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# How Wicked Can She Go?

J. Morgan

## **Dedication**

Without the grace and divine sweetness of one person, this book would not have been possible. Meems, I don't care what anyone says. You are the sweetest of the wicked, and the heart and soul of Nikki.

I'd also like to thank Terri, without whom I would never have gotten the Smythe dynasty off the ground, and Debbie at Kwips and Kritiques for liking my sneak peek enough to threaten me with bodily harm if I didn't finish it. This book is for you guys.

## Chapter One

"I am evil."

"I am vile."

"I am the wickedest one ever."

Sure I am. Right! How can I be evil and vile, not to mention wicked, with a nose like this? I mean really. This thing could be on one of those sickeningly cute child stars it's so perfect. I'm a witch, not some puerile child star. Do I look like one of the Olsen twins to you? Remember I'm a witch, before you answer that question. I could pull off a nice Rachel Ray though.

*Be quiet Nikki. You are not a Rachel Ray.*

Nikki is me, by the way. The other voice speaking there is me, too. She's the one who reminds me I'm evil when I'm feeling especially perky, which is more times than I am willing to admit to. Well, I'm not admitting to anything, so stopping waiting, for I barely know you people. Isn't it enough to admit to feeling perky, without revealing how much of the time I spend doing it? My mother would roll over in her condo, in the Bahamas, if she knew I was even talking to you about this.

She probably already is, to tell you the truth. I am somewhat of a disappointment to the grand Smythe-Ponthynhausen name. What she thinks is so grand about it I'll never know. There are only four bona fide witches out of the whole bunch. The rest were all wanabees, dragging on Grand-mama's good name for all it was worth. I'm not vindictive, but, after four hundred plus years, you'd think the first few inquisitions and witch trials would have taught them not to flaunt what they didn't have.

That was wicked of me, wasn't it? Maybe there's hope after all.

Let me get the hell away from this mirror. It's making me sick, with all the perkiness staring back at me. I mean, it's not my fault I was born this way, long curly black hair falling down my perfect white shoulders. I didn't want these full red lips, or piercing green eyes that haunt men for days. Well, maybe I'm not too upset about those, but the cupid-shaped face has got to go. I'm busty, too, with matching curves around the hips. What self-respecting witch wants those? You have to have a whippish figure, with lots of odd angles that can jab a man, and make it hurt, to be a real witch, as my mother loves to point out.

As you can see, I have quite the complex about all this. If I had a wart, or even a single, solitary blemish, I could deal with it better. Thanks to my Dad, I was left with an immaculate complexion. Mitches tend to be pretty. Mom should have known better than to fall in love with someone from the same species, not that I don't love my Dad. Because I do. He's the greatest, but he's so proud of passing along the Ponthynhausen genes to me, he tends to ignore Mom's wrath over me losing the Smythe part of the equation. In his defense, I did get the power from Mom. Mitches are big on showmanship, with some earth magic thrown in, but everyone knows witches are de bomb!

What? Mitches? You don't know what a Mitch is? Sorry, I tend to forget you mortals aren't up on the proper terminology we members of the higher orders use. Like everyone else, we tend to keep important stuff like that in books we don't lend out, because people treat other people's stuff like crap. We learned that a long time ago, when Evenia Dumaxious lent the girl, who lived next door, a box. Broke the damn thing, and let all sorts of crap loose in the world. It's the reason we have tax attorneys to this day.

Mitches are male witches, whereas female witches are, well, witches. Since we're the most powerful of the species, we got to take the name. It's also the reason you get a lot of: *If it's screwed up, Mitch did it*, in the witching community. Believe me; a Mitch is not worth troubling yourself with, most of the time, unless he's my Dad, of course.

Hey, Dad! You never know. He loves me, and might be reading this. Dad, if you are reading this, please cover your eyes during the naughty parts.

All this back-story is killing me. What I needed was to get my crap together, forget how I looked, and just go for the evil. It can't be that hard; fashion models do it all the time. I watch *Ugly Betty*. I know things. If only I could be an *Ugly Betty*.

*Stop it! We're about to make a change remember? No looking back. From this moment on we're...*

"Ahem."

*You're. You're going to be the witch with the mostest.*

"That's more like it."

Sorry for the mental debate but I had to get it out of my system, before the cobwebs gathered around it, and trapped my neuroses there for the rest of the day. I really don't have a split personality or anything. It just helps to talk it out in my head, before it comes out my mouth and makes me look crazy. Which I'm not! I'm a witch, thank you very much. A totally different set of issues altogether, as you've probably gathered.

Anyway, I've been at the whole witching thing since I graduated from Miss Bonet's School of Witchery and Social Graces back in... Wait that would be telling my age! I'm not so stupid I'll go around telling people I barely know how old I am. Needless to say, I've been at this awhile. I even have a costume to distract from my obvious shortcomings, but it itches, and makes me sneeze, so don't ask me to model it for you or anything. Luckily, I have a trust fund, so you'll only see me wearing it on special occasions, or when Mom cuts me off from my bank account.

Anyway, I live in a small town, which forces me to adhere to the Witches' Code: remain unseen, but well known. Don't ask me what the dang thing's supposed to mean. I didn't come up with it. To tell you the truth, witches are a bit loopy. Hide, but let your name go in the phone book under 'Witches for Hire'.

I'm waiting for the day the internet takes hold with them. They'll be cursing people from laptops, while they go to the john. I know them. They're that lazy, and are plagued with problematic bowels. Comes from eating from their ingredient jars. The narsty bitches. There is no way in hell I'm eating the eye of anything if a potato ain't attached.

Back to the small town, before I delve into the dietary habits of witches any more. My mother set me up in the South, nothing scenic, because the top witches get all the good locales. You have to wait a hundred or more years to get anywhere nice. I was stuck in northern Louisiana. Not stuck, because it is nice here, just as hot as all get out. But please! I'm a short skip and jump from the Big Easy, and can't even set foot in the joint. All because Melina doesn't like Mom, so I pay the price. Melina is the big honcho for the Southern Witches League. She runs everything from South Carolina through to Louisiana. The whole country is broken up under different leaders.

I'm digressing again. Darn it! It's another sign of my perkiness showing. Thank Heaven I'm not blonde, or I know I would be worse than I already am.

I've been in Blanc Baton for awhile. Not telling how long, so keep the question zipped. The town is in the middle of nowhere, nice population growth, all down. The neighbors keep to themselves, and I get to sleep in everyday. The only drawback is no bookstore or Starbucks that doesn't require a thirty minute drive. The solitude is worth it, so I gladly accept the sacrifice for the new Mary Janice book, and my weekly fix of Green Tea Latte, extra whipped cream, if you please.

My name is in the book under *Witch*, but nobody calls. Any more! Change one little ingredient in a spell, and no one trusts you any more. In my defense, I honestly thought turnip greens were a viable swap-out for something or other. The book was smudged, and I couldn't read the recipe.

The upshot of my faux pas is I get to live a life of luxury, and have to do nothing to earn the right. Sweet! As you can tell, this left me a lot of time to work



on my evilness or idleness. I always get those two confused. Maybe because I'm good at one, and not so good at the other?

Those thoughts flew from my head. I had things to do. See, today was the day I got my semi-tri-monthly meeting with Melina's head Gabaroon, a sort of familiar, or lackey, for lack of a better word. I'm still junior status in the witching corps, which means I'm under certain restrictions until I achieve my hat. I know it's crazy. A witch without her hat! But those are the rules. Anyway, Jerkin, honest that's his name, was showing up to check on my witchiness.

I spent most of last night getting ready. Secretly, I'd hoped to get bags under my eyes, or something, from all the late hours I'd spent trashing my house. Nada! I mean, the entire house was spruced down for the event. Cobwebs hung from the corners with care, in hopes spiders would live there. So far, all I had was some ladybugs. I thought I saw a rat under my couch, but it was a stuffed giraffe from the grab-it game outside Wally World. I kicked it toward the back in a fit of unperkiness. Felt good about it, until the little glass eyes wouldn't stop glaring at me. I ended up taking it into the bedroom, and tucking it under the pillow. Don't tell Jerkin, okay?

The yard was easy. I don't go outside. No fuss, no muss. Grass was as tall as me. Broken branches lay everywhere, and my red rose bush had turned black from distrust. There was even a skeleton in the ditch. Not sure what kind it was, because I don't touch icky things, plus it smelled bad. Not going out there until the Parish has the common decency to have it cleared away.

As it stood, the house was ready. I wasn't. Jerkin would just have to deal with what he was getting. It wasn't like we haven't been doing this since, like, forever. SSDD, if you know what I mean. He comes in and screams evil! I cringe, and fling magic at him until he laughs, and then he marks his pad and leaves. It's a routine we've become accustomed to.

The clock on the wall chimed a quarter until the hour. I checked the digital clock on the cable box, because I'm never sure if the one on the wall is keeping

time or not. Nope, same time. Fifteen minutes until he got here. Good thing I didn't start watching Tyra Banks. Don't think Jerkin would've appreciated the entertainment value.

Grabbing a handful of cat litter from the pantry I sprinkled it around the floor for a finishing touch. With ten minutes to spare, a little relaxation was in order. Five minutes of Tyra wouldn't hurt. My butt had barely hit the couch when the front door flew open.

My head jerked up to see a monstrous shape in the doorway. It slipped into the room, its curved horns slicing trenches in my wall. How rude! Jerkin was really developing an attitude. Didn't he realize I had to pay for that stuff to be fixed? I was set to give him a piece of my mind when it hit me.

That wasn't Jerkin! Oh crap. I was in trouble. It was worse than worst. No, he wasn't a demonic Amway salesman, but he was close. Looks like Melina had a new boy toy and he was on a power trip.

"Little witch. Melina sends her regards," he loomed over the couch, and sprayed the words in my face.

"Hey, bud! Watch the waterworks," I slung my hand over my face, in case he had a second dose ready to fly.

"Are you not afraid of my fearful countenance?" he actually seemed hurt to ask me.

"Not really. Jerkin smelled worse, and had the whole overbite thing going for him." Well he did.

"Jerkin is no longer affiliated with the Lady," the Gabaroon huffed.

"Good, I was beginning to worry about him. Last time he came, he looked positively human. Melina should take better care of you guys. It's all that humidity and sunshine," I tisked.

"You are as much the inane twit they said you were."

"Hey!" Who said *they* could talk about me? Whoever *they* were? "Can we just get the testing over with, so I can get back to fixing my door?"

“There will be no testing this quarter.”

“Say again?” I know it threw me too.

“Melina has looked over your progress reports.” He pulled a pad out of his jacket. “She has determined you are on immediate probation. Until such time as you can show true evilness, you will be required to take on clients of her lady’s choosing in hopes that you will learn the error of your laziness, or relocate to your parents’ domicile for the remainder of your retraining.”

Oh, shit! This was bad. If I didn’t shape up, it was home to Mom. Nope, I couldn’t live through that again.

“So, when does this go into affect?” Give me a bone here, dude. I need at least a week. Three days?

“Your first assignment will be here at dusk,” the Gabaroon smirked. “Prepare yourself. Here is his case file, and all the particulars you will need to proceed. We expect timely reports on his dispensation.”

I checked the window. The sun was already setting.

“Anything else?” I slumped into the couch, already hearing my mother’s voice, whining in my head.

“Yeah, don’t screw it up.”

Words to live by, if there ever were any.

## Chapter Two

This was just great. Here I was thinking I'd get off easy. But no! Melina and her smug butt, forcing me to work for a living. I was not made for all this manual, white-collar labor. I'm an heiress, for Morloque's sake. We don't work. We leech off our families until the will is read. Everyone knows that. Well, if they don't, they should.

Since there was no way out of this thing, I needed to get down to business. What's his name would be here any minute. I pulled the folder out from under my butt, and slapped it on the table. A jumble of papers, and a photo, slid onto the floor. Leaving the photo, I grabbed the papers. Man, I needed a Latte. It is my opinion that nothing important should start without a beverage in hand. I didn't have time to go to the Bucks, so I was stuck, thirsty and a little mad about the situation. On the bright side, I felt positively unperky.

The first page told me all I needed to know. It was enough to make me yawn for the rest of my life. This slob wanted to find true love. Get real! True love is a lie, masked by pheromones and designer scents. I've tried a few love spells over the years, and none of them worked, which is good for business, as they say. It gives you time to make the guy or girl miserable, until you finally spring the inevitable *Sorry babe, you're unlovable* on them.

Mom loves doing that. She even got a lifetime achievement award for it, back in '92. There was a move to rename it Smything, but no one else would agree to it. Despite the monogrammed voodoo dolls she sent out as enticements, there was not one taker. Go figure. Mom is nothing, if not original.

What was this guy's name, again? Gregory Hammer-toe. No, wait, Hamilton. Okay, it was weak pun, but I needed to get it out. I'm in a desperate situation here. I have a job with no perks. The file is pretty straightforward. Gregory, not Greg – it said so right there, was a computer programmer for some

big internet accounting firm. Boring. It seems he's twenty-nine and never been in love. Big whoop. Aged-not-telling and I ain't been in love. Sure, I've been in a couple cases of lust, but nothing to make me spend money. A few twenties in a stripper's waistband, does not count! It was a good thing I wasn't supposed to help this guy. Heidi Fleiss couldn't get him a date, if he looked half as boring as he read on paper.

Where was that picture at? It was here a minute ago. Damn, mess! It's going to take me a week to recover from all this filth. I hate redecorating from this thing. Normally, a little dust doesn't bother me, but cat litter pâté between my toes is another matter, especially when I need to find this picture so I can prepare myself not to blow chunks if this guy is a total freakazoid. There it was!

My head was wedged under the coffee table, when the doorbell rang. Two things happened at once. I was amazed the button worked after butt-boy smashed my door apart. I made him fix it back before he left, by the way. The whole job thing made me forget to mention it back at the beginning of the chapter. Now, back to the painful part of the paragraph. The second thing was my head slammed into the top of the table. I'm talking black spots, stars, and a mini-explosion that could only be described as a near-death experience. Okay, maybe not a near-death experience, but, man, did my teeth ring!

To make matters worse, I lost the stinking picture. It slipped from my fingers, and scooted under the couch like it had a mind of its own. Well, after all the junk I'd pushed under there getting ready for Jerkin to show up, I couldn't have found it if I'd wanted to. I guess I'd just have to wait to see what kind of nerd Melina had stuck me with when he got here. The doorbell ringing sent my head straight back into the coffee table. Note to self, burn table at earliest convenience.

With two knots on the top of my head, I was sure I now looked like a satyr. On my way to the front door, I grumbled about the unfairness of life. I noticed, for one brief second, that the door jam was in a parallel dimension.

Damn Gabaroon, couldn't even fix a door without opening a gateway to Neverland. Thankfully, he wasn't powerful enough to open a gateway to Hell. I have relatives down there I owe money to, so I was grateful for the small favor. Loverboy was still pounding on the door, which was doing nothing for my headache, or the mood I was in for having to take this frigging job.

Swinging the door open, I was ready to unleash as much vile unperkiness as I could muster. Too bad, my tongue stopped working when my eyes took in the hunk behind door number mine. He was flipping perfect. Throwing panties in the ceiling fan perfect, if there is such a thing. Seeing him, I'm pretty damn sure there was.

His hair was nicely tossed around his head without a care. It looked like a rampaging bird's nest. Normally, I'm not too fond of the whole blond on brown highlight look, but this guy pulled it off without even trying. And the face! I could have swum in those blue eyes. He had Robert Redford good looks with none of the social awareness. I liked that in a man. I needed my hair spray, and hated to be told I was killing the universe because I enjoyed manageable hair. I was naturally curly and needed it, so stop giving me the look.

His body wasn't bad to look at neither. Forgot the double negative. Get over it and move on. I'm using artistic license here. Even under the baggy clothes, I could tell he worked out. I'm going to be honest with you, if it wasn't my job to be a total witchy bitch to the guy, I would totally be rocking his world, as soon as the door was shut.

Hell, why not have my cake and eat it too? Nothing said bitch like a quick nookie, and don't let the door smack you on the ass on the way out. Stick around, I may be able to pull this off, and still keep my witch point two rating.

## Chapter Three

His mouth hung slightly open. I hoped it was from my appearance and not from seeing the disaster area of my house. I didn't have time to change into my witch's costume, so he was seeing the unadulterated me. I'm no fool. I knew I was hot for a mortal woman, not to imply that I was one. Witch spelled different species, remember? You'd have to be blind, and totally ignore cable TV, not to know I fit the perky-go-getter profile. I could be on *America's Next Top Model*, and hold my own. For a witch it was not a good thing, but for a horny woman, who hadn't had a date in *mumble mumble*, it worked to my advantage.

"So, are you really a witch?" his voice was squeaky, but I chalked it up to nerves.

"That's what the diploma on the wall says, so I guess it must be true," I cackled, because that's what witches are expected to do. Must keep up appearances don't ya know?

"But, you're beautiful."

I took it as a compliment, instead of rubbing salt over an old wound. "Thank you. Now come in before my neighbors start talking."

A couple of the busy-bodies were already gathering on the road, gawking, obviously taking a break from their nightly speed-walking, through the neighborhood, to gossip about me. He looked behind him, saw the people pointing, and couldn't get in fast enough.

My mind was in overdrive. Here was the hottest guy I've seen, in the flesh, in a long time. Not only was he more or less officially off-limits, but it was my job to screw with his mind, and leave him a shambling wreck, unable to trust or love another woman for the rest of his life. You know, when I say it out loud

like that, it doesn't make me sound like a nice person at all. Goodie! There may be hope for me after all.

I motioned for him to take a seat on the couch while I took the chair facing the door. My choice of seats gave me two advantages. I could dominate the room and look aloft, and I could keep an eye on the Neverland, flickering into my living room from the Gabaroon's piss-poor job of fixing my door. The last thing I wanted was a horde of tinkerbells flitting through my house. Raid only went so far, before you had to beat the snot out of them with a shoe. I don't know about you, but fairy crap on the bottom of a good pair of pumps is so narsty.

I kept one eye on the door, and one eye on the stud. He fidgeted around, and did his best not to look at me, but I caught the glances at my cleavage, while he thought I wasn't looking. I may have let a little more fall out than usual just because he was so shy about it. My sluttiness, and the fact I had lecherous thoughts, had nothing to do with it. Was it hot in here? Should I take off all my clothes? Forget I said that. I had Nelly in the CD player, and it kind of got stuck in my head. But it was a damn fine idea. Think I could work up a heat spell and get him to do it first?

"Uh, I think this was a mistake. I really should get back to work," he stumbled to his feet. "Sorry for wasting your time."

"Hold it there, stud-muffin." He wasn't getting away that easily.

"Excuse me?"

"Look, guy. You contracted for some witchly help, and you're gonna get it. Now, sit your butt back down so we can get to the root of your problem," I waved my finger toward the couch.

