant scent of him.

Caleb's grunt rumbled against her ear. "Yeah, I like you. Far more than I should."

"You say that like it's a bad thing."

"Have you forgotten I'm cursed? That tends to make me a less desirable catch to chicks."

Addison raised her head to meet his hard, dark gaze. "I've never met anyone like you, Caleb."

"I'd say not," he said, his lips lifting in a wry smile.

Crap, he was crazy sexy when he smiled. And she was about to take a risk she might regret...

## Chapter Two

"Would it be brazen of me to say I really wouldn't mind if you didn't up and get yourself killed and you could stay here with me?"

"In the era I come from, yep. There'd be no bigger tart than you."

She snorted. "In *this* era it's called sexually aware. Or desperate." She giggled.

"I can't imagine you desperate for male attention, Addy."

Huh. Really? How odd that the last time she'd checked, she was, to all outward appearances, purty desperate. With a shrug of her shoulders she dismissed his comment. "I don't get out much, so no male attention."

"Well, you ought to. It's a waste of a beautiful woman if you don't."

Okay, so she was blushing. But she'd decided she was going to go for it and practice all that sexually aware baloney you read in Cosmo but didn't ever really do because it was mostly bullshit. For a mere moment, her heart stopped with what she was about to do. But she couldn't think of a single reason why she shouldn't.

"Then don't waste me," she whispered, her face on fire, tingling where his hand cupped her jaw. This wasn't her kind of thing --the aggressive make the first move thing -- but she was too afraid to let this opportunity go without at least knowing she'd explored it.

Again, his dark gaze sought hers and he tipped her chin up. "I can't make any promises, Addy. We don't know what will happen tomorrow night," was his reply, throaty and raw.

What did that mean? He couldn't promise she'd be more than just a dimensional dalliance? Or he couldn't promise that he'd live to find out?

It didn't matter. She wouldn't let it. For the moment -- this moment -- she was all into not letting an opportunity slip away.

The opportunity to be with this sometimes funny, sometimes serious, werewhateverhewas man.

So she kept it light. "Well, I can't promise that I won't be possessed by some demon in the next couple of days either. Things could get pretty ugly, so call me willing to gamble."

Her response was apparently enough to satisfy him and he let his lips, full and luscious hover over hers. The sweet smell of toothpaste wafted under her nostrils and with the tilt of her head, Addison closed her eyes, waiting for his touch.

From the first graze of flesh on flesh, her heart hammered in her chest and the sweet heat of desire enflamed her pussy. She'd waited, hoped, wanted him to touch her for over two weeks. Now that it was a reality, Addison savored the sensations trickling along her spine, making her nipples harden and swell beneath her bra.

His lips devoured hers, parting them with his silky tongue, making her whimper and reach up to clutch his thick, dark hair, drawing him closer. Their heads tilted, creating a deeper connection. Caleb's arms wound around her, pulling her into a tight embrace.

"Clothes," he muttered, pulling away from her lips momentarily. "Why do you always have on so many clothes?"

"Because it's unseemly for me to prance around naked in front of you?" she joked, clasping her arms around his neck.

"Says you," he mumbled back, kissing his way down her neck with nibbles of tongue and lips.

In an instant, their clothes were simply gone, melting from their bodies into a puddle on the floor, and Caleb carried her up the stairs to her bedroom.

Ahh, the power of magic.

As he laid her on the bed, her pillows cushioned her, surrounding her with the sweet smell of clean sheets and raw male. His skin pressed to hers momentarily, sizzling and smooth, before he knelt over her, the thickness of his thighs rippling and flexing as he straddled her body.



His eyes, stormy and charcoal black, caressed her body with a gaze so intense, Addison felt wanton and exposed all at the same time.

For a moment it occurred to her to pull the thick comforter over herself, but Caleb held her hands above her head and whispered, "Don't hide, Addison. I want to remember every inch of you."

She fought a groan, hoping he wouldn't remember *all* of her inches. There were plenty to remember.

With a finger, he banished her embarrassment, tracing the slope of her breast, making her nipples tighten, lowering his head to them. He sipped each one with a low groan, rolling them between his lips, laving them with his tongue in long, searing strokes.

She squirmed beneath him, her hands clenching into fists, bucking beneath the white-hot heat his mouth created. Leaving her breasts, Caleb swept a path of kisses along her ribs to her navel. He stopped to dip his tongue into the sensitive space, moving his mouth in a hot circle. He let go of her hands and slipped a finger between her thighs, parting them, readying them for his mouth.

Her cunt was on fire, dripping, aching to feel the slick slide of his tongue. When his mouth lay over her pussy, open and hot, Addison bit her lip to keep from crying out. His chuckle was muffled against her swollen flesh, and then he took his first stoke with a slither of his tongue. Her clit throbbed at the sweet, sharp contact and her hands found the top of his head, pressing him to her.

When he inserted a finger into her, driving in and out with long, drawn out strokes, Addison clenched her teeth, fighting a roar of pleasure. Her back arched upward, seeking the fiery heat of his mouth, rolling her hips against his lips.

