

Dead Man's Party

Eve Vaughn

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Prologue

"Dude, would you stop fidgeting? You're making me nervous," Darkness, formally known as Bobby Little, growled impatiently at his friend Balthazar.

"Yeah, man why don't you keep still?" Even Razor, who was usually laid back, seemed to be losing patience.

Balthazar inhaled deeply on his cigarette before finally passing it over. It was so foggy out, the smoke blended in with the precipitation. He flung his freshly dyed black hair back from kohl lined eyes. "I can't help it. Rain Cloud is up to something and I don't like it one bit."

Darkness grabbed the cigarette from Balthazar's hand and took a drag and let the effects of the nicotine flow through his body. "Where's Rain Cloud, anyway? She's been awfully mysterious lately. This *is* Halloween. Shouldn't we be doing something other than hanging out in our normal spot? This is the day of the dead after all." The "normal spot" being the cemetery on the outskirts of town.

Balthazar snorted, his powdered face looking iridescent in the moon's light. "Like what? Go to one of those lame Halloween parties thrown by those posers? I think not. I'd rather gouge my eyes out."

"It's not like we would have been invited anyway so what does it matter? This seems as good a place to be. Anyway, Rain Cloud said we had to be here."

Just then a car full of the very posers they'd just disparaged rolled by. One of the passengers, Tadd Thomas, the captain of the football team, yelled out the window, "Freaks!" The car slowed down just enough for him to toss an egg which landed square in Darkness's face. The other occupants in the vehicle burst into loud laughter before the car took off again.

Darkness wiped the slimy residue of the egg from his face, his temper at its boiling point. "One of these days, I'm going to get even with those bastards. They'll be sorry they messed with us."

"Forget about those jerks. They're nothing but a bunch of conformist creeps and one day, they'll realize what we know. Life is a miserable abyss and then you die. We're here to suffer for some god's cruel twisted joke." Razor patted him on the shoulder.

Freaks, those loony Goth kids, and losers should have been something he was used to by now, but Darkness wasn't in the mood to be consoled. "We should do something about them. Tonight!"

"I have the perfect way to get even with them." Rain Cloud approached them. Tonight her hair was fire engine red. She wore her customary black, in addition to what looked like a black bride's veil. She carried in her arms a large thick leather bound book.

"What's that?" Balthazar asked.

"It's a book on the occult. It has really neat spells. There's even one to raise the dead and make them do your bidding," Rain Cloud explained proudly, her black painted lips curled into a broad grin. "Let's get this party started. I think this is the perfect spot to perform the ceremony." Rain Cloud opened the book and flipped through the pages.

Darkness felt a little uneasy about this. They all talked a lot of crap about doing spells and practicing witchcraft, but no one had actually taken the step to do anything about it.

"Uh, where did you get this book, Rain Cloud?"

"Some ugly gypsy woman was selling it. Her name was Madame Shaniqua, I think. Now shut up, I'm going to need complete silence if this is to go correctly."

Chapter One

Halloween sucked. Why had she bothered coming to this party? Dressed in a costume two sizes too small no less. Five years ago her French maid costume had made her look sexy, but now she felt like a desperate old lady looking for action. Not that forty-two was old, but apparently Tim thought so.

Tim.

He was the reason she'd decided to come to the party given by two of her dearest friends tonight, to forget about him and his new blonde twenty-something-year-old girlfriend. George and Lavern usually went all out with their holiday parties and tonight was no exception.

Carolyn leaned against the wall, feeling depressed as the merry partygoers swarmed around her in their colorful costumes. *You're becoming a fuddy duddy in your old age, Carolyn.*

Those words still reverberated in her head. They were the exact words Tim used when he walked out of their twenty-two-year marriage.

"Hey, Carolyn, you look great. Have you been working out?"

Carolyn turned to see her neighbor Susan wearing a witch costume. Very appropriate since Susan was a troublemaker with a capital T. Carolyn plastered a smile on her face hoping this conversation wouldn't last long. "How are you, Susan? Your costume looks great."

Susan twirled around. "I know. I paid the earth for it -- well, Marty did -- but he's such a dear. He gives me everything I want."

Normal people would have said thank you and left it at that, but not Susan Garrison. There was nothing the woman enjoyed more than bragging. Carolyn secretly congratulated herself for not bolting. "Well, that was very generous of him."

"Yes, I suppose it was, but what are husbands for? Oh!" Susan covered her mouth, big gray eyes widening in obvious mock horror. "That was so insensitive of me. You don't have a husband anymore, do you?"

"Not for much longer, I suppose," Carolyn said through clenched teeth. Her nails dug into her palms to stop herself from wrapping her fingers around the brunette's throat.

"Well, I think you're very brave for coming to this party tonight, especially when I hear Tim will be putting in an appearance with his new... uh, friend."

"What?"

The corners of Susan's lips lifted slightly in her heavily Botoxed face, giving her a smug appearance. "Oh, didn't you know?"

"If I did, I wouldn't have..." Carolyn stopped herself, not wanting to give away any more than she already had. Years of enforced etiquette prevented her from slapping the other woman into next October.

"Or you wouldn't have come," Susan finished for her, flipping back a silky strand of brown hair over her shoulder. "I can't say I blame you. I mean if Marty were to leave me for a much younger woman, I'd be devastated. I think you're brave."

That was it, Carolyn could take no more. "Susan, could you go be a bitch somewhere else? I really don't need this right now."

Susan's lips thinned. "Well. You don't have to get nasty with me. It's a wonder Tim didn't leave you sooner. How a woman like you managed to keep such a good looking man for as long as you did is beyond me." Her gaze traveled insolently up and down Carolyn's body. "By the way, you look like hell."

She turned away before Carolyn could respond. It would serve that bitch right if she were captured by a bunch of brain-eating zombies. The confrontation shook her more than she was willing to admit. Tim would be attending this party? Why hadn't anyone told her?

"Oh, my God, I'm so sorry, Carolyn. I didn't mean for you to find out that way." Lavern came rushing over wearing her Foxy Brown costume, her big afro bobbing, before enveloping her within long warm arms.

"Why wasn't I told?" Carolyn choked out, realizing that she was crying.

"I love George dearly, but he doesn't use the brain the good Lord gave him sometimes. Let's go up to the bathroom so we can clean your face."

"I have to get out of here before Tim shows up."

"Is that what you really want? To run away? You know you're going to have to confront him sometime."

"I know, but not tonight. Halloween is the anniversary of our first date. It used to be sacred." Carolyn tried her best to hold in her sob.

"Come on, baby. Let's go upstairs first and fix your makeup. I don't want you to get behind the wheel in this condition." The mother of four boys, Lavern had a natural air of command about her that was hard to go against.

When they got upstairs, Lavern gently pushed her into the bathroom. "You're much too pretty to cry, baby. Now clean your face and I'll go fix you a drink to calm your nerves. Then we'll talk. Okay?" Lavern called everyone baby. From her it never sounded condescending.

Carolyn looked in the mirror and saw two faces -- one white, one black. Next to Lavern's exotic beauty, Carolyn felt downright dowdy. "Susan's right. I am ugly."

"Stop it, girl! She didn't say that, and had I gotten to you two sooner, I would have put my foot up her ass. We only tolerate her because Marty's in George's poker group. That poor man. How he puts up with that bitch is beyond me. Okay, now I'm going to go downstairs and fix you a drink. The washcloths are under the sink. I'll be back, okay?"

Carolyn shrugged, despondency sinking in. "Sure."

When Lavern left, Carolyn went through the motions of cleaning her face, her auto-pilot kicking in. She examined herself in the mirror, feeling every bit of her forty-two years. Carolyn saw the crow's feet around her eyes and the laugh lines around her

mouth. She sighed in disgust as she studied the freckles sprinkled liberally on her face. Large brown eyes stared back at her. In her opinion, Carolyn's only claim to beauty was the cap of short flame red hair covering her head.

No longer was she the woman she'd been when she first married. Two children, several animals, a mortgage and tons of memories later, here she was, alone and miserable. How could Tim walk away from everything they'd once shared? Sure they had their problems, but all couples did.

Her heart twisted when she thought about Tim, and the day he'd walked out. She'd been moping around the house for the past few months since their youngest daughter Emily had gone off to study in France. Julie was in her junior year of college and had an apartment close to campus so she only came home for holidays. Empty nest syndrome hit Carolyn hard.

Though Tim said he missed the kids, he seemed to see their absence as a blessing. He started taking kickboxing lessons, traded in his SUV for a shiny red sports car, and bought a boat. He suddenly wanted to do things they'd never done before. It occurred to Carolyn that maybe Tim was having an affair. Weren't the sudden changes he'd gone through a sign? Her accusations led arguments, until one day, things had come to a head.

"That's it! I've had enough, Carolyn. You can wallow in your misery all you like, but I'm not going to sit around, waiting to die. Life is for the living and I plan to do all I can. You're becoming a fuddy duddy in your old age. If you don't watch it, you're going to be a lonely old lady."

Three months later, she was still trying to pick up the pieces. He hadn't served her with divorce papers. She refused to do it. If he wanted a divorce, he'd have to initiate it. And he'd have to be the one who explained to the children.

Tonight was the first night she'd gone out since the separation. And she wished she hadn't. Lavern came back into the bathroom as Carolyn was re-applying her makeup.

"Now, don't you look pretty? Here you go, baby, I brought you a drink. George mixes the best Long Island Iced Teas. It will relax you."

"Lavern, you know I'm not a drinker."

"Just take a few sips for me. You're going to need it when you go back downstairs."

Alarm spread through her. "Tim is here?"

Lavern averted her eyes for a moment, looking slightly uncomfortable. "Yes, but if the two of you should happen to run into each other before you go, then you need to play it cool, girl. Pretend you don't give a crap about him and his new bimbo."

"Is she really pretty?" Carolyn couldn't help asking. Was she a glutton for punishment?

"In an artificial way. Straight out of a peroxide bottle and the plastic surgeon's office. On the bright side, if we were ever on a plane and it crashed in the ocean, we could use her gigantic boobs as floatation devices."

Carolyn knew Lavern was trying to cheer her up, but when she looked down at her own modest B cups, she felt inadequate. Tim used to tell her more than a handful was a waste. Had that been a lie as well? She wanted to cry again.

* * *

Tim could feel several pair of eyes on him when he stepped into the party. He shouldn't have come, but George had convinced him he'd have a good time. Tim felt a bit guilty for neglecting his friends since the separation. It wasn't his intention to leave them behind, but he didn't want to create any awkwardness for anyone since he and Carolyn were no longer together.

He stuck his finger between his skin and the white priest's collar he wore. If the sisters at the Catholic schools could see him now, he was sure he'd get a whack with the ruler, but Bunnie insisted they come to the party as a matching pair: he as a priest and she as a naughty Catholic school girl. She looked naughty indeed with her plaid uniform skirt hiked several inches above her knees barely covering her vagina. And her

crisp white shirt was tied just beneath her breasts, the top two buttons open, revealing a generous amount of cleavage. She wore her blonde hair in pigtails.

The sight of her should have turned him on, but instead he felt like a pervert being with someone only five years older than his daughter. When he'd first asked Bunnie out he thought it was a good idea. They shared a lot of the same interests and they belonged to the same gym, but their conversations were limited at best.

Once he'd taken her dancing. When his head was next to hers, Tim could have sworn he heard the ocean. It was rather unfortunate, because she was nice enough, and he hated having such critical thoughts about her, but things weren't working out. Whenever they were out together, Tim felt like a dirty old man. Maybe he'd only gone out with her in the first place because it flattered him that such a young and attractive woman would be interested in him. Besides that, she was Carolyn's complete opposite.

Carolyn. Not a day went by when he didn't think about his estranged wife. Yes, he was the one who'd walked out on their marriage, but a man could only take so much.

They'd married young and missed out on a lot because of the children, not that he resented either one of his beautiful daughters for it. The thing was, he was ready to enjoy life with the woman he'd loved since he'd first set eyes on her in high school. Instead she sank into depression and refused to make love with him.