"Would you please not point that thing at me?" he plopped back down.

I shoved the finger in question under his nose, "What? This?"

"Yes, you being a witch and all, I'm sure it must be considered a lethal weapon, or something."



Was he for real? "Listen here, buster. I am a witch, and, as a witch of good standing, I would never do anything to endanger a client. It's right there in the Witches' Code."

"It is?"

"Of course it is. What, do you think I'm making this up?" I so was. Witches' Code indeed!

"Well, okay," he looked doubtful, but was smart enough not to call me a liar.

"I think we need to get down to the reason you're here. I'm a very busy witch, and have a whole list of things to do. A cursing that I must get done before midnight, a man who doesn't want to be a frog anymore, and a girl with a wart she wants removed. It goes on and on," I checked the list off on my fingers.

"Well I'd like to... um..."

"Come on. Spit it out."

"I'd like to find true love." You would have thought he was admitting to grand larceny.

"Was that so hard? Now that we have it out in the open, the rest should be a piece of cake." It would be if I was actually going to help the guy.

"It will?"

"Of course it will. Admitting the problem is half the battle. Don't you watch Dr. Phil?" I tisked at the very idea. "So, what type of woman are we looking for?" The little voice in my head was screaming: *me, me, me*. I told it to shut the hell up.

"It's not that simple. A few years ago I invented this program, and it made me kinda rich. Now I don't know if women like me for me, or the fact my bank account is in the seven figures." Did he just say seven figures? Is that before, or after, taxes, I wonder.

"That is a sticky situation," I stroked my chin, like I really felt his pain. I so didn't.

“What I need is something to take out the guess work, and find that one person I’m destined to fall in love with,” he looked so sincere, I didn’t have the heart to burst his bubble. In my experience, you were destined to die and little else in between. I am not being mean. That’s the truth, as I see it.

“Well you’ve come to the right place,” I beamed, before turning serious, “but it won’t be easy. From what I can see here, we have our work cut out for us.”

“Huh?” he looked confused. How sweet!

“Look at you. You’re not exactly GQ material.”

He shifted in his seat. I could see I was getting to him. I wasn’t trying to be mean. Really I wasn’t. Except for the hotness potential I saw hiding behind the geek exterior, I could tell he wasn’t making women swoon in ecstasy with what he was pushing. He could do with a little work. That’s what bothered me. He had all the equipment in the right places, but had no clue how to work it. Too bad my job wasn’t to make it work.

“So, what should I do?”

This is where I turned on the wicked. I put my finger to my lips, and let out a nice, loud tisk. I swear he melted into the furniture, and I hadn’t even turned on the appraising glare yet.

“To start with, you need a total makeover. New hair-do, wardrobe,” I paused for dramatic effect, “um, contacts. Definitely contacts.”

“But shouldn’t my true love...” he squinted his eyes shut, and I could tell he was looking for the right words, “love me for me?”

“Heavens, no! True love is all image. We need to market you in the most favorable light possible, without bringing your fortune into it.” Yes, I was counting dollar signs.

“Okay, I guess a new haircut, and some new clothes, wouldn’t hurt,” he sighed.

"Don't forget the contacts. We need to let the ladies see those baby blues."  
And what pretty blues they were.

"Anything else?"

"Now that you mention it... we need to see your moves in the sack," I actually held a straight face. Can you believe it?

"My what!"

"You know. I'm not about to unleash you on an unsuspecting true love, without knowing you can back up the packaging." Straight face was still in place, but my mind was screaming, *Oh yeah, baby!*

"You want me to have..."

"You got it. Me and you, sex in my bedroom," I thought he was going to die right then and there, "or here, in the living room, if you want."

"This isn't what I signed up for. I thought you would give me a spell or something."

"That is so eighteenth century. Get with the program. This is the new millennium. We witches have a responsibility to our clients to ensure they get exactly what they want." Yeah, right.

"Couldn't I watch an instructional video, instead?"

"Then how would I know you would just be pleasuring yourself, when I wasn't watching?" Yes, it was me being pleased that I was worried about. It had been a while, so get off my back.

"I would never!"

"I mean, instead of pleasuring your potential true love, silly." Though I thought the other was more likely.

"Oh, well that's different," he blushed. "I don't think a few pointers would hurt."

The big pointer I saw, straining at his jeans, told me hurting was not in the cards. Oh my! I am a dirty little witch. Aren't I?

## Chapter Four

I skipped the boring bits, while you were scrolling down. Hope you appreciate my effort to cut to the chase. But really, who wants to read through the open-the-door, drag-him-in-by-the-hand parts? I know I wouldn't.

To bring you up to date, I'm wearing something slinky, showcasing my best assets, and he's wearing red Fruit-of-the-Looms with a hole in the butt, shivering like I'm going to eat his ass, instead of rock his world.

First I had to get rid of those drawers. They were totally inappropriate for the sexual ambience I was going for. Then I could deal with the deer in headlights thing he had going on.

"Didn't we agree you'd be naked when I came out of the bathroom?" Sorry but the trip to the bathroom was necessary. My best nightie was hanging over the shower rod. I would have mentioned it earlier, but it fell under the boring bits deletion.

"I thought you were joking about that," he pulled the sheet over his lap, doing little to hide anything.

"We can't exactly have the sex with you half-dressed." We could, but it wouldn't be fun for me.

"Uh, yeah, right. Sex." Shouldn't he be more enthused about the project? I was. Unless men had suddenly changed overnight, sex was the most important thing on their minds.

"Look, do you think I'm looking forward to this? I mean, it isn't like I'm going to enjoy this." Like hell I wasn't. "This is totally to get you ready for the real thing. How do you think that makes me feel? Knowing you're going to use me for your own amusement, and then leave me for the arms of another

woman?" Man I could work a room. If I wasn't trying to be a full-time wicked witch, I could see myself on *The Young and the Restless*.

"I didn't think of it like that. Maybe I should just get dressed, before I demean you more than I already have." Chivalry wasn't dead. Damn its black heart!

"No, I shall endeavor to put aside my pride." I threw my hand across my brow. Melodrama, thy name is Nikki.

"I really can't ask you to do that."

I pushed him back on the bed, before he could get away. He was trying. Believe me. I had to straddle him, in the end, to keep him from making a mad dash for the door. The things I do for the greater wickedness.

Before he could scramble away, I reached down and ripped the offending undies off, or, at least, I tried to rip them off. The cloth tore into two, nice pieces, wedged under his clinched bootie. I wasn't going to let a little clinch come between me and my goal. Those drawers had to go. Just looking at them, made my teeth itch.

"Gregory, I may call you Gregory?"

"Seeing as how you're sitting on my naughty bits, I guess its okay," he squirmed under me, nearly making me forget the rest of what I had on my mind, "but shouldn't I know your name?"

Oh right! I knew I'd forgotten something. People rarely want to know the name of the horrible witch they're forced to deal with. I had kind of lost the habit of introducing myself over the years. Seeing as how I was five seconds away from totally ruining this guy for other women, knowing my name might be nice. That way he'd have something to scream out while having sex with them. And yes, I am that damn good!

"It goes against company policy, but my name is Nikki."

"Like the old Prince Song?"

I could have feigned ignorance, but what was the point. It wasn't like he wasn't going to find out the truth in a few minutes anyway. "Let's just say, I'm an inspiration to several people."

Hey, I could be. I'm sure I've inspired someone along the way. What I needed to do was set this guy's mind at ease. I didn't want him having an anxiety attack or anything. I needed his blood flowing smoothly to all the important areas, without bringing on a coronary in the process.

"Isn't there another way...?"

I put my finger over his lips, "Gregory, trust me. You need this. You are way too uptight. Once I have a handle on what you can offer to Ms. Right, we are on the road to bringing the two of you together."

"When you put it like that, I guess you're right."

Finally. This had to be a first. The way he was acting, you'd think he had never done the deed before. Come on, he was almost thirty. Surely, someone had gotten into his pants by now.

Wait a minute! Computer nerd. Rich. Spent all his time in front of a fourteen-inch monitor. Oh, my word! Gregg-poo was a virgin. Wicked is one thing, but did I have the right to deflower a virgin? Hell, someone needed to; why not me?

"But, I don't think this is for me."

Huh? What did I miss?

One minute I had him in the palm of my hand, and the next he's doing the Boot Scoot Boogie out from under me. Well, this wasn't going to do. Good thing I'm a witch, or he might actually have gotten away. That wouldn't have done either one of us any good. I was more worried about me, but it was past time he became a man. Yes, I can convince myself deep down that I was only looking out for the guy.

Stick around for the next chapter, and you'll see how good I am at it.

## Chapter Five

The first thing I had to do, was stop his forward progress, or backwards progress, however you wanted to look at it. I knew just the spell for it, too. Old standbys are the best, by the way, and this one was definitely old. I'd learned it from a witch who'd worked for the Marquis de Sade.

With a twist of my wrist, the sheets came to life, pulling him back to the bed. Cords of silk shot from the headboard, circled his wrists, and bound him against the bedposts all nice and snug. Don't ask what they're doing there, 'cause I ain't telling. The main thing was he wasn't going anywhere. Am I good, or what?

"Look lady, I said I wasn't going through with it," Gregory strained against the silk rope, but he might as well give it up. Auntie Beulah taught me too well for a mortal to slip free of one of my restraining spells.

I sat on the bed beside him, "Greg, this is for your own good. True love doesn't fall out of trees. Without a little training up, you're doomed to loneliness and despair. I promise you, this won't hurt. In fact, I think you'll quite enjoy yourself once we get started." I knew I would.

I could have stayed there and fought with him, for the rest of the night. I wasn't going to, but I could have. A little positive reinforcement was what the situation called for. Men needed a firm hand, and my left hand was pretty firm.

Not waiting for him to stop whining, I snaked my hand up his inner thigh, which clamped his mouth shut, I'm happy to report. My fingertips grazed the soft flesh of his sack. A moan reached me from the head of the bed. I looked up to see a blissful smile on his face. Man, he was a deprived little monkey.

At this point I could have put him in an ecstasy-induced coma, but I decided to take it easy on the poor guy. I slid my hands back, gently kneading

the tense muscles of his thighs. His legs twitched, but he wasn't struggling to get away. I considered it a move in the right direction. Really, I couldn't think of a single man in his situation, who would even consider yelling, *Stop you foul temptress!* There may be one out there, but, as you can probably tell, I wasn't about to go looking for him.

Through this whole thing, I'd never once thought to let my eyes wander to what all this fuss was about. It had been a long time since I'd allowed a man into my boudoir. Okay, you got me. It had been a really, long time since I'd even had a man knock at the front door, let alone bring his ass into my bedroom. So, basically, at this point, I wasn't about to be all that picky.

But, Damn! I peeked. Needless to say, I'd hit the jackpot with this one. Girls, if you see a computer geek looking for love, I suggest you snag him quick. All that radiation from the puters must be doing their bodies good, if Gregory here was any indication.

I was so caught up in the view I failed to notice that he was holding his last breath past the point of healthy. He was turning positively blue. I then figured out that my hand had developed a mind of its own and was doing the naughtiest of things to him, in the naughtiest of places.

Best to put a stop to it, before I had to call 911. Sexed-up dead guy in my bed might give me a bad reputation with the rest of the neighborhood. Plus, I was pretty sure Melina might not take killing the poor bastard as a satisfactory completion to my assignment.

"Gregory, I know this is all new to you, but it's important you breathe."

He let out a gasp, as oxygen rushed to his lungs.

Maybe this wasn't such a good idea after all. If foreplay put him in this kind of shape, no telling what the actual act would do to him. I let go of his Captain Happy just in case.

"Nnnnn.... No, don't stop," his eyes burned a hole through me, begging for more.



“Are you sure?” I wasn’t one to fight a situation going the way I wanted, but burying bodies in the middle of the night was just plain icky.

“Yyyy...yes,” he stuttered. Good enough for me.

“Okay, but keep up the breathing. I don’t know CPR.” What do I look like to you? Do you see the name Dr. Meredith Grey anywhere on my chest? If there are any men out there reading this, stop looking at my chest. Now for my shameless *Star Trek* plug: Dammit Jim, I’m a witch, not a doctor!

I had him ready, willing and able. So what do I do now? Anything too ambitious would kill him. If I went too sedately, it might kill me, or, at the very least, leave me unsatisfied. Neither one was an option I was willing to let happen, especially the last one.

I had to ask myself, could I, in all good conscience, pass up playing with a guy, who was tied to my bed? Sure, some may say; give him a break, it’s his first time. Who said that? Shut the hell up! A chance like this comes along maybe once in a lifetime. One of yours, not mine.

The best course of attack would be something simple yet effective. You know, freaky enough to get the job done, but nothing that would blow his mind. Ideally, I’d need the backseat of a car for this to be truly memorable but, seeing as how backseats make me nervous, I’m going with scenario number 2; parents are away for the weekend, so let’s play in the master bedroom.

My hands returned to his thighs. They were so hot my hands tingled from the heat rising from them. His breathing wasn’t normal, but at least he was getting air into his lungs. Lamaze counted as breathing, right? Since I was planning to throw everything he missed during his teenage years at him, he was going to hyperventilate through most of this.

While my fingers danced along the curve of his straining balls, I bent down, and took his shaft into my mouth. My teeth grazed the silky tip, sending shivers running down his legs. I felt him tense under me. That wasn’t going to do. Tensing was bad. It could mean the difference between a very good evening

and: Oops, can we try again in thirty minutes? My spell wasn't going to hold him for another fifteen, let alone thirty. Besides, he looked like a sleeper, not a can-we-do-that-again type of guy.

Damn computers were destroying the libidos of a whole generation of men. I wasn't even talking about internet porn, either. I tell you, the things were more of a pain in the ass than they were worth.

Well Shit! I guess I better stop. Ever notice when you get a guy where you want him, he goes all wilting violet on you? I untangled my tonsils in a fit of disgust. I never got to have any fun.

"Will you do that again?" he gasped, in between haggard breaths.

Maybe I was wrong about the can-we-do-that-again part. Nope, better not take the chance. Besides, I think I was about to the end of lesson one. It was time to get to the pop quiz.

I shifted forward ever so slightly. His touch burned against the bare flesh of my thigh. His tip prodded the fabric of my panties, sending a wave of blissful euphoria through me. My senses went crazy as the thickness of him brushed the tender folds of my sex, through the sheer fabric. I went weak at the knees from the sensation.

I'm normally a woman, sorry, witch, who is in full control of herself. Maybe it's the fact I've been out of the dating circle for a while, or just a hormone rush from having a guy in my complete power, but I was losing control of my self-control. In short I had to have him now.

I looked up to see his eyes drinking me in. He had a hungry look in his eye that mirrored the look I was sure was in my own. Hell, I knew it was there. Who am I kidding?

My left hand stroked his chest, while my other slipped my panties down my leg, while I tried to keep up the wanton vixen act without my ass falling off the bed. Helluva lot harder than it sounded! With one leg in the air, I realistically expected to go sailing over the side, headfirst into the floor.

I managed to get the leg back down, and the panties tossed into the far corner, without clipping him in the head, or doing a triple-gainer off his pecker. All in all, I was scoring myself a perfect ten for seduction and technique. I sincerely hoped the bicycle thing was true, because it had been that long since this little witchy had been on either a man or a ten-speed. Closest thing I'd been to either one was a shaky buggy at the grocery store. Don't knock the sensation of a jiggly cart full of crap on hard asphalt. Beats the hell out of the washer on the rinse cycle!

Where was I again? Damn, it has been a long time if I was waxing poetic about a defective shopping cart when I had a man at my sexual mercy.

Back on track, I turned my attention back to Gregory. He seemed not to have noticed my acrobatic performance. Good for me. It wasn't my best moment, in spite of its success. From the look on his face, he wasn't going to last much longer.

I slipped my hand across his chest, my fingers pinching the ripeness of his nipples. He jerked under me. The length of him caressed my swollen clit, sending another shiver down my spine. Then, all too quickly, I felt him enter me. I captured him with an eagerness that surprised me. Well, not really, but I didn't want to seem like a total slut.

My hips glided over the thickness of him, the corded muscles of his thighs rocking in time to each stroke. My breath caught in my throat, as he caught the rhythm of my tempo. For a newbie, he was a fast learner. I was almost sorry his hands were tied to the bedposts. They looked quite nimble, as they clutched at the empty air. Must be all that time they spent on the keyboard. Note to self, rethink my opinion on computers.

All too soon, I felt him quicken beneath me. The racing beat of his heart thundered through my core, as I felt his release rushing to fill me. My body answered in kind. The raw electricity of it slammed through my center, throwing me across his chest. My fingers dug trenches through his chest hair, as the last of

my release racked through me until each delicious sensation embedded itself into my brain for later, wistful thinking. Shoot me; I get poetic in the heat of the afterglow.

## Chapter Six

Said afterglow had barely begun when he burst my ecstasy bubble. “That was fantastic, so do you think we can get back to my true love?”

What the fuck? After that he should be comatose or still mumbling unintelligently under his breath about the earth moving, and the solar system spinning out of control. I’m not sure about you, but my ego needs shit like that at times like this.

I know this is not supposed to be about love or anything. It was just sex, great sex, but sex nonetheless. So my ego was a little bruised. This was all about getting some, and getting back in Melina’s good graces, so I didn’t have to go live with Mom. If he couldn’t appreciate my sexual prowess, it wasn’t like his life wouldn’t be going to hell because of me anyway. In the end, I looked at it as a win-win situation for me. And my ego.

What was he saying now? I’d tuned him out when he regained consciousness. Oh, something about his true love. Like I gave a crap. I should probably pay attention, huh?

“So, if this works, I was hoping for a June wedding. I know it’s clichéd, but I’m a traditional kind of guy,” he rambled on, oblivious to the fact that I was, so, not listening.

“One thing at a time slugger. We just started your training. I’m not sure if you’re ready for the real thing,” I tried to sound sincere, but was still pissed at him, so it may have come out snarky.

“I don’t want to sound ungrateful for the sex or anything.” Here comes, the ‘but’. “But I would really like to get this over with. My Mom is kind of on my back about the subject.”

Well, I could relate to that, but it didn't change the fact that my job was to make sure he didn't find true love. My sex life aside, I'd better get back to work.

"I hate sending a man out half prepared, but, since you're so head up to get out there and break hearts, who am I to stand in your way?"

"So, you'll give me a spell to find her?"

"Not so fast. Just because I'm a witch doesn't mean we do spells for this sort of thing. What you need is a potion."

"A potion?" his face scrunched up, as he digested what I'd said.

"Think of it scientifically. What I'm offering you is a pheromone serum that specifically targets your endorphin system, and searches out the perfect woman who will be attracted to the specific pheromones your body produces." Hey, even I believed me, when I went all Discovery Science on him.

"Gosh, and I thought all this stuff was just mumbo jumbo."