Orgasm fought to surface and Addison was aware of the fact that she wanted to hold onto this carnal pleasure for as long as she could, but she was unable to stop the freight train of sensation coursing through her body.

It attacked her senses, clinging to every square inch of her. Her toes curled when Caleb wrapped his mouth around her clit and there was no stopping the tidal wave of electricity that bolted to her most sensitive places.

She came in vivid color, grinding her hips to his face and clenching his head with her thighs. The silky rub of his hair sliding along her thighs and the rasp of his stubbled chin accentuated her climax, leaving her shuddering when he took his mouth away. He slid up her body to pull her close and lay her on top of him.

She was wracked with tremors, powerful and strong, but Caleb held her tight and for the first time she felt the desire he too was experiencing. He was tense, the muscles in his back flexing and stiff. Smooth, his skin was smooth and hard, the planes of his muscles bulging and rigid.

His cock was hard, thick and pressing against her belly. Reaching between them, she stroked him, surrounding his shaft with her hand. His groan in her ear showed his pleasure. His breathing became rapid, harsh, and once again he took possession of her lips while she caressed him. Caleb's hands roamed her back, sliding along her ribs, massaging the muscles with soothing circles.

Addison reveled in the hard, silken steel, hot and pulsing in her grasp. Pre-come beaded at the mushroom shaped head. When his hips began to jut forward in rhythm with her strokes, she heard him hiss a response and she boldly took advantage. Slipping down his body, she knelt in front of him, spreading his thighs, running her hands over the crisp hair that clung to them. Caleb arched upward, the rippled muscles of his abdomen straining beneath her touch.

Addison bent her head, taking a slow swipe of his thick cock, ready, hot, sleekly silken. Her tongue savored the rich essence he emanated, tasting each inch as she dragged her lips over him. Grasping him firmly in her hand again, her strokes followed her tongue in long deep passes.

When she finally took him completely in her mouth, he bucked beneath her, groaning low and long. He threaded his fingers through her hair, tugging the strands in time with the bob of her head. With each slick pass her mouth stretched to take more of

him, circling him with firm lips. Cupping his balls, Addison rolled them lightly between her fingers, bringing them flush to his cock, laving them as she swept her tongue from the base to the tip of his shaft.

He pulled away with a sharp twist of his hips. "Now, Addy. I need you *now* or I'll come in your mouth," he muttered with a raspy breath against the top of her head.

He rolled her over onto her belly, hiking her hips up so that her ass was high in the air, then positioned himself behind her. Again Caleb's hands roamed her body -- over her thighs, along her calves, skimming between the cheeks of her ass.

The thickness of his cock prodded her aching entrance. The mushroom shaped head pressed against her, making her muffle a whimper against the pillows and beg to be entered.

With a swift motion of his hips he thrust, filling her, stretching her until she momentarily lost her breath. Caleb kneaded her hips, gripping them, pulling her closer with each stroke.

His cock was like molten lava, each stroke melting inside her, leaving her in a feverish pitch of need. He reached between their sweat-glistened bodies and spread the lips of her pussy, stroking the aching nub of her clit.

Clinging to the headboard, Addison had one focus, one deep, resonating need for fulfillment and with each thrust of his cock, she lifted her ass higher, reveling in his hard abdomen crashing against her.

When he spoke it was her undoing. "Christ, baby, I could stay inside you forever," he groaned and then she felt him go stiff behind her.

Addison came again with a hard crash of electric heat that made her insides twist in a knot and her legs become weak.

Caleb fell forward over her, wrapping his hands around her waist and gasping for breath.

They lay silent for a while, both obviously lost in the impact of their lovemaking.

“Wow, for someone who doesn’t get out much...” he whispered against her shoulder, withdrawing from her and leaving her bereft for a moment before brushing her back with his lips.

Addison chuckled. “I bet you say that to all the humans.”

“No, Addy. There haven’t been any humans but you.”

“Have there been, er, other warwolfs?” Omigod. Had she just asked that? Jesus effin’. If the ground opened up and swallowed her whole right now, she wouldn’t shed tears.

“Werelocks,” he corrected.

She hid her face in his chest. “Never mind. Forget I asked that. My mouth moves quicker than the censor in my brain,” she said by way of an apology.

He chuckled with a deep growl that rumbled under her ear. “There have been a couple of others, yes. No humans and no one I’ve spent as much time with as I have you.”

“Well, it’s not like you’ve had a choice. I do have that damned statue you have to guard.”

“That’s very true, but I could have hovered without you ever knowing.”

“Okay, that’s just creepy.”

He laughed again. “Well, I guess it could be, but you’d have never known until you absolutely had to.”

Huh. And that meant what? “So you really do like me.”

“From the moment you popped up in my crystal ball.”

“No shit. You have a crystal ball?”

“It was a joke.”

Letting her head fall back on his shoulder, she giggled.

“I guess the time to tell you that I thought you were smokin’ hot from the second you picked up that talisman is now, huh?”