When he suggested she seek counseling, the accusations of infidelity began. Finally he'd lost his temper. He then packed his bags and left. Now, standing in a crowded room with his friends and neighbors, Tim felt ridiculous with someone nearly half his age. After tonight he'd tell Bunnie things were finished between them, and figure out a way to get back into Carolyn's good graces.

"Tim! I'm glad you could make it." His friend George walked over to him in a Count Dracula costume.

"How are you, buddy? Nice getup. Dracula, right?"

"No, actually I'm Blackula. You know from that movie in the seventies? It was Lavern's idea we pay homage to the blaxploitation movies. She's running around in a giant afro thinking she's Cleopatra Jones."

"Umm, that's Foxy Brown thank you very much, and don't you forget it, shuga!" Lavern joined them, the smile leaving her face when she glanced at Tim and then at Bunnie. "Tim, nice of you to come -- and you brought a little friend."

The sarcasm in her voice was evident. "Yes, this is Bunnie Rogers."

"Bunnie?" Lavern asked in disbelief.

Tim shifted uncomfortably. "Uh, yes. Nice costume, Lavern. Pam Grier has nothing on you."

She didn't crack a smile. Instead, Lavern stared pointedly at Bunnie. "You must be cold in that outfit. It's quite chilly outside."

Bunnie smiled congenially. "Oh, cold doesn't bother me. There's a little trick I learned in yoga. I let my mind go completely blank. When you don't think you don't feel."

Lavern lifted an arched brow. "You let your mind go blank? That must be something --"

"Lavern!" George cut her off, taking her arm. "Why don't you let Tim and Bunnie mingle with the other guests?" He dragged Lavern away, but not before she shot a venomous look in Tim's direction.

Tim wondered how he'd survive the night. It had been a mistake to come here. He was on the verge of telling Bunnie he was ready to leave when he saw Carolyn coming the stairs wearing a French maid outfit that left nothing to the imagination. His pulse raced and his cock stirred. She still had that effect after all these years. Just then her eyes turned in his direction. When she saw his companion, she gasped and ran back up the stairs.

Damn.

Chapter Two

Carolyn ran to the first door she came to, which happened to be a guest bedroom where all the coats had been laid out. How could he? And with someone who looked much too young to be with him. Did all men think with their penises? He obviously wasted no time finding someone else to warm his bed. Although she'd been warned, it still hurt like hell. Hearing about it was one thing, but seeing it with her own two eyes was quite another.

When she'd spotted him, she'd remained frozen for a few seconds. It had been a few months since she'd seen him, but Carolyn couldn't help noticing how good looking he was. At forty-two, Tim was still one of the best looking men she'd ever laid eyes on, with his tall lean frame. He'd kept in shape over the years, and there still wasn't an ounce of fat on his six foot two frame. No, he was all tight corded muscles. The only things that gave away his age were the patches of gray at the temples of his short dark brown hair.

His eyes were so startling a blue her knees went weak whenever he looked at her directly. And his mouth. How she missed those sensual lips of his. Too bad he used them to kiss other women. At the thought of his infidelity she wanted to cry, but Carolyn had shed all the tears she could over their broken relationship, and the pain had not lessened.

They'd still not yet told Julie and Emily about the separation. The last thing either one of them wanted was to worry the girls while they were at school. Soon Thanksgiving would be here and they wouldn't be able to keep up with the façade. She asked herself yet again how he could be so callous as to walk out on her, when she'd needed him so much?

Just then, the door flew open and Tim strode in, a determined look on his face. He closed the door behind him and locked it with a decisive click. Carolyn glared. "What the hell are you doing in here? Did you come to gloat about your new lady love? Isn't it past her bedtime?"

"Carolyn, would you stop? No, I didn't come here to gloat."

"Then what do you want?"

He sighed. "Must your voice be so venomous? I didn't come here to argue with you either. I came to talk."

"How do you expect me to sound? You were the one who walked out on our marriage without a backward glance. Did you think everything would be flowers and sunshine when we saw each other again?"

"No, I didn't think that. I really didn't know what to expect, but there was a time when we used to communicate without arguing and name calling. I think it's time to put an end to this mess. I can't take it anymore."

Her heart sank. The only thing he could possibly want to talk to her about was a divorce. Even though they'd been separated, a divorce had been the furthest thing from her mind. Carolyn was only getting used to the idea of separation, but divorce? She refused to let him see how much she hurt. "I suppose you want to finalize things?" she asked, secretly congratulating herself on the coolness of her response.

He looked surprised. Maybe Tim was upset because she'd brought the D word up before he did. Just like a man to want to get his digs in first, but she wasn't about to let him triumph. "Carolyn --"

"That is what you wanted to talk about, isn't it? And to be honest, I can't agree with you more. I can't be married to someone like you."

His mouth gaped open. "Someone like me? What the hell are you talking about?"

"A philanderer. I deserve someone who'll honor their vows to remain faithful to me."

"Carolyn, for the last time, I never cheated on you. Any infidelity I had was all in your head."

"Oh? And how do you explain the teenybopper you came to the party with? How dare you bring her to the party with all our friends in attendance and humiliate me like this. You just wanted to hurt me, didn't you?"

"No! That isn't true at all. Will you just take a minute and listen to yourself, Caro? This is exactly why I walked. A man needs peace in his home. How do you think it made me feel to come home night after night to a house full of dissension? I don't think I was a particularly demanding husband, but would it have killed you to let me sit down, take my shoes off, relax on the sofa for a few minutes before you started in on me? Hell, I couldn't even take a shit without you following me and calling me all kinds of names. Can you blame me for leaving?"

She felt the color drain from her face. Is that what he really thought? That she was just a big nag who drove him away? No, that wasn't true. She never would have accused him of cheating if she hadn't felt it was true. There had been all the signs of a classic cheater. "My mother didn't raise a fool. What was I supposed to think with all the late nights, and the new sports car and a sudden interest in extreme sports? Your bringing that bimbo to this party only confirms what I knew all along."

"Bunnie is not a bimbo. She's a very nice lady."

Laughter rippled from her throat. "Bunnie? Her name is Bunnie? You've got to be kidding me." She doubled over, her mirth causing her body to shake. "Oh, that's rich. Bunnie the bimbo!"

"You may think she's a bimbo, but she knows a hell of a lot more about having fun and how to treat a man than you do," he hissed, his eyes narrowed to icy blue slits.

He could have punched her in the stomach or slapped her face and it wouldn't have made as big an impact as his cutting words. It felt like someone had taken her heart and squeezed it really tight. She suddenly found it difficult to breathe. Tim had said some hurtful things before he'd left her, but never anything this ruthless.

Tim must have realized how his statement sounded because his expression was instantly contrite. "I'm sorry. That was uncalled for."

She snorted. "You wouldn't have said it if you didn't mean it."

"I didn't. It's just -- Caro, can't we have a discussion like two rational adults? What I really wanted to say was --"

She clasped her hands over her ears, not wanting to hear it. "La la la la la," she chanted to drown out his words.

He wrenched her hands down. "Would you stop it? You're acting childish."

"I'm acting childish?" she asked incredulously. "From the looks of your date, I would have thought you were into children."

"That's it! There was always one way we could really communicate, wasn't there?"

"What are you talking about?" she asked suspiciously.

"This!" He pulled her into his arms before his mouth captured hers in a bruising kiss. When Carolyn tried to turn her head away, his lips followed. That old familiar heat began to course through her body. She didn't want to like this. She couldn't like this. Could she?

To her chagrin, Carolyn found herself melting against Tim's taut body. Her lips parted slightly under the persistent probing of his tongue. God, he tasted good, so raw and male. She threw her arms around his neck and tangled her fingers in his hair.

It had been so long since she'd been held like this. Her nipples hardened as they pressed against the sinewy planes of his chest. "Oh, Caro, you have no idea how long I've dreamed of doing this to you."

He had to be lying. After all, he had Bambie, the wonderslut. Oh, what was her name? It didn't matter. What did matter was how good it felt to be in Tim's arms again even though she knew this moment couldn't last. *Just give me this night and I swear I'll do whatever it takes to finally move on with my life*, she vowed to herself.

Tim's erection pressed against her thigh, hard and insistent. How was it possible for her to have denied herself the heady sensations only he could produce? A pool of wetness formed in her panties as her pussy tightened with her need for him and an incredible heat seared through her being.

She pushed her tongue forward to meet his, circling and twining around it. Carolyn was lost. When his hands slid down her back to cup her bottom, she thought she'd lose her mind.

Tim pushed her toward the bed, until the back of her knees hit the edge. She clung to him, but tore her mouth away from his. "Tim, we can't do this here," she whispered, trying to catch her breath. Her head told her there was a houseful of people below them, but her body told her to let him make love to her.

"Yes, here. Yes, now." He bent over once again, and ran his tongue along the outline of her lip. "Mmm, you're delicious. You know you want this just as much as I do. Don't fight it. This is something we both want."

"But the other people --"

"Don't matter. You and I are here together, doing something we should have done months ago. I've missed you so much, Caro."

She stiffened. "You sure have a funny way of showing it."

His eyes narrowed. "Shut up." He pushed her and she fell on the pile of coats lying on the bed. When she would have sat up, Tim immediately covered her body with his, giving her no time to think.

His mouth was on hers once more, and Carolyn was lost. Her hands slid along his back until they gripped the bottom of his shirt and tugged it loose from his pants. She was desperate to feel his bare skin beneath her fingertips. She ached for him. He had obviously cast a spell on her; how else could she react this way to him after all they'd been through?

The past few months no longer mattered as his body moved over hers, pressing her into the bed. His kiss was savage, plundering and seeking. Tim explored every inch of her mouth with his tongue. Her hands roamed up and down his spine.

His cock ground against her through his pants. "I need you so badly, Caro. I miss this so much." He pulled back just enough to slide her puffy sleeve down over her shoulder. "You're not wearing a bra are you?" he murmured with seeming satisfaction.

"I can't in this costume. I shouldn't have worn it."

"Why? You look sexy in it."

"Are you just saying that to get into my pants?" She gasped when he pulled the bodice down, setting her burgeoning breasts free.

His fingertip grazed the top of her breasts, making her shiver. "First of all, you're not wearing any pants. And secondly, I'm telling the truth. My dick jumped to attention when I saw you on those stairs. Do you know what I wanted to do when I saw you?"

"Gag?" she asked with self-deprecation. She wasn't blind to the changes in her body over the years. Her breasts hung a little lower, her waist wasn't as slim and there were some very obvious dimples in the back of her thighs.

"No. You have some self-esteem issues we're going to have to work on. I wanted to do this." Tim dipped his head then and flicked one rose-tipped breast with his tongue.

"Oh!" she sighed with pleasure. He licked and lapped the bud to tightness before taking it between his teeth. Carolyn arched her back, granting him further access. "Tim, please," she begged, not really sure what she was asking for. What she knew for sure was she didn't want him to stop.

She writhed and squirmed beneath him, her panties now soaked. She cupped the back of his head, holding it against her breast. Shockwaves of delight tickled her nerve endings at the ministrations of his wet mouth. "Tim, no one has ever made me feel like this but you," she groaned.

"And no one ever will," he growled, transferring his attention to her other breast. She wasn't sure what he meant by that cryptic remark, but at this point she didn't care, she was too horny. His mouth on her breasts, while sensational, was no longer enough. Placing her hands on his shoulders, she gave him a gentle push.

"It's okay, sweetheart. I know exactly what you want." He slid down the length of her body. "Spread your legs for me, darling."

She didn't hesitate. Carolyn couldn't disobey him in that moment even if her life depended on it, so great was her need for him. Tim settled between her parted thighs until he was eye level with her pussy.

He buried his face against her damp panties. "You're already wet for me and you smell wonderful." Tim hooked a finger in her underwear as though testing the wetness of the material.

"Don't tease me, Tim. I don't think I can take it."

His gaze met hers. "Eager for it now, are you?"

Her face grew hot with embarrassment at her wanton abandonment where he was concerned, but she couldn't ignore the burning inferno within her. "Don't... don't you want this too?" she asked, feeling uncertain all of a sudden.