"Witches had all this shit down long before Estée Lauder even thought about making a woman smell like an alcoholic flower bed." Well, we did. We just didn't give the real stuff out to the rubes. "Let Nikki fix you up."

I let the sheet slip down my body, and pranced my naked ass to the bedroom door, grabbing a dressing gown from a chair on my way. I could hear his jaw drop. I have a great butt, even if I do say so myself. I saw no reason why he shouldn't suffer for his earlier disregard of my feelings.

Leaving him to worship me from afar, I went in search of my mythical potion. There was one, but just not in my house. But I did have an old bottle of José, some mango-passion fruit Kool-Aide, and a packet of sugar substitute for a nasty aftertaste; that should do the trick. A dash of dry ice I kept on hand would complete the illusion of a potion.

I heard him shuffling around in the bedroom, as I finished brewing up the 'potion'. Good, the spell must have worn off in time to let me finish. I could have let it fade out, but that wouldn't exactly have been wicked now, would it? I dumped the smoking concoction into a really cool-looking terracotta mug I'd

picked up at a flea market over at Arcadia, a few years back. Serving it in a Bugs Bunny jelly glass wouldn't have instilled confidence in my witchy skills.

"Is that it?" I turned around to see him pulling on his shirt as he came through the door. Eager little thing, wasn't he?

"Sure is," I beamed behind the lie. I hate to admit this, but a smidgen of guilt was pecking at the back of my brain. The sex had been great and all, but not enough to make me feel sorry for lying to the guy. I didn't think I'd developed a conscience either. So what was the deal? Maybe it was gas from the Taco Bell I'd had for lunch. "Bring your cute buns over to the table, and I'll give you the rundown on the dosage."

Within seconds we were huddled over my cluttered dining room set. Along with the mug, I'd pulled out an ancient-looking, leather-bound book I'd found at the same flea market in Arcadia. It was nothing more than a French-to-Latin dictionary, but, for my purposes, it looked the part of a grimoire. I opened it to a titillating translation of chicken, and began mumbling.

My 'spell' lasted for all of three seconds. That was the amount of time it took for my throat to start hurting from my pseudo-Latin. With a flourish, I passed my hand over the mug, letting my palmed dry ice drop into the mixture. It flared to life, in a haze of smoke drawing just the gasp from Gregory I'd been looking for.

"Drink up!"

"Uh, you first."

"I'm not looking for true love, sweetie, but thanks for thinking of me," I pushed the glass toward him. "Won't kill you, I promise."

He looked doubtful, but lifted it to his lips anyway. It made me wonder if love was so hard to find out there in the real world, that people were willing to trust a total stranger to help them find it. Sure, I'd seen the ads for everything from love hotlines to online dating, but seeing it firsthand put a new spin on the situation for me. I hoped I never found myself in his shoes. About as close to love

as I planned to get was a bag of popcorn and *Bridget Jones Diary* on my DVD player.

My inner musings made me miss his chug-a-lug, but I did catch his snarl as the aftertaste hit him in the taste buds. I stifled a snicker behind the musky book, as I closed it before setting the tome beside him.

"What the hell was in that crap?" he sputtered, wiping his tongue on his sleeve.

"Before I answer that, do you really want to know?" I shot back with a devilish grin.

"Uh, no," he said wisely.

"Thought not," this time I couldn't hide the snicker.

"You know, I didn't come here to amuse you," he rose from the chair, and stomped toward the front door, which was leaking a large amount of Neverland into my living room. Damn Gabaroon!

I'd better stop him. I still needed to finish screwing with his mind. Stop looking at me like that. Melina was the one you needed to be looking at, not me. This was all her fault. I was content to sit on my butt, and be a drain on my parents' finances. She was the one who forced me to be wicked.

"Gregory, stop! I need to tell you the rest of it," I jumped up and followed him.

He paused. I could see the indecision play across his face. Finally, insecurity won over, like I knew it would. "So, there's a rest?"

"Of course there is. The potion is only half the equation." I had him. You speak geek, and it gets them every time. "If you'll sit back down, I'll fill you in on the rest."

He joined me on the couch. I could still smell sex all over him, and it did crazy things to my head. I found it incredibly hard to concentrate on the lies I had rolling around in my head to tell him. Don't you hate it when that happens? I focused my synapses back to the non-sex portion of the conversation.



"The potion is the reactant. It is, even now, working its way through your system, activating all that manliness you've been keeping locked away. By this time tomorrow, it should have fully revitalized your testosterone to epic proportions. Believe you, me, women will be throwing themselves at you in the morning." Oops, maybe I overdid it there a bit.

"But, I don't want women throwing themselves at me." Yep I did.

"Of course you don't. That's why you have to watch what you're doing in the morning. No sudden studly moves on the way to the Starbuck's counter, if you know what I mean."

"How will I know when my true love is there?" he waved his hands in a circle around him.

"Silly man. She'll know you. The first woman to come up to you tomorrow will be your true love," and I said it with a straight face. It tells of the true wickedness in my heart.

"That's it?" he seemed incredulous at the simplicity of it, and rightly so. It was bullshit, and he had every right to think so.

"Hey, you came for magic, and that, my friend, is magic. Don't look for complicated explanations, or longwinded dissertations on the meanings of life. Just take it at face value, and kiss your incredible good fortune on the lips, cuz, tiger, you just hit the jackpot."

## Chapter Seven

I woke the next morning to the worst case of morning-after regret of my entire life. To be perfectly honest with you, it was the first case of morning-after regret of my life. Normally, regrets are not something I find myself dwelling on. Strange how sex gives you thought-provoking revelations, when all you want is a great lay, with no lasting relationships to tie you down.

By eleven o'clock I'd chalked the entire episode up to the half gallon of double-fudge mocha sundae I'd topped my night off with, after Gregory had left. I strongly advise you to never to eat an entire tub of artificially-flavored ice cream, and then take a sleeping pill right after you do it. The diarrhetic warning on the side of the tub ain't kidding. Less said the better.

I spent the rest of the morning cleaning house. Since I wasn't expecting Melina's bully boy back for a few days, the filth had to go. I would deal with the Neverland seepage later, after I worked up the courage to wash out my coffee pot. The hum of the washing machine distracted me from what was really bugging me, namely Gregory.

Okay, I was still feeling bad for the guy. I'd boinked his brains out, and sent him on a wild goose chase to find his mythical true love. I was so going to Hell for this one, but, if it worked, I wasn't going back to Mom's, which was a good thing. Hell, I could deal with. Mom was a different matter.

There I go thinking about myself again. Mom would be proud. I was finally taking my witchiness seriously. That isn't to say my mind wasn't wandering toward him, because it was.

Had he made a total fool of himself yet? I could see him now, looking for Ms. Right behind every bush and trash can between here and the east coast. Yeah, makes me feel shitty all over. I shouldn't be, but I am. Sex never had this

affect on me before. Maybe I need to swear off the pure stuff, if it's going to throw my conscience into overdrive.

I rolled onto my side. My hip dug a groove in the couch, as I fumbled on the floor for the cable remote. A little mindless drivel would cure me of whatever outbreak of niceness was griping me.

The first one hundred and fifty channels yielded nothing but infomercials, and horrible excuses for Seventies sitcoms. How was I supposed to forget my troubles, if the TV wouldn't cooperate? I could try my hand at house-cleaning again, but I'd used up all my happy home-making skills twenty minutes ago, and wasn't up for a second attempt at the whole mess.

So, I went back to flipping. Three straight channels of *The Dukes of Hazard*, and I was tempted to pick up my Swifter anyway. I swore to myself *one more channel* and then it was back to cleaning.

"Are you going to lie there all day on your dead ass, or do something productive?" the TV squawked at me, in my mother's, high-pitched voice.

I blinked twice. Normally, the voices in my head sound nothing like my mother. The TV never sounds like her, so I must be losing my mind. I reached for the Windex, which conveniently sat beside the couch. I'd dropped the spray bottle there earlier in my haste to get away from cleaning. Now I needed the damn thing to spritz the screen, just in case the image of my mother flashing across the shot of the General Lee jumping a creek bed was a mirage. I didn't think it was but you never knew.

"Spray me with that, and I'll take away your trust fund quicker than you can say Bob's your uncle," the TV snapped.

"Mom?"

"Who else?"

"Why are you in my TV?"

"Have you seen what they're charging for international phone calls? This is a helluva lot cheaper, and you can see how pissed I am, without me working

so hard to get my point across without resorting to the use of profanity." She had a point there.

"I guess Melina told you about my probation," I flinched, because I knew what her reaction was going to be.

"Probation my ass. You've been sitting around doing nothing, and she finally caught on to your little games. I'm surprised she didn't ship you home." The General Lee clipped her in the ear, as it crashed into the side of the river bank. I suppressed a giggle, as Mom slapped the car out of her way.

"It wasn't like that."

"Don't lie to me. I raised you, for Morloque's sake."

I hate it when she's right. I was lazy, and decidedly too perky for my own good. Somewhere in the back of my mind, I knew it was going to bite me in the ass, but who really thinks about stuff like that when they're living the high life.

"I'm sorry if I'm a disappointment to you, Mom."

"Well, I've learned to live with it." Please ignore her. Morloque knows I wish I could.

"Did you call for something, besides to bust my chops?"

"No dear, basically the whole reason for this call is to make sure you don't screw this up. I had your room turned into a sauna, and there is no longer a place for you to stay in the big house."

I was smart enough to read between the lines. She didn't want me to come home. More importantly, she didn't want the stigmatism attached to having her failure of a daughter anywhere close to her. Thanks Mom. I can feel the love from here.

"I'm not planning to fail, mother. My assignment is coming along quite nicely. By now he should be well on his way to making a total fool of himself," I saw no need to mention the guilt I felt over the fact.

"Famous last words of a fool," even though she was mumbling, I could hear her. I suspected she wanted me to. Mothers are evil like that. "I don't have

all day to baby you. Your father is taking me out for our anniversary. Thanks for not sending us a card."

With that, my TV went back to *The Dukes of Hazard*.

## Chapter Eight

With my morning shot, I fully expected my afternoon to fair not much better. It was shaping up to be one of those days. Since I wasn't going to enjoy it anyway, I finished my cleaning, and even did a spot of laundry. The dishes could soak until tomorrow, or I needed something to eat off. Nasty as hell of me, but do I look like I give a damn?

The only good thing about today was that my cleaning had wasted much of my day, but it had done little to take my mind off Gregory. For some reason, his goofy face and delicious body kept running through my mind all day. My body flip-flopped between chills and hot flashes all afternoon. It was enough to make me think menopause had set in. Thankfully, I had a few hundred years to worry about that curse, or blessing, depending on which mood you happened to find me in.

The dimming light of dusk captured the kitchen window, bringing my exhaustion falling down on top of me. I'd given up trying to blot him from my mind. Let him stay there. Misery was good for the soul. It let the wicked fester.

I grabbed the least disgusting glass from the sink, and rinsed the hell out of it. Skipping the ice, I went straight for the tea. It was in the fridge. What did I need ice for? Okay, I was too lazy to break up the cubes and refill the tray. Sue me. I cleaned the house. Wasn't that good enough for you people? I'm leaving the half-empty pitcher out on the counter to attract ants. Want to bitch about that, too?

I nuked a Hot Pocket, and headed for the couch. I wanted to watch a little TV, and veg for the evening, but my Mom's earlier hi-jacking of the airwaves had scared me off of the boob tube for life, well, for tonight anyway. The thought of two maternal visits in one day was more than my frazzled nerves could take.

The blank screen mocked me, as melted cheese dribbled down my chin. The doorbell rang, sending the rest of the filling shooting into my cleavage. A few choice profanities and I flew from the couch ready to curse whoever decided to add the so not perfect end to my day. I tossed the empty Hot Pocket toward the wall, and marched for the door, ignoring the smell of burnt, cheesy boob.

Once there, I threw it open with enough force to let loose enough Neverland for a hundred tinkerbells to soar into the living room, before flying into a bug zapper I'd installed for just such an occasion. The scent of fried fairy instantly filled the room. I wrinkled my nose, adding another mark against whoever had just picked that particular moment to darken my door.

I threw my finger back for the patented frog in a jar special when I caught sight of the face that had been dancing through my dreams all day. Gregory looked so pitiful I slammed the finger in my ear, blasting a few hundred decibels of white noise through my brain pan. The things I do in the name of... Well, damned if I know why did it!

"Gregory, what a pleasant surprise!" I yelled, perhaps a little too loud. In my own defense, I was deaf in one ear, and possibly bleeding from the other one.

"Uh, mind if I come in?" he mumbled, as he walked in without waiting for me to answer.

"Sure. Mi casa, yo casa!" Again, with the shouting. I'm sure he thought I was going peculiar or something. I'm a witch. There's no telling what he thought I was. For some reason, that fact bothered me.

"Nikki, I hate to bother you," he slumped into a chair, hanging his head between his legs.

"No bother, sweetie. You're my client; that means my door is open to you until you're perfectly satisfied." *Or when I need a little satisfying*, I kept to myself.

"Why don't you tell me what's wrong?"

I sat down in front of him gathering his hands in mine. He was trembling. I'm sure it was from the sight of my massive boobs jiggling in his face. They are awe-inspiring and, I'm sure, enough to make a mere mortal quiver.

"Nikki," he was staring right at them. What did I tell you?

"Yes, Gregory."

"Did you know there appears to be a glob of ham and cheese between your breasts?" Sometimes, I fear the world conspires against me.

"How cavalier of you to point that out," I dropped his hands, and scooted back to the couch.

"I'm sorry," his shoulders slumped even more, shoving a wedge of guilt through me.

Where the hell was all this shit coming from? I knew watching all those afternoon self-help talk shows were going to bite me in the butt, somewhere down the line. Well, there was the line, and, man, was my butt hanging over it.

"Forget it, Greg," I reached down, picked out the cheese, and gave it a toss toward the kitchen. "You were going to tell me what was troubling you."

"If this is a bad time, I can come back," he made to move from the chair.

I clamped my leg around his, and flipped him back into the chair, "Nope, I'm totally free and ready to help you with whatever you need."

"You sure?" I nodded without looking bored. "I did like you said this morning. I got up and went to work."

Now I knew the reason he looked like crap. There went the guilt back-flips again.

"And did your true love find you?" Amazing how that question tasted just like bile.

"I thought so. Nikki, she was amazing. Everything I'd ever looked for in a woman. Smart, funny, and beautiful. To be honest with you, I'd seen her every day in the coffee shop I stop in every morning, before going to work. I'd noticed her, but never thought she'd given me a second glance. Then, this morning, she



bumps into me, and asks me if I would pass her the non-dairy creamer. I knew then, it was just like you said: she was my true love."

I tried not to vomit when he got that dreamy look in his eye. "So what's the problem? Sound's to me like the potion worked."

"I thought so too. I asked her out on a date, and she agreed."

"And?" I don't know if I was rooting for a happy ending, or for the bitch to spontaneously burst into flames over dessert.

"I took her to the Olive Garden for supper, and it was horrible," he threw his hands into the air.

"If you took her to the Olive Garden, it's no wonder."

"But everyone loves the never-ending pasta bowl."

"If you're a cheap bastard, you do." Come on, really. This guy was worth how much? His idea of a fancy date was a fast-food, Italian restaurant. He might as well have taken her to Pizza Hut.

"Where should I have taken her?"

"Someplace with ambience. A dark, romantic, out-of-the-way bistro, filled with candle light, and waiters who barely speak English, wearing tiny aprons. Good lord, man, we're talking true love here. You don't take true love to a chain restaurant." I'm sorry if I got a little worked up here, but, if you feel strongly on a subject, you shouldn't be afraid to speak your mind.

"I'm not sure I know where that is," Gregory scratched his head, and looked even more confused, if that was possible.

"Then you're in luck. I do. Give me a few minutes to get changed, and we'll take a crash course in fine dining." Hey, my supper went down my shirt. I was hungry, and it was all his fault, so I was entitled.

"But I just ate."

"I haven't. Stop being so selfish. This is for your own good. I sacrifice my virginal nature to teach you about sex, only to have you screw up your chances

for true love, by ruining a perfectly good dinner. I'm not risking a second screw-up. We're doing this walk through, and that's final."

I left him there, with his mouth gaping open, and headed for the bedroom. It'd been ages since I'd been wined and dined. Hell, it'd been decades since I'd been anywhere close to a real date. A fake one seemed to be in order. You know something to knock the dust off the tires, and get me in shape, just in case a Colin Firth comes to the door. I am working on the spell for that, if you're wondering.

## Chapter Nine

Come a little closer. I don't want Gregory to hear this. I've had a standing invitation to this place for absolutely forever! The owner is an old friend of the family, from the old country. He came over about the same time Mom did. Instead of setting up in the family business, like she did, he turned his hand to something new, namely the restaurant game. Frankly, there wasn't much of a future in being a god in the New World, especially a Greek one.

Dion's was the absolutely best place in the entire South to eat if you wanted authentic, Greek cuisine. The lamb was to die for. Of course, I'd been eating it since before there was indoor plumbing. Things might have changed since the last time I was here, but I seriously doubted it. Dion was a fanatic when it came to perfection.

The new place had as much of the old world charm I'd expect out of something Dion had his hand in. The exterior looked like something from hundreds of years ago, nestled amongst a blend of modern-day construction and typical southern charm. Gregory led me to the entrance, with my arm tucked gallantly under his.

If I wasn't being so decidedly wicked, I would have felt positively giddy being with him. My sudden outbreak of guilt was killing all the joy in my life. I was going to a delightful restaurant, with a nice man, who wasn't bad to look at, but was I enjoying myself? Hell, no!

Damn Melina for putting me in this position. My life was going along quite nicely, before she had to put her big nose into my affairs. I'm sure his was, too. That goes without saying.

Greg moved in front of me, and swung the door so I could enter. Dang, what was the deal with this other woman? It looked to me like he had all the

moves down pat. She must be one of those picky broads. You know the type. Hateful bitches!

The maître de moved to intercept us, as soon as we walked up to the velvet rope, separating the entrance from the main dining area. One look at the guy, and I could tell he was an asshole from way back. Guess the post office was full up the day he applied.

"Does sir have a reservation?" the snoot rolled off his nose. I wanted to smack him, but thought Dion would have taken offense.

"Dammit, Baby!" a voice I instantly recognized, rolled through the place like thunder.

My head popped up to see Dion, barreling through the kitchen doors. Except for the modern clothing, he looked exactly the same as he had the last time I'd seen him. His hair was a thatch of curly black going in every direction but straight. His body was thick without looking fat, guess you'd call it a football player's body gone to pot.

It was his face that really got you. Ice-blue eyes peered out from beneath bushy eyebrows, with devilment that bespoke a lifetime of sin. His mouth was curled up into an eternal grin, with inset dimples that begged to be pinched. I'd never worked up the courage, if you were wondering.

"Dion!" I pushed assface out of the way, and threw my arms around the big lug.

