

**Wickford High**  
**The Revelation**

**By**  
**Karen Fuller**



**World Castle Publishing**

<http://www.worldcastlepublishing.com>

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## **World Castle Publishing**

Pensacola, Florida

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ISBN: 9781937085278

Library of Congress Catalogue Number

First Edition kNight Romance Publishing October 2010

**Second Edition World Castle Publishing May 15, 2011**

<http://www.worldcastlepublishing.com>

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Cover Artist: Dara England

Editor: Gateway Editorial Services

Printed in the United States

[Enduring Romance Blogspot-Great Review](#) *Heat wise this is a mild read. I recommend it for all fans of YA paranormal romance, especially if they enjoy books evolving around high school (I do!). I hope to be reviewing the rest of this series as it gets released.*

[A Night Owl Reviews Top Pick!](#) *She carved out wonderful characters that you just can't help but fall in love with and they work so well together to make this story so believable. I eagerly look forward to reading the next book in the series, *Furiously Tempted*, which should be coming out soon. Don't pass this new series up!*

[Great Review from The Phantom Paragapher](#) *Sometimes it's the small publishing companies that release the awesome books to read, the ones that give unknown authors a chance to shine, to make their mark on the world. Author Karen Fuller is one of those authors, she has just released a new series called *Wickford High* - it is set in a community, a small town -where the majority of the families have some kind of Supernatural power - it reminded me a bit of the Television Show "The Gates."*

[Paranormal Romance Guild](#) *Let me tell you people, is this the start of a great new storyline??? I loved it and I am not a young teen...Book is coming out August 31st, 2010. Review by Gloria Lakritz-Senior Reviewer*

## Chapter One

Vicky Phillips slowly pulled her '99 Ford Mustang into the school parking lot and parked it. She gripped the steering wheel tightly, and she stared forlornly at the sign on the large brownstone school, which stood ominously before her. A chill ran down her spine in the late August heat. "Wickford High. Proud home of the Packwolves since 1886?" she read out loud. "What kind of name is that for a school team?" She rolled her eyes and laughed at herself for allowing that eerie feeling to consume her. "Yea team," she said sarcastically.

She looked into her rearview mirror for a last minute personal check. Her eye makeup was perfect, making her large brown eyes framed in lush black lashes look even more exotic. She fumbled through her bag and found her lip gloss to put the finishing touches on her pale pink full lips. She quickly brushed her fingers across her high cheekbones to tone her makeup down a bit, and she glanced at her bag and tossed the lip-gloss back into it. She looked in the mirror again and adjusted her head in a couple of different angles to make sure her shoulder length light brown hair fell just right. She plucked a couple of curls to reposition them around her oval face. She took a deep breath and blew it out dramatically. "You can do this . . . It's just a new school in a small town." She grimaced and swallowed hard. "Even though it looks like something straight out of some horror movie . . . there's nothing to be afraid of. You'll get inside and be your old popular self." She squared her shoulders in determination and glanced in the mirror one more time for good measure.

Now that she was finally satisfied that she looked presentable, she opened the car door, slid out of the car, and grabbed her bag. She threw the bag over her shoulder and looked around. Her mouth dropped open, and her heart sank. "Oh God, what have I just gotten myself into," she groaned. Everyone was wearing school uniforms. The girls were wearing navy blue polo shirts with white and blue plaid skirts. The guys were wearing navy blue dress pants and white polo shirts. She looked down at herself and groaned again. Her slender five foot-five-inch frame fit nicely in her tight hip hugger jeans, stacked high heels, a red form fitting top, and all the fashionable jewelry accessories. She rolled her eyes. "So much for blending in, now everyone's really going to notice me," she grumbled to herself, "and not in a good way. Hey, look at the

dork who thinks she can make her own rules and dress the way she wants to.” She would have fit right in at her high school back in Fort Lauderdale, but here, in this backwoods town, she couldn’t look more out of place.

If her mom hadn’t just died, and her dad hadn’t taken that new job and uprooted her from her home, she wouldn’t be in this mess. She shook her head and blew out a breath. “Thanks, Dad,” she grumbled to herself, “I have always had a dream to be the new girl at school, in a new town, starting my senior year, and to top it all off I have to be the dork without a uniform.” She looked up to the Heavens. “Please tell me that this is a bad dream, and that this isn’t happening to me.”

“I’ll tell you anything you want to hear, because I think I’m dreaming too.”

Vicky whipped her head around at the sound of a male voice. She flushed deeply at being caught talking to herself. For once, she was speechless.

He laughed at her expression. “Awe, don’t be embarrassed. I won’t tell anyone that I caught you talking to yourself.” If at all possible, Vicky turned an even deeper shade of red. “Hi, I’m Luke Wolfburn . . .”

Vicky took a moment to get her composure back and observe the gorgeous hunk standing before her. He was about six foot, with a strong athletic build that was even noticeable through the loose-fitting white polo shirt. His blond hair was cropped close on the sides and in the back and was a little longer and slightly wavy on the top. His skin was tanned dark like he had been kissed by the sun. He had soft brown eyes, a straight nose, and a crooked flirtatious smile. She couldn’t help but smile back. “Hi Luke, I’m Vicky Phillips. I guess you have already guessed that I’m new here.”

“Huh . . . you don’t say.” She flushed again, and Luke laughed. “I’ve recently heard my dad mention the name Ryan Phillips. Are you any relation?”

“Yeah, he’s my dad.”

He gave her a crooked grin and winked. “Look at me rubbing elbows with the famous freelance news journalist’s daughter. I had better stay out of trouble if I don’t want my name plastered over the national news. Maybe I had better stay on his good side. If he knows that I’m your friend, he might take it easy on me.”

She laughed. "I'm afraid that wouldn't help. My Dad never seems to like any of my friends. It might stand better for you if he doesn't know that you know me."

His crooked grin got bigger. "I'll keep that in mind. Hey, I thought all the big reporters lived in the big cities."

She shrugged. "He's freelance. He can work where he wants. He's taken an office in the local paper, but he submits most of his work to the large papers by internet. It keeps the crazies, and the people who might not like what he wrote about them away. We don't say where we live to keep our privacy intact."

Luke nodded. "Your privacy is an important thing. I'm glad you both decided to make your home here. Come on. I'll show you to the office so that you can get your class schedule. Maybe they'll put us in some of the same classes." He reached over and closed the door to the Mustang. She smiled up at him, and he stepped forward and draped his arm around her shoulders and steered her toward the school. "Welcome to Wickford High, Vicky."

She looked up to him as they walked. "Thanks, Luke. Is everyone around here as friendly as you are?"

The smile left his face. "Uh . . . I might be the exception to that rule," he said seriously. "Usually it takes awhile for an outsider to be accepted here." He shook his head sadly. "I've lived here all my life, and I don't understand it. It takes people awhile to take to new people. It's like the others don't trust 'um. Please don't take it personally." He smiled at her again and squeezed her shoulders. "I like you already, Vicky. You can talk to me anytime."

They walked up the six steps leading to the front door, and Luke let go of her shoulders and ran ahead. "Here, let me get that door for you."

He opened the door and she grinned up at him as she entered the building. "Thank you again, Luke."

He grinned. "It's my pleasure helping a pretty girl like you."

She rolled her eyes. "You're going to spoil me. A girl could get used to this."

His grin grew larger. "You better get used to it then, because I plan on spoiling you."

She laughed. "Luke, do you flirt with all the new girls like this?" she joked.

He rolled his eyes. "Of course I don't. We haven't had a new girl at this school in about ten

years.”

Vicky did a double take, and her mouth dropped open. She stopped dead in her tracks. “Did you just say ten years?”

He grinned again and turned to face her. “Yep, we don’t normally get new families moving into the area. Our little town is in the middle of nowhere.” He shrugged. “If a new family makes it through the first few months here, they usually stay.”

She shook her head in disbelief. “In Fort Lauderdale, we had people moving in and out of town all the time.”

Luke’s eyes sparkled. “This is about the furthest thing from a big city that you’re likely to find. We don’t usually even get people just passing through.” Luke stepped up and draped his arm over her shoulders again. “Come on, or we’ll be late for class.” They took a few more steps and Luke stopped. “Well Vicky, this is the office.” He pointed inside the door. “That nun sitting behind the counter is Sister Phoebe, the office secretary. She’ll be the one to give you a schedule. I have to go to class. It was nice meeting you, and I hope to see you in some of my classes.”

She smiled up at Luke. “Thanks, I’m really glad I met you. I hope we have some classes together too. See ya later.”

Luke turned to hurry to class. “Bye, Vicky. I’m sure I’ll see ya around.” he said over his shoulder.