A feral gleam sparkled in his piercing blue gaze. "You're damn right I do." He put her shoes aside and then peeled her fishnet stockings off before pulling her panties down, moving just enough to rid her of them completely. Then he placed the heels back on her feet.

"Take off my shoes."

Tim shook his head. "No. I want you to leave them on. Making love to a beautiful woman in high heels is sexy. You have gorgeous legs, Carolyn." As if to prove his point, he lifted one by the ankle and proceeded to kiss his way toward her pussy. He always had a way of making her feel beautiful whenever they made love. She'd accused him of many things, but a bad lover he was not. Tim always managed to make her feel she was the most beautiful woman in the world when she was in his arms. Too bad she was no longer the only woman sharing that distinction now. Carolyn quickly pushed that thought away. This could very well be her last time with Tim, and she wanted to relish it and remember it fondly. They did after all share twenty-two years of joy and laughter together.

Tim eased his middle finger between the damp folds of her labia. She spasmed as a wave of hot lust hit her. Dear Lord. It had been so long, it felt like her first time all over again.

"Do you like that, Caro?" he asked, his eyes meeting hers once more.

"Yes. You know I do."

"But I want to hear you say the words. A man can never get tired of hearing how much the woman he --" He broke off abruptly.

"What?" she asked anxiously, feeling as if he were trying to tell her something important.

"Nothing. Don't worry about it. Just feel, and let me make you feel good." He pushed the long digit into her channel, sliding it in and out in slow steady motions.

She bucked her hip against his hand. "Yes, Tim! Oh yes." Carolyn thrashed her head from side to side on the coats. When another finger joined the first, the sensation of drowning in a sea of lust coursed through her being, but she didn't want to be rescued. Tim lowered his head then. While she shook and twisted beneath his hand, his lips caught her clit.

"Tim! Oh God, Tim!"

He sucked on her clit voraciously -- like a man who'd been denied for too long -- all while his fingers fucked her harder and faster. He attacked her pussy with his mouth and hands, sucking, licking, laving and poking. Her body went up into flames.

Beads of sweat popped up on the surface of her skin. How could this be? Not even a half hour ago, she'd vowed to never give this man another thought, but instead she lay beneath him with his mouth on her pussy and she loved it. "Tim, please, I don't think I can take any more."

Giving her pussy one last stroke with his tongue, he lifted his head with seeming reluctance. "Nor can I. There's nothing I want more than to be inside of you right now."

He pulled away from her just enough to undo his pants, setting his cock free. No matter how many times they'd made love, she was always in awe of his member. It was beautiful. Not overly large, it was just the right size, with just the right amount of thickness. It filled her channel so perfectly it was as if his cock had been made especially for her.

"Go ahead and touch it. I know you want to."

"I do," she groaned, running a finger along its length.

Tim shuddered. "Yes, that's it. Take me in your fist. Guide me into your sweet cunt."

She took him in hand and did as she was told, positioning the head of his cock at her entrance. Carolyn scooted forward, pushing herself onto him. She gasped when he thrust into her and began to pump furiously.

Carolyn wrapped her arms around his back and her legs around his waist, grinding and sliding against his body. There was no feeling in the world like being deliciously filled by Tim's cock.

"Tim, oh, God!"

"This is my pussy! Mine, do you hear me?" His guttural growl was primal, sending shivers up her spine.

"Yes."

"Say it!"

"This is your pussy, Tim. Always. Always. Always!"

"And don't you forget it! Mine," he groaned with each thrust. With every stroke, he slammed harder and deeper into her. It almost felt like he was touching her womb at one point. She steadily grew closer to her peak. Carolyn knew Tim was close to his as well. His face was bright red.

When her climax came, it was an explosion. "Oh, my God!" she screamed at the top of her lungs, not caring if anyone could hear her. She was too in the moment.

A hot burst of liquid fire shot up her channel, signaling Tim's orgasm, but he continued to rock over her body like a man possessed, unrelenting.

"Tim," she whispered weakly, trying to keep up with him, but he kept moving at an erratic pace. She thrashed beneath him, another wave of sensation swimming through her.

His eyes were glazed with passion and it turned her on to know she'd driven him to this point. Finally after what could only have been a few minutes, he collapsed on top of her, his breath coming out in loud gasps.

They lay without speaking, wrapped in each other's arms. Tim was the first to break the silence. He lifted his head, and gave her a smile. "I think it's time we had that talk now, don't you think?"

It was like a bucket of cold water thrown in her face.

"Get off me." She pushed at his chest with enough force to send him off the bed.

Tim landed on his butt. "What the hell was that all about?"

Carolyn sat up and started to fix her costume. "You really are a leech. You just had to get in one last fuck for old times' sake, didn't you?"

"What the hell are you talking about, Carolyn?"

"You brought a date to this party and ended up sleeping with me. Aren't you capable of being faithful to any woman?"

He stared at her with a bewildered expression until he let out a humorless laugh. "You really are a head case, do you know that? What we just shared was more than just a quick fuck, and if you can't see that, then I'm sorry for you." Tim pulled his pants back on. "You know at this point, I think Bunnie would be much better company. I hope the rest of the party is an enjoyable experience for you." He turned on his heel then yanked open the door and slammed it behind him.

The tears she'd thought were long gone resurfaced with a vengeance.

Chapter Three

They were just trying to have a little fun. No one really thought the book would conjure up the dead, let alone brain-hungry zombies. They'd all had a laugh when Rain Cloud performed her ceremony to raise a servant to wreak vengeance on their enemies. They stood in the middle of the cemetery, holding hands, and chanting the spell in the book, but nothing happened.

"I told you this wouldn't work." Razor laughed. "Now how about breaking out that joint you promised us."

Rain Cloud looked indignant. "Give it some time. A spell this powerful doesn't happen in an instant. Most of the people in the cemetery have been sleeping a long time."

Balthazar frowned. "People? I thought you were only trying to bring up one person."

Rain Cloud rolled her black-lined eyes. "Does it really matter?"

"It does if your cockamamie spell actually works," Razor countered.

Darkness snorted with derision. "She's full of shit. It's not going to happen."

"Then what the hell is that?" Balthazar's eyes nearly bulged out of his head as a hand, worn and decrepit, crept from beneath the soil.

Rain Cloud gaped, almost as if she was unable to believe it had worked herself. Darkness had known all along she had been talking out of her ass. Whatever that thing was coming out of the ground, he didn't intend to stick around and find out what it was. "I'm outta here."

When he turned to leave, however, Rain Cloud grabbed his arm. Not a small girl, she hovered over his five foot five frame. "Oh, no, you don't. I want you to stick around and witness my triumph. You didn't believe in me."

"Rain Cloud, there's a damn dead person coming out of the ground. Stuff like this isn't supposed to happen!" Darkness tried to pull away from her surprisingly strong grip.

"What are you -- chicken?" she taunted.

Darkness looked at Razor and Balthazar, who looked slightly uneasy. He wasn't the only one having doubts about this whole mess. "If that's what you want to call me, then fine." By now the subject of their argument had pulled himself out of the ground and was slowly getting to his feet.

He'd been raised to never lay a hand on a girl, but desperate times called for desperate measures. Elbowing Rain Cloud in the chest, Darkness dashed away when her grip loosened.

"You big chicken!" she called after him.

Screw her. He'd rather be a live chicken than a dead one. Darkness -- no Bobby -- had had enough of those three. He'd only hung out with them in the first place because he'd been having trouble making friends at his new school. Bobby didn't like wearing black all the time, dyeing his hair funky colors, or the crappy industrial music the rest of them favored. He didn't want to think about death and dying all the time. He liked bright colors and sunshine, and damn it, he liked Barry Manilow!

He was nearly out of the cemetery when he ran smack into a solid figure before falling to the ground. The other person was the first to recover, stumbling to her feet. Bobby screamed when he noticed how badly decayed her face was. Her hair was almost gone, and her neck was broken judging from the odd angle of her head. "Brains." Her grunt was nearly indiscernible, but he'd heard exactly what she said.

Scooting away, Bobby scrambled to his feet. He heard a loud scream. Rain Cloud! As much as he wanted to leave this cemetery, he wasn't going to leave the others behind if he could help it. When he reached them, Razor, Balthazar and Rain Cloud were surrounded by a group of zombies closing in on them. He picked up a stick took the lighter from his pocket. Bobby set the stick on fire and charged toward the zombies.

The zombies didn't like the fire. When they parted, Bobby beckoned the terrified trio forward. "Come on. Don't just stand there. We have to get the hell out of here."

As if coming to life the three kids ran past the zombies as Bobby held them off with the fire. The stick was nearly burnt to the end. With zombies on either entrance, they probably wouldn't get out of the cemetery alive. They had to find a hiding place. His eyes zeroed in on a group of tombs. He hoped to God one of them was open.

They tried three tombs before they found one that actually opened. The teenagers scrambled inside the dark tomb and pushed against the door to keep the zombies out.

When his eyes adjusted to the darkness, he was able to make out candles in the far corner. How convenient. "Take this and light some candles!" Bobby handed the lighter to Rain Cloud. There was a pounding on the door as bodies on the outside hurled themselves against it.

Rain Cloud paced the floor. "Don't yell at me. Let me think for a minute."

"Had you been thinking in the first place, we wouldn't be in this mess!" Razor yelled, echoing Bobby's thoughts. Rain Cloud went to the corner and curled up into a ball on the floor. She jammed her finger up her nose, leaving it there as she rocked herself.

Zombies were outside of the tomb, trying to get in to eat their brains and this bitch was picking her nose? He realized people handled stress in different ways, but this was ridiculous. Turning to the other two, Bobby asked, "Do you think you can hold them off for a minute? I'm going to try to get Booger to help us out."

Razor looked doubtful. Just as he was about to protest, the thuds stopped. The groans for brains soon began to fade into the distance.

"Maybe they got tired of trying to get in and are seeking out easier prey," Balthazar suggested.

Fortunately it was past the time when children would be in from their trick-or-treating, but there were still a lot of parties going on.

Someone was about to get a few uninvited guests.

* * *

Tim was so mad he could spit fire. How could she belittle what they'd just shared? Granted it wasn't the most ideal of locations, but it had meant something to him and he thought it did to her as well. It hadn't been his intention to start an argument when he followed Carolyn, but to see if they could work things out. The last few months had been difficult without her and he hoped the time apart had helped her to see they belonged together.

At this point, Tim wondered if it was even worth the bother. She'd never see reason. When he'd stormed out of the bedroom, his intention had been to take Bunnie home and then go back to his place to stew. Bunnie, however, had other plans. When he came downstairs he went searching for her only to find her on the floor demonstrating her flexibility for the party guests.

Both legs were behind her head, which revealed her thong underwear. The men were gaping, many of them trying to hide their arousal. The women either smirked as they looked on, or wore expressions of disgust.

"Uh, why don't you show us that other yoga position you were talking about, Bunnie, the one where you're bent over?" Although the person who'd made the request wore a costume, Tim recognized it as the voice of Melvin Sneed. How appropriate to see him dressed as a donkey. A sudden wave of guilt swept through him. Although Tim didn't regret what had happened with Carolyn, he shouldn't have left Bunnie alone to be preyed upon by the dirty old men at the party.

"Bunnie, get up. We're leaving," he said tightly.

"Hey, don't be a killjoy! We're just having a little fun." Melvin laughed.

Tim itched to punch him in the face. He didn't find it the least bit funny to see a young woman humiliated like this even if she wasn't smart enough to realize she was being laughed at.

Bunnie untangled herself. "Aww, Timmy, I was just showing them a couple techniques."

"But do you also realize how much skin you're showing by doing so?" he said tightly.

She turned a becoming shade of red as if suddenly realizing her faux pas. "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to embarrass you in front of your friends," she muttered miserably.

He took her in the crook of his arm and kissed the top of her head, feeling protective of her as if she were one of his daughters.

"Come on, Timmy, don't be a party pooper," Melvin mocked.