"Nikki, where the hell you been keeping yourself, girl?" I know I can't be the only one wondering how a Greek god traded a perfectly good accent in for a redneck twang.

"You know, around."

He pushed me back, and gave me an appraising eye. "Damn glad to see you took after your Dad's side of the family. Zeus knows I love ya ma, but she's fugly enough to curdle even my home brew," he let out a healthy guffaw. It

stopped dead in his throat, when he saw Gregory shuffling behind me. "And who would this lanky piece of driftwood be?"

"Dion, let me introduce Gregory Hamilton."

He shoved his hand into Greg's, giving it a pump that sent the smaller man straight to the floor. "Seems the breakable type to me, Nikki. Perhaps you should send him home before he hurts himself."

"Dion be nice. He's a client. Melina has me working for my keep now."

"Well, that's different. Why didn't you tell me he was a mort?" he reached down, and lifted Gregory from the floor.

"I didn't think it was important."

"Girl, of course it's important. What if I'd let slip a bit of the secret tongue?" his frown told me I'd committed a social faux pas for our set. The old 'stay hidden' rule of thumb.

"Sorry, Dion," I really was. Even though witches were more or less out for public consumption, the rest of the community liked to stay in the shadows where the humans were concerned.

"Just remember your manners next time," he clipped me on the shoulder playfully. "Now, what can I do for you?"

"A table, please. I'm teaching Greg here the finer points of dating," my statement sent Dion's eyebrow shooting a foot above his head.

"Gerald, get Miss Smythe-Ponthynhausen, and her escort, a table in the back."

"Something romantic, if it isn't too much trouble, Geraldo," I knew that would get a snarl out of his butt. I also knew, with Dion next to him, he wasn't about to say anything about it either. I just had to hope he didn't spit in my couscous.

"You heard the lady. The most romantic table in the joint," Dion extended his hand toward the back of the restaurant, "and don't worry about menus. You will be served Chef's Delight, tonight."

Gregory was too overwhelmed to speak, as we made our way to our table. Dion hurried off to the kitchen to prepare our meal, while Gerald showed us to our table.

True to his word, we found ourselves nestled in a secluded corner. Flickering candle light was the only radiance in sight. The dim bulbs from the center of the room cast pale shadows that fell short of where we sat, in an awkward silence. I was beginning to figure out where the horrible part of Gregory's earlier statement came in.

"I've never been to a Greek restaurant before," he mumbled, breaking the silence before I could.

"Then you're in for a treat. Dion is a magician in the kitchen."

"Somehow I can't picture him as a chef."

"Well, it isn't his first vocation, but he's taken to it quite well."

"What was his first vocation? Professional wrestler?" he took a worried look toward the kitchen.

I laughed, in spite of myself. When it died down I had to know, "Do you mind telling me what happened on your date?"

A flash of shame and bruised ego crossed his face. I could tell I'd crossed the line. A part of me kicked myself for being so mean, but the nosey part wanted me to dig deeper. For once, the nosey part lost out.

"If you don't want to talk about it..."

"No, I guess it was my fault. You were right. The Olive Garden wasn't the proper place to take her. Then, when I should have been making witty repartee, I blanked, and started stuttering. Before it was over, I had wine shooting out of my nose, and my fettuccini was all over her dress."

"Don't be so hard on yourself. Talking to women can be hard."

"I don't seem to have any trouble talking to you."

"Well, I'm different," I grinned.

“No you’re not! My word, Nikki. You are the hottest woman I’ve ever seen, and I can talk to you.”

Did he just say I was hot?

*Calm down sister.*

I’m calm.

*Sure you are.*

Shut up! Can’t you see he’s talking about me again?!

“She was nowhere near as beautiful as you are, and I couldn’t even say ‘boo’ around her. After listening to her ramble on, I found I wasn’t even that attracted to her. She wanted me to be totally into her, without trying to find out anything about me. I don’t know about you, but that doesn’t sound like true love.”

Oh shoot! I stopped talking to myself, and it wasn’t even about me. Wonder if I could get me to talk to myself again?

“Does it to you?”

“No it doesn’t.” Good thing I listened to that last bit or I’d look totally like a goob right now.

“So, I was thinking, perhaps we should call this whole true love thing off. Obviously it isn’t for me.”

Okay, this was my out. He was broke. No way would he go near women again for a long time. I could report to Melina the good news, and go back to doing nothing for a living. As good as that sounded, I just couldn’t do it. For one thing, I had to be sure he was out of the true love biz. One bad date did not make jilted for life. Promise not to think badly of me but, for some reason, sitting this close to him was making me horny as hell.

The sudden appearance of a platter of pita bread, hummus, and those little lamb thingies in corn meal I love, saved me from making a fool of myself by jumping him right then and there. I was losing it. Plain and simple, my brain was on hiatus, and my nether regions were officially doing all my thinking for me.

"Greg, I think the problem was the potion."

"Huh?"

"Isn't it obvious? Your body rejected the potion and attracted the wrong woman. Happens all the time. It's why witches rarely use them any more, too many fluorocarbons in the atmosphere for them to work effectively."

"Then what do I need?"

"A charm. I'm sure I have one at the house that should do the trick." If I didn't, I sure the hell could find something. "Now, eat some hummus. Dion will get pissy if we don't finish this before the main course is ready."

Gregory dug suspiciously into the platter, but, after a few bites, he happily went back for second and third helpings. His gusto afforded me ample time to consider my options. I couldn't help but wonder at my motives in this. Sure, I wanted to get back to my easy way of life, but was there something else behind my sudden charm answer to his problems.

As much as I'd like to deny the attraction I was feeling for the guy, I couldn't. He wasn't a conventional hottie, but he had potential. Last night I'd got a taste of that potential, and it had been ruining me ever since. What I needed was a second taste to get it out of my system. That was the answer!

If I could get him into bed again, then surely it would cure me of this sad addiction I seemed to be forming for him. My long absence from the sex game had a damaging affect on me that was all. Once I'd had it a couple times I was sure my metabolism would level out, and I could shake this feeling turning my guts into knots. Hell, it was getting so bad I was picking at my food, and I never picked at my food.

That settled it. The minute we got back to my place. Him and me, in the bedroom, full freak-on until he was blind and stumbling, and I was once again the normal witch who started out telling this freaking story. Now, leave me alone; I smell lamb kebabs coming from the kitchen.



## Chapter Ten

The rest of our dinner was pure torture. Sure, the food was good, but what I really wanted to do through the whole meal, was taste him. That was true until the baklava hit the table. I ask you, what man compares to a rich pastry? Besides, I needed the sugar boost. I was in the mood to hurt somebody, or at the very least, make them walk funny for a week or two. Excuse me while I lick my lips.

Gregory closed the door behind us as we returned to my house. I winced at the sound of the door hitting the fractured frame. No, I still hadn't gotten around to fixing the damn thing. For all I knew, he'd let loose all manner of pixie shit into my house. I took a casual peek behind me, trying not to draw the attention of anything that might have drifted through. The only thing I saw was a haze of sparkling dust fading into the woodwork. Guess I'd dodged a bullet with that one.

I threw my purse on the counter, and walked into the kitchen. Gregory assumed what was becoming his usual place on my couch. Isn't it funny how men gravitated toward the most comfortable seat in the house? It was like their asses were divining rods for them. It should have bugged me, but I liked the thought of him making himself at home in my house.

The fact made me sick to my stomach. All too soon, I would dash his hopes and dreams to the ground. He'd hate me for the rest of his life. I wasn't sure I was ready to deal with that. It would only get worse if I let myself get any more emotionally attached to him than I already was.

"Care for something to drink?" I was already rummaging around in the cabinet for the bottle of Cabo Wabo I'd bought myself for Christmas. The situation called for tequila. Then again, what situation didn't?

"I'm good, but it's getting late. Do you think you could go ahead and get me the charm? I have an early meeting, in the morning, with some investors, about a new program I'm developing," he looked over his shoulder, giving me a hopeful grin.

Found the bottle. Ignored the grin. I popped the cap, and took a less than medically approved swig, before answering, "I wish it were that simple. If charms were that easy to hand out, do you think I would have tried a potion last night?"

"I really didn't think about it. I thought witches and potions kind of went hand in hand."

"Well, that's why I'm the witch and you aren't," another shot of Cabo scalded my tonsils, as my face oozed over the countertop.

"You're right. If it were that easy, I wouldn't have come to you in the first place."

"Damn skippy, I'm right. I hand you a charm without getting the settings tuned precisely to your biorhythms, and it'll blow your willie into last week. Is that what you want?" Maybe I needed to cut back on the tequila. That last bit came off all crazed even for me.

"So how do we get my biorhythms into the charm, or whatever?"

"Sex!"

"Sex?"

"Of course sex. I need to infuse the charm with the essence of love. Without your true love where we can get our hands on her, we'll have to improvise." Like you didn't see that coming from a mile away. If you didn't, you really need to pay closer attention.

"After last night I couldn't ask you to degrade yourself like that again."

"Look, Gregory. I like you," I swayed my way over to the couch, and plopped down beside him. "I'm going to be honest with you, if I may. I don't

usually go around sleeping with my clients, but I'm making an exception in your case. That shows how much I want you to find your true love."

"Nikki, I appreciate all the effort you're putting into this, but I can't help but feel I'm not worth it. You're a great person, and it isn't fair for me to take advantage of you like this." If he only knew. "And besides, I think you're drunk."

"I am not. Do I look drunk to you? Don't answer," I put my fingers over his lips. "This is part of the ceremony for powering up the charm." I got the words out just before a high octane belch bellowed from my lips. "Now that it's started, it can't be stopped. Do you want to rip a hole in the astral plane?"

"That sounds bad," he looked around like he expected one to pop up at any moment. Was it me, or did men seem to be overly gullible nowadays?

"If you don't want the whole world being sucked into the afterworld, you better get over this pedestal you've got me on." I think that was a bit much. Blame the booze.

"How much time do we have?" he glanced nervously at his watch.

"Thirty-seven minutes." Don't ask me how I came up with that number. It just popped into my head.

"Then, we'd better get to it. Mom would kill me if I was responsible for the end of the world." You had to love motherly guilt. It was part of the reason I was in this mess to begin with.

"Good boy," I used his knee to stagger to my feet. I swung from side to side, but managed to stay vertical. One more swig of Cabo, and I'm not sure I could say that with any amount of certainty. "Now, get your love bug moving."

"I'm not sure what exactly a love bug is, but don't we need to get the stuff together for the charm, before we, you know..." he tilted his head towards the bedroom door.

"Yeah, right." Dammit! I'd forgotten all about needing an actual charm to work into this sex. What the hell did I have that would work? I left him, and

went back to the kitchen, hoping my junk drawer might have something to fit the bill. Morloque knew there were enough cereal box prizes in there to make children happy the world over. Surely I had a necklace that wasn't in the shape of a leprechaun.

I stopped by the fridge, opening the door, and grabbing the first thing my hand touched. I needed something to equalize the alcohol in my system. I slammed the door shut without even glancing at my choice. The voice in my head was telling me to hurry the hell up. Unless it bit first, I probably wouldn't notice a little mold at this point.

I found the drawer just as full as I remembered it. A little artful decoration, mostly of my linoleum, and I found a trinket that just might work. At one time it might have been a Cap'n Crunch doubloon, now it looked more like a half eaten Oreo. However it looked, the thing was all I had, so it would have to work.

Where the hell did this freaking celery come from?

Oh yeah. Food. Fridge. Soaking up alcohol. Well, fuck it. All a stalk of celery would do was make me want a Bloody Mary. Mmmm... But, if I wanted to get nasty about it, there are things I could do with a stalk of celery that would make Rachel Ray blush. I'm not sure about Paula Dean. She doesn't look the type to blush easily.

I juggled the Cabo and celery, as I slipped the necklace over my head. I wouldn't advise drunken juggling. Somehow or another, the celery slipped from my hand and landed in my cleavage. The bottle of tequila tried to follow suit, but, while my boobs are impressive, I know for a fact there isn't room for both of them there, so I left the celery where it was, and clung to the Cabo for dear life. Good booze is never to be wasted, even if a piece of foliage is tickling your under-wire.

While all this must be as entertaining as hell for him to watch, it wasn't getting either of us into the bedroom. If I was going to keep to the pretense of the

world ending in... let me check my watch... twenty-nine minutes. I'd better sober my drunken ass up, and get this show on the road.

## Chapter Eleven

Gregory was more pliable tonight, as I ushered him into my boudoir. Either that or I was too tipsy to notice his resistance. I did note a hint of bemusement on his face. I wondered at that, until I got a nose full of Green Grocer. Damn Celery! I was probably going to end up with green nipples from all the Miracle Grow they pumped into these things. The inhumanity was too much for me to bear. Good thing I wasn't human.

"Hold this!" I reluctantly shoved the Cabo into his hand, pushing him toward the bed.

I plucked the now limp veggie from my cleavage, throwing it on my bedside table and stormed for my closet door. My buzz was wearing off. It put me in a particularly pissy mood. I'd backed myself into a corner with this charm crap. Sure it segued nicely into the sex I'd wanted, but it put me into a position where I had to actually perform a minor feat of magic to make it look believable.

Nothing complex, mind you, but I did need my hat. Yes, witches did indeed wear the stereotypical hat you see in all the Halloween adverts. Only mine seems to be in a state of misplaced, and I didn't have the time to look for it. My thirty-seven minute time table was rapidly running out.

The closest thing I had to any kind of hat was a pith helmet I'd worn during spring break, one year back in the day. Don't look at me like I'm crazy. It was quite fashionable in its day. I'm just not telling you which day it was. In any case, it was the only thing I had, unless I wanted to wear a brown paper bag on my head. And, no, I didn't. A happy face and the words *dropping prices* was so not me.

After a little shuffling of hangers, I picked a slinky, not sleazy, little number, from the closet, to match my mood. It was a whole lot see-through, and

a lot less fabric than the price tag would have led you to believe it entailed. Okay, sleazy it was. I quickly shucked my clothes and shimmied into it, hoping Gregory was getting an eyeful. A pair of black stilettos begged me to slide into them, but I left them on the floor of the closet. He couldn't handle the way they made my butt pop when I walked. Reaching down, I grabbed the cereal prize necklace, which I was now sure acted as some kind of decoder for another prize I'd since thrown away, and slipped it around my neck. The only thing left to complete my embarrassment was the helmet.

With it firmly atop my head, I turned around for the shock of my life. Shy and retiring Gregory Hamilton was naked and quite ready in my bed. What happened to *'I don't want to use you'* and *'you're too drunk for me to take advantage of you like this'*. Men were all the same. Thank Morloque.

"All comfy are we?" I smirked.

"I thought you wanted me to..." The look on his face was priceless. He looked like a kid with his hand in the cookie jar.

"Never presume to know the mind of a woman, Mr. Hamilton," I shot him a stern look without bursting out in giggles. "The gravity of this situation prevents me from chastising you properly."

"I won't do it again. I swear." He was so cute. He crossed his heart and everything.

"I wish I could believe you," shaking my head, I came around to the foot of the bed. "See, if I let you get away with it this time, who's to say you won't make the same mistake again, only this time with your true love?"

"But I won't," he squirmed his way up against the headboard.

I came up beside him, taking the celery from the bedside table. Thought I'd forgotten about that didn't you? "I wish I could say this is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you." This time I did giggle.

Before he could draw in a breath, I threw back the sheet covering him and brought the celery flying toward him. His hands flew toward his face. Silly man, like I was aiming for his face.

I held back at the last minute. Instead of lasting damage I went for the subtle whisper of the unknowing. As momma always said, wicked is as wicked does. Nothing said wicked like wondering what came next. I let the limp green stalk dance over the quivering mass of his chest before venturing down the valley of his abs. A low gasp escaped his lips, as the cold leaves brushed the hard flesh of his inner thigh. His hands fell away from his face, falling to grasp the sheet into tight balls in his fists, as I played the celery around the curve of his swollen sack. Oh my, wasn't my wicked growing by leaps and bounds? I'm happy to report it wasn't the only thing in that happy condition.

All this foreplay was distracting me from two very important things. One: I had a fake charm to produce. On a more important note, men aren't known for their staying power once excited for any length of time. So I'd better fake my way through the charm, and hope it's the only thing I'm forced to fake tonight.

I moved my leg over him, easing the rest of my body over his tender man bits. A little wiggle to make him jump and I snapped my legs shut trapping his writhing thighs. His entire body went rigid with expectation of the deviousness I had in mind for next.

Not to disappoint, I reached down and lifted his chin, until his eyes drank me in. I wanted his full attention. Taking the celery, I ran it in between the valley of my breasts, and along the curve of my – sucking it in – taut stomach. With my other hand, I grasped the base of his shaft, playing it across the sheer fabric of my not-so-there nightie. His body bucked, trying to get away, but I was having none of it. For the time being, he was mine to do with what I wanted, and I wanted to play 'walk the veggie'.

Gregory's mouth dropped to his chest, as my fingers caressed his shaft, while I swirled the celery around the tip of his swollen head. With each delicate



pass, I could feel the fevered beat of his heart racing through his manhood. His breath became a labored hiss. White, blank orbs stared back at me as he threw his head back, his bottom lip tucked painfully between his teeth. As much fun as my veggie fetish was becoming, dare I continue, and risk the end of the world and my chance at a good time?

I turned my attention to other areas to give him a reprieve, not much of one, but enough to let him see forward again. I swirled the leaves around his nipples just to feel him twitch under me. I had to make sure there wasn't lasting brain damage, didn't I? His reflexes seemed to be in working order, so I leaned forward to give his pesky left one a little more attention, and got more than I had bargained for.

The delicious heat of his shaft slipped beneath the flimsy fabric of my nightie, nudging its way against the tender folds of my swollen sex. The shock of his touch sent me rocking back. The full weight of him slid easily into me. The sensation sent me rolling onto the hot granite of his chest. My breasts crushed against him. My nipples hardened instantly of their own volition. I don't know which felt better, the feel of him beneath me, or the exquisite piece of him exploring the inside of me.

I tried to forget the plastic disk digging a chunk out of my boobies, in the middle of all this sexual excitement. The frigging charm could damn well wait. I don't know if it was me, or the Cabo, but Gregory appeared to have learned a thing or two since last night.

The corded muscles of his thighs drove a steady rhythm against the soft flesh of my butt, the fine hairs covering them sending a thrill of goose bumps running up my spine. Never in my life have I found myself so close to losing myself so soon. His inexperience aside, the very touch of his skin against mine was sending me over the edge at an alarming rate, never mind the things his cock was doing to the inside of me.

I lost myself in the heady scent of him rolling over me, as my tongue twirled rings around the base of his neck. My hair swam from underneath the pith helmet that rocked back and forth precariously atop my head. Before you ask – hell if I know how it was still in place with all the sex actions taking place.