Vicky squared her shoulders and turned to face the office again. She took a deep breath and charged into the office.

Sitting behind the counter was a large robust nun with pudgy stern features. Her attention was centered on the large stack of papers in front of her. Vicky walked up to the counter and stood there. After a few seconds of being ignored, Vicky put her hand on the counter and drummed her fingers. She rolled her eyes and cleared her throat. “Excuse me, Sister Phoebe?”

Sister Phoebe didn’t raise her eyes to acknowledge Vicky. “Students don’t speak until they are spoken to first,” she said sharply.

Vicky’s mouth dropped open, and then the situation started to get on her nerves. “I’m sorry, but I can’t stand here all day.”

Sister Phoebe’s eyes darted up from the stack of papers. “You’re new.”

Vicky rolled her eyes and sighed heavily. "Yes, ma'am."

"You must be from the big city." She looked her up and down. "You walk through these doors with a bad attitude. Well Missy, check the attitude at the door. We don't tolerate that here at Wickford High," she said sharply. Vicky blinked a few times and looked around. Surely, this woman couldn't be talking to her. "You will look at me when I address you," the nun barked.

Vicky jumped and looked Sister Phoebe in the eyes. "Yes, ma'am," she grumbled.

"That's better," she said and looked down at her paperwork again. She shuffled through the mess and put a paper on the counter in front of Vicky. "Fill this out while I make up a schedule for you."

Vicky took the paper and looked down at it. It looked normal enough. She filled it out and pushed it back in front of the nun. "We'll have to order my transcripts. We left Fort Lauderdale a little suddenly."

"We don't need them here. You'll keep up or suffer the consequences."

Vicky gnashed her teeth and glared at the nun



## Chapter Two

“Here’s your schedule, Miss Phillips. Be sure to have all of your teachers sign off on the form and return it to the office at the end of the day,” said Sister Phoebe. She pointed down the hallway. “Your first class is the third door on the right. Be sure you have a school uniform by tomorrow.” She looked at Vicky critically with disapproval. “We have a dress code here.” She raised an eyebrow and glared. “I also expect to see your face scrubbed clean. We are a strict Catholic School. Makeup is the Devil’s tool, and is not allowed under any circumstances.”

Vicky brought her notebook up and placed it self-consciously over her chest in a tight grip. She flushed in a combination of embarrassment and rage. “Yes, ma’am,” she said in a clipped tone. She quickly backed away from the counter and hurried down the hallway toward her classroom. She was furious. She had never been dressed down so rudely before in her life.

She rounded the corner and stepped into the classroom. All eyes trained in on her. Great, the day just kept getting better and better. She wanted to shrink down in a corner and hide for the rest of the day. She blew out a breath and handed her schedule to her new teacher, Father Turner, a young priest. He was short and portly with black close-cropped hair. He signed her schedule and handed it back to her. “Welcome to Senior Religion, Vicky,” he said and eyed her critically. “I hope you take your studies to heart.” He pointed to an empty desk. “Take that desk next to Luke and we’ll begin class.”

She locked eyes with Luke and smiled, finally, a friendly face in a sea of monsters. Luke grinned back at her as she sat down.

“Hi again, Vicky,” Luke whispered.

“I wouldn’t get too friendly with our boy Luke,” said a young beautiful blond. She had a small frame, petite features and crystal blue eyes. Vicky looked her in the eyes and the girl smiled smugly. “He can tend to be a little ‘g-r-u-f-f’ with the new girls,” she said snootily, and the class laughed. Luke narrowed his eyes and glared at her. “But then again, he did always tend to ‘sniff out’ the harlots.”

Vicky drew in a sharp breath, and her mouth fell open.

“Sara!” Father Turner scolded. “That will be enough!”

Sara rolled her eyes. “I’m sorry, Father Turner. I’m just saying what everybody’s thinking.”

“Vicky is new to our community. She has come to us from a large city,” Father Turner lectured. “In time, she’ll learn our ways and not dress so shamelessly in front of our Lord.”

Vicky covered her face with both of her hands. She officially wanted to disappear.

Sara rolled her eyes and flippantly tossed her hair over her shoulder. “I’m just saying . . .,” she said.

Father Turner’s face turned beet red with irritation. “Sara, if you say one more word, you will be ‘just saying’ your way to after school detention,” he chastised her sternly. “Am I clear?”

Sara nodded, rolled her eyes, and then she glared at Vicky for getting her into trouble.

Luke tapped her on the shoulder. “Meet me in the cafeteria at lunch,” he whispered to Vicky. She nodded, but she didn’t turn around to acknowledge him.

She was livid. “Obviously this little ‘chick’ doesn’t know who she’s dealing with,” she said to herself in a barely audible whisper. Luke chuckled softly, and she whipped her head around in surprise. Her eyes were wide, and she flushed a deep red. Obviously he heard her talking to herself again. Luke’s smile grew larger, and he winked at her.

“Luke, is there something you’d like to share with the class?” Father Turner said sharply.

Vicky froze, and then slowly turned back around to face the front. The smile left Luke’s face, and he looked uncaringly into Father Turner’s eyes. He sat back in his seat, draped his arm across the back of the chair, and said nonchalantly, “Nope.”

Most of the class laughed, and Father Turner looked around at everyone sharply. Father Turner turned beet red again. “See me after class,” he barked at Luke.

Vicky closed her eyes, and the color left her face. Now Luke was in trouble because of her. She sighed heavily. “Great,” she said under her breath.

### Chapter Three

The bell ending first period had rung, and Vicky sat there dumbfounded. Luke placed his hand on her shoulder. “Are you okay?” he asked softly.

She turned her eyes up to his. “I’m so sorry for getting you in trouble.”

He smiled. “Don’t worry about it. I stay in trouble around here.” He looked over his shoulder at Father Turner, and he was glaring at him. He looked back into Vicky’s eyes and smiled. “He’ll just make me go to confessional and say a few ‘Hail Mary’s’ and everything will be back to normal.” He chuckled. “I’ve never seen anyone talk to themselves more than you do.”

She looked away, and her gaze caught Father Turner’s. She groaned at the glare she was receiving. “I don’t recall ever having a need to talk to myself, but today has been exceptionally trying.” She looked back into Luke’s eyes. “I have to go find my next class, and you had better go talk with Father Turner before he has a stroke.” She glanced at Father Turner again and raised an eyebrow. “It looks like we’ve got his blood pressure up.”

Luke laughed, and she looked back at him and smiled. “Let me see your schedule.”

She pulled it out of her notebook and handed it to him. He glanced over it and frowned. “What’s wrong with it?” she said in alarm.

He smiled. “We don’t have any more classes together.” He shook his head. “Well, there’s still lunch. Meet me in the cafeteria.” He handed her back her schedule.

She placed it in her notebook, grabbed her bag, and rose from the desk. She smiled. “Okay, I’ll see you at lunch.” He grinned at her, and then turned to go see Father Turner. “Good luck,” she whispered to his retreating back, and she heard him laugh.



Vicky rushed into her next classroom just as the bell rang. Her mouth dropped open. Standing in the front of the class was Sister Phoebe, and she was glaring back at Vicky for being late. Vicky looked at her schedule again in a panic and quickly looked at the number on the classroom door to verify she was in the right place.

Sister Phoebe put out her hand for the schedule to sign off on it. “Vicky, I’m happy to see that you finally decided to grace this class with your presence,” she said dryly.

Vicky swallowed hard. “You’re the teacher? I . . . I thought you were the school secretary.”

Sister Phoebe handed the signed schedule back to Vicky. "I have many jobs in this school, Miss Phillips. Be sure you're on time tomorrow," she said sharply. "Take that seat next to Sara."

Vicky and Sara locked eyes, and Vicky groaned. Sara sat back and smiled smugly. "Oh look everybody, it's the harlot again," she said snidely.

Vicky had about all she could stand of Sara for one day, and her temper finally got the best of her. She smiled at Sara spitefully. "It takes one to know one," she said flippantly.

Sara smiled hatefully. "You really don't know who you're dealing with, do you?"

Vicky cocked her head to the side and shrugged uncaringly as she sat down in the empty desk. "I could say the same thing to you."

Sara motioned her head to a small girl sitting meekly in the back of the class. "Ask Rachael back there what happens when you cross me." Rachael turned white and cowered down in her chair further.

Vicky glared defiantly at Sara.

Sister Phoebe slammed a ruler across the front of Sara's desk, hard, and they both jumped. "Ladies, if you both don't want detention, then I suggest you stop this bickering now!" she barked.

"Yes ma'am," Vicky grumbled.