That was it. Pushing Bunnie aside, he dove through the crowd to reach Melvin. His hands found his adversary's neck. "Apologize to her!" Tim demanded.

"Whoa, you both need to calm down." George pushed his way through the onlookers and pulled the men apart.

Melvin took off the head of his costume, his face dark purple from the blood rush. "It's not my fault he brought a Britney Spears impersonator to the party. We were just enjoying the show she seemed to enjoy putting on," the man sneered without an ounce of apology in his voice. The son of a bitch.

Bunnie's face crumpled, and she looked like she was going to cry. "You miserable bastard!" Tim lunged at Melvin, but George held him back.

"He's not worth it, man. Just leave everything to me. Why don't you take your date to the other side of the room and cool off?" the host suggested.

Tim realized what a spectacle he'd probably made, but nothing raised his ire more than when someone picked on another person who clearly couldn't fight back. Melvin Sneed was a bully, and Tim hated them with a passion.

Bunnie sniffed when he put his arms around her again. "I think you were right, Timmy. We should probably leave."

Just as he turned his date around he met Carolyn's stricken brown gaze.

"Carolyn, wait," Tim called, but she didn't want to hear any more. Starting a fight over his girlfriend in the middle of the party sent a clear message: thanks for the fuck, but I still prefer the newer, younger model.

She ducked past the onlookers, not wanting to speak to anyone in case she broke down into tears, but someone stopped her. She thought it was Tim at first, but the hurtful bite of sharp nails dug into her skin. Carolyn should have known Susan would want to start trouble.

Whirling around, Carolyn pulled her arm out of her assailant's grip. "Don't ever touch me again!"

Susan smirked. "Sorry, my dear, I didn't realize you had a thing about being touched. I guess that's why Tim left you, huh? What an interesting display that was. Has Tim ever fought for you?"

Carolyn's blood boiled. No, Tim hadn't, but there'd never been any reason for him to. Her eyes narrowed. "What pleasure do you get from trying to hurt me, Susan? Is your own life so meaningless you constantly have to cause problems? Your bitch routine is getting old. Oh, wait a minute. It's not an act."

Susan glared. "You make me sick."

"My sentiments exactly." Normally Carolyn would have walked away without a backward glance, but this bitch had a thing or two coming and Carolyn thought it was long overdue.

Just then someone tapped on her shoulder. Carolyn shrugged the hand off.

Susan sneered. "Is that your date? Is that the best you could do?"

Carolyn turned around, bewildered to see who stood behind her. A man dressed in a zombie outfit looked at her with vacant eyes. He looked like something straight out of Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video, with the decaying skin makeup, the rotted teeth, and oozing sores. The man also came with a pungent odor. His costume was so realistic it was eerie. "Go away, will you?" She waved her hand in a dismissive gesture.

"Brains," he moaned.

"Ha ha. Really cute, but I'm not in the mood for jokes, buddy." She turned back to a smug Susan. "Now as for you, I don't know what your deal is, but I suggest you get out of my way before I forget I'm a lady."

Susan inched closer, bringing her face down until their noses nearly touched. "And what are you going to do about it, shorty?"

"Get out of my face before you find out."

"I'm not going anywhere," Susan taunted.

Balling her hand into a tight fist, Carolyn slammed it into Susan's nose. Her adversary hit the floor, much to her amazement and that of the stunned onlookers. Blood gushed from the other woman's nose. "You stupid cunt! I think you broke my nose! I'm going to fucking sue you."

"Do what you have to do. You don't scare me." Carolyn stood over Susan, ready to hit her again if she was brave enough to get back to her feet.

"She just assaulted me! Isn't anyone going to call the police?" Susan demanded.

No one made a move to assist the woman. Carolyn wouldn't have been surprised if people were secretly applauding her actions.

"Brains," the man in the zombie costume groaned, grabbing Carolyn by the head. She wiggled away. Who the hell was this weirdo? She pulled out of his grasp. "Would you please go away?"

The man wrapped his arm around her and brought his mouth down to her head. She didn't know if he was trying to stay in character or not, but this was simply enough. She brought the heel of her three-inch stiletto down on his foot. Hard. Then she followed it with an elbow to the stomach. "Get off of me, you creep. Go bother someone else!"

A look of disorientation crossed his face before he refocused his attention on Susan, who was still wallowing on the floor.

Tim stepped out then and made an attempt to grab the persistent man. "You heard her."

But zombie boy lunged at Susan and, before anyone could do anything, bit off a big chunk of her head.

Carolyn's jaw dropped. Holy cow. She had a sinking feeling that wasn't a costume.

Chapter Four

Tim's eyes widened in horror. What the hell? Someone screamed. A couple of the men finally rushed to Susan's aid, pulling the man -- thing -- off the woman on the floor. What the hell was going on?

His first thought was to protect Carolyn. Leaving Bunnie's side he rushed over to her. "Caro, are you okay?"

She wore a dazed expression on her face. "What... what is that?"

"I don't know, but I think you and I need to get the hell out of here."

Another blood-curdling scream tore through the air. This time it came from the other side of the room. Everyone looked over to see Carol Peters being attacked by another zombie. The creature had taken a big chunk from her throat.

The room went into a sudden panic, with people scrambling all over. Tim grabbed Carolyn's arm and pulled her toward the door, but then he remembered Bunnie. He'd brought her to the party. He couldn't very well leave her. That wouldn't be fair. He searched the room to see her standing on a table, two more fiends walking her way. "Get away, you horrible beasts!" she yelled.

As they got closer to her, she kicked one in the head. The zombie went flying back. She gave a roundhouse to the next monster who tried to approach her. It seemed like Bunnie was handling herself just fine, but he didn't want to leave it to chance. There was no telling just how many more of them there were.

"I have to go get Bunnie."

Carolyn's face fell. "Yes. I guess you should go rescue your first choice. I'll find my own way out of here."

"Don't start! Can you honestly say it would be okay for me to leave her here? No one deserves that fate."

Carolyn turned a bright shade of red. "I'm sorry. You're right. You should go to her, but please be careful." The way she looked at him, he could almost start to think she actually meant it.

Unable to help himself, he pressed a swift kiss on her lips. "If another one of those things comes your way, run. I'll find you."

She nodded, and he turned to get Bunnie. The woman was giving a great Bruce Lee impression at the moment. She might not have been the sharpest tool in the shed, but she kicked ass. Pushing his way through the frantic crowd, he reached out to her. "Bunnie, take my hand."

She looked uncertain. "How do I know you're not a zombie trying to eat my brains?"

Because I'd go hungry, he wanted to say, but didn't. The situation didn't call for it. "Bunnie, I promise you I'm not a zombie. Look at me. I'm not a rotting corpse."

"But I've seen zombie movies. What if they ate your brain and turned you into one of them?"

He was fast losing patience with her. Most people would have appreciated the help under these circumstances. "If I were a zombie, I'd hardly have such an extensive vocabulary."

"Timmy, you know when you use big words it gives me a headache."

He sighed. How could she stand there when chaos reigned around them? Someone crashed into him, making Tim stumble into the table. Bunnie karate chopped him on the head. "Stay away from me, zombie."

Tim growled. It was time to take matters into his own hands. He grabbed her by the legs, pulling her off balance, before slinging her over his shoulder. She beat against his back, but he ignored her surprisingly painful blows as he attempted to make his way back to Carolyn.

He scanned the room to see more of the creatures around them. Where the hell had they come from? "Carolyn!" he screamed, panic starting to set in. *Please tell me nothing has happened to her.* He didn't think he could live with himself if it did.

Just then, someone grabbed his arm. It was Lavern, her afro now slightly askew. "They're outside, too, standing in front of the house. George is getting people into the basement. We should be safe there until we can figure out what's going on."

"I can't go down without Carolyn." He refused to budge when she tried to pull them along with her.

"I saw George leading her downstairs."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. Trust me. She's my best friend. After George, she was the very next person I made sure was okay."

Tim nodded. Lavern was protective when it came to her friends. He followed Lavern down the hallway, but a group of zombies were close on their heels. Bunnie screamed when two of them grabbed her and ripped her out of his arms.

"Leave her," Lavern urged.

"Where's your compassion? I know you're Carolyn's friend, but don't let what you think has happened between us cloud your judgment."

The zombies were dragging Bunnie away. "Brains," they chanted.

Tim tripped, falling onto the carpet. As he stumbled to his feet, one of the zombies sniffed Bunnie's head. "Brains?" He sounded confused.

To Tim's surprise, the zombie threw Bunnie back. "Brains!" he yelled almost sounding furious.

Bunnie stumbled into Tim nearly knocking him over, but Lavern kept him steady. "Come on," she urged, taking Tim and Bunnie's hands. The three of them made it to the basement door.

George was waiting for them. "What the hell took you so long?" he said gruffly.

"Rescuing Tim and Bunnie the Zombie Slayer."

George pulled each one of them inside. "Well, get in. There's a few of us down there."

He managed to close the door just as the zombies made their way toward them.

Tim rushed down the stairs to scan the crowded room. He had to find Carolyn. She was waiting in the corner of the room, an anxious expression on her face. When she saw him, she rushed over and leaped into his arms. "Tim, you're okay!" She pressed kisses all over his face.

He laughed. "Where did this come from?"

"George had to carry me here. I didn't want to leave you. I'm so glad you're okay -- for the sake of the girls of course."

It was like a punch in the gut. He released her, pulling away. "I see."

"What's wrong, Tim?"

Tim raised a brow. "Need you ask? Look, let's not argue right now. We have to figure out how the hell the party got invaded by zombies."

* * *

"I think the zombies are gone. It may be safe to go outside," Bobby declared.

Rain Cloud sat huddled in the corner, sucking on the finger that had been up her nose. "I'm not going anywhere," she whined.

"Get a hold of yourself, Ashley. You got us into this mess; you should be helping us get out of it."

She snatched her finger out of her mouth. "My name is Rain Cloud." Finally there was some animation in her voice.

"Shut up. Just stop it. I'm tired of this Goth shit, and the stupid names for ourselves," Bobby ranted.

Razor spoke up, "Hey, man, not cool at all."

"Shut up, Jeffrey. Grow the hell up. It's time to stop playing dress up, and dark games. This is real life. There are brain-eating zombies out there who will kill us. This isn't like some role playing thing. We could wind up dead. I'm Bobby, you're Jeffrey." He turned to Balthazar. "You're Carlos. How the hell did you decide to name yourself after a demon when you still wet the bed?"

Carlos turned bright red. "Hey, that was supposed to be between you and me."

Bobby ignored him and turned to the biggest offender, his eyes narrowed. "And you, Ashley, you talk about posers and being a non-conformist. You're the biggest poser of them all. Witch, indeed. If we get out of this alive, I'm so through with you guys. I'd rather not have any friends at all than be around a group of miserable kids who talk about death and destruction. I'm going out there to see if the coast is clear. I'll knock on the door with two knocks, pause and then knock again to signal it's me. Got it?"

The three stunned teenagers staring back at him could only nod. He'd wanted to get that off his chest for a long time, but he'd always chickened out. At least when he hung out with them, he had friends. It wasn't that they were bad people, just a little strange and not his speed.

Bobby took slow steps as he looked around him. It seemed as if the zombies were gone, but it was hard to tell in this fog. Just then, he saw a large figure looming in the shadows. Whoever it was, the person didn't limp like a zombie. Who the hell, or what, was it? If this night had taught him anything it was to run first and ask questions later.

When he turned to leave, the person called to him, "Wait! I want to help."

Definitely not a zombie, but it was Halloween; there were all kinds of freaks out tonight. Bobby continued to take steps back as the figure came closer. When the person came into his line of vision, his eyes widened. Freak was an understatement. Bobby's jaw dropped. Was it a man, or a woman?

The large figure wore a hot pink spandex bodysuit, with a spangled silver belt around its waist. His gaze drifted over the shim's body and saw a decisive bulge between his legs. It was a man -- at least he thought it was. He wore a bright red wig, which would have made Ronald McDonald jealous, and so much makeup he could have been a clown. Why did Bobby have a feeling this wasn't a costume? "Who -- who are you?"