Gregory nipped at my ear, driving the question completely from my head. I let out a groan as his teeth grazed its ridge before letting go to work his way down my neck. Do any of you remember me teaching him this last night? Me neither! Do you think he spent his day Googling? Frankly, I didn't care. As long as he was doing this, and kept up his fine work at the other end, I wasn't going to complain about how he spent his day. I just hoped he didn't develop carpal tunnel before we got through.

"Nikki," the harsh rasp of his voice in my ear sent shivers through my brain.

"Yes, Gregory," my own breathless voice answered.

"I know this may seem an inopportune time to mention this, but shouldn't you start working on the charm before I, you know, come or something?"

Ever notice how practical men could be when you're trying to have a good time? I'm just glad I snuck in one while no one was looking, otherwise I'd have to find that damn celery again.

Remember, I told you I was going to have to work a little magic to pull this off. Well, here it comes.

Sex, in itself, is an act of magic. The whole creation-of-life thing. When a witch is involved it is magnified to the number ten. I eased the necklace off my neck and placed it over his heart. The entire time I never once let him miss a beat. His momentary distraction aside, he didn't seem to be in the mood, in any case. I reached back and cupped his balls with my free hand, while the other stayed poised over the erstwhile charm. The touch of my hand on him increased the rhythm of his urgency, and, exponentially, the magic I needed to get the spell going. I didn't like the fact this sex was turning into work one little bit.

As much as I hated to do it, I ignored the swelling orgasm I felt at my core. Instead of giving in to it, I cursed my stupid luck and focused a portion of myself into the cheap plastic under my hand. A jolt of energy rocked through my arm. I recognized the groundswell and gathered the magic into myself. My arm was on fire from the intensity, but I held it, waiting for him to monkey-face. I didn't have to wait long. My senses blurred as I sensed Gregory stiffen inside me. Within seconds, his release filled me and I let the magic flow.

My own orgasm was seconds behind. The combination of magic and sex was like a circuit blowing in my brain. A tidal wave of power coursed through my body, but it didn't stop with me. I looked down to see the necklace acting as a breaker between Gregory and me. Crackles of purple light sizzled, the air snapping and popping across our flesh.

I think I may have umphed a little more into the dang thing than I should have. Oops, my bad. It was too late to worry about it now. Like I could if I wanted to! My third climax, in as many seconds, was rolling through me, eliminating any chance of my brain focusing on anything else at the moment.

The charm burned the palm of my hand. I tried to pull away, but it held my hand rooted to the spot. Gregory stared up at me, his eyes washed with fear-tinged bliss. My eyes reflected it back at him.

I'd never felt magic this strong in my life. Somebody should have mentioned back in school never to mix Sammy Hagar's best with impractical magic. Warning labels, people! Just about the time my eyeteeth started singing show tunes, the power surged back through me. The resulting backlash sent me slumping over Gregory, spent, in more ways than one.

"Did it work?" the question was hissed in my ear.

"Yeah. I'm pretty sure my eyes will stop rolling any time now," I grinned, until I saw the confused look on his face. "Oh, you mean the charm."

"What else did you think I meant?" he shifted under me, unceremoniously throwing me to the side of the bed.

I scrambled to keep from falling off the bed, in as dignified manner as I could. Not easy with a pith helmet perched on top of your head, but I managed it and was still able to answer his question. "You felt the magic. Of course it worked."

That was the bad part. Something had worked. I'm not sure what exactly, but a strong dose of magic went into the old cereal toy. For all I knew, I could be handing him an actual, true, love charm. I doubted it, but still. More than likely, it was a lust charm. He might get lucky, well luckier than he just did, but I doubted more than that would happen. If you haven't figured it out yet, for all my talk, I'm not exactly all the hype would have you believe.

"Thank heavens. For a second I thought we'd been too late and the world was coming to an end," he let out a sigh of relief.

And here I thought I was the only one who'd felt the earth move. "It was just the mojo kicking in on the charm."

"Can I have it, or do you need to tweak it some more?"

"Nope, it's ready to go. All you have to do is throw it around your neck. When you get up in the morning, focus your thoughts on finding the woman of your dreams and the charm will do the rest." I handed him the charm, reluctantly letting it slip from my fingers.

"I know we should cuddle or something, but, since it's like you said, a business arrangement, I really should be going," he leapt from the bed, grabbing his clothes on the way, and headed through the door before I could open my mouth.

The slamming of the front door shook me from my shock at his abrupt exit. Emptiness settled over me. I'm sure it wasn't because he was gone. Using magic always left me feeling wonky. There was no way Gregory Hamilton could be affecting me like some girl with a crush. The whole reason I'd slept with him a second time was to get him out of my brain.

Now that I'd done it, he was so out of there. I barely even remembered all the tingly, naughty things we'd done to each other. By the time I woke up in a few hours, I would be realigned with the ley lines running under my house, my body would be back to normal, and Gregory would be out of my head. The sad thing was, I could almost lie to myself and believe a small part of myself was actually convinced of that.

## Chapter Twelve

Mornings suck! Usually I avoid the whole A.M. thing like a plague of rabid monkeys, dragging my butt from bed sometime after *Days of our Lives* has bit the dust. This morning, notice I said morning, and not a more consumer-friendly afternoon, my stomach was doing flip flops and wouldn't let me sleep. At first I thought it was the hummus backing up on me. I had almost convinced myself it was. My reasoning would have worked if it wasn't for Gregory's face dancing through my fitful dreams all night.

Let's face facts. I had it bad for the guy. No fricking doubt about it. I slapped my legs to the floor thoroughly disgusted by the current turn of events. My eyes weren't even open yet and today already looked like another shitty day. The tequila hangover wasn't helping my outlook any, either.

"You aren't suffering from a hangover my dear," a decidedly feminine voice sliced into my brain.

Who the fuck was that – and what the hell were they doing in my bedroom at... I cracked one eye open to peek at my alarm clock ...the stabbing red lights informed me 6:37. I could only assume it was in the A.M. Morloque, who wakes up this damn early and isn't trying to open fire on someone?

I cracked the other eye open looking for my intruder. Once the room stopped blurring into shadows, I made out a shape sitting in my grandmother's chair against the wall. I was sure, when the shape stopped spinning, I'd be able to tell who it was, but it would be nice if they'd just tell me themselves.

"Not to sound rude, but mind introducing yourself – or killing me and getting it over with?" I grumbled on my way to the bathroom. If whoever it was thought they could barge in here, finding me to be a civil host, they were sadly

mistaken. If they were lucky, I could manage a passable surly only after I'd had my morning pee, and not a minute before.

"I can see expending so much magic has affected you far worse than I feared, if you cannot even recognize me, the Vesperex of your domain."

I nearly slipped off the commode, and I'd barely gotten my butt down good enough to unclench. Melina was in my freaking bedroom. Here I was, taking a leak, and the woman trying to ruin my life was in the next room. Maybe I should just crawl in and flush myself before I tinkled.

"Uh, Melina. Sorry, I had a rough night last night," I yelled, while trying to maintain some shred of dignity, the entire time wondering why I keep forgetting to buy toilet paper.

"The entire region knows what kind of night you had, silly girl," the woman's laughter mocked me. It almost made me feel like my mother was in the next room. "Any witch worth her salt knows to set up wards before mixing magic and sex. I had reports of spontaneous orgasms from as far away as Biloxi. Do you know the amount of paperwork something of that nature entails? My poor Gabaroon had to be sedated this morning from the last one; otherwise he'd be the one here instead of me. Poor Elsbeth hasn't walked that funny in five hundred years."

My heart was breaking. Now where was that damn toilet paper? Sure, I wanted to hide in here until she left, but I didn't think she'd let me get away with it. There it was, tucked under the edge of the vanity. I inched my big toe toward the cabinet until it was close enough to drag the squished roll over to me, while she ranted on about how much I needed to refrain from being a twit.

Blah, blah, blah.

I was on the damn pot! You'd think she'd have the common courtesy to wait until I finished, before ripping me a new one. She was still going strong as I flushed, washed my hands and brushed teeth. I figured I'd leave my hair natty,

but drew the line at funk mouth. I took a last minute check for eye boogers, and walked back into the bedroom to finish facing the music.

"And really dear, what would your mother say, if she found out you were up to the sexual mambo with a client, when you're supposed to be making it so he's turned off the entire process?" I nodded blankly, and sat on the edge of the bed across from her.

"I'm sure she'd say exactly what you've been telling me, Melina," I answered demurely.

"Correct you are, because your mother and I are of the same school." Yeah, old school. "Nichole, you are of an age to know that the mortal world is a harsh place, and to know how precarious our position is in it. The things you do reflect not only on you but on us all."

"Then why do we go around being assholes?" She'd used my first name, which I hate and really sets me off. She was just going to have to deal with me being a smartass as a result.

"Because we have a reputation to think about. Cousin Frankie tried to make that good witch crap fly, with that ridiculous book of his, but it doesn't, no matter how many times Ted Turner tries to make us watch the damn movie. My Aunt Glenda is still trying to live down the shame. The Baum name is ruined for all eternity, and now you're well on the way to making Smythe name just as bad. Morloque knows we would all like to be daisies and butterflies, but the reality is witches are snakes, spiders and things that make your skin crawl. The minute you get that through your perky little head the better off you'll be. Your Mitch of a father is to blame for your present condition. I told your mother she should have never let him within ten feet of you, but love has blinded many a bad witch to the truth staring them in their one good eye."

"Huh?" she'd caught me at a vulnerable moment, and it slipped out before I could stop myself.



“True love. For all the hype, it is the vilest magic ever conceived. Your mother could have been one of the greatest witches of our time if she hadn’t fallen for your father. Now look at her. She is exiled to the wilds of the Bahamas, her daughter is a wastrel, and her husband is by all accounts a burgeoning golf pro at the local country club. Does any of that scream ‘witch’ to you?”

Now she was dissing my Dad. It was too much to take before noon.  
“When you put it like that I guess not.”

“Exactly. Nichole, this is your last chance. Fail at this, and I see very little in your future that does not revolve around the use of a paper hat and a deep fryer.” A hint of glee shone in the old cow’s eyes at the prospect.

“Melina, what do you want me to do?” The best thing to do was agree to whatever she wanted, and get her the hell out of my house before I went psycho on her ass for talking about my family.

“Stop having sex with this mortal for one thing. It will only lead to misery. Yours.”

Okay, I can deal with that. I’d already come to the same conclusion myself.

“And, make sure he is a broken man by the end of tomorrow, or it’s good-bye freedom, hello ‘*Biggie Size that?*’. I don’t want Mr. Hamilton to ever, I repeat, ever, consider love with a mortal woman. Do we understand each other?”

Ouch! “What if I need more time?”

“This is a time-delicate situation. I think it’s only fair to tell you, Ms. Bonet’s has a new crop of girls about to graduate. In the event you don’t succeed, I need to be prepared to place one of them here, no later than Friday. With so many promising girls coming up, proper placement is vital,” Melina dismissed me with a flip of her wrist.

Not only was I being shipped home, they were already lining up my replacement. How could my life be in any worse shape?

“By the way, did you know there is a family of pixies living in your microwave?” Melina rose from the chair, positively floating toward my bedroom door.

I was so relieved to see her leaving; it took everything I had not to grin from ear to ear as she sauntered through the door, in spite of her news that I’d somehow acquired new houseguests over night. I waited for the swish of air marking her exit before moving from the bed. She must have been right about the magic hangover. My entire body ached, not my usual Cabo morning-after feeling. With it, only my head hurt and my tongue itched. This morning the only thing that didn’t itch was my tongue.

Running my hand through my hair, I let out a sigh of relief. At least she was gone. My day could only get better from here. Catching my reflection in the full length mirror, it dawned on me I’d just had an entire conversation with my de facto boss, totally naked. Okay, my shame was now complete. I might as well go greet the pixies and let the day be complete.

I left the bedroom, throwing on my dressing gown as I did. Letting Melina see me in the all together was one thing, an appliance full of pixies was a totally different matter. They were all perverts down to their little glow-in-the-dark butts. Squeaky cat calls before my coffee did not sit well with my digestion, which wasn’t working all that well to begin with, this morning.

I stumbled past the microwave, hitting auto-defrost for the pure hell of it. I tuned out the screams, and went in search of something sugar-coated. Throwing open my pantry door, I discovered that, before taking up residence in my microwave, the pixies had replaced all my junk food with South Beach Diet alternatives. I was glad I nuked the bastards. My taste buds were yelling for Fruity Pebbles and Frosted Flakes, not this junk.

Breakfast was out. Soy-flavored cardboard was not my idea of food, if you hadn’t guessed from the end of the last paragraph. I checked the coffee canister. They’d hit it too. The little snot heads. Now I had enough Tang to last me until

the end of time. I debated on an early trip to Starbucks. Deciding that, from the way today was starting off, the Apocalypse could well result from me stepping foot through my front door. I made for my couch instead.

After ten minutes of tossing and turning, I knew I couldn't even enjoy being lazy. The smell of Gregory covered the cushions, bringing memories of last night flooding back. Even though I knew I was crazy for doing it, I breathed in the richness of his scent, relishing the closeness to him it represented. I quickly pulled my head back, realizing how pathetic I was becoming.

Sitting here, pining for him was such a bad idea. Of course, sleeping with him a second time had been the ultimate bad idea. You didn't get men out of your head by sleeping with them. I should have known that. Stupid ideas like that didn't even work in the movies.

I was through deluding myself. Some part of me was forming an attachment for Gregory. Not love! Witches did not fall in love willy nilly, thank you very much. A carnal lust thing was happening, nothing more. Okay, maybe I cared a little about him, which was what was so damn hard about this. I did care. He was a great guy, and didn't deserve to be a pawn in Melina's game of wicked witch of the South.

I could just stand up to the wench and tell her I wasn't doing her dirty work anymore. Yeah, like that shit was going to happen. I was spoiled by my own laziness. Quite frankly, I was ashamed of myself, so don't feel bad if you do too. My first bout of guilt still didn't change the fact the end result would be that, no matter what I did, I was going to ruin Gregory's chances for ever believing in love.

If only I wasn't a witch. Things would be so much simpler if I was a mere human. Witches weren't supposed to fall in lust. Yet, here I was doing exactly that. Humans never seemed to have this type of trouble. They were free to lust whoever they wanted, and frequently did. Strange how being a member of a superior species, didn't make things any easier.

Well, I could sit here all day wishing for something that could never be, or I could get proactive and be constructive about the situation. I needed to forget my troubles, not dwell on them. No, I wasn't going to get drunk and pole dance at the local strip club. I'm not even sure we have a local strip club. I was losing track of what's important. I needed to get the hell of my house before I went bonkers.

Instead of entertaining the male population, I was going with my earlier idea. Starbucks here I come! A day away from the house, a Green Tea Latte and, perhaps, a cheesecake lunch, sounded like just the ticket I needed to put some distance between me and this mess. As good as all this sounded I knew it was just sugar coating the harsh reality I wasn't ready to face.

For the first time in my life, I didn't want to feel wicked.

## Chapter Thirteen

The last drag of my iced latte is always the best. It is! I let all the whipped cream ooze down to the bottom of the cup so, with the last sip, I'm mainlining the good shit straight, with a hint of green tea to flavor it. Let me tell you, perfection every time. One day I'm going to find out what's in this stuff, and circumvent the thirty minute drive to sustain my habit.

I swished my straw around, trapping a stray glob or two of goodie before abandoning the cup for the second one I had stashed in the cooler sitting beside me on the park bench. Yes, before you get all nosy, there was a third one for the drive home. The cheesecake sitting beside it, though, was for now. Putting the second Starbucks of the day down, I took the plastic triangle, holding my heaven, out.

Cracking the lid, the smell of caramel, nuts and chocolate sent my taste buds to watering. I'm sure there was actual cheesecake under the mound of topping. My spork was dying to discover just where it was to be found. I dug into the tip and dragged a healthy slab of the cheesecake away, making sure the chocolate to cake ratio was just right. Finally, sure the spork wasn't going to collapse under the weight, I leaned back on the park bench, savoring the first bite.

Before you ask, the park isn't my normal hangout, but, today, I wanted to be outside, well away from anything that might remind me of him. You know who I mean, so I'm not saying his name. To that end I was ignoring all the young lovers, smooching as they walked along the paths that twirled their way throughout the park. All I needed was my tea and this cheesecake to make me deliriously happy.

By the last bite, I was almost convinced. Nothing helped a girl's outlook like cheesecake and chocolate. I was nearly back to my unnaturally perky self and ready to tackle a trip to the local gateway to Hell, i.e. department store, *insert your favorite company logo here*, for the essentials. Yes, I remembered the toilet paper. I made a list and everything. See, it's stuck to the bottom of my Starbucks cup.

The shadows were drawing past the tree I was sitting beside. Before long I might actually be sitting in the bright stuff, if I didn't watch it. Me and sunlight don't mix. I have a naturally creamy complexion, and the sun plays havoc with it. Freckles are the bane of my existence. I have a doctor's excuse stating I could die from them, if you don't believe me. It's a witch doctor's excuse, but she's licensed and bonded, so there.

Plucking my list from my empty cup, I readied myself for the mythical battle to come. Yes the grocery store was that bad. I made sure my last latte was safe, and rose from my seat. The cooler remained snug against the back of the bench, while I threw my trash away in the can sitting on the other side of the path. Just because I was wicked didn't mean I was a litter bug.

The can was overflowing and entirely icky. With the help of a twig I pushed my refuse into the flap without actually having to touch anything, all the time keeping one eye on my little cooler. While I wasn't averse to making another trip to Starbucks, it went against my nature to let someone kidnap my hard-earned trust fund bought drink.

I turned to pick up the aforementioned drink when my shocked eyes locked on the most unbelievable scene I'd ever seen in my whole entire life. Gregory, my Gregory, was standing across the park with some floozie. I didn't know for sure if she was a slut, or just dressed the part really well, but I had to go with the feeling my gut was screaming at me to go with.

She was all blond, with perky everything. The cut of her skirt was downright indecent. I could see her knees! And the top of her breasts were just

about flying into his face, her top was swung so low. I don't mean to shock you with this next bit, but I could see the top of her black bra all the way from here. I mean, if that didn't scream floozie, I don't know what did!

Is this the type of woman he wanted? I wasn't wasting perfectly fantastic sex on the guy so he could go after women he could have paid for. This was not going to do. I had half a mind to march over there and kick both their asses for the very principle of the matter.

Besides, I looked a hundred times better than that bleached whale. Any fool could tell those breasts were all lift and tuck, with nothing but the padding to keep them up in your face. I bet she had butt implants, too. Nobody's ass looked that good, without some work being done. Mine did, but I'm perfect in every way, so I don't count.

How dare he smile at her! She was giggling. Did you see that? I've been with him two nights in a row, and he never said anything remotely amusing to me, let alone something to set me to giggling. She was faking it. Poor Gregory couldn't see she was just playing with his emotions.