Her smile was smugly satisfied. “So tomorrow’s the day.” The statement stuck in her throat like sludge, nearly choking her. It was their reality.

“Yeah, tomorrow’s the day.”

She snuggled deeper into him and clenched her eyes shut. “Whatever happens, I’m glad *this* happened.”

His arms grew tighter. “Me too. Now sleep, Addy. Tomorrow will be a long night.”

With gentle fingers Caleb stroked the soft skin of Addison’s cheek, still pressed to his chest. She would sleep, falling into a deep slumber he’d created. With any luck, he’d be back tomorrow to wake her. His fascination with her wasn’t something he should have ever allowed, but he found himself unable to prevent it. He was compelled by something bigger than he was to ring her doorbell and each moment he’d spent with her since had been different than any other time in his life.

And he’d had a pretty long life.

Still, he should never have allowed this to happen. This wasn’t just relieving his baser needs. It was more, but his follow-up might sorely be lacking if tomorrow left him dead. She was a temptation too luscious to deny and when she’d offered herself, knowing they might not see each other again, Caleb had decided to throw caution to the wind for the chance to take a small taste of what he’d craved from her.

Addison sighed against him, stretching catlike before settling back against his side. Caleb soaked in the sweet, breathy moan she made and pulled her closer.

Closing his eyes, he forced himself to find respite in sleep.

## Chapter Three

"Addy! Wake up!"

The urgency of Caleb's voice sliced through the warm haze of her dream. She popped up immediately, throwing her legs over the side of the bed. "What's wrong?"

"Where's the talisman?"

Looking up at him, she saw the terror that manifested in his eyes. "Where it's always been. On the kitchen counter."

"No. No, it's not. I came back from, well, from my dimension and it was gone. Christ, how could I have been so stupid as to leave?" he spat.

Addison scurried out of bed, grabbing the sheet as she went. It was dark at her window. A glance at the bedside clock told her it was almost eleven o'clock. "I thought you weren't going to leave my side unless you had to, warwolf?"

"Werelock. I'm a werelock."

She flicked an impatient hand at him. "Forget it. Why did you let me sleep so late?"

Caleb ran a hand over his hair in frustration. "I put a spell on you. My hope was that you'd sleep until after midnight and by then this would all be over. I only left because I knew you wouldn't wake up with the spell I cast."

Well, for fuck's sake. How nice that he should want to protect her. This -- this would be one of those times when she hated how he went all Neanderthal. "Weren't you even going to say goodbye?" she squeaked in disbelief, realizing her words were shaky.

"I was hoping I wouldn't have to." His face was grave, his words somber, his eyes dark.

And it was then that she completely understood.

He wanted to stay here too.

She rested a hand on his arm for a moment then turned to fly downstairs to the kitchen, scanning her countertops, pristine and white.

It was gone.

Holy fuck, it was *gone*.

Caleb followed hot on her heels, his face a mask of worry. "It's gone and I can't find it anywhere."

"So did this Volac dude come in here and just take it?"

"He can't do that, Addy. He can only take it at the portal. A human has to take it, or me, the keeper. He has no power until tonight when he gets his free pass. So where did it go? How the fuck did he get it?"

Leaning forward on the countertop, Addison pressed her hot cheeks to the cool surface. Her head popped up. She had a message on her answering machine. The angry red light blinked at her. She'd always kept the sound off because she didn't want to be interrupted when she was knee-deep in work.

Pressing the black button, her sister's voice filled the room. "Hey, Add. We popped by tonight about six. Thought you might want to trick or treat with us," she said with a snort. "But your house was pretty quiet. You got something you wanna tell me?" she joked. "Anyway, Sophie borrowed your statue. She said it would make a reallllly cool addition to her princess costume. Joel said princesses don't have statues, but we figured you wouldn't mind. We'll bring it back tomorrow. Oh, and I told the kids I just knew you had a nice little Halloween care package for them... Love ya!"

Addison's stomach sank to her toes. She gripped the countertop for support, her knuckles white, while stinging tears filled her eyes.

Jesus Christ in a mini skirt. He had Sophie. She was Volac's human.

Caleb came to stand behind her, pulling her back against him to give her a quick hug. "I have to go, Addy. I'll find her. I swear to you, I'll find her."

“Do -- do -- you really think he ha -- has her?” she sobbed. Maybe it was a mistake. Maybe they were just assuming. She had to call Tricia. To possibly possess *her* was one thing, but her sweet, innocent niece? She’d kill the motherfucker.

“I don’t know, but if he does, I’ll find her. I promise.”

“I have to call Tricia.”

“No!” Caleb shouted with a bark. “Let her be. More than likely, if he does have Sophie, Tricia isn’t even aware of it yet. Let me go find out.”

Turning, Addison let him envelop her in the arms he offered. “Go. Get Sophie. Try to come back, okay?” she said on a shaky, tear filled breath.

He kissed the top of her head and whispered, “I’ll get Sophie. No matter what, I’ll get her back.”

And then he was gone. As quickly as his big body had filled her arms, it left her with nothing but empty air, a heavy, cloying scent she couldn’t identify and a heart that was so heavy it felt like a weight in her chest.