"This isn't over harlot," Sara said in a low tone that only Vicky could hear.

"You're damn right it isn't," Vicky whispered back.

## Chapter Four

It seemed like the day was dragging on forever for Vicky. All she wanted was for the horrid day to be over. Her third period class was a little better. She had Father Turner again, but at least Sara wasn't in that class.

This time she had sat next to Rachael, and at least she was nice. Rachael was actually a beautiful brunette. She had large round blue eyes and a small petite frame. She also had a beautiful smile, when she was brave enough to show it. If she had been back in Fort Lauderdale with Vicky, Rachael would have been very popular. As it was, Sara had the poor girl cowering in a self-conscious shell. Vicky had always been a champion of the underdog, and she made the decision that she'd have to do something about that.

The bell ending the class had rung for lunch. Vicky glanced over at Rachael. She cleared her throat. "Rachael, tell me something. Why do you cower away from Sara?"

Rachael turned white. "She's a witch," she said in a barely audible whisper.

Vicky's eyes got wide. "When you say that she's a witch, do you mean actually or figuratively speaking?"

Rachael swallowed hard. "She's really a witch." She gave Vicky a pleading look. "You seem nice enough. Please don't cross her."

Vicky raised an eyebrow. "I'm not afraid of Sara," she said dryly.

Rachael looked away. "You should be."

Vicky smiled and placed her hand on Rachael's. "Can you keep a secret?"

Rachael nodded. "Who am I gonna tell? Sara has no one talking to me."

Vicky pressed her lips in a thin line grimly at what Rachael said. Vicky blew out a breath. "I'm not afraid of Sara. I'm a witch, too." Rachael's eyes grew wide in fear. Vicky shook her head and smiled. "I wouldn't hurt you. In fact, I like you. I'm going to take you under my wing and give you back some of the confidence that Sara has stolen from you." Rachael shook her head frantically. Vicky's smile grew bigger. "It will be okay. If Sara wants to butt heads with me, she can just bring it on. My day couldn't get any worse than it already is."

"Do you wanna bet?" Rachael said meekly.

Vicky rolled her eyes and laughed. "I'll repeat myself. I'm not afraid of Sara."

Rachael's face paled again. "Well, when your hair starts falling out, you'll be singing a different tune."

Vicky's face grew concerned. "Is that what she did to you?" Rachael nodded. "You seem like a nice girl. What did you do to her to make her want to curse you like that?"

Rachael shrugged. "Jason smiled at me."

"Who's Jason?"

"Jason is Sara's boyfriend," Rachael said and looked away. "Sara said she'd make it so that Jason or any other guy at this school wouldn't want to smile at me ever again."

Vicky's blood started boiling. She and Sara were definitely going to butt heads. Vicky patted Rachael's hand again in comfort. "Stick with me Rachael. In a few days, Sara won't be a problem for you anymore."

Rachael shook her head frantically again. "Please don't provoke Sara."

Vicky shrugged. "Sara's already provoked me. We're already going to have a go at each other. I might as well save you while I'm at it. Believe me, when I'm done with Sara, she won't be able to hurt you anymore." Vicky stood up from her desk. "I promised Luke that I would meet him in the cafeteria for lunch." She gathered her notebook and bag. "I'll see ya later. Try not to worry about Sara."

Rachael swallowed hard and nodded. "It was nice knowing ya, Vicky."

Vicky shook her head and laughed at Rachael and hurriedly left the classroom in the direction of the cafeteria to meet Luke.

## Chapter Five

Vicky hurried into the school cafeteria, and Luke was waiting for her just inside the doorway. He tapped in her shoulder. "Vicky . . ."

Vicky jumped and whirled around. "Luke!" she said in surprise. "You scared me!"

He laughed softly. "What's the hurry?"

She grinned. "I was running late, and I didn't want you to think that I was a no show."

He raised an eyebrow and smiled. "So, you care what I think?"

Her eyes sparkled. "Of course, I care."

He draped his arm around her shoulders. "That's nice to know. Let's go get in line before we run out of time to eat." They joined the lunch line and Luke put a tray on the rail. Vicky reached for a tray and Luke shook his head. "I've got this."

She rolled her eyes. "Luke, you don't need to be doing this."

He grinned. "Just get what you want to eat off of the line."

Vicky rolled her eyes again and picked up a hamburger, a plate of fries, a bottle of juice, and she put them on the tray. "Thank you."

Luke laughed and picked up the same thing. He paid the cashier, and he looked around the room. "There's a table in the corner," he said, and Vicky led the way to the table. They sat down at the table and Vicky took her plate of fries and popped one in her mouth.

She grinned. "So, what did Father Turner say to you?"

He rolled his eyes. "I had to go to the confessional." He shook his head. "They're so predictable around here." He laughed. "My sentence was twenty-five 'Hail Mary's' just like I said it would be."

She laughed. "Well, I'm glad it wasn't that bad," she said and popped another fry into her mouth.

He laughed. "How were your last two classes?"

She sat back and frowned. "Don't ask."

He raised an eyebrow. "I really want to know."

She sighed heavily. "Well for starters, Sister Phoebe was the teacher for my second period class." His eyes sparkled; he grinned, and waited for her to continue. "Then I had a run-in with

Sara.”

“Sara.”

She nodded. “Yeah, Sister Phoebe told me to take the desk next to Sara.”

“And . . .”

Vicky shrugged. “Sara and I are going to wind up butting heads.”

“Vicky, you need to be careful around Sara . . .”

She held up a hand to stop him from going on. “You leave Sara to me.” He opened his mouth to object. “Luke, I already know what Sara is.” She shook her head. “I am not afraid of Sara.”

He swallowed hard. “Maybe you should be . . .”

She popped the last bite of hamburger in her mouth; she chewed it and swallowed it. She put her hand over Luke’s. “Listen, Luke, I appreciate your concern.”

“Vicky, Sara is a witch,” he growled and looked around cautiously before he continued. “If she doesn’t like someone, she usually whips up a curse. I don’t want anything to happen to you. I don’t think you’re taking the Sara situation seriously enough.”

She sat back in her chair and frowned. “I know Sara is a witch. I’ve already been talking with Rachael . . .”

He threw out his hand. “Rachael is a perfect example of what I’m trying to tell you . . .”

Her eyes flashed with anger. “Rachael is the perfect example of why I have to stop Sara. That poor girl . . .”

He took her hand in his. “I don’t want you to be ‘that poor girl’,” he said softly.

She smiled. “I can handle myself.”

He sat back in his chair and sighed in defeat. “I hope you’re right.” He smiled back at her sadly. “I’ll stick by you no matter what happens.”

She placed her hand on his cheek and smiled. “Luke, nothing is going to happen to me. Trust me.”

He smiled. “I do trust you. I just don’t trust Sara.”

She shrugged. “I’m sorry I even brought the subject up.”

He stood up and picked up the tray. “Unfortunately it’s time to go back to class. Meet me in



the parking lot by your car after school.”

She grinned. “Sure, I’ll wait for you.”

## Chapter Six

Vicky stepped out of the cafeteria in a hurry for her next class. She was dreading finding out who the teacher for the next class would be. She was passing by the girl's bathroom when the door flew open, and a set of hands grabbed her from behind and yanked her inside. "What the hell . . ." she said, and then she hit the wall hard hitting her head in the process. "You!" she shouted.

Sara smiled smugly and paced back and forth in front of Vicky triumphantly. "Well, well, well . . . Lookie what I found," she said snidely. She laughed. "Not so high and mighty now, are ya?"

Vicky rubbed the back of her head. She had a large lump forming, and all it did was make her angry. "Sara, what is it that you have against me?" she demanded as she glowered at Sara. "You've been trying to provoke me from the first moment we saw each other. I want to know why?"

Sara shrugged. "I don't like you," she said hatefully.

Vicky raised an eyebrow and glared. "No duh . . ." she said sarcastically. "I don't particularly like you either, but I didn't start out in the beginning to purposefully attack you."

Sara slammed her hands on her hips, and put her face in Vicky's. "I know what you are . . ." Sara spat the accusation.

Vicky rolled her eyes. "Oh please, Sara, tell me what I am . . . please enlighten me," she paused when Sara smiled, "and don't tell me that I'm a harlot, because we both know that's not true."

Sara laughed. "I can't help it if your reputation precedes you."

Vicky mirrored Sara, slamming her hands on her hips. "My reputation . . . How in the hell can I have a reputation here, when I just arrived in town two days ago?"

"I know why you came here," Sara hissed.

The color left Vicky's face. "How could you possibly know anything about me?"

"I know about your mother."