I knew the hussy was just revving him up for a joke. Just look at him. What woman would want a guy with tossed hair, boyish charm, and a hint of muscle under a rumpled shirt and baggy pants? Who the hell am I kidding? I just described Tom Welling. I'm surprised every woman in the park wasn't dragging him down and stripping him naked to get a look at his Clark Kent.

I'd better face facts. Not only was he a stud, but she would probably fall for him hard. Melina would kick me out of my house and send me packing home to Mom before the day was out. So much for a day away from my troubles.

I should have seen from the start I was doomed to failure. All Gregory needed to find true love was a little confidence. I'm sure my tumbling him a couple times was all the ego boosting he needed to chat up Ms Hottie. The flipping charm was just an added bonus to the confidence package.

If this new development didn't convince me I had no business being a witch, I didn't know what would. I had the trust fund, spoiled brat thing down pat, but the witch bit I was a total failure at. No wonder Mom was always on my case. She knew what she'd given birth to, all those years ago. I was a witch without the right stuff, plain and simple. Well, what was I going to do about it? Bitch and moan sounded good to me.

No, I had to stop thinking about me for a minute. Gregory needed saving from a fate worse than death, before I started my self pity party. He deserved to find true love, just not with THAT!

Evil visions flooded my brain. I could follow them, and slip a few choice spells in while she wasn't looking. The thought perked me up considerably. It made me feel positively wicked, even. No, I couldn't do it. I could do it, but the better word here is I CAN'T do it. If I revealed myself openly, Melina would hang me up by my toes. The mood I was in, there was no telling what I would do. As much as I hated to admit it, I wasn't going to do anything but stand behind this tree, watching the train wreck unfold.

Would you look at that! The hussy was pushing the hair out of his face. I hugged the tree, trying my best not to run over there and bust her one upside the head. I so could not believe Gregory was falling for this crud. He actually had a big, goofy smile on his face. You'd think he'd never had a woman touch him before. I mean, really. My hands were all over him last night, and he hadn't acted like that. True, his eyes were too busy rolling back in his head to do much of anything, but that was beside the point. He was acting like a damn fool.

I couldn't watch this anymore. To think I'd spent the entire morning pining for the goober, and here he was throwing himself at the first blond with fake everything to come along. I had better things to do with my time than to waste my afternoon playing stalker behind some tree.

Damn straight, I did! I had important witch things to do. Shut up! Buying toilet paper was important witch things. You try living without it.



I jerked my cooler from the park bench, instantly regretting it when I heard the cup thump against the inside wall of the cooler. I popped the lid. My timely intervention saved the world from coming to an end. Lucky for the rest of you my latte hadn't spilled. I rounded the tree, to see Gregory and Ms. Thang heading in the opposite direction.

My finger twitched. Instantly, a boil developed on her right butt cheek. Hey, nobody saw me. Let Melina track it back to me. I hoped it was a painful one, too! I didn't have time to check before I let fly. For all I knew, it could have been a harmless pimple, or the start of the Black Death. Either way she was going to have trouble sitting for the next day or two.

Feeling a little better, I trotted toward my car. The thought of hitting the shopping hell seemed like heaven to me at that moment. My wicked was flaring, and Morloque help the person who picked today to cross my path. I swear the first person to cut me off with a squeaky wheel, or who stood in front of what I needed while talking to their friends, instead of getting their shit and getting the hell out of my way, was going home with a donkey tail with cloven hooves to match. If the evil grin plastered on my face was any indication, *-insert department store chain of your choice here* – really was going to earn the name Hellmouth today.

## Chapter Fourteen

If you're still around after my emotional meltdown, at the end of the last chapter, I should tell you no one died during my shopping adventure, but it was close on a couple of occasions. I don't care what the cow in the leopard skin pants says; her ass was that big before she bumped into me. The case of feminine itch may have been me, but I'm not copping to anything without a lawyer present.

Needless to say, my nerves were on edge until I set my bags down and collapsed in my favorite chair, two hours later. As far as I was concerned, the couch was still off limits. Even from my chair, I caught the musky scent of Gregory lingering among the cushions. I wish I could Febreze the guy as easily from my head, as I could the heady smell of him from the couch.

Finding him at the park hadn't exactly been a wake-up call, but it had been a shock. The fact he was with another woman was definitely not how I pictured spending my day not thinking about him. Three days ago, I managed just fine not thinking about him. Of course, I hadn't met him yet, but, surely, that shouldn't make a difference.

I was a witch. Witches didn't go mushy in the head over men, especially human ones. You didn't see my Mom mooning over my Dad while he was on the golf course. No, she went about her business making people miserable, until he got home so she could focus solely on him. Why couldn't I be like that?

*Because at the end of the day, Gregory wasn't coming home to you. You silly witch.*

I'm not silly.

*Yes you are. I should know.*

You be quiet. I've got the situation well in hand. Thank you very much.

*Sure you do; that's why you're talking to yourself, instead of admitting the truth that you...*

I told you to shut up! How can I concentrate on my breakdown, if you're going to act like mother?

*That's it. I don't have to take this abuse from you. I'll be in your temporal-lobe until you come to your senses and apologize.*

About damn time. Now where was I? Oh yes. He was going to go home to that blonde hussy with the butt implants and pushed up titties. And why was he going to do that? Because I whammied the charm!

That really bites! The first real piece of magic I manage, and it sends the guy I lust over into the arms of another woman. Hold it a minute! What if I don't lust him? Could she be right? You know, little voices tended to know things. If she was, this all this could be a symptom of a more disastrous and potentially life-changing disease. I could 'gasp' be in the other L word.

My head swiveled, in case someone might have overheard my thoughts. Nope, not even the Neverland was seeping enough to eavesdrop today. Could I be in love with him? According to Nazareth, *Love Hurts*, and I was definitely feeling some major discomfort at the prospect.

Maybe I needed a cat. Witches loved cats. I'd never owned one personally. Excuse me. I have never been owned by one. I am in no way stupid enough to think cats were owned by anyone. The above was a slip of the tongue if a cat should be happening to read this.

Perhaps now was the time to invest in the stereotype and get one. I'm sure, with a cat to boss me around, I wouldn't have time to think about Gregory, or the dreaded L word. Where did one go to buy a feline that was suited to life as a witch's owner?

Who was I trying to kid? I was in the L word. What a revolting development. If I was the type of witch they wanted me to be, I'd be hunkered

down over a smelly cauldron this minute, and putting the finishing touches on a one-two punch Mr. Hamilton wouldn't be able to walk away from.

As good as that sounded, I couldn't bring myself to magic my way into his heart. It may sound human of me, but I wanted him to want me for me, not because of something I'd slipped into his system without him knowing. The coven would drum me out on my ear, if they knew I felt this way.

Just when did I go from lust to love? I think the third green tea threw me over the edge. The antioxidants were going to my head. None of it mattered anyway. Melina was quite clear that he wasn't to find true love. Even if there was a chance I was his true love, he'd never want me anyway.

You heard him last night. I was an ends to his means. He wouldn't give me the time of day, if he hadn't needed a magical boost to his love life. He thought I was a nice girl, who was fine to tumble once or twice in the bed for an ego boost, but definitely not the type of woman to settle down with. Hell, he couldn't get out of here fast enough, once he got his hands on the stinking charm. He didn't even wait to get dressed. I bet he was still throwing his leg through his pants when he made it to his car. Did any of that scream a man besotted with my charms? I didn't think so, either.

At this point I wished my door would explode and the Neverland would take me. Anything would be better than what I was feeling at this moment. I'd lived over four hundred years without feeling anything remotely this painful, and would have gladly gone another century or two without the pleasure, thank you very much.

Oh shit! I just gave away my age. Who cares? It's not like any of you believe any of this is anything but fiction anyway.

I rose from my chair, dragging my butt into the kitchen. My few groceries weren't going to put themselves up. I would have left the entire mess there to rot, if it wasn't for the two gallons of ice cream I'd thrown into the buggy for therapy, at the last minute. There was no way in hell I was wasting ten bucks

worth of perfectly good Blueberry Cheesecake and Double Mocha Almond Fudge ice cream because I was a lovesick ninny. I may be emotionally distraught, but crazy I'm not. The little voices notwithstanding.

Tossing all the bathroom stuff in one bag, I quickly stashed the rest where it went, so I could hit the ice cream for a much needed pig-out. Yes, I did plan to have both gallons in front of me. Stupid question if you ask me. Whether or not I was using a regular spoon, or just using the soup ladle, now that was the question you should have been asking me.

I was pretty well deep into my first ladle full of blueberry cheesecake, when I felt dear old Dad sneak up behind me. Like I might have mentioned earlier, Mitches, which my Dad is one, aren't all that great at magic. I love him anyway.

"So what's up Dad?" I gurgled through a hunk of melting blueberry mush.

"How'd you know I was here?"

I could hear the pout in his voice, but finished my bite before I answered, "Because you won't stop wearing that cheap cologne. I can smell you coming from a mile away."

"You bought me this cologne," he pushed a stool over, and sat beside me.

"Dad, it was a gag gift. Nobody wears Brut."

"I like it," he took the ladle before I could hit the mocha fudge. "Besides it irritates the hell out of your mother."

I smirked. It would. Him being here put me in such a good mood suddenly, I didn't even mind when he snatched a heaping spoonful when anyone with eyes could see it was clearly my turn.

"Is there a reason you decided to drop by?" I asked, taking the spoon before he decided to go back for seconds.

"Can't a dad check in on his one and only daughter without there being a reason?" I raised my eyebrow. "You got me. I intercepted a message about you from Melina before your mother could see it."

"So, you know?" My stomach sank to the tips of my toes. It wasn't every day your dad found out what a nasty slut his baby girl was. I guess it was too late to climb into the tub of ice cream and drown myself.

"Yep," he put his hand on mine. "Before you go all mental, I know you well enough to know you don't go around making it a habit of sleeping with every man who knocks on your door."

Only because they don't make it a habit of knocking, but he didn't need to know that.

"Dad, I screwed up big time," I dug out another heaping scoop and shoved it into my mouth.

"Mitched it up good, huh?" he smiled and took the spoon out of my hand, and tossed it back into the sink.

I couldn't help but smile back, in spite of the fact he took away my weapon of self destruction, leaving me no choice but to bury my face in the tub. Only his hand on my shoulder stopped me.

"Nikki, do you love this man?" the question was so out of the blue it shocked me into honesty.

"Morloque help me, but I think I do."

"Well that explains the death by Blue Bell," Dad pushed the buckets away and put his arms around me.

"What am I going to do, Dad?" I sobbed into his pit.

"If you love him, there's only one thing to do. Fight for him."

I loved him but being a Mitch he always looked for the easiest answer to a problem. Just because you loved someone didn't mean you automatically ended up with them.

"Melina will never allow that to happen. I'm supposed to turn him off true love, not become his one and only. Besides, he doesn't want me. He wants some blond hoochie."

"How could he want some blond hoochie when he has you?"

You had to love my dad, but he really had a blind spot when it came to me. "He's mortal, Dad. Mortals don't want to be tied down to a witch. Didn't you ever watch that documentary they made during the sixties? It was all about how they made that poor witch hide who she was so she could fit in. I don't want to hide who I am."

Dad broke out in a boisterous fit of laughter, "Nikki that was a sitcom, not a documentary. I don't think any man, be he mortal or Mitch, could ever force you to be anything other than what you are."

"But Melina?"

"You let me worry about her." Dad lifted my face to his with a serious look in his eye. "And your mother. I may only be a Mitch, but even a Mitch has some power when it comes to the happiness of his baby girl."

Something in the tone of his voice gave me a moment of hope. Just a moment, mind you. I'd never heard Dad talk this way before. He and Mom had had their little tiffs but she'd always seemed to come out the victor in them. Now I wasn't so sure. I think dear old Dad was craftier than he let on. Maybe there was hope after all.

"If I head out, do you think you'll be okay?" he fluffed a curl off my forehead and kissed the tip of my nose. "No more ice cream suicide?"

"Yeah," I snuggled my head under his chin, feeling another couple of bites did not constitute suicide.

"Good girl. I've got a doubles set up with that old fool Dr. Bombay, this afternoon, and, if I'm late, he'll fudge a birdie on the first hole."

"Are you really planning on becoming golf pro?" the idea was ludicrous, but I had to ask.

He gave me a devilish wink, "Tiger Woods has nothing to worry about, but you should see the looks your mother gives me when I leave the house with those plaid, checkered pants."

I giggled as the image planted itself in my head. My straight-laced witch of a mother was probably dying by inches from embarrassment. The Bahamas League of Covenant Witches must be having a field day at her expense.

"Bye, Dad."

"Seeya, kiddo." He gave me a last peck on the top of the head before blinking out of the room.

Fatherly encouragement aside, he may be on to something. Melina did say I had to ruin his chances at ever enjoying love with a mortal woman. Falling in love with me would certainly see to that. If my Mom and Dad were any indication, it wouldn't a bed of roses either. Since I ruled out magic, I was going to have to do this the hard way.

Sex my way into his heart, you say? Good plan. Thanks for the help. I'm going with it!



## Chapter Fifteen

The door wouldn't be knocked. As much as I willed it to be knocked, it just wouldn't oblige my whim. You would think, by now, that the world would know to do as I wanted it to. I was a force of nature after all. It wasn't like I wanted world peace or anything. I just wanted one person to walk up to my front door and beg me to let him come inside. Of course, that one person had to be Gregory, but you already knew that because you've read the rest of the book. Excuse me for babbling, but I'm emotionally charged at the moment.

If Gregory was true to form, he should be showing up any minute now. I said that an hour ago, and he still wasn't darkening my door. I ain't too proud to admit I said the same thing two hours before that too. It was now after nine o' fricking clock. My normally bubbly personality was beginning to doubt he was going show up at all.

Score one for Miss Clairol Summer Gold. The bitch!

Tonight definitely looked like a bust. I might as well pack it in. All my carefully laid out plans were for nothing, candles, soft music, and a table filled with delicacies fit for a king. I'd ordered the last in. If it didn't come from a cardboard box, I couldn't cook it. Luckily, Dion delivers to his favorite customers.

I'd even dressed especially sexy for the occasion. Not my usual slutty, mind you, but something with real sex appeal. I'd gone with a full length black silk negligee, cut up the side to reveal a shapely slice of leg, with the bodice low enough to show the barest hint of cleavage. My hair was clipped back and fell haphazardly around my face. I'd used a touch of make-up, just enough to accentuate, without over-powering my natural charms. A drop of perfume

between my breasts completed a devastating package that was totally going to waste if he wasn't here to see it.

I gathered my sad sack butt up from the chair, where I'd spent the last three hours watching Neverland seep from around my closed front door, and started blowing out the candles. Clearing the table could wait until tomorrow. I was in no mood to clean up after myself tonight. If I was lucky, the pixies would come back and take care of it for me. It was times like this I wished the new Mary Janice was out. Then I'd at least have a good book to curl up in bed with and console myself with, in this, my time of utter rejection by the male of the species.

The bedroom door greeted me with mocking disdain. I pushed past it, not up to unleashing my wrath on an inanimate object. I know, I was positively pitiful, wasn't I?

With nothing to look forward to, I went about my nightly routine. Shucking sex appeal in favor of comfort, I found my favorite sleep shirt at the foot of the bed. A tentative sniff told me it was more or less clean, so it went over my head without a second thought. The black number took its place on the floor, and would likely stay there for the duration of my life. I ripped the clippie out of my hair, flinging it to parts unknown. My pile of curls went wild at the prospect of freedom. I didn't care.

A trip to the bathroom was next on my agenda. The trip to the park had done ungodly things to my face. Any minute now, it was going to sue for Botox treatments, if I didn't get a decent moisturizer on it. Since it had been forever since I'd set foot outside in direct sunlight, I went with a deep cleanser to open the pores, and a heavy dollop of facial mask to repair the damage my stupidity had earned me.

I made a face at the ghost in the mirror staring back at me. The lime-green mask winked and wiggled its pink tongue at me, signaling it was indeed time to collapse into bed, and to forget this day ever happened. Flipping off the light, I opened the door, planning to do just that.

"I hope you don't mind, but the front door was wide open." Gregory's timid voice sent me tumbling onto the bathroom floor.

"What are you doing here?" I screeched at the realization he was not only in my house, but had caught me at so not my best. Before I forget about it: Don't think I don't know who was to blame for the door being wide ass open! First thing in the morning that door was getting de-Neverlanded.

"I'm sorry if I came by at a bad time. I can see you were getting ready for bed, but I had to tell you about my date," he looked so dreamy-eyed I wanted to vomit.

"Haven't you ever heard of calling first?" I rose to my feet, slapping his hand when he tried to help.

"You never gave me your number."

"Might be a reason for that," I slammed the door in his face.

Oh crap! What was I going to do? He'd seen me in my sleep face. The moisturizer was a put-off wasn't it? Oh shit! There went my lasting impression. How was I going to get him to fall in love with me, after he saw me looking like a total hag? Think. Think. Okay, first things first, I need to get this glop off my face. I couldn't do anything about the t-shirt. Going out there naked wasn't the look I was going for, so I'll try girl-next-door sweet instead.

I scrubbed my face until it was pink and raw. I chanced a swish of mouth wash, in case the garlic toast I'd snatched waiting for him wasn't killed by the toothpaste. Nothing short of a trip to the beauty parlor was going to help my hair, so I dragged a brush through it, hoping he wouldn't notice the Eighties hair I was in danger of bringing back in style.

Throwing the door open, I put my brave face on. He'd already seen my scary as hell one. I felt he was entitled to a new one. If it wasn't much different from the other one, he could learn to live with it. The brave one was more for me than him anyway. I tried my best not to think about how much hinged on what might happen next.

I had to play this cool. The secret wasn't to let him know I wanted him more than I did while implying I did. Let me recheck that. Mmm... Carry the one and multiply the seven. Yep, I was just as confused as you by that so it must be right.

"So, you had a date?" See, cool as a cucumber.

"The most amazing date of my life!" Gregory fell back onto the bed laughing like a schoolboy.

"Gotcha some, did ya?" The thought set my skin to crawling but I had to ask. Morbid curiosity never killed this cat. It just made her universally unhappy.

"Nikki!" he sat up with that shocked look on his face I was growing accustomed to seeing. "We just met today. People don't normally jump into bed on the first date."

Obviously he didn't watch daytime television, or reality TV for that matter. Since he was sticking to his prudish ways, this was the perfect time to put a slow down into the works. "Before you go overboard with this girl, I don't want you to get too excited. Remember, it's just like you said, it was only a first date."

"You're missing the point. The charm worked. Alice was perfect for me. She even knew what logarithms were, and didn't nod off when I went into detail about them." And I'm sure he went on and on.

"I'm not missing the point. Gregory, charms are not the be all and end all of magic. I think you should just sit back and look at this analytically." If he wanted to be a geek, I would speak to him in geek.