"Someone who's in hot water. I've got to get that book back!"

"You're the gypsy who sold Rain Cloud the book?"

"You mean Ashley? Yes, charming girl," the she-male muttered, the tone of his voice making a lie of his words, rubbing the thick mustache resting over its lips. "I'm Cletus, well, soon to be Clotilda when I get enough money for the operation."

"I thought Ashley said some lady named Shaniqua sold her the book."

Cletus/Clotilda flushed, looking slightly uncomfortable. "Well, uh... that's my aunt. I may have told your friend I was her."

"Why would you do that?"

"Everyone comes to my aunt for remedies and potions. While she was away, I wanted to prove to her I could compete so she'll give me more responsibility. Now I fear she'll shrink me again."

"Huh?"

"Oh, it was a love potion incident, but that's a long story. Anyway, I saw on the news people being attacked by brain-eating zombies. Please tell me you two didn't try to perform the resurrection spell?"

"I don't know what kind of spell it was, but Rain Cloud wanted to conjure up a servant to wreak revenge on our enemies."

"Hmm, most of those conjuring spells if not done correctly can lead to a bunch of hungry dead people. Stupid girl. I didn't think she would actually try the damn spell. Sheesh. She struck me as one of those creepy Goth kids who like to play dress up -- no offense, honey."

"None taken," Bobby murmured, thinking this transvestite had no room to talk when it came to playing dress up. He could have at least fixed his fake boobs. One hung nearly to his stomach, while the other peeked from the top of his outfit. "So what do you suggest we do? There's going to be a lot of dead people because of what we did."

"Not necessarily. There is a spell which can reverse everything and this night can all be just a distant memory."

"Great, then what do we need to do?"

"We have to get the book and perform the spell. Where is it?"

Bobby paused. Had Ashley taken it into the tomb with her? He didn't remember seeing it there. It was a pretty big book. "I think she may have dropped it when the zombies showed up."

Cletus looked annoyed. "Where?"

Bobby scanned the graveyard. "Over there. I'm sure of it."

"Well, let's not just stand around, take me there. We have to hurry. This spell has to be performed before midnight or all is lost." Cletus glanced at his watch.

Bobby took Cletus to the spot. "Here we are. This is where it happened."

"Then where the hell is the book? Shit, if we don't reverse the spell, Aunt Shaniqua will have my hide. Oh, my God. How could this have happened?"

"Well, you're the dumbass who sold Ashley the book."

Cletus's expression grew stony. "Don't ever call me dumbass. It's bad enough I have to hear it from my aunt. I'm not going to take it from some punk kid."

"Doesn't tell me why you sold the book."

"I didn't mean to sell her that book. I thought it was the fake."

"Well, your plan to defraud didn't work. Now what do you propose we do?"

"Obviously we have to find that book, or else we're all doomed."

Chapter Five

Carolyn rested in Tim's arms. It felt so right. This is where she belonged. What had gone wrong between them? Those brief moments when she'd waited in the basement, wondering if he was okay, she realized how much she still loved him. What they'd shared earlier was a beautiful thing and she'd belittled it. Tim wasn't a user. They made love because they both wanted it.

"Tim, what are we going to do? Everyone is huddled up, not doing anything. I don't want to stay down here and wait to die. I think we should do something."

He didn't say anything at first, and for a moment Carolyn thought he'd ignored her. "Yes, I think so too."

Bunnie joined them, much to Carolyn's annoyance. "Timmy, I'm bored. What are we going to do?" the younger woman whined.

"I don't know. I really don't."

Bunnie frowned. "Who is she?" the blonde finally asked.

Carolyn held her breath as she waited for his answer. What would he say?

Tim sighed. "Bunnie, this is my wife, Carolyn."

"But... I thought you were separated. We were... are... well, I didn't expect to see her at the party tonight, but now that I have..."

Carolyn tried to pull out of his arms, but Tim held her firm. "No, stay."

Bunnie looked at Carolyn then back at Tim, an unreadable expression in her eyes. "Well, I kind of knew you weren't into me. But you... but you weren't like the other guys. You actually listened to me when I talked and you didn't try to jump into bed with me. I... I felt like a human being around you."

"I'm sorry it turned out this way."

The blonde shrugged. "I knew things were too good to be true." Bunnie gave Carolyn a slight smile. "You're a very lucky woman to have a man like Tim. I knew the writing was on the wall when all he did was talk about you. You'd better treat him right, because if you don't, I'll be waiting around to snatch him up." She turned away and then joined a group on the other side of the room.

Carolyn felt like an ass. All this time she'd had visions of stuffing Bunnie's head into a wood chipper, but the other woman wasn't bad at all. In fact, she seemed kind of nice. She turned to Tim then. "You... you never slept with her?"

"No."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Would you have believed me?"

She blushed, knowing she wouldn't have. "Has... has there been anyone else since we've been apart?"

"No. I went on a few dates, but I couldn't bring myself to go to bed with any of them. You're the only woman I've ever wanted. Didn't tonight finally prove that to you?"

"When we were together, did you cheat on me?"

He looked annoyed. "Carolyn --"

"I'll believe you."

"You never believed me before."

"But I will now. Did you?" She wasn't sure if she wanted to know the answer to her own question, but she couldn't help asking.

"No, Carolyn. The late nights were when I was out driving, mainly to clear my head. You have no idea how much it hurt me that you could think I'd treat our vows so casually. I love you, Carolyn. I've always loved you."

"But you... all the classic signs..."

"Of cheating? I guess I didn't realize how it must have looked, but I was ready to venture into a new phase of my life... with you. I was hoping you'd try new things with

me. I love Julie and Emily very much, but I was glad when they left the house, because I finally had you to myself again."

She felt like crying. "I... I messed things up. I was so upset about the girls leaving, I neglected you."

"It's my fault too. I should have been more understanding, pushed harder for you to see a counseling. I only wish things didn't have to get to the point they did before we could have this conversation."

She laughed humorlessly. "You mean sitting in our friends' basement surrounded by a bunch of people in costume while a bunch of zombies are waiting outside the door to eat our brains?"

Tim smiled. "Yeah, something like that."

"Whatever happens --" Carolyn cut off abruptly when she realized the room had gotten quiet. Several pairs of eyes looked their way. Lavern was giving her the thumbs up sign. Carolyn's face grew hot with embarrassment.

"We can't talk here." Tim stood up and took her hand.

"There's nowhere for us to go."

"Yes, there is." He led her around the corner to the tiny powder room and locked the door behind them. The room only contained a toilet and a sink. It was so small the two of them were squished together.

"Tim! Everyone just saw us come in here."

"So what? I'm not going to have prying eyes looking in on us when we're in the middle of one of the most important conversations of our lives. Now tell me what you were going to say." The determined look in his steely blue eyes allowed no argument.

She licked her lips. "I love you, Tim. I've never stopped. I only wish I didn't wait to tell you until now."

He pulled her into his arms and held her tight. "You have no idea how long I've wanted to hear those words from you, and for the record, when I came upstairs to the bedroom, it wasn't with the intention of talking divorce. I wanted to let you know once

and for all, I've never been unfaithful to you, not even in my thoughts. I wanted us to get back together."

"But when you... you brought Bunnie to the party and everyone said you were seeing a string of women."

"Who was everybody? You mean people like Susan Garrison? She's a -- well, was a first class bitch. Why would you take her word over mine?"

"I was foolish and insecure." She sighed, deciding now was the time to tell him exactly what had been going on in her mind. "But you brought a date to a houseful of our friends on our special night. What was I supposed to think?"

"I admit, it wasn't my best decision. But this night means so much to me. The thought of being without you on it was unbearable. George invited me and I didn't want to sit home and wallow in my own misery. Bunnie was there when George invited me, and I felt it would be kind of rude if I didn't bring her along. I should have thought it out and realized how it would make you feel to bring her around our friends."

Carolyn smiled. "Well, men can make some really dumb decisions."

"And the biggest one of all for me was walking out on our marriage. I should have stayed and fought harder to make things work between us, but I was so discouraged. Can you forgive me for not trying harder to reach you?"

"I'm just as much to blame. I was sad with the girls gone, and I felt old and unattractive. All of a sudden, you were so full of life. You wanted to do new things. I started to believe, along with this new lifestyle, you'd want someone new in your life. My insecurities manifested into this jealousy I couldn't control. Trust me, I didn't like myself at times."

Tim grasped her chin, tilting her head so their eyes met. "Listen and listen well. There is no one I love more than you. When we were freshmen in high school, I was the new kid in a new town. I didn't have a friend in the world until one day the cute redhead in my algebra class smiled at me. I knew at that very moment I was going to marry you. And even at this very moment, I'll never forget how you made me feel that day."

Tears streamed down her cheeks, her heart overflowing with love for him. "Tim, I want to make things work with you, but I'm scared this may be our last night together."

"If that's true, then let's make one more memory."

"Right here?"

"Yes."

"But the people outside..."

"Let them make their own memories." He lowered his head and gently brushed her lips with his. "Delicious. I never get tired of kissing you, my love," he groaned before covering her mouth once more.

Carolyn wrapped her arms around his neck, threading her fingers through the silky strands of his hair. "I love you so much," she moaned into his mouth, reveling in the feeling of being in his arms again, and knowing this time it was forever, no matter what happened. She slid her tongue out to meet his. Carolyn could still taste herself from earlier. It sent a thrill like nothing else up her spine.

Her pussy contracted with need for him. They might have made love less than a couple hours ago, but it held no bearing. Once was never enough with Tim. Most people would be surprised they could still feel such burning passion for each other after all this time.

Tim was the first to break the kiss. "I need to be inside of you now."

Catching his meaning, she slipped out of her shoes and pulled down her stockings and panties. "How do you propose we do this? It's so tiny in here," she whispered breathlessly, still conscious of others outside the door.

"When there's a will there's a way. Undo my pants."

With nimble fingers, she unfastened his pants and slid them down his hips. She then lowered his boxers. Her eyes were riveted on his hardness. Carolyn ran a fingertip along its stiff length. "Tim, you have the most beautiful cock I've ever seen."

He grinned wolfishly. "And you have the tastiest pussy I've ever eaten."

She giggled. "Mine is the only pussy you've ever eaten."

"And mine is the only cock you've ever seen so what's the difference? I don't have to sample other goods to know when I have the best. Now how about wrapping your arms around me so I can get some of that delectable pussy?"

"Hey, wait a minute. Not so fast. You had a little fun with me earlier. I think it's my turn."

"What..."

She dropped to her knees. It was a tight squeeze in the tiny room but she wanted to feel his hardness in her mouth. Giving Tim a blow job had always been one of her favorite things to do. She loved the way he groaned from the back of his throat, and the way his head would loll from side to side. She circled the helmet-shaped tip. The saltiness of their mingled juices still clung to his cock, tingling on her tongue. There was something primordial and sensual about loving him this way shortly after their joining.

Tim groaned. "Carolyn, you don't have to do this."

"I want to. Let me do this for me -- for us." She opened her mouth over his erection, and slowly slid her lips along his length, sucking him in until his cock head touched the back of her throat. Carolyn pulled back just enough that he had only an inch of it still in her mouth before repeating the motion.

"Caro, that feels so good. I missed being with you like this. God, I love you."

His words sent a warm feeling through her body. Her heart fluttered. Carolyn took his balls into her palm, testing their weight, refamiliarizing herself with their satiny hair-roughened texture. She eased his cock out of her mouth before sucking on his sensitive sac. The strong scent of musk filled her nostrils, but it only heightened her pleasure. She loved everything about this man, his touch, taste, smell.

Tim clutched her head, holding her against him as she increased the pressure of her mouth on his balls. She soon turned her attention back to his gloriously hard cock. Her head bobbed back and forth over his length, sucking him as if this were the last time they would be together. Tim's moan grew louder when she tightened her lips around him and slid up and down his cock in swifter motions. She wanted his release in her mouth.

"Caro, I can't hold on for much longer."