A deep-seated rage began to consume Vicky. "Don't talk bad about my mother," she growled.

“I don’t have to. Your reaction tells me that the rumors are true.” The room started to darken and haze over, and Sara looked around, suddenly alarmed. “What . . . What the hell?” The light bulbs in the bathroom started to pop, slowly, one at a time. Her head whipped around to stare Vicky in the eyes. “It’s true!”

Vicky narrowed her eyes. “Do you think you still want to cross me?” she growled. “I’ve heard rumors myself, all about you.” She raised her chin defiantly. “More than one person in this school will swear that you’re a witch yourself. They are afraid of you and your petty curses.” Sara’s eyes grew wide and she backed up. Vicky charged on and got right in Sara’s face. “You see, I’m not generally vindictive. In fact, most people would describe me as nice and easy going. I will warn you now Sara. If you corner me, I will fight back.” She shook her head. “I don’t need spells or potions. It all comes naturally to me.” The metal on the stalls started to tremble and shake.

Sara backed up as far as she could go until she hit the wall. She brought her trembling hands up to cover her mouth. “You’re a white witch!” she said in disbelief. She swallowed hard. “You were born to the craft.”

Vicky nodded. “If you’re smart enough to figure that out, then you’re smart enough to know that your black magic has no effect on me.” Sara swallowed hard again, and Vicky continued, “I could destroy you if I so willed it.”

Sara’s eyes were large and frightened. “But . . . but . . . but white witches are only supposed to be a myth.” She shook her head in denial. “It can’t be real, but . . . I saw you. You didn’t even lift a finger. You didn’t even look at it. You . . . you didn’t even have to chant.”

Vicky slung her bag back over her shoulder and backed away from Sara. “Now, I’m going to my next class. I’ll make up some excuse as to why I was late. I don’t want any more trouble out of you. In fact, I don’t want to hear about you terrorizing anybody else.” Sara nodded. “If I do hear about you terrorizing anybody else, I won’t be so nice next time.” Sara swallowed hard and nodded.

Vicky left the bathroom to go to class. Sara stayed behind trembling in the corner.

## Chapter Seven

Vicky looked around the parking lot nervously. All the other students had left, and her car was the only one left on the lot. She had been standing by her car waiting on Luke for the last ten minutes. She opened her car door and tossed her bag inside and then slammed the door tight. “Come on Luke . . .” she said under her breath. This had been a day from hell. That run in with Sara in the bathroom had been the last straw. All she wanted to do was to go home, take a hot bath, and try to forget about the day’s events, but she had agreed to meet Luke after school. If he didn’t hurry, she was going home. She wanted to forget that this day had ever happened.

“Miss me?” Luke said softly.

Vicky jumped and brought her hand up to her chest to still her racing heart. “Luke,” she said breathlessly. “You scared me again. Where did you come from?”

He laughed softly. “I’ve been around.” He leaned against her car door. “Today’s been tough for you. Tomorrow will be better.” His eyes sparkled. “Tonight could be better.” He lifted his hand to her cheek and brushed a stray lock of hair away tenderly. “I was wondering if you’d like to go out for dinner tonight.”

She bit her bottom lip and grinned flirtatiously. “Having dinner with you does sound like fun, but I have to go shopping tonight to get a couple of school uniforms to wear tomorrow.”

He grinned. “That wasn’t an out and out ‘no’. Will you go out with me if I take you shopping too?”

Her grin got bigger. No guy in Fort Lauderdale had ever offered to take her shopping too. “I’ll have to check with my dad first.” She bit her bottom lip, looked away, and flushed. “He’s probably going to want to meet you before he’ll give me an answer.”

He put his finger under her chin and made her look at him. “I don’t mind talking to your dad first,” he said. He let go of her chin, and then he laughed. “My name hasn’t crossed his desk at work, so I should pass his test.”

She shook her head and laughed. “I don’t know. My dad can be pretty tough.”

He grinned. “Have no fear babe. Getting on your dad’s good side should be a piece of cake. I can be very persuasive when I want to be.”

She laughed softly. “I’m sure you can, but if you want to get on my dad’s good side you

can't clown around. He's a very serious man, and he takes his daughter's safety very seriously."

He put his hand over his heart dramatically. "I will protect you with my life."

She laughed harder. "You're teasing me."

His eyes sparkled mischievously. "I never joke about a beautiful girl's safety."

"Pick me up at seven," she said excitedly. "Do you know where I live?"

He nodded. "I've lived here all my life, and it's a very small town. I know where everybody lives." He took her hand in his and kissed her fingers. "I'll see you at seven," he said and stepped away from her car door.

"Okay," she said and turned to open her car door. She opened the door, turned back around to tell him good-bye, and he was gone. She searched the empty school parking lot with her eyes in disappointment. He was nowhere to be seen. She shrugged, and then her eyes caught a movement at the edge of the woods. There was a large black wolf staring back at her. It wasn't making any aggressive advances toward her. A cold chill ran up and down her spine and her heart raced. She quickly jumped into her car and slammed the car door shut and locked it.

She sped out of the school parking lot, and stared at the wolf as she drove by. He didn't advance, and he didn't run. He just watched her car leave.

## Chapter Eight

There was something weird about that wolf, and it was nagging at Vicky's subconscious like she should already know the answer. She had never heard of a wolf acting in that manner; wolves were generally aggressive. She just couldn't put her finger on it. He hadn't really scared her. It was strange, she felt like the wolf was just *watching* her . . . almost like it *knew* her. Her eyes grew wide at that thought. "Oh, don't be silly. How could that wolf know you?" she mumbled to herself. She shook her head at her overactive imagination. "Girl, you just need to chalk it up to another string of bad experiences of this awful day, and get over yourself."

Her Mustang rounded the corner on Wicca Drive, her street. She cocked her head to the side and stared at the street sign. "That's a weird name for a street," she mumbled. "It's almost like . . . no . . . it can't be . . ." She shook her head in confusion. "Was this street meant for witches to live on? I'll admit this town is weird . . . but . . . could it be true?" She blew out a frustrated breath. "I'm going to get to the bottom of this, and dear old Dad is going to give me some answers for a change." She pulled her Mustang into the driveway behind her dad's Mercedes, put it in park, and cut the engine. With a new sense of determination, she went into the house.

"Dad, I'm home," she called out as she entered the house.

"I'm in my study, Pumpkin," he called out.

She put her keys in her purse and set it on the table next to the door. She walked into her dad's study and smiled at him. Her father was a fairly tall man with a smooth medium complexion. She had his soft brown eyes and smile. He stood up from his desk and held his arms out to her. She stepped into his embrace and hugged him back. "How was school," he asked softly.

She pulled out of his arms and rolled her eyes. "Don't ask," she said testily.

He smiled at her tenderly and sighed because he knew what was coming. "It couldn't have been that bad," he said to soothe her.

She looked him in the eyes. "Do you want to bet?" She shook her head in frustration. "They all but called me a harlot today." She blew out a frustrated breath. "One girl actually did."

He frowned and raised an eyebrow in disbelief. "Pumpkin, you're not a harlot."

She rolled her eyes. "I know that, Dad. That's not the point."

He smiled to try to pacify her. "So, was everyone mean to my baby?" he said gently.

It worked, she grinned. "Not everyone." She bit her bottom lip apprehensively. "Uh . . . Dad?"

He eyed her suspiciously and sighed dramatically. "You're up to something." He crossed his arms over his chest and stared levelly at her. "You're not any better at keeping secrets from me than your mother was. Spit it out."

She rolled her eyes and giggled. "I kind of have a date."

He raised an eyebrow. "How can you kind of have a date? Either you do or you don't."

"Okay, I do have a date," she said and winced.

He rolled his eyes and blew out a breath. "When and where?"

"Tonight and he's taking me to dinner." Her father started to open his mouth, and she put up a finger. "Oh, and I almost forgot, he's taking me shopping too."

Her father did a double take. "Shopping," he said in disbelief.

She laughed at the look on his face. "Yeah, it surprised me too. He asked me out to dinner, and I told him that I couldn't go because I had to go shopping for a school uniform. That's when he offered to take me shopping, too."

Her father shook his head and grimaced. "Oh, I'm sorry, Pumpkin. I forgot to tell you about the uniforms." He walked back behind his desk and sat back down.

Vicky plopped into a chair in front of the desk, and rolled her eyes. "Thanks, Dad, that was part of the problem today. Everyone else was in uniforms, and I stuck out like a sore thumb." She scrunched up her face. "I'm not allowed to wear my makeup to school anymore, either."

"I'm sorry, Pumpkin."

She shrugged. "It's just something that I'm going to have to get used to."