"To hell with analytical! I want spontaneous combustion."

He was insane. I'd created a monster.

"And how do you expect to get something like that if you're afraid to get busy on a first date?" There let him fight that logic.

"Sex!"

"Sex?" Let me clean my ears out. Did he just say sex?

"Yeah, I figured you could help me get past my hang-ups about the S word," he winked at me and flopped back into the bed.

"You figured I'd just drop my drawers and fall into bed with you so you could work up the courage to take Alice to Wonderland did you?" I think I may be pissed. Yep, I'm pissed. Having sex because I want to have sex is one thing. Him thinking he can come over here and I'll automatically have sex is another thing entirely.

"Uh, kind of. You did say you wanted me to find true love."

"True love, not get your rocks off when your ego needed a boost! I don't know if you noticed this or not, but I may not be a normal woman, but I still have feelings."

"I know you're a woman. You have all the woman parts right there where I can see them," he wiggled his fingers at my breasts.

"And the feelings?"

"I never gave them much thought." He was such a man.

"Well think about them, now!"

"I'd have to say you have them," Gregory flinched.

"Unless you're a total moron and haven't noticed, those feelings are for you."

"But you're a witch."

"And that means I can't be a woman and fall in love with assholes?" I grabbed the first thing I could get my hands on and threw it at him. Unfortunately a silk negligee wasn't a lethal weapon.

"Nikki, I'm sorry. I didn't know how you felt."

"Of course you didn't. You're a man," I threw my arms across my chest.

"If I had..."

"You would have what? Fallen instantly in love with me."

"You're a witch!"

"You just said that," my cocked eyebrow, daring him to say it again.

“As much as I like you...” for one brief second I felt a glimmer of hope at his words, “...I need to be with a woman who I know isn’t making me love them.” Only to have it dashed away.

Whatever he felt for me was tainted by the fact he couldn’t trust me, because I was a witch. Dammit, I couldn’t blame him. In his shoes, I’d probably feel the same way. That didn’t make the knot in my stomach feel any better.

“Gregory, you better go,” I pointed toward the door, wishing with everything I had that, for just once in my life, I was wicked enough to be the woman he thought I was.

## Chapter Sixteen

A fitful rest was the least of my complaints the next morning. Apparently, my fury had worked the Neverland loose from around my doorjamb. By the time I gave up trying to sleep, I had a veritable guide to mythology living in my house.

I waded through a horde of fairies, who had started a jungle-like ecosystem in my linoleum. After my attempt at genocide, the pixies had learned their lesson and left my food alone. I grabbed a pastry and an iced double-shot espresso from the fridge, and made my way to the kitchen counter.

My usual comfort zone, the couch, was now home to a family of griffins, who didn't look like they wanted company. I picked at the pastry, and tried my best to figure out how to go on with my life. Any minute now, Melina was going to show up to evict me from my house. My failure as a witch would be broadcast to the world, and all I had to look forward to, was a one way ticket to my mother's guest room, since my own room was now a sauna. Try dealing with all that with a broken heart.

On cue a Fiddlers Green began playing Hank Williams from the kitchen cabinets above the sink. I winced, shoving a piece of strawberry slop into my mouth, and washing it down before the bile could catch in my throat. My life was so miserable that I had to be infected with the Neverland's version of Hell, country western style.

Love sucked. You can quote me on that. All night I had made myself try to picture Gregory as the bad guy in all this, but I couldn't bring myself to do it. The truth of his statement kept slapping me in the face.

His words rang through my head. "But you're a witch!"

I couldn't change who I was. Being a witch was more than a life choice, it was a birth right. One I was proud of.

Then why was I crying over some guy who couldn't see it?

Hell if I know! Isn't it amazing how a bad night's sleep and a dose of double-shot espresso put things into perspective? I'd spent the entire night pining for someone who couldn't see past a preconceived notion of what witches were supposed to be. Sure we were wicked, but what woman wasn't?

"Hey, toots. Come here often?"

I looked down to see a troll winking up at me. His brownish-green brows winked at me from the top of his bare head while his eyes drank my barely-clothed body in. A snake-like tongue slid from a twig-thatched beard that matched his earthy brows. The little freak was giving me the willies, but, for today, it was par for the course. What woman didn't want to be hit on by a five-foot-tall lech, first thing in the morning?

"Beat it, shortstuff. This is a private party," I grumbled, trying to ignore the things he was doing with his tongue.

"Hey can't blame a guy for trying. Usually girls on the rebound are a helluva a lot easier."

"This one ain't," I swatted at his head.

"Damn, girl, he must have screwed you up bad. First time I ever saw a witch with a love jonz. Want to tell old Nob all about it?"

What the hell! A girl needed a shoulder to cry on, even if it was a sleazy one, "Pull up a chair, but no funny business."

"I got daughters your age, toots. I'm more bark than bite these days, but I've got appearances to keep up. Got another one of those?" he pointed at the espresso.

"Fridge," I grunted. Good sense told me feeding him was a bad idea, but, right now, bad ideas were the only ones I had.



My pastry was a mass of crumbs by the time the troll made his way back with not one, but two, of my coffees. What did I tell you? Feeding mythical creatures was a big mistake.

"So, what's the deal? Some mortal break your heart?" he scampered up the stool, nearly knocking the both of us over.

"Does it show?"

"Honey, I've seen it all. I just never expected to see it in a witch, but, given time, you're liable to see it all, I guess," he popped both tops and chugged until the cans were empty. "A right bastard was he?"

"No, he is quite nice but..."

"He couldn't take the fact you're a witch. Same thing happened with my first wife. Her family couldn't stand the fact I wasn't a goat. They ended up having the marriage annulled. She got the bridge, and I had to live in a cave with my brothers for the next fifty years."

"That's nothing like this."

"If you wanted sage advice, you should have asked the gnome under the toilet to sit down. With trolls you get depraved barnyard allegories," he ran his finger around my napkin, gathering my few, remaining crumbs and popped them in his mouth. "I've got more, if you want to hear them."

"Ew, no!" What did I do to deserve this?

"I was trying to lighten the mood. You know, I could have minded my own business, but I thought you needed a comforting ear."

The troll was right. I did need someone to talk to, and, even if sage advice wasn't involved, being alone wasn't something I wanted to be right now. A troll from the other side of Neverland might not be my first choice of confidant, but, without anyone else to turn to, he was all I had.

"I just wish I knew what to do," I laid my head against the counter.

"You do have it bad," I turned my head to see him shaking his head. He bent down to look me in the eye. "But, lass, is he worth all this misery you're putting yourself through?"

"I thought so, yesterday, but, this morning, I really don't know."

"You sound just like me daughters. If you love the man, then he must be worth it," he slapped the counter, making my head ring with the impact of his meaty paw.

"But he called me a witch, and said he couldn't trust me."

"You are a witch and a woman to boot. A man be he mortal or whatever you call us beasties these days, can never fully trust the female of the species. If this fella thinks he can, he's a bigger fool than I think he is for letting a bonnie lass like you slip through his fingers."

"He is, isn't he?" For a troll, Nob made a lot of sense. For one thing, he'd called me a bonnie lass, which I was.

"Of course he is. Now are you going to wallow in those crumbs all day or do something about making him see it?"

"I'm going to hoist Mr. High and Mighty Gregory Hamilton up by his petard, and make him see what he's missing." My face came up from the Formica like a shot, sending a shower of pastry boogers into the air.

"That's the spirit, luv. Now be a dear and get me another coffee, and tell the gnome it's safe to flush the pixies."

I got him the coffee, but wasn't going anywhere near the gnome. I shuffled my way back to the bedroom, ignoring the Neverland going wild around me. In a few hours it would be somebody else's problem anyway. Let Melina's new witch deal with it.

Nob's pep talk had done the trick. My mind was already brimming with a plan to make Mr. Hamilton realize the error of his ways. He wanted a true love who wasn't trying to make him love her. If he believed Ms. Alice Blond Floozie

wasn't trying to make him do something with those pushed-up boobies, I'd eat my hat, if I could find it of course.

All I had to do was make him see her, and the rest of you bitches for what you were. Hey, I'm not saying I didn't have a fully-stocked cosmetics kit and a closet full of man traps in the bedroom, because I did. I just needed to show him women were all witches at heart.

We all have our tricks to trap a man. The good ones used their hearts. The bad ones used their looks, and a devious mind. Before you get any funny ideas, none of you have the one thing that counts in this particular situation. None of you are me!

Gregory Hamilton was mine. He might not know it yet, but, before tonight was over with, true love was going to Witch Slap him into my arms for the rest of his life.

## Chapter Seventeen

It took some doing, but I tracked down Mr. Hamilton. I'm not a stalker, mind you, but I do have my ways. All right, I called his office and pretended to be his cousin. It wasn't my most original idea, but, when I mentioned his Aunt Bessie was at death's door, it did get me the name of the restaurant he was taking, grrr, Alice to. I gave his secretary a planters' wart for being the bearer of bad news.

When she finally came across with the information I could have spit nails. The bastard was taking her to Dion's! That was my place. No blonde floozies allowed. He should have a sign above the door that says just that. Standing in the parking lot, I was sorely tempted to solve the oversight for him. Dion had a nasty temper, so I kept my vandalism to myself.

The sun had dropped behind the tangle of trees, and night reigned over the deserted parking lot, as I sauntered up to the door. Only a few cars spotted the packed gravel. I knew, in another hour or so, that wouldn't be the case. The sweltering summer heat wouldn't bleed off until nearly morning, so, universally, people would drive the short distance to eat out, rather than endure the added warmth from a super-heated kitchen.

My only true concern wasn't Melina shipping me off to Mom for the rest of my life. I wasn't even worried about Gregory not realizing he loved me. He would, that was already a done deal, as far as I was concerned. The only thing that had me shitting bricks was Dion. See, I was about to play fast with the rule book when it came to using magic around morts.

Dion might fudge his way around the rules when it suited him, but what I had planned went way past fudging. It went straight to, *'Damn did she just do that?!'* Yep, Nob had definitely lit a fire under my butt.

The first part of my scheme called for subterfuge. Hence my disguise. If you hadn't noticed, I was wearing one. I was decked out in my old hag outfit, minus the hat because the damn thing still refused to be found. I didn't look my best, but I didn't want to. Standing out was the last thing on my agenda for this evening.

I slipped through the door without soliciting much notice. See, already my plan was working like a charm, not one of mine, but one that actually works the way it's supposed to. If I could make it to a quiet corner unnoticed, I could really get down to business. I'd spotted just the place, and taken a step in the right direction, when I felt a hand fall on the small of my back. Oops, caught in the act.

"Nikki, you wouldn't be planning any mischief, now would you?" Dang it! I knew he'd sniff me out before I got a foot through the door. Dion was just that scary.

"Dion, whatever gave you that idea?" I flinched because he knew me so well.

"Well, for one thing, you're in your working clothes," he spun me around until I was staring into his chest, "and, for a second thing, that boy you were in here with the other night has a sweet young thing with him in that back corner."

I nearly twisted my neck out of its socket, trying to see what back corner he was talking about. I guess trying to look innocent now was out of the question. So, I was going to try a little deception. Don't look so surprised. It could work.

"Of course I know he's here. Gregory is my client after all," I do indignant very well, don't ya think.

"He is?"

"He is. I'm in my working clothes to make sure he doesn't screw up," I lie well too.

"The boy's a real comer. I don't think you have to worry about him on that account. He's got this girl eating out of the palm of his hand."

Oh, I bet she was. The skank!

“Dion, I hate to be a bother, but could you get me a table close to them so I can keep an eye on things. Melina will skin me alive if I screw this up.” She’d skin me alive if I went through with what I had planned, but, then again, so would he.

“No problem, doll. Just take a left at the potted fern and seat yourself. I’ll have a waitress bring you over something to nosh on,” he gave me a warm smile that made me feel guilty. Then it quickly faded. All’s fair as they say.

I waited for him to disappear into the kitchen, before I slunk in the direction he’d pointed. Poking my head over the plant, I saw them. They were huddled together over a plate of appetizers feeding each other. Excuse me. I may be sick.

I belched back a mouthful of this morning’s pastry. The whole scene made me wonder if this love business was worth all the effort I was going through. I pulled back the fern in disgust, trying to get a closer look. They were positively indecent. Dion ought to throw them out before the vice squad busted the place for being a den of iniquity.

She sucked in the tip of his finger, causing my hand to slip. The fern slapped me full in my face. I’m pretty sure the damn thing was tattooed to my forehead from the impact. If I wasn’t wearing a pound of makeup I’d be pissed by that fact. Since I was in disguise, I rolled with the added touch, and stumbled toward a booth not far from the happy couple.

They gave me an odd look as I shuffled into my seat across from them. My appearance was so horrific that they quickly went back to soaking in each other. Ignoring me suited my purposes just fine. I wanted them to act like I wasn’t here. I needed little *Miss Butter-Won’t-Melt-In-My-Mouth* to slip up. Then I’d pounce, and Gregory could see just what he was well and truly dealing with.

I slid further back into the booth until my face was hidden in shadow, but I still had an unobstructed view of them. I could hear them whispering to each other. The words were garbled and unintelligible.

That wouldn't do. Time for the first bit of magic for the night. With a twist of my pinky, I excited the air molecules between me and their table creating a sonic funnel. Believe me. It was cheaper than Sharper Image, and a lot safer than raiding the CIA for surveillance equipment.

The waitress dropped off my plate of goodies during all the fuss. I snagged a lamb thingie, realizing I was absolutely famished. Munching down, I listened to Greg and the chippie.

"Oh, Greggie. I can't believe this is our second date," she caterwauled.

"Me either, Alice. I wanted to make this night special."

"Just being with you makes it special," she leaned in and touched his hand.

"Really?"

For some reason I didn't believe her. Call me jaded, but let's see if a dash of honesty changed her story. I let another pinky spell fly, zapping her right between the eyes.

"Well, would it have killed you to take me someplace that didn't smell like a dead goat?" Alice's hands went straight to her mouth.

"I'm sorry. A friend told me this was the perfect place to bring a woman for a romantic date."

"Greggie, I don't know what's wrong with me. This is a nice place. I think my blood sugar must be low." Or all that silicone is seeping into her bloodstream.

"No, if you'd rather go someplace else, I understand."

"I told you. As long as I'm with you, that's all that matters." She took his hand and gave it a peck.

"Are you sure?" he looked doubtful.

"Of course I am. I'm not the type of woman who needs fancy things to be impressed." My pinky twitched without me even having to tell it to. "But would it have killed you to buy me a present or something before picking me up to bring me to this roach motel."

"Uh, I didn't know I was supposed to," Gregory dropped her hand like he'd just committed a crime against nature.

Alice looked mortified, but quickly recovered from her faux pas. "Silly goose. You actually thought I was serious? I wanted you to see what type of woman you could be spending the night with."

"You were joking?"

"Of course I was. Greggie, from the moment we met, I knew you were something special. I'm with you for the person inside you, not for the things you can do for me," the sincerity in her voice sounded as fake, as her boobs looked in this natural lighting.

My pinky was tied up with a bite of pita bread, so I flicked my thumb, sending not only a heaping dose of magic her way but a dollop of hummus as well. Damn, I hated to waste good food.

"But my last boyfriend at least could afford to buy me this fabulous necklace and he worked at Payless," she was able to throw a kebab in her mouth before he heard her. I had to chuckle as she choked on the lamb and her words.

"Alice, are you okay?" Gregory jumped from his seat, rushing around behind her. He banged on her back until a hunk of lamb went shooting across the table.

"I'm fine. That'll teach me to talk with my mouth full," she smiled weakly.

"You scared me. What was so important you couldn't wait to finish eating before you told me?" he handed her a glass of water and went back to his seat.

"Just that I love being here with you."



Did she now? I grinned as I felt a burst of wicked rise within me. I had to wonder if this is what Mom and Melina felt like all the time. The feeling was definitely a power trip. Given time I think I could come to like this.

As much fun as this was for me, Gregory deserved to know the truth about his lady love. She was just as witchy as I was. The only difference was I didn't hide mine behind blonde dye and fake everything else. Gregory, you wanted the truth? Well, here it is.

I did a double twist with a zinger back, and let fly. Alice opened her mouth, and what came out next shocked even me.

"How I love being here with you! You may be the biggest geek in the world, but gawd, after seeing your picture in my ex-boyfriend's Gamer Today as one of the richest programmers alive, I'd listen to you babble on for a chance to snag those millions you've got squirreled away."

"Alice!" Gregory's jaw dropped. The expression on his face tore a hole through my heart. Suddenly my wicked didn't feel so good.

"What are you looking at? From the looks of you, you'd pay through the nose for a good lay. Why shouldn't a girl like me cash in on a gold mine like you? Hell, I'd have fucked your brains out last night if you hadn't run off like a bitch." Maybe I went overboard with my last spell. That was a little harsh.

"But I thought you liked me."

"Hey, you're an okay guy, don't get me wrong. But, if I had to listen to you drone on about that techno mumbo jumbo one more minute last night, I swear I'd have slit my own throat."

Okay, this wasn't what I'd planned on. I wanted Gregory to see her for the cow she was, not have her rip his heart out and shit on it.

"Alice, I can't believe you were dating me for my money. You were so nice."

"Believe it, baby. Nice don't put Gucci in my closet." Okay, she had the whole wicked thing down. I should be taking notes, instead of thinking of ways of kicking her ass.

"I think you should go," his dejected little head tilted toward the door.

"I don't think so. Some hopped-up geek isn't dumping me in some dive out in the middle of nowhere," she rose from her seat and towered over him. "You will sit your dweeby ass there and do exactly like I tell you to do, and be damn glad a woman like me is giving you the time of day."

Okay, the bitch just crossed the line. My spell might have made her tell the truth, but making him her slave was not part of the deal. Besides, if you haven't forgotten, this particular geek belonged to me.

"Sister, if you weren't listening, the guy ain't buying," I hefted my butt out of the booth.

"Look, you old hag. This is a private conversation, so carry your ass," Alice whipped around, giving me a venomous look.

"The only ass I see here is you. Gregory, get up and go tell Dion to clear out the restaurant for a few minutes. Alice and I need to have a witch to bitch chat."

"Nikki?" he scooted to the end of the seat, peering at me like I was crazy. He knew me so well.

"Who else?" I grinned beneath the green warts and pancake make-up. "Now, do what I said, before you get called in as a material witness."

He started to say something, but a look sent him scurrying from the booth. Alice tried to snag him, but his fear of me was greater. Smart little dickens, wasn't he? Gold Digger huffed at his abrupt departure. I ignored her obvious play for attention. Her shit didn't work on me. I didn't have a penis.

The shuffle of feet told me Gregory had delivered my message. The slamming of doors told me Dion was taking him seriously. The old god hadn't

survived for as long as he had by being stupid and not being paid up on his insurance.