\* \* \*

Okay, so this might be a little rash, but when could anyone ever accuse her of being levelheaded. She played the stock market for a living, for crap’s sake.

With the flip of a button, Addison turned on her computer and thanked the goddess known as *Mavis Beacon* for keeping her typing skills up. In five minutes flat she had a letter drawn up to her lawyer, made a phone call to his office, and she was out the door, in her car, and on her way to the pumpkin patch.

She couldn’t leave Sophie’s fate in Caleb’s hands alone. It was too huge a responsibility. Oh, God. Her stomach heaved at the thought that this Volac had little Sophie. Why the fuck couldn’t those kids just leave stuff alone? They were always touching something they shouldn’t.

*Cuz they’re kids, Addison, and you can’t exactly call the kettle black, Ms. Pot. You did dig up a talisman.*

Oh, right.

Guilty.



Her thoughts, along with her heart, raced as she drove to the pumpkin patch. If something happened to Sophie, she'd kill herself, but not before she took that motherfucker Volac out with her.

*How* was the question? She wasn't exactly armed for demonic destruction.

With a screeching halt, she pulled into the dirt driveway that led to the field of pumpkins, turning off the lights and the ignition.

Fear, rage and panic welled in her chest and her legs were like bricks, heavy with terror. The night was black, so black she could barely see two feet in front of her, but she stumbled over the lumpy patches, hoping against hope that she could re-locate the place where she'd found the pumpkin.

Wouldn't that be where the portal would open?

Jesus, it was cold. Her teeth chattered with a consistent clack and her hands were stiff.

"Auntie Addy?" a sweet, sing-song voice called to her.

Addison whipped around, her eyes trying to focus on the small figure that sat in the pumpkin patch to her left.

"Look what I have. Mommy said you wouldn't mind if I borrowed it." Her voice wasn't at all afraid and as Addison's eyes adjusted, she noted there was no fear on Sophie's face. She held the talisman up. The moon shone on it, giving it a sinister gleam and leaving it looking not nearly as innocent and fun as it once had.

A flood of relief assaulted her and she fought to speak. "I don't mind at all, Sophie. Cuz it's reallllly cool, isn't it?" she said, struggling to keep her voice even and calm.

"Reallllly," Sophie agreed with a semi-toothless grin. She was wearing her Princess Pink bathrobe and foofy slippers. Sophie called them foofy because they had tufts of marabou fur on the toes.

"But borrowing time is over, Soph. So give it to Auntie Addie now." Addison moved closer, holding her hand out.

"Um, no."

Stubborn little nose picker. "Um, *yes*."

"No, no, no." She stomped her little size threes for affect.

"Sophie? If you don't give that to Auntie Addy right this second, well, I'm going to have to tell Mommy." Cheerist, she sounded like a two-year old preparing to tattle on her sibling.

"You're so meeeeean, Auntie Addy."

"Yeah, well, I only get meaner. And I've got a secret."

"What?"

"Barney says if you don't give me the statue he won't sing the 'I love you, you love me' song anymore." There, take that for not listening to me. Addison went for the low blow because she had no clue what would really scare Sophie into giving her the talisman. It was a cheap shot for a six-year old, no doubt.

"Who's Barney?"

Okay, so not so cheap. Fuck. Wrong era. "Sorry, I meant ahhhh, Dora! Dora the Explorer."

"But she doesn't sing a song, Auntie Addie. Well, she sings, but mostly she teaches me Spanish. And she's got a monkey named Boots and her Back Pack."

Oh.

"Besides, I don't even like Dora. I like Blue."

"Blue?"

"Blue's Clues. You know, the dog," she offered petulantly.

A dog. Of course. She'd forgotten Sophie's love affair with dogs. Blue, Dora, Boots, fucking purple dinosaurs. Addison made a promise to herself right then and there. From here on out she'd make a point of spending more time with the little heathens and less time at her job. Just in case a dire negotiation such as this occurred again. "Okay, so do you suppose this Blue wouldn't listen to his aunt?"

Sophie seemed to pause to think about that and then she said, "Blue is a dog, silly. He doesn't have an aunt he has to listen to," she giggled.

Addison's patience was fraying. Her small scope of child psychology was waning. "Give me the statue, Sophie and do it now!"

She shook her chestnut curls. "Nuh-uh. I can't," she said, with perfect calm. "That nice man said if I held it he'd give me candy for Halloween. The big candy bars too. The reallllly big ones that you don't like to give for trick or treat because mommy says you're too cheap."

For the love of Pete, this -- cheap, mean old Auntie Addy never gets out -- shit had to end. Tricia was brainwashing the kids. Seriously, this had to stop. Look where it had gotten them. In a pumpkin patch with a petulant kid who was willing to let the world end because she didn't have her "listening ears" on and candy was her first priority. Addy was growing more antsy with each passing moment. Wherever this demon was, he was bound to show up any second. "Sophie, Auntie Addy needs the nice statue and she needs it *now*."