She continued to suck him at a frantic pace, wanting him to lose the control he tried to hold on to. Her fingers tightened around his shaft. With her free hand, she reached between her legs and fingered her clit, just the way she knew Tim would like it. She knew he enjoyed watching her touch herself. Warm honey flowed over her finger, her arousal egged on by Tim's responses to her ministrations.

Without any warning, Tim gripped her shoulders and pulled out of her hold, his cock coming out of her mouth with a decisive pop. She looked up in bewilderment. "Why did you stop me? Didn't you like it?"

"You know I did. Too much. I want to be inside of you right now," he growled. Tim inserted his hands under her armpits and yanked her to her feet. "Put your arms around my neck, baby." His fingers dug into her bottom before hoisting her up. Carolyn curled her legs around his waist, eager to receive his turgid member.

When he slipped into her, she released a sigh of delight. There was nothing more gratifying than being so deliciously filled with hard cock, especially when it belonged to someone she loved with all her heart and soul. Earlier when they'd made love, it had been wild and passionate, but this time around, it was more gentle and tender, but no less satisfying.

She clenched her vaginal muscles around his rod, squeezing him deeper into her pussy. The decadent friction of his cock sliding in and out of Carolyn slowly drove her to a maddening peak. "Oh, Tim." She allowed the wonderful sensations to course through her body.

"I love you so much, Carolyn. Never doubt it. You're the only woman I've ever loved, will ever love or want. You are my sunshine, moonlight and warmth on a cold day. You're my everything."

Carolyn buried her face against his neck while she let the tears fall freely. She'd become a virtual watering pot tonight. The last time she'd cried like this was the day Tim left her, but this time her tears were those of joy. The gravity of their situation

remained in the back of her mind, but if she were to die tonight, she knew it would be with Tim's love.

Their bodies ground together in a synchronized rhythm to the beat of their hearts. Her breasts were pressed against the hard wall of his chest, growing tight with her arousal for him. Fire seared through her, threatening to incinerate her from the inside.

Her climax was close. "I'm going to come," she moaned, holding him tighter.

"Then let it happen, sweetheart. Don't hold anything back from me."

She couldn't if she tried. When the explosion came, Carolyn shuddered against him, unable to control herself. Had Tim not had such a strong grip around her waist, she would have fallen to his feet in a boneless puddle.

Tim's orgasm came like a tornado, shooting into her hungry pussy. The heat of his sperm filled her. "Oh, baby, yeah," he grunted, still pumping furiously into her, spilling every last drop of his essence into her.

Carolyn could barely breathe, her heart was beating so fast. Tim leaned against the wall, still holding her firmly, his mouth just against her ear. "That was wonderful."

"Oh God. I can't believe we just did this. I bet everyone outside the door heard us."

"We sure did!" someone called from outside of the room.

With obvious reluctance Tim relaxed his hold on her and planted Carolyn back on her feet. She felt empty without his cock inside of her, wanting him all over again. Laughter welled within her breast. She should have been mortified about what had just happened, but instead, the thrill of the experience was a rush like nothing before. So what if they'd all heard?

"Do you mind?" Tim asked. He didn't elaborate, but she knew exactly what he meant. It had been one of the reasons they'd been so good together over the years -- their ability to communicate. When that was lost, that's when things in the marriage began to break down. Carolyn vowed she'd never allow that to happen again.

"No. I don't mind."

"Well, I mind. I have to take a leak," a voice she didn't recognize on the other side of the door groaned.

They both burst out laughing. "Oh, my goodness, I feel like I'm in the middle of a bad horror movie. Remember when we used to poke fun at how the teenagers always managed to have sex with each other, even though there was a killer on the loose?" She grinned.

"I guess we just had a cliché moment."

"Yes. As precarious as our situation is, we still couldn't keep our hands off each other. How corny is that?"

Tim kissed the top of her head. "Very corny, but also very sexy. I'm happy to have a movie moment with you. There's no one I would rather have it with than you."

"I feel the same way."

Then reality sunk in. There really were brain-eating zombies outside ready to take every last person in the basement down. Carolyn hadn't envisioned her last moments on earth to be like this. She'd always envisioned growing old with Tim, traveling the world, babysitting her grandchildren, and sitting in a rocker watching the sunset next to the man she loved.

Would this be the last time they made love or laughed together? Would they never see their two beautiful daughters again?

Carolyn pressed her face against his chest. "Tim, I'm scared. What are we going to do?"

He stroked her hair in a comforting gesture, a heavy sigh falling from his lips. "I don't know, baby. I just don't know."

Chapter Six

"Why won't this car go any faster?" Bobby asked his companion, who drove like a little old lady on a Sunday drive.

"This car is a classic, kid. It needs to be handled gently."

"More like a lemon if you ask me. There's a spring poking my ass. Where did you get this hunk of junk anyway?"

"You know, I can stop the car and let the zombies get you. I have as much at stake here as you do. The last thing I want is for my Aunt Shaniqua to find out what I did." Cletus fingered his mustache, a thoughtful expression on his face.

"What I don't understand is why you were selling relics that didn't belong to you in the first place."

"They were things she wouldn't have missed. Never you mind why I did what I did. We have to figure out where that book is."

"But we searched every inch of the cemetery. If it wasn't there then what do you think will happen by driving around?"

Cletus sighed, tilting his bright red wig. Bobby wished the she-male would pay more attention to the road. "Listen, you young whippersnapper, I'm in charge and don't need you to question my every step."

"I still don't get why we have to ride around. You're not going to try any funny stuff, are you? I've read about pervs like you."

Cletus slammed on the brakes and turned off the car. "How dare you! I am not a perv. I'm a woman trapped in a man's body and as soon as I have enough money for the operation, my outside will match the inside. I have a woman's needs that a scrawny brat like you could never satisfy. Besides, I'm saving myself for Barry Manilow. That man is magic," he finished with a dreamy sigh.

At the mention of his musical idol, Bobby perked up. "You like Barry Manilow, too? I love his stuff!"

Cletus gave him a suspicious look. "He's way before your time, young one. What do you know about him?"

Bobby snorted. "I know he writes the songs that make the whole world sing. I know he used to be the piano player for the divine Miss M. He's won countless Grammys, written over a hundred hit songs. The man is a musical genius."

"What's your favorite song, and don't say 'Mandy' or 'I Write the Songs,' everyone knows those two."

"My favorite is 'Through the Rain.' It's gotten me through some hard times."

The transvestite gasped. A wet sheen entered Cletus's eyes as he clutched his hand against his chest. "You really are a fan."

"Of course I am. I said I was. I have all his albums."

"You can't be a bad guy if you like Barry. I... I guess you're okay then." Cletus started the car again. "The reason why we're driving around is to see who holds the book. They couldn't have gotten very far if they took it from the cemetery."

"Why would that be? They could have driven away just like we did."

"That's true, but the book has special properties. The book has its own security system."

"What do you mean?"

"Once it falls into the hands of the wrong owner it could cause an extreme reaction. Whoever has the book may be in a catatonic state."

Bobby frowned, trying to make sense of it. "You weren't exactly the owner of the book, so how were you able to sell it to Ashley? Wouldn't she have fallen victim to the curse of the book if that were the case?"

"The book belongs to my family, not to one person exclusively, but since I unwittingly gave the book away freely, your friend Rain Cloud -- err, Ashley became the owner."

"So you're saying it has to be given freely to the next owner in order for the book not to go on the defensive?"

Cletus smiled, revealing lipstick-smeared teeth. "Exactly."

"But since the book technically belongs to Ashley, wouldn't she have to hand it to you?"

"Well, there's an exception to everything. Since my family members are the original keepers of the book, we should be able to retrieve it without any harm done."

"And just how far do you think whoever has the book may have gotten?"

"They may have gotten a few miles by car, but definitely not far enough to get out of town. On foot, maybe a few blocks. Did you by any chance notice any cars parked at the cemetery when you and your friends were playing Goth kids of America?"

"You're one to talk. You look like Ronald McDonald's fat illegitimate sister."

Cletus looked as if he'd explode literally. "In the name of Barry, I'll pretend you didn't say that."

Bobby rolled his eyes. They might share an affinity for the same music, but he couldn't wait to get away from this loony tune.

Cletus shrieked and tires squealed as the car smacked into a figure in the road. "Oh, my goodness. Oh, my goodness. I think I just killed someone."

"It could have been a zombie."

"I don't think so. The person just came out of nowhere." Cletus threw the car into park and started to get out of the car.

Bobby grabbed his arm. "Don't do it. There are zombies roaming the street."

"Don't you think I know it? But I'm Rom. If we kill someone we're indebted to the surviving family members for the rest of our natural lives. I don't do servitude well. It's bad enough I have to bow and scrape to my Aunt Shaniqua. Now let go of me." The transvestite snatched his arm away from Bobby's grasp.

Bobby's first inclination was to lock the door and drive off, but he couldn't leave Cletus, as much as he wanted to, just as he couldn't leave the other three in harm's way.

He wished he didn't have a conscience or else he would have left their asses and got the hell out of town. His parents were on vacation so at least they were safe. He'd often wondered when he watched horror movies why the people didn't just run like hell when danger came their way. Bobby used to say he would run first and ask questions later. Now he found himself in a similar situation to the dummies on the silver screen and he felt like a fool.

With a heavy sigh, Bobby got out of the car to see Cletus being smacked on the side of his head by a lady who looked older than dirt.

"Dumbass, I told you the last time you messed with my things you'd get it. You thought being shrunk for several months was punishment? Well, you don't know what torture is until I get a hold of you."

"Who is this woman?" Bobby demanded.

Cletus pouted. "Goth kid, this is my Aunt Shaniqua."

* * *

When Tim and Carolyn finally emerged from the bathroom, their clothing was slightly askew, and they wore sheepish grins on their faces. A guest wearing a Tarzan costume pushed past them and raced into the bathroom. The rest of the onlookers stared at them with expressions of disbelief and smugness. Lavern stalked over to them. "Are you crazy? We could all die and you're playing horizontal hokey pokey?"

"It was vertical actually," Tim corrected.

"Whatever! You two are nuts. First you can't stand each other and then you're humping in my powder room like you don't have any damn sense."

"No, you have it wrong. We finally came to our senses. I'm sorry if you're offended, but I wouldn't take the moment back for anything. We love each other, and we didn't want our possibly last time together to be with bad blood between us."

"Lavern, please don't be mad at us," Carolyn pleaded.

Lavern placed her hands on her hips and pursed her lips. Then she smiled. "I'm not mad. I'm actually really jealous. George and I haven't knocked boots like that in years. We're going to take a page from your book." Her smile suddenly fell. "I'm happy

for you two, but... I'm going out of my mind. It's hard not knowing whether you're going to live or die. I keep thinking I'll wake up and this will all be a bad dream. We were watching the small black and white television down here while you two were getting it on, until it died on us."

Tim sensed something was up. And it wasn't good. "What did you guys see on the television, Lavern?"

Lavern wrapped her arms around her body and looked as if she'd cry. "We're on our own."

"What do you mean we're on our own?" Carolyn frowned.

"Most of the night duty police officers have either called out sick, gone home, or quit. No one wants to deal with these zombies. It's every man for himself." Their hostess's voice rose in near hysteria.

"I don't want to die! I don't want to die!" a woman in a Cleopatra costume wailed.

"Someone smack her, she's hysterical!" another person shouted. Everyone started talking at once.

Tim grabbed Lavern's arm. "You mean no one is coming to help us? What about the National Guard? Haven't they been called?"

"Even if we did know where to get help, who's to say they'd get to us before the zombies did? They're all over town. No one knows what to do. The newscaster advised everyone to stay inside. The mayor has skipped town with his latest mistress."

The situation seemed hopeless, but there had to be a way to get rid of the zombies.

The sound of splintering wood tore through the air and someone screamed. "Oh, no! One of the zombies punched a hole through the door!"

Carolyn buried her face against Tim's chest. He desperately wanted to assure her everything would be okay, but he couldn't do it, because he didn't know what was going to happen. "Tim, we can't just stay down here like sitting ducks. We have to find a way out of this mess."