He gave her his most stern glare. "You know I'm going to have to meet this guy and approve of him before you can go, don't you?"

She put up her hand. "I've already told him that, and he said he'd be happy to meet you."

His eyes opened wider in surprise. "He did?" She smiled and nodded. "What's this kid's name?"

She smiled; she wasn't expecting him to be so agreeable. "His name is Luke Wolfburn."

He looked up in the air and thought out loud. “Wolfburn, Wolfburn, where have I heard that name before?”

She shrugged. “Luke asked me if I had heard of you when he heard my last name. Maybe you met his father at work?”

He shook his head in thought as he tried to place the name. “We don’t have any Wolfburns in the office,” he said distractedly. He looked up and snapped his fingers. “The Wolfburns own that diner where I eat my lunch.”

She shrugged. “Luke didn’t say what his father did. Anyhow, Luke will be here at seven to pick me up.”

Her father pulled his wallet out of his pocket and retrieved his credit card. He held it up just out of her reach and spoke to her sternly, “This is for the school uniforms only. Don’t go crazy with it.”

She snatched it out of his hand and laughed. “I promise I won’t go crazy. It’s not like I have to make a fashion statement at school.” She rolled her eyes. “Everyone dresses like everyone else.”

“You just be sure to check with me before you leave the house. I want to meet Luke. I want to know who has my daughter. Am I clear?”

“Crystal,” she said and waited. He looked back down at his paperwork and picked back up his pen. She was trying to think of the best way to approach her father and decided to go for broke. “Uh . . . Dad?” she said hesitantly, and he put his pen back down and looked up.

“Was there something else?”

She looked away and then snapped her eyes back to his. “I want to know why we came here,” she blurted out, and threw her hand up over her mouth. She hadn’t meant to be that blunt.

He sat back in his chair and studied her expression. “Has something else happened to make you think that I have ulterior motives?”

She blew out a breath and nodded. “I deserve to hear the truth from you and not a stranger.”

“You think I’ve been lying to you,” he said solemnly.

She looked away. “I don’t think that you are actually telling me any lies . . . but . . . uh, I do feel like you’re not telling me everything.” She looked back into his eyes and waited for him to



answer.

He sighed dramatically. "I think that I need to hear more of what happened to you at school today." He raised an eyebrow expectantly. "I need to know what was said to you so that I can answer your question properly."

Her eyes grew wide. "Are you keeping that many secrets from me, that I have to explain what omission you've been caught in?" she said in disbelief.

He closed his eyes to consider his words carefully. He opened his eyes and looked directly into hers. "There were certain things that your mother didn't want you to know," he said gently.

She swallowed hard as the tears threatened to spill. "Mom's dead," she said in a whisper. "I need to know why."

He looked away. "Pumpkin . . . I think that it's better that you don't know."

She blinked hard and the tears spilled down her cheeks. She looked away. "So . . . You think it's better for me to hear it from a stranger than to hear it from my own father."

He slammed his hand down on his desk. "I've been trying to protect you!" he said defensively, and she cringed. He grimaced at her reaction and said gently, "I'm sorry, Pumpkin."

She shook her head and cried harder. "Dad, I don't want your pity," she said forcefully and looked up into his eyes. "I want the truth."

He wiped a trembling hand across his brow. "What do you want to know?"

Her red-rimmed eyes grew wide in disbelief. He wanted her to pick and choose what truth she wanted to hear? She threw out her hands in frustration. "I want to know all of it, Dad!"

## Chapter Nine

Ryan sat back in his chair and sighed heavily in defeat. “This isn’t going to be easy for you to hear, Pumpkin.”

Vicky shook her head. “I expect not,” she said in a clipped tone. “It certainly wasn’t easy for me to hear in the girl’s bathroom today either. So . . . as you always say to me, just spit it out.”

He shifted uneasily in his chair. “You know that your mother was a witch.” She nodded. “And you are as well,” he said softly and looked at her expectantly.

She shrugged. “So far you haven’t told me anything that I don’t know.”

His eyes grew wide. “You knew you were a witch?”

She nodded seriously. “When you can control the elements, it’s hard not to notice that you’re special. Mom shared that secret with me. I guess she sensed how confused I was. Please go on.”

“I can’t believe she didn’t tell me that you knew that.”

She shrugged. “I never knew that it was supposed to be a secret. It was just something that we never talked about.”

“Right,” he said distractedly.

“Tell me something that I don’t know.”

“What’s that, Pumpkin?”

“After Mom was killed last week . . . why did you whisk me away in the middle of the night to bring me to this God forsaken place?”

“I did it at your mother’s request,” he said softly.

She did a double take. “Excuse me?”

He sighed heavily. “Your mother grew up here.” He looked around the room. “She lived in this house as a child.”

Vicky’s mouth dropped open. “I had always assumed that she grew up in Fort Lauderdale.”

“That’s what she wanted you to believe. She wanted to keep it a secret of just how powerful she was.”

She looked into his eyes. “Sara called me a white witch.”

“Just who in the hell is Sara?” He shook his head in aggravation. “Why were you using your

powers in front of that girl?"

Her eyes grew wide. She brought her hand up to chest. "Me? You're accusing me of using witchcraft in front of others?" she said indignantly.

He raised an eyebrow. "You're denying it?"

Her face turned beet red. "I'm not denying anything." He set his mouth in a thin grim line. "But I will tell you this, Sara called me a witch before I ever demonstrated any powers," she said forcefully.

His eyes grew wide. "How did she know that?"

Vicky threw out her hands and shrugged. "That's why I'm grilling you. She knew something about me and my mother that I had never told a soul about. I'm just trying to get to the bottom of it."

He shook his head. "Your mother told me to bring you here to live if anything bad ever happened to her. She said that you would be safe here. At the time, I didn't really think anything about it." His eyes took on a sad, distant look. "It was several years ago. We were so happy. You were just entering puberty, and I guess she knew you were coming into your powers. She must have known something was going to happen to her." His eyes came back into the present and he looked her in the eyes. "Your mother knew things. She must have foreseen what was going to happen to her."

She looked away. "I wonder why she said that. I wonder why she wanted you to bring me to the one place that it would probably be impossible for me to keep my secret."

His face turned white. "Why are you talking like that, Pumpkin?"

Her eyes zoomed back in on his. "Come on, Dad," she said dryly. "I know you're not naive. The name of the street we live on is Wicca, another term used in the craft. I am assuming that other witches live here, in this town, as well." She blew out a breath. "Sara is a practicing witch. She uses her witchcraft to terrorize others. She takes it to a dark place. She thought she could intimidate me." She took a deep breath. "I had to show her that she couldn't." She gave her father a piercing glare. "Dad, I need to know what happened to mom last week."

He set his jaw. "She died," he said through clenched teeth.

"Don't patronize me. I'm very aware that she died, although I never saw her body. Why's

that? How did she die, Dad?"

He covered his face with trembling hands and slumped down in his chair. "Somehow the wrong person found out that she was a witch." He let his hands drop in defeat. "A large group of vigilante witch hunters broke into our home and took her from me by gunpoint. There were too many of them." A tear trailed down his cheek as he remembered. "They knocked me out and were somehow quiet enough that they didn't wake you." He raised his eyes to hers. They were filled with the deep-seated pain and anguish of a lost love. "They tied her to a stake and burned her alive." He looked up at the ceiling to blink back the tears. "I was afraid that they would find out about you." Her face turned white, and she brought her trembling hands over her mouth in shocked horror. "Your mother had inherited the deed to this house, so I brought you here. Vicky, you're all I have left. I couldn't risk your life by staying in Fort Lauderdale. If what you say is true, and people know about you, we may have to pack up and leave." He shook his head. "I don't know where we would go. Maybe somewhere where no one has ever heard of us, I don't know."

She looked away, and the tears fell, unchecked, down her face. "How could you keep this from me," she whispered. "Momma . . ." she cried. "She was a sweet and gentle soul. She would never hurt anybody. Oh my God . . ." Her eyes took on a cold hard glare. She set her jaw in anger. "I will see to it personally, that they will pay for what they did to her."

He shook his head frantically. "No, Pumpkin. Your mother wouldn't want that."

"Oh, come on, Dad . . . If this story is true, these people already know about me," she said sarcastically. "Why not strike first?"

"Because you're better than they are," he growled, "and they may just be lying in wait to make sure you're a witch before they strike. I'll not allow you to provoke them into action."

She laughed, and her laughter took on a slightly hysterical tone. "You won't 'allow' me to strike?" she said defiantly. She laughed harder, and he got up from his chair and shook her.

"Vicky!" he said urgently.