"Now why would she want to give it back? That would be silly in light of the fact that it can be very useful to someone like her. Someone so young and malleable. A virgin even," a thick, harsh voice retorted.

*Volac.*

## Chapter Four

Addison gulped hard, turning to face the root of this problem. His sudden appearance was eerily without announcement.

Well, he definitely didn't look like a demon, even if he did have that aura thing surrounding him, like a bunch of lights in a myriad of colors outlining his body. He also had yellow eyes. Yellow and glowing. If she couldn't see in the dark before, she could now.

Freaky deaky double Dutch.

He sure wasn't what she'd had in mind since Caleb had come to her with this crazy mess. He was actually pretty easy on the eye. Though not really her type per se. He was too pretty for her. His suit was too perfect. Not a wrinkle. Didn't skipping dimensions wreak havoc on a linen suit? It had to be worse than a trans-Atlantic flight.

What kind of demon wore Calvin Klein anyway? Everything about him was too - - too -- just -- *too*. His hair was too perfect too, and his skin was without a single blemish. She'd love to know what kind of moisturizer he used...

For shit's sake, she was behaving as if she was on the dating game. Okay, what to do, what to do?

Make nice.

How often was it that a demon had someone inquire as to their well-being? Probably never. They were too busy freaking people out, but Caleb had knocked some of the freak right outta her.

So she was ready.

Besides, he didn't look *that* scary.

Without preamble, Addison stuck her trembling hand out. Cuz really, what did one do when they came face-to-face with a demon? "You must be this Volac I've heard

so much about. Good to meet ya. I'm Addison Ross. If you'll just give me Sophie we'll let you do your thang. You know, take over the world and all that jazz." Her words rang false. They were nervous and high-pitched and rife with her panic. Where the hell was Caleb?

Volac threw his midnight black head back, gleaming and slick, and laughed, ignoring the hand she offered. It echoed, hollow and maniacal.

Hookay, now that was definitely a demon-like laugh. "Wow, that was impressive. Under normal circumstances, I'd applaud you cuz that was downright blood curdling. But we have to go. Sophie needs to get some sleep." She scooted past the very scary Volac and went to Sophie's side, grabbing her by the arm. "C'mon, honey. Time to go with Auntie Addy." But Sophie didn't budge. Clearly the *big* candy was a strong motivator.

"Sophie can't go with you now, *Auntie Addy*," he mocked her name with a derisive snort. "She has work to do. Volac work," he informed her with ominous malice coating each word.

Hoo boy. This was going to be bad. "Look, how about we swing a deal? You let Sophie go and take me. I'll do your work." If she could just get the talisman from Sophie and find this friggin' portal, all would be well. And again, where the fuck was Caleb?

The crunch of hard dirt beneath Volac's feet brought him to stand next to Sophie. "Come, child," he whispered on the cool night air, wiggling his forefinger. Sophie rose stiff and mechanical to stand beside him, her eyes looking straight through Addison and directly at Volac's hand.

A hand that held a reallllly big candy bar.

Ohhhh, he'd brought out the Snickers.

No fair.

Shit. Sophie's total fav.

This meant war.

"I don't think so, Addison," he said smoothly. "However, your gesture is duly noted. I'll let them know in hell that you're a real team player. It just doesn't work for me now that I've found the little one. You, ahem, if you'll pardon my blunt assessment, are tainted." He wrinkled his perfect nose in distaste. "Sophie is pure, unfettered by cynicism. So scurry off now, and Sophie and I will be on our way."

Unfettered? Who used words like unfettered? Pretentious son of a bitch. And how the fuck did he know if she was tainted? Taint *this*. Addison narrowed her eyes at him. "Give me Sophie," she demanded, tugging on Sophie's hand.

"Or you'll what, Addison? Cry? Stomp your feet? Pitch a hissy? Go all girly on me?"

Maybe... And really, what defense did she have against a demon? He was a *demon*.

*D.E.M.O.N.*

That beat stockbroker pretty much always.

"You don't seriously think you can pose a threat to me, do you?"

He was taunting her.

It was working.

The amber glow of his eyes made her stomach turn and her legs were racked with tremors.

"Ahh, Addison, I can smell your fear. It's deliciously divine. Human fear is especially savory."

With those words, her heart thrashed against her ribs. Clearly he was enjoying intimidating her and that tweaked the bejesus out of her. Yeah, he definitely had the one up on her and hell, yeah, he and his potential for havoc was caaa-razy scary, but she couldn't let that stop her. Obviously Caleb had skipped off to somewhere other than here.

It was time to make a move.

Realizing she was anything but imposing didn't stop her. She gave it the most threatening shot she had anyway. She meant every word she was about to speak, she

just didn't know if she could follow through. "I'll see you dead before I'll let you have her, Volac!" Addison sneered, her voice rising along with her panic, sweat trickling between her breasts, clammy and cold from the autumn air.