"I know, but we can't all get out. The zombies are surrounding the house. I think if a few of us could find a way out, we can find a way to get rid of the zombies. In the meantime we should start barricading the door." Tim looked around the basement for an escape route.

Lavern pointed to the far corner. "There's a small window over there you may be able to get out. It leads to the back yard, and the fence is locked from the inside. There's a good chance those creatures haven't gotten back there yet. The only problem is window hasn't been opened in years. You may have a hard time getting it to work."

Tim nodded. "Okay. I'll try to jimmy it open."

"No, Tim." The fearful look in Carolyn's eyes touched his heart, but this was something he had to do. If they stayed down here, there was no telling when the zombies would break through the door entirely. He'd rather die fighting than waiting around for things to happen.

"Sweetheart, I have to do this. If I don't try, we'll all be doomed."

"Fine, then I'm coming with you." A determined gleam sparkled in her eyes.

"Oh, no you don't. You stay put. I don't want you getting hurt."

"Why is it okay for you to risk your neck, but not me? I don't think so, buddy. Remember, we're in this together. I'm not completely helpless, you know."

Tim wanted to argue, but she had a point. It was possibly just as dangerous down in the basement as it was outside. The distant chants for brains seemed louder. "George, round up a crew to barricade that door now. Lavern, find a table or chair we can stand on to reach that window."

George, who'd been standing by the door looking as if he'd piss his pants any minute, jumped into action. "You heard the man. Start looking for items to use to keep those monsters out."

Lavern came back with a chair in less than a minute, and Tim climbed up on it and attempted to pry the window open. When it didn't budge, he started banging on it. It was stuck. "Do you have a crowbar or something to wedge in here?"

Lavern shook her head. "Would a screwdriver work? George keeps his tools down here."

"It might."

"Is there anything I can do?" Carolyn asked anxiously.

"Not yet, sweetheart. I have to get this window opened first."

Lavern returned with a toolbox.

Tim bent three screwdrivers before the window even budged. Finally with the fourth one, he managed to open it. He turned to the crowd then. "It's now or never, guys. Who's coming with me?"

Most people looked at him as if he were crazy. Only Bunnie volunteered. "I'll come with you."

"Are you sure? It could be dangerous."

"I know, but I... I don't want to stay here with that man leering at me."

"What man?" Tim saw Melvin Sneed sneering in Bunnie's direction.

"Wassa matter? I was only trying to be friendly." Melvin shrugged.

Tim hopped down from his chair. "Melvin, you've had this coming for a long time," Tim growled, his fist clenched.

Carolyn held him back. "No, Tim. Don't do it." She walked over to Melvin. "Let me." Before anyone saw it coming, she slammed her fist into the unsuspecting man's face. He crumpled to the ground.

"Damn, woman, where did you learn to do that? That's the second time you laid someone out like that. You're a regular Muhammad Ali. I thought you said you didn't know how to fight." Tim shook his head with amazement.

"I never said I didn't know how to fight. I just never had a reason to before tonight."

"Caro, you should have let me take care of it." Tim made a mental note never to underestimate her again.

"That's what he gets for being a pig. Now let's stop standing around and get out that window."

"Okay, I'll go first and then I'll hoist you and Bunnie out." He turned to the crowd. "No one else wants to come with us?"

A man in a Lone Ranger costume and a woman dressed like a cowgirl volunteered. "Okay, I guess this is it." Tim climbed back on the chair and pulled himself up enough to wiggle out the window. He thanked his lucky stars he'd added those extra pull ups to his workout regimen. When he finally managed to crawl out he surveyed the grounds to see if the coast was clear.

Feeling confident it was safe to help the others out, he reached down and helped Carolyn and then Bunnie. Then the three of them helped the other two outside. Everything seemed eerily quiet except for the chant for brains. They were outside of the fence.

"What do we do now?" the cowgirl asked, gnawing on her fingernails.

He hadn't thought that far.

"I think we need weapons to fend off the zombies," Carolyn suggested. "We're not going to get far if we don't have anything to combat them with."

Bunnie brightened. "I have pepper spray in my purse."

Tim raised a brow, noticing the blonde's hands were empty. "Where's your purse, Bunnie?"

"At home, but I bet it would work against those horrible zombies."

"Do you actually hear what you're saying or is it like a big wind tunnel in there?" the Lone Ranger asked.

"Hey, that was unnecessary. She's only trying to help," Carolyn said.

Tim smiled. Most women wouldn't have taken kindly to a woman like Bunnie, but Carolyn was a classy woman. "Good thinking about the weapons, Caro. I'll call down to Lavern and see if she could send something up to us."

Within minutes, George and Lavern produced a couple baseball bats and some golf clubs.

Tim gave Carolyn's hand a reassuring squeeze. "Are you ready, babe?"

"Yes. It's now or never."

Chapter Seven

"My amulet is glowing. I think we're close." Madame Shaniqua clutched the charm hanging around her neck.

Bobby's night was getting stranger by the minute. First he and his crew had inadvertently unleashed a group of zombies on the town. Then he met a transvestite wanna-be gypsy. Then there was Madame Shaniqua. When she wasn't being verbally and physically abusive to Cletus, she was an interesting person to watch.

She wore bright colors and several gold chains, and rings on every finger. She wore at least an inch of makeup on her face. Bobby had made the mistake of asking her age, and the battle-axe gave him jock itch with the snap of her fingers.

Fortunately the gypsy wore a talisman around her neck which glowed when it got close to the book.

"Look over there!" Bobby pointed to a bunch of zombies, circled around a small group of people swinging baseball bats and golf clubs to keep them off. Bobby had a feeling they wouldn't be able to keep this up for much longer. "We have to help them."

Cletus snorted. "I won't be able to fit them in this car. We have to look for the book."

"No, Dumbass, drive toward them. The amulet's glow is getting stronger. It's near."

"Aunt Shaniqua --"

Shaniqua smacked Cletus on the back of his head, nearly knocking off the bright red wig. "Hey, watch the hair," Cletus sniffed.

"You're not in a position to give me orders. Because of you, I had to cut my trip short. I don't know why you thought you could get away with selling my relics. I'm watching you even when you don't think I am."

"You treat me like a child. I just wanted to show you I could be responsible."

"I treat you like a child because you're a good-for-nothing piece of worthlessness."

Bobby held back a snicker. These two together were even funnier than Ashley and her propensity for eating her nose goblins. "Could you two stop arguing for a minute so we can figure out how we're going to save them?"

Shaniqua turned beady black eyes his way. "Are you trying to tell me what to do?" Her low voice rumbled, sending shivers down his spine.

Bobby scratched his nuts again, not wanting the old crone to do anything worse to him. "Uh, no. I was just... uh, making a suggestion. That's all. I defer to you, of course." *You evil old bitch.*

She glared at him as if she'd read his mind. "Watch it, young man. Dumbass here can tell you, I don't suffer fools gladly."

Bobby nodded, trying to keep his thoughts at bay in case she really could tell what he was thinking. The gypsy turned back to the scene in front of them. The zombies must have heard their approach because some of them turned toward their car.

"Speed up, Dumbass, and run them over. If we get some of them then I can perform my fire spell to take the rest of them out."

"But Aunt Shaniqua, this car is a classic!"

"One more word and I'll zap you good," Shaniqua threatened.

Cletus firmed his lips before pressing the gas pedal, gunning the car forward. Bodies fell all around them as the car plowed through the zombies. Bobby had never been more scared in his life.

"The book! There it is!" Shaniqua's voice grew animated.

"Where?" Bobby looked around and saw nothing.

"On the ground. One of the rings binding the book must have come loose because it's snagged on one of the zombie's pants. It's a wonder the book was able to make it this far. The curse it would perform on an unwanted owner wouldn't affect a

zombie. I'll get out of the car and ward the zombies off with my fire spell. Stop the car, Dumbass."

"Cletus," the pink-clad man muttered stubbornly before pulling the car to a halt.

More zombies came their way, and Bobby hoped they would make it out of this mess alive.

* * *

Carolyn swung the golf club, catching another zombie in the face. Her arms ached, and her chest was on fire from the exertion. She didn't know how much longer she would be able to hold on. If she survived this, she promised herself to sign up for more aerobics classes.

She glanced at Tim from the corner of her eye to assure herself he was okay. She gasped when a zombie reached out to grab Tim's head. Carolyn smashed the club against the fiend's back. To her horror, the monster's arm fell off, but it continued to move, inching its way toward her.

She swung at the zombie again, knocking it back, and kicked at the arm.

"Caro, duck!"

She didn't have much time to react before she was grabbed from behind. She screamed, trying to wiggle out of the tight hold on her waist. Tim reached for her, only to be grabbed by two more of the creatures. "Tim, I love you," she called to him.

"I love you too, Carolyn. Always." There was resignation in his voice.

It just didn't seem fair for things to end this way when they'd all fought so hard to stay alive. The cowgirl had been taken down by a group of the creatures who'd ambushed them. There were only four of them left. As she squirmed, trying to break free of the cold clammy arms, she closed her eyes and prayed for a miracle. Carolyn braced herself for the zombie's bite.

Then nothing. She opened her eyes to find the zombie had let go. Not only that, but a little old woman dressed in all the colors of the rainbow stood before them with fire blazing from her hands. The monsters didn't like it and edged away. "One of you must retrieve my book if you want to put an end to this nightmare."

Carolyn shook her head in confusion. "Book? What are you talking about?"

Tim pulled Carolyn into his arms in a huge bear hug. "Thank God you're okay. When I saw you captured, my heart sank to my feet." He gave her a swift kiss.

She smiled up at him, thankful to have him by her side. "I'm okay now."

"Uh, would you two mind breaking it up? If you haven't noticed there's a bunch of zombies standing around us." A kid dressed in all black with short, spiky black hair and dark makeup appeared as if from nowhere.

Carolyn didn't need to be told twice. Tim grabbed her by the hand and would have pulled her away but the old woman held a fire-laden hand out, blocking their way. "No. You can't go, not until one of you retrieves my book."

A stormy look crossed Tim's face. "What book? Are you crazy? We have to get out of here."

The old lady didn't look happy. "If you want the zombies to go away, one of you will retrieve my book. It's our only hope. We only have about an hour or we're all doomed."

Carolyn knew one of them had to go. Why not her? This was her chance to prove she was worthy of Tim's love. "I'll do it. Where's the book?"

Tim pulled her against him. "Like hell you will, I'll go."

"I can do this. I'm capable of more than you think," she argued.

"Well, one of you has to go, because I'm not." The Goth kid shook his head vehemently.

"I'm not doing it either." The Lone Ranger sniffed as he knocked another zombie away with a golf club.

That only left Bunnie. Where was Bunnie? Carolyn scanned the chaos and saw the blonde standing a few feet away examining her nails with a frown on her face. The zombies were leaving her alone completely. It only made sense that she should be the one to retrieve the book.

As if knowing in which direction Carolyn's thoughts were aimed, she looked up with pursed lips. "I broke a nail." The pout on her face said it all. She wasn't going.

Carolyn sighed in exasperation. "Where is the damn thing?"

The gypsy nodded into the direction of a zombie several feet away. Hooked at the bottom of his pants was a large leather-bound book. Why hadn't any of them noticed it before? It didn't matter. She wiggled out of Tim's grip and dashed toward the group of walking dead they'd been holding off for the past hour.

"Caro, no!" He tried to pull her back, but she eluded his grip.

"Let her go, young man," she heard the gypsy say from behind her.

The group of zombies saw her coming and immediately limped over to her. With all her might she bashed the closest monster in the face, the end of the club sinking into its skull. Carolyn yanked the club out and hit it again. The next blow bent the club.

Tim was by her side, swinging his baseball bat wildly, holding a few of the creatures off.

Carolyn looked at her target and made her way toward it, using her club and striking anything that crossed her path. She dove for the book thinking it would be easy to retrieve, however, it was well and truly snagged on the zombie's pants. The zombie bent over and grabbed her hair. "Tim!" she cried out, hoping he was near.

He was. She looked up to see Tim slam his bat into the fiend's head, knocking it clean off. Carolyn screamed in horror as the head dropped to her side. Its eyes were still open and it chanted, "Brains."