The laughter stopped and she glared up at him. "I love you, Daddy, but I'm not very happy with you right now," she said in a small voice. "I feel like such a fraud."

"Pumpkin . . . please . . ."

She held up her hand and turned her head away from him. "I'm going to go upstairs and get ready for my date." She took a deep breath and blew it out. "I'm also going to try and forget that this conversation ever happened. I want to trust you again, Daddy, I really do. Just leave me alone and give me some time. I promise you that I won't do anything rash." She turned and left the room without even glancing back at him.

Ryan sat back down in his chair and stared blankly at the door. He felt like he had just lost his daughter.



She slowly walked up the stairs to go to her room. She paused at the top of the stairs. Her head was swimming with all that she had learned from her father. She wanted to hold a grudge and blame him for keeping all of this from her, but she honestly couldn't. She knew that he had kept it from her because he loved her. There was no doubt in her mind about that. She also knew that she was hurting him by acting out, and her conscience was getting the best of her. She turned back around and went back downstairs to his study.

She threw the door open and charged in. Her eyes met his. "I'm sorry," they both said in unison.

He smiled, and she laughed lightly. He stood up, and she ran around his desk and threw herself into his arms in a fierce hug. "I love you," he said fiercely.

"I know, Daddy. I love you, too." She sighed. "I'm still not happy with what happened, but I do understand that you were trying to spare me some of the pain." She pulled back and gave him a stern look. "In the future, I expect you to tell me everything. I'm a big girl now, and I can handle it. Please don't keep things from me."

He pulled her into another fierce hug. "You've got it, Pumpkin. Now, you need to go. You have a date."

She smiled up at him. "Yes I do."

## Chapter Ten

She heard a knock at the door and she went to go answer it. "I'll get it," she called out to her father. She opened the front door to Luke. She smiled and opened the door wider. "Hey you, come on in."

Luke flashed a crooked grin. "You look nice. Are you ready to go to dinner?"

Her eyes sparkled. "You still have to meet my dad first."

He blew out a breath and then laughed. "Okay babe, do your worst."

She laughed. "He's really not that bad. Come on. He's in his study." Luke followed her down the hall to her father's study. She knocked on the door as she opened it. "Dad?" she said to get his attention. He looked up from his paperwork. "Dad, this is Luke."

"Hello, sir," Luke said, "I'm Luke Wolfburn."

Ryan sat back in his chair to assess the young man that had arrived to take out his daughter. He could see how happy Vicky was and decided to take it easy on her date. "Luke, does your father own the diner?"

Luke smiled. "Yes sir. The diner's ours," he said and glanced at Vicky and shrugged.

Ryan nodded. "What time are you going to have Vicky home?"

"I thought we'd eat first, and then I'm going to take her to the department store for a school uniform. It closes at nine. I should have her home before ten."

Ryan gave them both a stern look. "You be sure that you do." He looked into Vicky's eyes. "Behave yourself, young lady."

She flushed. "Dad . . . I always behave myself."

"Just see that you do." Ryan went back to his paperwork. "Not a minute after ten."

They turned to leave the room. "Bye, Dad."

"Bye, Pumpkin."

"Dad . . ."

"Sorry."

Luke laughed. "Your dad calls you 'Pumpkin'?"

She punched him playfully in the arm. "Yeah, don't rub it in."

"I think it's cute."

She rolled her eyes. “Let’s go before I change my mind.”

## Chapter Eleven

Luke put the truck in park and cut the engine. He grinned. "We're here," he said softly. She grinned back and reached for the door handle. "No, let me do that."

She pulled her hand away and grinned. "Okay, you can open the door." He raced around the truck and opened the door. She climbed out. "Thank you," she said sweetly.

The grin seemed to be stuck on his face. "You're welcome." His eyes sparkled mischievously. "There's something that I've wanted to do all day."

She smiled and turned her face up to his. "Oh yeah, what's that?"

"This," he said and brought his warm lips to hers in a leisurely kiss. Her heart raced frantically, and she inched her arms up around his neck, pulled closer to him, and returned the kiss ardently. The warm, soft, pressure of his lips on hers sent a warm, tingly sensation through her body. He nudged her lips apart, caressed his tongue with hers, and she moaned in response.

Her legs suddenly felt like jelly, and she broke the kiss and looked into his eyes. "Wow," she said breathlessly.

He grinned. "That's what I thought." He draped his arm over her shoulders and she grinned up at him. "We had better go eat dinner before I get in trouble with your dad."

She rolled her eyes. "It wouldn't have gone that far."

He shrugged. "I'm just saying . . ." She laughed and elbowed him in the ribs. "Hey, cut it out."

She smiled and tried to look innocent. "What?"

He laughed and opened the door to the steak house and ushered her inside.

The hostess greeted them with a big smile. She was a pretty, tall, slender blond. "Will there be just two tonight, Luke?"

He laughed and looked around. "Yeah, Grace. It's just the two of us."

She grinned. "Follow me then." She led them to a corner booth.

Vicky looked up at him and whispered, "Do you know her?"

He shrugged and tried to play off innocence. "I know everybody in this town."

They sat down, the hostess handed them the menus, and Luke handed his right back. He glanced over at Vicky. "Can I order for you?"



She grinned and bit her bottom lip flirtatiously. “Can I stop you if you start to order something that I don’t like?”

He grinned. “Sure.”

She giggled. “Then you may order for me.”

He winked at Vicky and looked up at the hostess. “Have the waitress bring us a couple of steaks, medium rare, with tossed salads and house dressing. Oh, also bring us a couple of glasses of iced tea.” He glanced at Vicky and she nodded her approval.

She grinned. “Not a bad guess for a guy I just met this morning.”

He sat back in the booth and his eyes gleamed mischievously. “I’m very intuitive. I can read people very well.”

She couldn’t hide her surprise. She inclined her head. “Is that something you just learned how to do?”

He looked away and laughed self-consciously. “No, I’ve always been able to sense things.”

She nodded and caught his eyes again. “I guess that makes you kind of special,” she said softly.

He looked away self-consciously. “What it makes me is a freak.”

She placed her hand over his on top of the table, and he looked back at her. “Luke, listen to me. You are not a freak. I have seen some freaky things in my day, and you don’t even rank close to the term freak. Tell me why you think you’re a freak.”

He looked away again. “You heard it for yourself this morning. The snide comments Sara made about me.”

She squeezed his hand. “Don’t get me started on Sara.” She shook her head and blew out a breath. “I promised myself that I would be nice. I can’t even think about her and be nice, so let’s talk about something else please.” She sighed dramatically. “Luke, her comments don’t count.” She smiled. “I think you’re great, and my opinion trumps hers.”

The waitress brought the iced tea and salad and placed it on the table before them. Luke smiled at her. “Thanks, Jenny.”

“You got it, Luke.” She looked between them. “Is there anything else you need before the dinner arrives?”

Luke glanced at Vicky and she shrugged. "No, Jenny, this is great. Thanks."

She grinned. "Okay, I'll be back in a few minutes with the steaks."

Vicky sat back in the booth and stared at Luke. Luke smiled self-consciously. "What?"

She raised an eyebrow and gave him a calculating look. "You seem to know all these people very well."

He shrugged and laughed lightly. "Oh that. This is my family's restaurant. I work here too."

Her eyes grew wide, and her mouth dropped open in surprise. "I thought my dad said that your family owned a diner."

He cocked his head to the side and lifted a single shoulder in a shrug. "You and your dad are from a large city and are used to large restaurants. To your dad, this place must seem like a small diner." He smiled and shook his head. "I just let it go. It's just a small misuse of terminology. It's no big deal."

She looked around at the place and laughed. "I like this place. It's nice." She picked up her fork and took a bite of the salad, and nodded. "The food's good, too."

He grinned. "How would you know that? All you've tasted so far is rabbit food."

She rolled her eyes and took another bite of salad. She closed her eyes and smiled in mock ecstasy. She laughed again. "Okay, okay, I'll reserve my opinion for the steak."

He laughed. "You're a nut." His eyes sparkled and he cocked his head to the side. "You are one beautiful nut, but still a nut none the less."

They were laughing at his joke when Jenny brought the steaks. She set the plates before them. "Would either of you care for anything else?" She looked between them. "Do you need any ketchup, steak sauce, anything?"

"No, we're doing fine here, Jenny, thanks."

Jenny smiled. "I can see that, Luke, and I'm happy to see it." She smiled at Vicky. "I haven't seen our Luke this happy in a long time."

"Jenny . . ."

Vicky laughed at Luke's reaction. "Thanks, Jenny. I enjoy his company."