His uber handsome face wrinkled into a frown. "Don't make me go all demon on you, Addison," he warned, amusement tainting his words. "It's preeetty frightening from what I've been told. And believe you me when I tell you, I've run into some screaming humans who can verify just how freaky I can be. Now go home and sleep well on the thought that by this time tomorrow, your world will be a very different place." He dismissed her with a wave of his hand and began to usher Sophie away. The odd glow surrounding him lit a path to yet another eerie light.

The portal.

The portal the talisman must end up in -- in order to keep humans from turning into demons. She needed to take care of that, to keep Caleb from possibly dying trying to do it and Sophie from taking shit from strangers she had no business taking.

*Lawd, the pressure.*

The presence of the portal, nothing more than a black hole with a small, almost white light deep in its core, made their situation very real.

And if that no good werelockwarwolf didn't make an appearance soon, her choices were going to be few.

Addison didn't know what provoked her to do something as impulsive as tackle him. Truly, it was sublime given the fact that she was a mere mortal and he was a bad ass demon with powers she felt certain surpassed even Superman's. But she was incensed, irate, and deathly afraid he'd hurt Sophie. So when she found herself on his back, tearing at his hair with nails that sank into his scalp, her surprise probably mirrored his.

However, the growl that came after his surprise was ferocious -- completely the opposite of her timid squeak when he hurled her off him and threw her to the hard ground.

The impact pounded the breath out of her. A sharp, snapping crack made her reach for her ribs with a yelp of agony. She struggled to rise despite the searing pain as she watched him take an apparently willing Sophie with him. Her mind raced, but she rose on unsteady feet and stalked behind him, taking wheezing breaths as she went.

She had to get the talisman.

“Volac!”

The roar of his name had both Addison and Volac turning in surprise.

Caleb.

Thank fricken’ God.

“Give me the child,” Caleb said, moving toward them, taking slow, measured steps. He was larger than the demon by a head and just as imposing with the anger his face displayed. His jaw was knotted, his teeth firmly clenched. Addison couldn’t imagine what his next move might be, but it warmed the cockles of her every fiber to have him here.

Volac rocked back on his heels and chuckled that maniacal laugh he had the market so cornered on. “Yeah, riiiiight, novice. So you know how long I’ve waited for this? You aren’t equipped to wage a war with me, werelock!”

Again, Caleb’s response was steady, but harsh and filled with contained rage. “Give me the child, Volac or I’ll make you pay in ways that even hell can’t.”

“And if I don’t you’ll do what?” he taunted with a snarl, his gleaming yellow eyes flashing brighter, drawing Sophie away from the portal and closer to his side.

Volac’s reference to the fact that Caleb hadn’t ever had to defend the talisman made her cringe. Christ, what would he do? Volac was easily better equipped at this evil crap than Caleb was.

No sooner did Addison think the unthinkable than she heard a low, feral growl.

A growl that wasn’t at all human.

The blurry arc of fur and teeth made for an impressive sight as it appeared out of thin air, leaping high into the dark night and landing directly in front of Sophie and Volac. Caleb had shifted into his were form, fierce and powerful. He growled again,



barring his teeth, pushing back on his muscled haunches. His silky, midnight black fur stood on end, displaying his anger.

And then a thought occurred to her. Crystal clear. Like manna from Heaven. She only hoped Caleb would follow her lead. "Sophie! Look, sweetness, a doooooog. Isn't he pretty?" she cooed, fighting the sharp stabs of pain in her ribs.

Sophie's attention was immediately diverted, her face soft with child-like joy. "He's a big puppy, Auntie Addy!" she squealed.

Aha! Apparently, dog beat candy bar every time. Neener, neener, neener.

"You know, I bet if you run he'll try to catch you."

"Like tag you're it?" she asked with such sweet innocence Addison thought her heart might crash through her splintered ribs.

"Yeah, Soph. Just like that," she encouraged with a wince. Every breath she took was an effort now and the tight band around her middle was growing tighter.

"So let's play a game with him, Soph. What should we do? Oh, I know! Let's play fetch! The kind of catch where you run and he tries to catch you, then you throw something. Do you see the big, black hole over there?" She panted, fighting a wave of nausea.

"Uh-huh," Sophie nodded, the sparkle of excitement visible in her eyes.

"Good! Then run toward it, sweetie! Hurry, Sophie! Run and keep running, cuz I bet he can't catch you!"

Thank the Nickelodeon Gods for smart kids programming because Sophie didn't even question *what* she should throw when Caleb began to run alongside her, veering her skillfully toward the portal. He barked, playfully nipping at her heels while a stunned Volac howled his outrage.

"You fucking bitch!" he screamed at Addison as his image rippled, changing with his fury. He was no longer the cool, Calvin Klein wearing work of perfection he'd been, but an enormous skeleton, looming over her. The sockets of his eyes were black and hollow. The smooth, creamy skin he'd once had was now cancelled out by the gray cast of his bony, fleshless form. The light that had once been an almost ethereal glow

was now a crimson red with slashes of deep black. He wore a hooded, long cape that whipped around in a bone-chilling wind that sprang up from nowhere.

Volac moved toward the portal with the speed of a possessed running back, making a beeline for Sophie.