I waited until I heard the key turn in the door before turning around. "Okay, slut. I can understand you making a play for Gregory's cash, but if you think I'm going to let you get away with treating him like a total piece of crap you've got another thing coming."

"Who the hell do you think you are, talking to me like that?" the woman shrieked.

"Let's try this again. I tried to be nice. Since you're too skanky to understand nice, I'm going to have to do this the hard way," I didn't wait for a response; I simply cut loose. Magic swelled from my fingertips and slammed into her. Nothing harmful, mind you. She didn't instantly become a frog, if that's what you're thinking. I just wanted her attention. Now, if she wasn't up to a civilized discussion, I felt perfectly justified changing selected body parts back to their original dimensions.

"What did you just do to me?" she scrambled back against the booth.

"Nothing you'll remember tomorrow," I squatted down so that we were eye to eye. "I'm willing to let you walk out of here, but first you need to learn a harsh lesson, something you should have learned a long time ago. Gregory is, perhaps, the finest man I've ever met. He's kind, gentle, smart, and an all round great catch. What you were trying to do to him just wasn't right. Now, was it?"

She shook her head.

"Now, I've set my cap for him, so I'm glad you were a spiteful gold-digging bitch, but the next woman that comes along might not be as forgiving as I am. I think it would be in both our best interests to make sure something like this doesn't happen again," I waited for the nod I knew was coming, "so, here's the deal. I'm a witch, and I'm going to cast this teensy weensy spell."

Alice let out a baleful whimper.

“Oh, don’t be such a wuss. I’m not going to hurt you, but, if you ever try that shit with another man, this spell will wither whatever you got that isn’t factory original until they look like something the cat wouldn’t even drag in. You get me?” Feel free to laugh your ass off. Morloque knows I would if I could.

All I needed was the big finish to seal the deal. Throwing back my head, I let the most insane amount of drivel fly from my lips you’ve ever heard in your life. It was so stupid; I won’t even insult your intelligence by repeating it here. I cracked my eye open to see she was buying it. Figured I’d done enough so I rolled my eyes back in my head, and gargled the *Star Spangled Banner* before throwing my head forward and growling in her face: “Biggidy Pobbify Jiggidy, pop a tiddity if you do.”

It was enough to send her spiraling from the floor. She took off, like a shot, for the door. Her spindly legs couldn’t carry her fast enough. I could hear her high heels skidding across the slick tile as she hit the entrance. I heard the front door open on cue as she hit the carpeted foyer.

Dion must have kept an ear open. Bet he was snickering the entire time. I rocked back on my butt, feeling supremely satisfied with myself.

“Nikki,” Gregory’s voice brought my smugness to a crashing halt.

“Gregory, I’d like to explain,” I started to get up, but he put his hand on my shoulder.

“No need to; I get the picture,” he eased himself down beside me. “You hexed her. Didn’t you?”

“Yes, but it was for your own good,” I couldn’t bring myself to look him in the eye. My heart believed my words, but my mind was telling me the whole thing was more for me than him.

“How can I be sure those words were really hers and not yours? Nikki, I want to believe you, here,” he tapped his chest, “but my brain is always going to know that some part of you can do things to other people – to make them do what you want.”

"Gregory, sure, I'm a witch. I can't change that. I couldn't if I wanted to, and I don't. It's who I am," I shifted around until I was facing him. I wanted him to look at me. "I know this is crazy, but I love you. I shouldn't but I do."

"Nik..."

I put my hand over his mouth, "Stop, I need to finish this. Loving you is the hardest thing I've ever done, because it means I have to care about somebody besides me. I'm the most self-absorbed bitch you will ever meet, but I'm willing to try changing my wicked ways, if it means there's a chance we can be an us."

I held my breath as he digested my speech. His eyes flickered with doubt, sending my heart plummeting to the tips of my toes. I'd lost him. My shot at true love was blown because I was too damn wicked for my own good.

"Those things she said were really her?" he didn't raise his head.

"I swear to you, I didn't make her say anything but what she was thinking," I wanted to add witches' honor but held back. I knew how far witches' honor would go with him at the moment.

"I'm not saying this will work, but, if we give it a shot," he looked up, "we wouldn't have any crazy relatives showing up all the time, giving me funny looks from the TV would we?"

Put your hands over your ears. I'm going to tell a little white lie here. "Of course not. What do you think this is a sitcom?" Okay, you can take them off now. "So, you're willing to give it a try?"

"I'd be lying if I said you haven't been on my mind these past few days. I don't know what love is supposed to feel like, but I can't stop thinking about you. My gut is tied in knots when I'm around you, and I feel empty when I'm not with you," he sighed and sat back.

"Then why were you with, Alice?" I slurred the name into a curse.

"Because you scare the hell out of me. Being around you is like being in the middle of a natural disaster. I never know whether the house is going to fall in around me, or I'm going to be sucked straight up to heaven. No one has ever

made me feel like that before. The funny thing is I don't want that feeling to ever end."

"I'm just as scared as you are, but I'm okay with that as long as we're scared together."

Gregory leaned in and took my lips with his. The move was so unexpected; I nearly fell back on my ass. I mean I was dressed as hag of the year and he still wanted to lock lips with me. Tell me this guy wasn't a keeper. Now all I had to do was convince Melina this was all part of my plan.

Hey, it could work. Probably wouldn't, but, hell, I was due a break sometime.

"So, what do we do now?" Gregory asked.

"Sex?" It sounded like a good plan to me.

A grin split his face from ear to ear, "You read my mind."

## Chapter Eighteen

I was never so glad to be home in my entire life. True, Melina was probably on her way to kick my butt out. For now, it was my house and, with Gregory with me, it was going to be damn well perfect. Tomorrow may be a different story. If so, I'd deal with that problem when it popped up and not a minute before.

Gregory was a few minutes behind me in his car. I'd taken a few liberties with the speed limits between Dion's and home, so I could clear the Neverland from the house before he arrived. Nothing ruined a romantic evening like mythical creatures running around while you were trying to get your freak on.

I tilted my head back toward the road, checking for his headlights. The lonely stretch was clear as far as the eye could see. I figured I had about fifteen minutes to get my house in order. It was not nearly enough time, but what was a girl to do. I'm no expert on cleaning Neverland out of the carpet, but I knew it would take longer than that.

I'd just have to do my best. Luckily, I'd spelled my disguise off on the way home. I may have scared the crap out of a busload of nuns when I did it, but that was one less thing I had to worry about now.

I jiggled the key in the lock and thrust the door open, expecting the worst. The sight that greeted me was anything but. The room looked spotless, better than I normally keep it, if you can believe me. The floor practically gleamed. I couldn't even see a speck of dust.

Okay, only one thing made sense. Melina was already in residence. She'd moved her new, improved witch in while I was gone. I'm surprised my bags weren't waiting for me on the front step.

I stepped inside, looking for the other shoe to drop any minute. Nothing! My house was clean. Call me paranoid, but I was sure, any minute now, someone was going to jump out and play Freddy Krueger on my ass. I have an active imagination, don't ya think? If this wasn't an episode of *The Twilight Zone*, I didn't know what it was.

"Don't look so surprised. This place ain't half bad, once it's all spruced up."

I reserved the right to jump out of my skin until later, just because the sight of a clean house had shocked me into a dazed stupor. "Nob?" And because I recognized the voice.

"Who else, darling?" the troll walked out of the kitchen with another one of my double-shots in his hand. The bastard!

"What happened to the rest of the Neverland?" Even the kitchen was clean. I needed to sit down. This was all too much to take in.

"I figured you'd work things out with the mortal, so I sent them packing, after I made them clean the dump up," he grinned.

"But why?"

"I told ya. You remind me of me daughters. Call it paternal instincts kicking in, but ya deserved the perfect end to this evening if things worked out, or a clean place if they didn't. So did they?"

"He'll be here in a minute." I knew I had a goofy smile on my face, but didn't care.

"Then, I'd best be going. Nothing like an old troll to kill that loving feeling."

I couldn't let him go without saying something. I went over to the old reprobate. "Thanks."

"For what?"

"Being there." I bent down and wrapped my arms around him, kissing him on the top of his furry head. "Don't be a stranger."



"I might stop in from time to time at that. For a witch, you seem to need a lot of looking after. Besides, this mortal hasn't gotten my seal of approval yet. If he steps out of line, let old Nob know and he'll come running."

The troll faded from between my arms in a blast of blue powder that shimmered, washing over me. I blinked and he was gone. Damn pixie dust. Now I was going to have sinus trouble for my trouble. Try to get sentimental, and this is what you get.

"Nikki, are you okay?"

The sound of Gregory's voice made my heart skip. This love thing was sickening, even when it was me. "Yeah, I was picking up something I dropped."

"You shouldn't keep leaving the door open like that. It's too dangerous for a woman alone to take chances in times like this."

"Then it's a good thing I have a strong man like you to protect me." I rose from the floor and threw my arms around him. "Did you remember to shut it?"

"I sure did," he snuggled against me. "Locked it too."

"Oh, my, aren't you thorough? Since we're all safe and sound, what should we do now?" I batted my eyes like any good vixen would do.

"Not to be presumptuous, but I believe there was some mention of carnal pleasures back at the restaurant," a blush washed up his neck and face.

"Was there now?" I wiggled my breasts into his rock hard chest. "Care to refresh my memory."

The heat of his mouth against my lips brought a curl all the way down to my toes. His tongue pressed against them, forcing its way past my meager defenses. His raw need woke something in me. It was already awake, but damn if it didn't stand up and start doing an aria worthy of a diva.

I couldn't stand this for another minute. My house was a clean. The bedroom was a good ten feet away. Why not defile my living room?

"Gregory," tearing my mouth away, my voice came out all husky. I sounded just like Kathleen Turner.

"Yes, my love?" he whispered back. He was no Michael Douglas, but who wanted Michael Douglas? Sue me, I love *Romancing the Stone*.

"I think my memory is refreshed."

"Funny, I can't seem to remember my own name. All the blood has left my head."

I let my hand fall to his throbbing crotch, finding just where all that blood had went to. "I think what you need is to relieve this pressure and your memory problems will be solved."

I didn't give him a chance to say anything. Deftly, because witches are all about deftly, I moved him toward the couch, while untangling those nasty pants from the parts I was trying to get to. Talented, aren't I?

We made it to the couch without bodily harm. No mean trick with Gregory's pants around his ankles. I was so busy unraveling him from his clothes I didn't notice he was doing the same to me. How he got my shirt over my head without me noticing I'll never know, but he did it. I was just glad I'd worn the Victoria's Secret instead of the Wal-Mart special. Nothing screams: *Do me, big boy!* like peek-a-boo black lace.

Our last step sent us tumbling over the arm of the couch. We landed in a lump of tangled flesh, throwing cushions into the air. I felt the weight of his newly freed cock growing against my inner thigh. I wished he'd shucked my skirt instead of my shirt but then I'd still have my panties to deal with. I'm ashamed to admit it, but granny panties were the fashion statement of the day, so perhaps that was for the best. As distracted as he was, I was hoping I could toss them under the radar without him noticing.

My fingers gripped the hem, tugging for dear life. My blood was boiling. I know my sex life had seen an upswing lately, but the admission of love had set my body into overdrive. The fact he was naked, willing and on my couch, didn't hurt either.

There goes my underwear. Don't look! Sheesh, you people. I snagged them with my toe, and shoved them as far under the furniture as my biggest digit would allow. My secret safe, I turned my full attention back to Gregory.

I was entitled to enjoy this moment. I'd foiled the gold-digging floozie, forsaken my job in favor of true love, won the heart of the man of my dreams, and somehow convinced a troll to get pixies to clean my house. As far as I was concerned, nothing could ruin this moment.

Of course, you realize that was my first mistake.

My front door exploded, sending us flying to the other side of the room. It would appear, in my sex-befuddled state that I'd completely forgotten about Melina. My bad. Hitting the wall brought the fact rushing into my brain, along with a mountain of pain. No, my mistake. The pain was the couch squishing my boobies into my spleen, and Gregory's knee in my back. I guess it was too much to ask for a time out so we could finish the sex before she stomped a mud hole in my butt.

"Nichole Smythe-Ponthynhausen!" Oh shit! It wasn't Melina.

"Mom," I peered over the top of the couch and grinned. It was worse than that. It was Melina and Mom!

"I didn't believe her when she told me, so I had to come see for myself."

I bet she couldn't wait to come bust my chops.

"You should have believed me, Petunia dear, and saved yourself the embarrassment. I knew this would end in tragedy," Melina tiskied. "Just look at her. Compromised beyond any hope of redemption, and with a mortal, no less. I tried to tell her: mortals and witches don't mix."

"I know, luv. Mortals are fine to mate with, but emotional entanglements..." Mom threw her head back. "Oh, the shame."

"There, there. Once she's home, I'm sure the scandal will blow over. No one will blame you. It's the way this newer generation thinks. I blame the Mitches."

I told you way in the first chapter. They always blame the Mitches. It saves them from actually having to shoulder any blame for themselves.

"One can only hope. I trust you will be the soul of discretion." That one cost Mom. Melina would keep her mouth shut, but Mom would owe her big time.

"We've known each other too long for you to ask me that." You notice the old hag didn't say friend. Witches weren't big on friendship among the ranks.

"Thank you dear. With your own daughter such a handful, I know you understand what I'm going through." Ah, there's the none-too-subtle threat. So Mom had a little dirt of her own. That was good to know. "Nikki, pack your things and extricate yourself from that naked mortal."

Oops, I knew she'd get back to me sooner or later. I'd just hoped it would be later rather sooner.

"Ma'am, I'm afraid she's not going to do that," Gregory surprised me by saying. I twisted my neck to see him give me a nod of the head.

"Young man, this is a family matter. Gladly keep your nose out of it," Mom wagged her finger at him.

Gregory pushed himself to his feet, "I can't do that. See, I'm in love with your daughter."

He was! Sure, I'd known he might be back at Dion's, but this was standing up to my Mom. Now, was not the time for him to grow a set of balls. She might decide to cut them off for him. I was pretty sure I wanted to have use of them later.

"Gregory, let me do the talking," I scrambled to my feet, hoping to curtail a random act of magic.

"Yes, mortal, let us witches handle this," Melina butted her nose in.

Gregory pushed me to the side, "Nikki, I'm not afraid of your mother."

"You damn well should be!"

"Don't you think I know that, but I'm more afraid she'll actually take you away from me. If she sees I really care about you, she has to let you stay."

I saw about a million reasons his plan wouldn't work. Without a better one I let him give it a shot.

"Mom, if you love me, just listen to him."

I thought I saw a moment of weakness cross her snagged face. It may have been a trick of the light, but it gave me a spark of hope. "All right, mortal, speak."

"I can't say I know exactly what's going on here, but I do love your daughter. All I'm asking is for you to let us see if we can make it work. We may not be able to, but, dammit, we deserve the chance to see." Wasn't he the greatest?

"Petunia, how can you listen to this drivel? We must not lose sight of the fact Nichole was suppose to sabotage his attempts at finding true love, not become the object of his desire."

"What?" he turned around giving me the dirtiest look you've ever seen in your life.

"Yeah, but aren't you glad I suck at my job?" I smiled.

"We'll talk about this later, after I convince your mother you can stay." Man, for a second there I thought he was going to walk out the door.

"Melina, I agree Nikki should have been more responsible with her duties, but, as a mother, I can't very well ignore her feelings for this man." Ah, Mom did care.

"Well, as her Vesperex, I can do as I damn well please. Nichole, pack your things; you are hereby relieved of your duties, and henceforth banned from this region."

"Like hell she is! She quits. Which means she can do whatever, and live wherever, she wants," Gregory took a step toward the witch.

"Petunia, that mortal is threatening me with his John Thomas! Is that the sort of ruffian you wish to have associating with your child?" Melina ducked behind Mom, pointing wildly toward Gregory.

It took a minute for the both of us to realize we were half-naked. Ever notice nobody drops by when you look your best? Now, not only did my mother know I was seeing a mortal, but that we were doing the nasty in my living room. It was bad enough hearing about it through the witch grapevine, but to see your daughter's boyfriend's winkle first hand kind of sealed the deal.

"Oh, Melina, be quiet. It's not like you've never seen one, and, quite frankly, it's nice to be threatened by something that big for once in my life."

Ew, I so did not need to hear that coming from my mother's lips.

"Would all three of you just shut up?!" I'd had enough. If I didn't put a stop to things soon, there was no telling what my mother would say.

"Yes, Petunia. I think you and Melina have interfered in our daughter's life enough for one night."

"Dad!"

"Who invited that Mitch?" Melina howled.

"Nobody did. I invited myself." Dad walked past them, throwing Gregory a robe. "Someone had to come and make sure you two didn't ramrod Nikki into doing something stupid, like becoming a prune-faced bitch like the two of you."

"Well, I never," Melina huffed.

"With that face, I'd believe it," Dad snickered.

"Petunia, control your Mitch before I am forced to control him for you." Melina was livid. Her face was three shades of purple before the words left her mouth.

"Give it a rest. Despite what you tell yourself, I'm twice the witch you are and you know it," he waited for Melina to say something. When she didn't, he went on, "Now, this is the way things are going to go. Nikki is going to keep her job."

Melina started to protest, "But she..."

"She did exactly what you asked her to. She became wicked. The things she did to that poor girl were as wicked as I've ever seen. As for turning Gregory here off true love, that would never have happened. For all the magic in the world, love is stronger. The fact that Nikki and Gregory are together proves it."

Melina tapped her foot against the floor as she considered what he'd said. I could see the indecision playing across her face. True, she could fire me, but I doubted she could keep us apart. Still, I'd come to like my little house.

"Alright, Mitch. Nichole can keep her job, but only on a probationary basis."

Dad gave me a wink, "I think we can leave these two lovebirds alone now. We've ruined their evening enough for one night."

"Reginald, there's still the matter of this mortal," Mom voiced, as Dad grabbed her and Melina by the arm.

"I'm sure they don't need us mucking around in the business quite yet, dear. I'll tell you what, if the wedding interferes with one of my golf games, then I'll become concerned."

"Wedding?" Mom's knees began shaking, but it didn't stop Dad from leading her through the door.

"Yes, that's generally what people in love end up doing eventually. Who knows, you may even become a grandmother before too long," he gave me a wave as they blinked back to the Bahamas, leaving us alone.

"So that was your Mom and Dad?" Gregory sighed, looking at the smashed ruin of my front door.

"Yep."

"Think they'll be dropping by often?" he draped his arm around my waist.

"Not so much, until the grandchildren come of course," I smiled as he snuggled close against me.

“Figure there’ll be grandchildren for them to come visit?”

“If we stand here in the living room all night, we’ll never find out,” I couldn’t resist giving his arm a pinch and dashing for the bedroom.

“Nikki that hurt! What did you do that for?” he yelled, giving chase.

“Because if you aren’t wicked you never get what you want.”

The Ever Loving Wicked End