Jenny gave her a toothy grin. "Good. I like seeing my little brother happy."

Vicky's eyes grew wide in surprise. "He's your little brother?"

Jenny laughed. “He didn’t tell you.”

“Jenny . . .”

She laughed. “I’m going, Luke. Calm down. It was nice to meet you, Vicky.”

“Same here,” Vicky said. She looked over at Luke and her eyes sparkled. “Why didn’t you tell me that Jenny was your sister?”

He rolled his eyes. “I didn’t tell you because I wanted to avoid this line of questioning. Besides, I told you that my family owns this place.”

“Yes, you did. I just never thought to put two and two together.” She shrugged. “She’s pretty.”

Jenny was clear across the restaurant, but he could hear her chuckle softly. “I’m sure she’ll be happy to know that you think so.” He huffed out a breath. “Eat your steak before it gets cold.”

Vicky giggled at his embarrassment. “I don’t mind if I do.” She cut into the steak and took a bite. She smiled. “Now, I’m going to tell you that the food *is* good.”

He laughed and cut into his steak as well.



She swallowed the last bite of steak and sighed. “Luke, I’ve never had a steak that tasted that good.”

He smiled. “You’re just saying that because my family owns this place.”

She shook her head and laughed. “No seriously, I don’t joke about good food. We’ll have to come back here.”

His eyes sparkled, and he gave her a toothy grin. “You’re telling me that you want to go out with me again?”

She flushed when she realized that she had just invited herself out on another date with him. She bit her bottom lip and grinned. “Sure, I like the company.”

He grinned at her blush, and he reached across the table and placed his hand over hers. “I like the company, too.” He let go of her hand and set back in the booth, and his mood became serious. He shifted nervously on the bench. “I want to ask you something.”

She noticed his change in manner and it tweaked her curiosity. She cocked her head to the side and sighed. “What is it that you want to know?”

He toyed with the silverware to avoid her eyes. "I have never known anyone to move here by pure chance." He looked up and into her eyes. "What happened in Fort Lauderdale?"

She looked away and started fidgeting with her napkin. "I'm not supposed to talk about it."

He placed his hand over hers to stop her nervous fidget. She stared at their hands. "Vicky, this small town isn't what it seems." She put the napkin down and looked into his eyes. "There are a lot of strange things that go on behind the scenes." He blew out a breath. "I'm just trying to decide just where you fit into all of this."

She shifted nervously in her seat. The memory of her father's confession was fresh on her mind. She felt a compelling need to tell him what he wanted to know, but she didn't know if she really should. "It's not that I don't want to tell you, Luke. I like you. I really do." She looked away again. "If the rumors started here too, my dad would pack us up and move again."

He reached across the table again and placed his hand over hers and squeezed it. "I won't tell a soul," he whispered.

She tried to blink back the tears and decided to tell him. "A group of . . . concerned citizens . . . tied my mother to a stake . . . and burned her alive," she said bitterly. She looked back into his eyes. "My dad packed us up in the middle of the night and brought us here."

He sighed heavily. "So, she was a witch," he said solemnly, he wasn't asking. "If she was a witch, you must be too for your dad to whisk you away like that."

Her heart raced, and she swallowed hard. "Now you know." She looked away. "I don't suppose you want anything more to do with me now."

He put his finger under her chin and made her look at him. "Don't be silly. You fit right in this God forsaken town more than you know." He sat back.

Her bottom lip quivered. "Are you telling me that you're a witch, too?"

He smiled and shook his head. "No, I have my own peculiarities that I'm sure you'll discover soon."

She smiled grimly. "I've noticed a couple." He lifted an eyebrow and waited for her to continue. "You know a couple of peculiarities in you."

He smiled. "Such as . . ."

She grinned. "You seem to have a talent for just appearing and disappearing from seemingly

nowhere.” She shook her head. “Take this afternoon. I turned around to tell you good bye, and you were just gone.” She shrugged. “I couldn’t find you anywhere.” He smiled and shrugged. “What I did find was a dark wolf staring at me from the edge of the woods.” She shivered and he turned white. “Are there many wolves around here?”

He looked away. “There are a few. Don’t worry about them. They don’t usually bother anybody.” She gave him a strange look for his last statement. He smiled. “I guess this also explains why you refused to listen to my warning about Sara.”

She looked away. “Luke . . . Sara is a witch. She um . . . she yanked me into the bathroom after lunch.” She rubbed the knot on the back of her head. “She tried to scare me.”

His eyes flashed with anger. “Did she hurt you?” he growled.

She shrugged. “I have a lump on the back of my head, but I’m okay.”

“I’m going to make her pay for that one,” he growled.

She shook her head and looked away with guilt. “Luke, that won’t be necessary.”

“She can’t be allowed to run all over you and get away with it,” he said through clenched teeth.

She shrugged again. “She, uh, didn’t exactly get away with it.”

He drew his eyebrows together in a frown. “What do you mean?”

She shook her head with guilt, her eyes still refused to meet his. “Luke, I really don’t want to tell you.”

He squeezed her hand. “I don’t understand, why not?” he said gently.

She shrugged. “I don’t want you to think I’m a freak either.” She shook her head. “Sara made me angry, and I don’t like what my temper does to me.”

He grinned. “What did you do to her? Did you punch her or scratch her?” She shook her head guiltily. “Oh, come on, Vicky, whatever you did to her, she deserved it. She has been terrorizing that place for far too long.”

Her eyes met his. “I used my magic against her.”

He quickly looked down at the table. “Oh, I see,” he said in a clipped tone.

Vicky looked up in the air. “What’s that supposed to mean?”

“You used black magic against black magic. I get it.”

She rolled her eyes and huffed out a frustrated breath. “No, Luke. I don’t think you *do* get it. I don’t practice black magic.” His eyes met hers. He wanted so badly to believe her. “Luke, Sara is a vindictive, self-made witch. She practices black magic, and I believe she *enjoys* torturing innocent people. I was born a witch.” She shook her head. “I don’t have to mix potions or chant to make things happen. It all comes very naturally to me. Just like breathing is to you. I can control the elements with just a thought. I can literally *make* things happen with no conscious effort on my part.” She looked away again. “Sara purposefully provoked me and made me angry. Somehow, she already knew that I was a witch. I guess she wanted to test to see who was more powerful. So, instead of just approaching me and getting to know me, like most people would, she did what she does best. She got in my face and forced my hand. She started talking bad about my mother, who by the way is a sore subject with me, and I used my magic to purposefully frighten her. I threatened her and told her to leave everyone alone, or I would come after her and make her pay.” She looked down at her hands with a great measure of guilt. “I’m not proud of what I did. You see, my momma taught me that magic was a gift, and with that gift came certain responsibilities. She had warned me to never use my powers maliciously against other weaker people. In the past, I have always been the ‘champion’ of the underdog. I prefer to help people, rather than hurt them. Sara brought out the monster in me that resides in my darkest subconscious. I would prefer that that beast, better known as my temper, remain chained and locked away. I’m sorry, Luke, if you don’t approve of me, and if you never want to date me again, I understand.”

He placed his hand compassionately on top of hers, and she raised her eyes to his. “I’m sorry that I copped an attitude and judged you prematurely. In my heart I didn’t want to believe that you were like Sara. The only witches that I’ve been around have been the black magic kind, and I was praying with every fiber of my being that you weren’t like that, because I genuinely like you. I am usually a pretty good judge of character, and I could sense the compassion in you. It’s just that you took me off guard when you said you used your magic against someone. You are *nothing* like Sara. I can *see* that. Please don’t be angry with me.” He grinned at her trying to lift her spirits. “In case you’re interested, I do want to continue dating you.” She grinned back at him. “Okay, I’m through with the judging. Tell me *exactly* what you did to Sara. I, for one,

would have loved to see her get what's coming to her."

Vicky flushed and gave him a shy guilty smile. "I'm afraid that the maintenance department at Wickford High might not be too happy with me right now." He smiled for encouragement and lifted an eyebrow and waited patiently for her to continue. "I . . . uh . . . started popping the light bulbs in the bathroom one by one for intimidation. I had Sara backed into a corner and I made the earth tremble beneath her feet and caused the metal in the bathroom stalls to shake around her." She shrugged. "That's about it. I didn't harm her. I just demonstrated what I could do so that she would leave me and everyone else alone."

He grinned. "Show off," he teased.

She grinned flirtatiously. "I'm not a show off."

His eyes sparkled and he smiled at her tenderly. "No, you're not. I just enjoy picking on you, but alas, it's getting late." He folded his napkin and put it on the table. "Come on. You need to get to the department store before they close."