However, Caleb was the cleverer linebacker, zigzagging a different route until he had Sophie at the mouth of the portal.

“Throw the statue, Sophie! Throw it hard into the big hole,” Addison croaked, hobbling along behind the group, shards of pain stabbing her ribs.

And she did.

Throw it hard. For all she was worth. It soared into the portal with such skill, Magic Johnson himself would have wept.

In the instant Sophie hurled the talisman, a sharp, deafening crack, followed by a crisp bolt of light, sliced through the midnight sky. It reached down and cradled Volac, cupping him in its grip before evaporating.

And it was over nearly as fast as it had begun.

Volac was nothing more than a memory in a puddle of designer suit.

Sophie, on the other hand, was feeling very pleased with herself. “I did it!”

Addison forced herself to stay upright, gathering Sophie against her hip. Sophie buried her face against her aunt, who gave her a tight squeeze. “Ya done good, kid.”

“Very good, I’d say,” Caleb praised.

He’d returned to his human state and he wasn’t at all geriatric. What did this mean? Addison wanted to touch him, afraid he’d crumble much like Volac had, right before her very eyes. “Are you all right?” Addison held a hand out to him, wobbling with the weight of Sophie at her side.

“Question is, are you? You’re hurt, Addy.” His hand reached out to lightly graze her side. “But that was some stellar thinking under pressure.”

Addison managed a grin. “I’m a stockbroker. We do that. And I’m okay. It only hurts to breathe,” she joked. “Now... what about,” she lowered her voice, leaning into him, “the little ‘I like the big candy bars, Auntie Addie’ beast? She’ll be terrified. Have

bad dreams forever. Traumatized. She's going to have a tale to tell, and I'm in deep kimchee with her mother for hiding what's been going on."

His big shoulders rose and fell. "Nah, I'll make it all just fine. Let go of her for a minute and she'll be back in her bed like this never happened."

Addison extracted herself from a sleepy Sophie and Caleb knelt in front of her, placing a hand on her forehead. "Nice goin', Sophie," he praised again and Sophie graced him with her angelic smile. "The next time we meet, you won't remember me, but I'll sure remember you."

"Will you remember Auntie Addie?"

Caleb grinned. "Yeah, I think I got that covered."

"Oh, that's good! Then could you remind her I like the reallllly big candy bars?"

He threw his head back and laughed at the pure innocence that only Sophie could retain after seeing a demon. "I think I can. Can you do me a favor too?"

"Yep." She cocked her head to the left and listened closely.

"No more going anywhere with strangers. Not even if he has the biggest candy bar in the whole wide world, okay?"

"Am I going to have to sit in the time-out chair? Mommy makes me do that when I don't listen. I didn't mean not to listen, but I just couldn't help it." She shrugged her bathrobe clad shoulders in confusion.

Yeah, Addison figured it was something like that. "Well, now you can help it, Soph. So listen to Caleb. Got that?"

"Got it."

"Good," Caleb chimed in. "Now close your eyes and have sweet dreams."

For once in her six years, Sophie smiled and did as she was asked

And then Sophie was gone too.

Just like that.

## Chapter Five

"You were a *what*?"

"A snake-oil salesman," he muttered, obviously embarrassed.

"Oh. My. God. Like the guys who sold those supposed cure-alls in covered wagons?" Addison asked, sitting astride Caleb's luscious, naked body.

"Yeah, so?" His response screamed defensive.

"Don't get all upset. I'm just getting a feel for where your entry level job skills are at in the twenty-first century is all. You probably could apply those skills to a 1-800 psychic hotline," she snorted. "Oh, wait. I know! How do you feel about door-to-door vacuum cleaner sales? Those guys are real shysters."

Caleb's strong hands cupped her breasts as he moved his hips, gesturing for her to slide down the hot length of his cock. "I need a real job, Addy. You know, like the kind that has benefits and security. 401k's. I have a feeling the psychic hotline doesn't have benefits."

She had to give him credit. In the past month he'd set about finding a job and contributing. It went without saying that Caleb would stay with her.

Addison's hope was that he'd chose to do that even after he got on his feet. There had been many surprises as a result of that night and his ambition was one of them. She'd have expected him to be lackadaisical in looking for a job. After all he was a warwolf, er, werelock. He'd never had to work. His magic had done the work for him.

She forgot all of his job hunting woes when her nipples tightened and a low groan slid from her lips. "I just can't believe you're human again. And with no side effects to boot. I mean, I couldn't believe the next day you couldn't even cough up a hairball, let alone shift," she said before using her knees to rise and then plunge herself downward on his shaft. "God, that's sooo good," she purred.

Caleb twisted his hips upward, just the way she liked, grinding against the lips of her spread pussy. It rubbed her clit, creating a delicious friction. "Well, I am, and I don't plan to question why or how I was lucky enough to survive this. So that means I have to deal with it and dealing means a nine-to-five job."

"You know, I was thinking about that night."

"And what were you thinking?" he asked, planting a kiss on her lips.