She moved out of the way as the body toppled to the ground.

"Hurry up and get the book. I'll try to hold the rest of them off."

By now the gypsy had joined them. Her fire was starting to die down, but it was just enough to keep most of the zombies off. "What are you waiting for, you stupid woman?" the gypsy hissed. "Get the book!"

"Back off, old lady, can't you see she's doing the best she can?" Tim defended her.

"It's okay, Tim. That head caught me off guard for a minute." With clumsy fingers she tried to unhook the book as fast as she could, but nerves were getting the better of her.

The old woman yelled at her again, and it took a few tries, but she finally got it undone. "Now what?" she asked.

"Give me the book." Someone held out a hairy hand. Carolyn looked up and had to shake her head and blink to make sure she wasn't imagining things. A large man in a wig and a bright pink spandex unitard stood there. If this wasn't Halloween, this guy would definitely be on the freak squad. "Give me the book or you'll be sorry," he said in a sing-song voice.

"Give the book to Dumbass. Hurry!"

She hesitated, but in that brief moment a jolt that felt like lightning crashed into her body, and then she felt the sensation of falling.

"Caro!" Tim screamed.

"I told you to hand the book over." Pinkie sounded annoyed.

She tried to move her lips, but the words wouldn't form. What was happening to her? Then -- total darkness.

Chapter Eight

Tim sat crammed in the back of an old Chevy Coupe with Carolyn on his lap. He could barely move with all the people packed inside. He felt like a circus clown. The Goth kid's elbow dug into his ribs. The Lone Ranger sat next to him holding Bunnie on his lap, and wouldn't stop squirming.

Tim patted Carolyn's face, but she remained unresponsive. Panic began to set in. "Why isn't she responding? You said she'd come to in a few minutes." They'd come so far tonight. Surviving the party, getting out of the house alive, and fighting off zombies until their muscles burned couldn't all be in vain. Tim didn't want to lose her now when there was finally hope.

The old lady shook her head without sympathy. "I told her to hand the book to Dumbass, but she didn't listen. It will be a few minutes before she comes to. Lucky for her she didn't attempt to open the book or she'd be in that state for much longer. Now, we have to get to the cemetery and perform the ceremony at the spot the zombies were raised. Only then will they return to their eternal rest."

"What about the people who died tonight because of them?" the Lone Ranger asked.

Madame Shaniqua, as she'd introduced herself when they all got into the vehicle, sighed as if losing patience. Tim could tell she was a woman who didn't like being questioned. "When the spell is done, and done properly, everyone affected by the zombies will return to the way they were before. No one will remember what happened."

Tim's heart fell. If things returned to the point they'd been at before the zombies arrived, then what did that mean for him and Carolyn? Would they return to their separate lives? The very thought tore at him like sharp knives. It felt as if his world

were caving in on him. Tonight, despite the circumstances, he wanted to shout at the top of the highest roof that he and Carolyn were back together. Now, it was possible they wouldn't remember their vows to each other. "You mean we won't remember this night? Everything will be like it was before the zombies came?"

"That's what I said." The gypsy shrugged.

"Are you okay, mister?" the Goth kid asked.

Tim clutched Carolyn close to him, not exactly sure how to answer. On the one hand if they could reverse the spell, the town would go back to normal, but on the other, he could lose Carolyn forever. Tim wished he could climb out of the car and run away with her and never look back, but it wouldn't be fair to the other people involved. "Not really, son, but hopefully one day I will be."

The kid gave him a funny look.

The car pulled into the cemetery parking lot. Carolyn wiggled in his lap with a groan.

"Caro?" Tim asked anxiously.

"Tim, where are we? Did we get rid of the zombies?"

"Not yet, sweetie, but once we perform the ceremony it will be all over." Literally.

"Oh, that will be good. Then we can go home."

She said it as if they were going home together. It was what he wanted more than he wanted air to breathe, but he knew his hopes were futile. One thing he refused to do was disillusion her. After this he vowed to try harder than ever to win her back. "Yes, home sounds nice, darling." He kissed her forehead.

The seven of them climbed out of the car. A group of zombies started toward them. "Do you guys have those clubs you were swinging earlier?" the kid asked.

Tim groaned. In his concern for Carolyn, he'd dropped his baseball bat and he knew the golf club she had been carrying had also been left behind. Now they were well and truly doomed.

"Why don't you do that fire thing to hold them off, Madame Shaniqua?" the kid suggested.

She waved her hand in an elaborate gesture. "I've placed a ward on your head. The zombies won't be able to touch you for the next ten minutes, but that is all we need."

Goth boy scowled. "You mean you could have done this the entire time and didn't?"

Madame Shaniqua turned to him and snarled, "I'm warning you, one more outburst and I'll turn you into a boil on Dumbass's butt!"

The kid went a pale shade of green.

"Cletus," the pink blob of a man muttered under his breath.

"Let's not stand around, let's do it. Now!" The Lone Ranger sounded as impatient as Tim was getting.

"Yes, let's do this," Tim agreed.

The kid led the motley band to the spot to perform the ceremony. "This is where it happened."

The gypsy nodded. She mumbled some incoherent words Tim didn't think were English almost in a trance-like state.

"What's she doing?" Carolyn whispered to him.

"I think it's part of the ceremony," Tim answered.

The gypsy lifted her head then and revealed a cell phone ear piece. "No, not part of the ceremony, my sister in Romania just called. Sorry about that."

Everyone in the group looked at each other in disbelief that this woman could take a phone call when the fate of the town was in their hands. This bad horror movie was getting worse by the minute.

"Okay, now that you've reached out and touched someone, can we get on with this thing?" The annoyance in the Goth kid's voice echoed Tim's own sentiments.

The gypsy glared at the offender. "Keep it up and you won't have any balls to itch."

Tim didn't know what that threat meant -- hell, he didn't want to know, but it obviously did mean something to the kid.

"Get into a circle and hold hands. Repeat after me." Laying the book open on the ground, the old woman maneuvered herself between Tim and Carolyn, wrapping a gnarled hand around each of theirs.

He wanted to protest, but thought better of it. "Ouh rum resurahm," she chanted. "Repeat after me," she yelled.

"Ouh rum resurahm!" they all chanted back.

"Sum reh teregon."

"Sum reh teregon."

The chants went back and forth, but nothing was happening. Madame Shaniqua frowned. "Of course, I should have remembered. I'm starting to get up there in years."

"Starting?" Cletus snorted derisively.

"Shut up, Dumbass!" Shaniqua hissed. "We need at least ten people for this spell to work. The power comes from within us, and we'll need more people to get rid of this many zombies."

"Everyone is inside their homes, terrified to death. Where are we going to find three more people in ten minutes? It's nearly midnight."

The Goth kid perked up. "Give me two minutes and I'll be right back." The kid took off and Tim said a silent prayer that the kid would get back in time.

"Oh, God, what's taking him so long?" Carolyn muttered when he didn't immediately come back.

He glanced at his watch. Nearly five minutes had passed and he was getting anxious. Had the kid gotten scared and run off? Just when he would have gone to look for him, the boy returned with three more similarly dressed teenagers.

"I brought some reinforcements. We managed to elude the zombies. Madame Shaniqua, do you think you can put a ward on their heads?" the kid asked.

The gypsy sighed and waved her hand in the air in an exasperated gesture. "Done. Now hurry and get in a circle."

"I'm not holding her hand. She's been picking her nose all night." The kid shuddered.

"Would you shut the hell up? People are dead, I have zombie blood on my skirt, and everyone is in hiding and scared not knowing if they'll see another day. To top that off I broke a nail! I don't care if she's been picking her nasty little nose for the past ten years, take her damn hand and do what the woman says!" Bunnie screamed.

Everyone stared, stunned that the sunny-natured Bunnie had spoken up. The kid quickly rejoined the circle and took the girl's hand.

Madame Shaniqua smiled for the first time that night, taking Tim and Carolyn's hands in hers once again. This time when the ten of them performed the chant, the ground began to shake almost as if there were an earthquake.

"Don't be afraid. It's starting to work," the gypsy said, squeezing Tim's hand tighter. "Everyone close your eyes and concentrate really hard."

They continued to chant, making the ground shake even harder. The faint sound of zombies registered, but the sound grew weaker with each passing second until it was completely gone.

Tim didn't know why, but he had a feeling the spell had worked. He didn't want to open his eyes, however, because then things would be the same as they were with Carolyn before the zombie incident.

"You can open your eyes now, Timothy," the gypsy whispered.

"Tim," he muttered. No one called him Timothy except his mother, and she only did it when he was in trouble.

"Open your eyes, the spell has been broken. Order is now restored," she urged again.

"No. Just leave me to my memories for a moment."

"Tim, would you open your eyes?" It was Carolyn's voice.

Slowly he lifted his lids. To his surprise the cemetery was empty save for Madame Shaniqua and Carolyn. He looked around with confusion. Where had the others gone? "What? What happened?"

"Things have been restored to the way they were." The gypsy smiled, a smugness around the corners of her mouth.

"But you said..."

"Things are as they should be."

"But I remember everything." Tim was still confused.

"I held your hands for a reason, my child. Now, I must be going." She picked up the book and closed it. "I have a lesson to teach my nephew."

"Help me! Help me!" a little voice cried from somewhere.

"Shut up, Dumbass, you only have yourself to blame." She bent over again and scooped up the now shrunken Cletus. "Should you ever need my services, just call old Shaniqua's name in the wind, and I'll be there."

Tim watched in amazement as the old lady walked away. After a few steps, she disappeared completely.

Carolyn shot into his arms, showering kisses all over his face. "We did it, baby! We made it through this crazy night."

Tim buried his face against her neck, inhaling her sweet scent. "I thought I'd lost you, Caro. I love you so much."

"Sweetheart, you can never lose me. Not anymore. After what we shared tonight, why did you think you would?"

"Maybe we should go home and I'll explain it to you in bed."

Carolyn grinned. "I like the sound of that."

Tim turned serious for a moment. "After you passed out, Madame Shaniqua said no one would remember this night."

"But I remember everything -- well, almost everything except what happened from the time I blacked out to when we got to the cemetery."

"I know, but what I'm saying is, none of our friends will remember tonight."

"Oh, so we can never talk about this night again?"

"Only when we're alone. It's not like anyone will believe us anyway. Come on, brain-eating zombies, Goth kids, a hairy transvestite and a gypsy who looks like she

should have been dead several hundred years ago?" At the thought of it, Tim burst into laughter, hardly believing it himself.

Carolyn joined him, doubling over until tears raced down her face. "Oh my God. It was really wild, wasn't it? Well, you did say you wanted us to have an adventure together."

Tim groaned. "Don't remind me. That saying about being careful what you wish for is true. We certainly got more than we bargained for tonight." He took Carolyn by the hand and looked into her eyes. "I love you very much and I think if we could get through tonight we can get through anything together."

"I know. You do know, since no one will remember except us, you'll have to call Bunnie and tell her it's off. I don't plan on sharing you with anyone, even if she's a nice person."

"Yes, ma'am!" Tim grinned, never happier to obey an order. "Did I tell you how sexy you are in that French maid outfit?"

She smiled, wrapping her arms around his neck. "No, but you can now."

"You are the sexiest, most desirable woman I've ever met, or will ever meet."

She lifted a brow. "Even sexier than Bunnie?"

"Much more."

"I love you, Tim."

"And I you."

She pressed a kiss against his throat. "Halloween rules," she sighed.

It certainly did.

Eve Vaughn

Eve Vaughn has enjoyed creating characters and making up stories from an early age. As a child she was always getting into mischief, so when she lost her television privileges (which was often), writing was her outlet. Her stories have gotten quite a bit spicier since then! Eve likes to read, bake, make crafts, travel, and spend time with her family. She lives in the Philadelphia area with her husband and pet turtle. She loves to hear from her fans, so feel free to contact her at EveVaughn10@aol.com, join her yahoo group at www.evevaughnsbooks-subscribe@yahoogroups.com and visit her website at <http://www.evevaughn.com/>.