"I was thinking that we should thank the magic Gods that your magic faded slowly. We'd have been in some shit if you lost your power and you weren't able to erase Sophie's memories, Houdini." His magic and his ability to shift had taken its sweet time taking its leave. It had lingered for a day or so, then slowly faded to black.

"I'm just glad Sophie's okay."

Her heart warmed with his words. Planting her hands on his chest, Addison rose in a slow slide, then drove back downward. "I think," she suggested with a hoarse whisper, "we should talk *later*."

Caleb consented with another moan when she wrapped two fingers around the base of his cock, circling it. Pulling her to him, he wrapped his lips around a nipple and sucked the turgid bud tightly in his mouth.

A sweet/sharp zing of pleasure shot to her cunt, leaving her breathless and needy for release. As the pressure mounted, his strokes became rhythmic and intoxicating, pushing her further to the edge of orgasm. She loved the finely veined surface of his cock, the way it stretched her, the texture of it wet with her juices.

Caleb pulled her closer with a hiss when she rolled her hips, letting her head fall back on her shoulders. He buried his face between her breasts and plunged upward with one last, fierce stroke of silken heat.

Addison's cry was long and harsh as she came, gripping the firm shoulders that had carried so much weight for so many years.

Caleb's climax made his muscled body shudder, leaving Addison feeling empowered and purring with satisfaction.

He cupped the back of her head and kissed her lips. "You know, I don't think you were telling the truth when you said you didn't get out much."

With a giggle, she wrapped her arms around his neck. "Yeah, it's clear from the constant banging at my door that I have suitors coming out my wazoo."

"You damned well better not," he retorted with the typical possessive nature she'd grown so used to since they'd sent Volac packing a month ago today. It made her insides get all goofy and wiggly. It also lent promise to a future for them -- together.

"Can I ask you something?"

"Yep. Just don't expect a coherent answer. I just spent my last couple of brain cells in that torture chamber you call a condom," he chuckled with that honeyed rumble that spilled from his throat.

"Do you miss your -- your whatever it was you lived in? Dimension was it? I mean, you must have had friends, if not family."

"Some days I do. Especially when I think about all the hard work it is to be a human. I can have contact with the people I've forged relationships with, Addy. Just because I'm here now doesn't mean they can't come calling. It'll just be different than before. I can't visit them on their turf. It also makes getting you naked more work."

Her heart ached for what he'd been robbed of. First, his mortality, then his family and finally his immortality and magic. Yet, he could still joke. "Do you think they will? Come calling, I mean?"

"I'm sure they will. Though honestly, I was living a half-life. I could never rest with the weight of the talisman and what might happen if Volac got ahold of it. It's a relief to know it's gone. At least for now. I think I got pretty damned lucky that I didn't end up dead instead of just human again. It could have been much worse, I suppose. Thankfully, I spent a lot of time observing your world over the centuries. It isn't such a hard adjustment to make staying here because I did. I had a lot of time on my hands, waiting around with that talisman. Besides, I think I'm almost of the belief that the talisman was meant to be mine because it led me to you."

Addison's heart beat harder. "And look what we have now, eh? An unemployed, ex-immortal warwolf," she joked, hugging him harder and burying her face in his neck, soaking in the scent that was all Caleb.

"Werelock. God, the indignity of it all. Will you ever get that right?"

She smiled against his neck. "Will you miss your magic powers? Mere mortals have to actually purchase their beer at the store, you know. Heaven forbid."

"Only when I can't zap your clothes off," he joked and then his face grew serious. "I've been meaning to ask you something. What's this? I found it on the counter when we came back from the pumpkin patch." He reached behind the pillow and pulled out a piece of white paper.

Oh. She'd forgotten about that. She leaned back, her eyes opening briefly and she chuckled, splaying her hand across his broad chest and snatching the note from him with the other. Thank God she'd called Nathan bright and early the day after Halloween. It had taken some explaining and she'd sat through an hour-long lecture on living wills, but he'd backed off, swallowing her story about a medical scare. "It was my on-the-spot will. You know, so my sister would be clear on who got the one plate I own in my desolate cabinets."

With a sly grin, she tore the letter to her lawyer up and let the small pieces fall over them in a shower of white.

"You know what?"

"What?"

"I say we get me a plate too. So your plate won't be so lonely."

"Reallllly?"

"Reallllly."

And Addison wholeheartedly agreed, letting her lips do the consenting.

**The End**

## **Dakota Cassidy**

Dakota Cassidy found writing quite by accident and it's "been madness ever since." Who knew writing the grocery list would turn into this? Dakota loves anything funny and nothing pleases her more than to hear she's made someone laugh. She loves to write in many genres with a contemporary flair. Dakota lives with her two handsome sons, a dog and a cat. (None of them shape shift--that we know of.) She'd love to hear from you--she always answers her e-mail! Visit her at [www.dakotacassidy.com](http://www.dakotacassidy.com) or email her at [dakota@dakotacassidy.com](mailto:dakota@dakotacassidy.com)

PS: Sorry, you get the regular old boring Bio this time. Dakota hasn't bothered to update it and I'm not feeling creative at the moment.