She rolled her eyes. "Ugh, I had almost forgotten that I still had to buy that horrid uniform. I've been having such a good time with you that I guess I blocked out the trip to the department store. It just means that our date will soon be coming to an end."

She slid out of the booth, grabbed her purse, and stood up. He put his arm around her and steered her toward the front door. They stopped by the passenger door of his truck. He was still grinning at her comment inside. "I don't want this evening to come to an end either, but I promise you, there will be other dates . . . often."

She laughed. "You're assuming that I'll go back out with you," she teased.

He smiled and put his index finger under her chin and brought his lips close to hers. "Oh, you'll go out with me again. I guarantee it," he whispered softly against her lips. She felt the thrill of anticipation course through her, and she couldn't wait. She closed the gap, and brought her lips hungrily to his. Her heart raced, as she gave in to the intense feelings he ignited in her. Feelings, of heat and passion, were new and exciting. Her blood felt like fire in her veins as the kiss continued and she boldly stroked her tongue with his.

Then reality set in and she tore her lips away from his. She looked into his eyes that were dark with passion. They were both breathing heavily. "You're dangerous," she said, her voice

was husky and breathless.

He grinned. "You might say that," he said and opened the passenger door to the truck.

Her heart had finally slowed down its frantic pace. Her body, however, was still in tune and sensitive to his. She was physically drawn to him, and all she wanted to do was go right back in his arms and kiss him again. Instead, she turned and climbed into the passenger seat of the truck. She looked away to get her composure back. "We had better go," she said huskily. Her voice still betrayed her.

He opened the driver's door and climbed in. He gripped the steering wheel and stared blankly into the darkness. His heart too, was still racing from that fiery, passion-filled kiss. He also felt the strong, physical pull, the fierce yearning to be with her only. He chanced a glance in her direction; she was still staring into the darkness. He had a gut feeling, that when she found out what he was, that she would be gone, and he wasn't sure if his heart could take it. He knew in his heart that she was all he wanted, and he felt an intense disappointment when he realized that he had found his true mate. He felt her rejection was imminent.

Without another word, he started the truck and drove her to the department store.



## Chapter Twelve

In the few minutes it took to drive to the department store, they both managed to get their composure back. Luke decided to let the cards fall where they may and try not to worry about the future.

Vicky managed to get her raging hormones back under control, and made a quick decision to be more careful in the future. She really, really, liked Luke, but she decided that she didn't want to rush things and possibly make a huge teenage mistake.

He pulled the truck into the parking space and put it in park. He jumped out and raced around to her side to open the door. She slid out of the truck and smiled at him sweetly. "Thank you, Luke. I've said it before, but I'll say it again. You are spoiling me."

He grinned mischievously. "That's my master plan."

Her eyes grew wide in surprise. "You have a master plan?"

His eyes sparkled. "Yeah, I do." She grinned and waited patiently for him to continue. "I plan to treat you so nice that no other guy will hold a candle to me. That if you do decide to date other guys, you'll always come back to me because they don't treat you as good as I do."

"Luke, in my eyes, no other guy does hold a candle to you. You are the sweetest, most caring guy that I've ever met." She shook her head. "You really don't have to try so hard. You've already got my full attention."

He grinned. "That's good to know. I'll let you in on a little secret. You've had my full attention from the moment I laid eyes on you."

She rolled her eyes and giggled. "I would have never guessed that," she teased.

"Now, my dear, let's go inside this fine establishment and buy you a uniform," he said in mock formality.

Her body shook with laughter at his theatrics. "I don't know when I've had this much fun, even if it is just to buy a ratty old uniform."

"I don't recall ever having this much fun either." He wiggled his eyebrows. "It must be the company."

She laughed harder. "Let's just get this chore over with. I would rather not have to think about that distasteful uniform any more than I have to. I would rather move on to something

more fun.”

“Fun,” he said wistfully and cut her a side glance. “I don’t know how much more ‘fun’ I could stand. You . . . are such . . . uh . . .” He sighed. “I think the word I’m looking for is temptation.”

The laughter was gone, and she looked away nervously. “Luke . . . I’m not ready for any of that yet.”

He chuckled softly at her reaction. “Neither am I,” he said softly, “but it doesn’t mean that I still don’t feel the temptation. I am drawn to you, Vicky. I have been from the moment that I met you.”

Her heart raced with joy at his confession. She looked into his eyes. “I feel it too, and those feelings scare me, Luke.”

In all seriousness, he tilted his head to the side. “I don’t mean to scare you.”

She smiled nervously. “You, yourself, don’t scare me. I’m not sure if I trust myself with you. These new, intense, feelings for you are what scare me. I’ve never ever felt like this before now, and I don’t want to lose control of *me* in the process.”

“I won’t let that happen,” he said softly.

She gave him a slight smile. “I wish I could believe that.”

He raised an eyebrow. “What, you don’t trust me?”

“It’s not that I don’t trust you. I think I could trust you with my life,” she said seriously. She looked away and smiled shyly. “It’s just that . . . you are a guy after all, and guys don’t always think rationally in that department.”

“I promise to treat you with nothing but respect,” he said seriously. “I also promise that nothing serious will happen unless you initiate it first and are ready to take that step. I will continue to tell you how I feel, but you can trust yourself with me. I will never force you to do something you’re not ready for. Agreed?”

She nodded. “Agreed,” she said enthusiastically.

“Well then, Miss Phillips, let’s go inside this store and buy that school uniform before they close.”

“I think that’s a right good idea you have there, Mr. Wolfburn,” she joked back, and they

both laughed.



“These clothes are downright ugly,” Vicky said in disgust. She placed them on the counter and handed the clerk her dad’s credit card.

Luke laughed. “Tell that to Father Thomas. They’re his rules.”

She scrunched up her face. “I haven’t met him yet.”

Luke smiled. “You probably won’t meet him unless you get into trouble.”

She cut him a side-glance and winced. “I have been known to find trouble from time to time.”

“Haven’t we all.” He walked over to the racks on the wall and pulled out an outfit on a hanger. His eyes sparkled. “I think this would look nice on you.”

She smiled. “It is cute, but where would I wear it?”

“You could wear it out on another date with me.”

The clerk handed her the bag and the credit card back. “Thanks,” she said to the clerk. She turned and smiled at Luke. “Are you asking me out on another date?”

He smiled. “Yes.”

“Okay, I accept.”

He took her bag and handed her the outfit. “Go try this on.”

She took the outfit from him and grinned. “I’ll be right back.”

She walked to the back of the department store where the dressing rooms were and left Luke at the register. She found a dressing room and hung the hanger on a hook and pulled the curtain. She started to unbutton her shirt when she saw something dark flash in the mirror. She whirled around in surprise when a pair of hands clutched her from behind with a rag doused in chloroform. Everything went black.



Luke paced back and forth in front of the register. It had been fifteen minutes and Vicky hadn’t come out of the fitting room. The store was scheduled to close in ten minutes. He was starting to worry. He turned to the girl behind the counter. “Agnes, could you please check on Vicky for me?”

“Sure, Luke,” Agnes said and walked to the back of the store. She came back a minute later and shrugged. “She’s not back there.”

A cold chill ran down Luke’s spine. “I’m going back there to check it out.”

Agnes shrugged. “Whatever. I’m telling you that she’s not back there.”

Luke took off at a run for the back of the store. Vicky’s scent was all over the place. He looked down and saw the rag on the floor and his face turned white. He tore out of the store and made a beeline for his truck.

## Chapter Thirteen

Vicky slowly opened her eyes. Her mouth felt like it was filled with cotton, and her head was pounding painfully. Her head lulled on her shoulders, and her eyelids felt like they were being held down by weights. She could feel the damp, cool, night air on her skin. Everything was still dark. Her body felt like she had been hit with a Mac Truck. She slowly lifted her head and tried to move, but she couldn't. Her hands were numb and bound behind her around a huge stake. A deep fear and a feeling of *déjà vu* clutched her. Her heart sank, and she jerked violently at her bindings. She heard a loud bark of laughter, and her heart turned cold.

"So, the witch thought she could hide from us," a male voice thundered.

Vicky narrowed her eyes and tried to see into the darkness. "Who are you?"

"Has it been so long since your mother died that you don't recognize us?" he mocked.

She swallowed hard, and tears streamed down her face. "You bastard, you killed my mother!" she shouted.

He strutted back and forth in front of her arrogantly. He puffed out his chest. "No. I killed a demon," he said proudly. "I burned a witch, and I'm about to burn another one."

She yanked violently at the ropes. "I'm not the monster," she shouted. "You are. I've never hurt anybody."

He held up his hands in the air righteously. "Don't listen to the lies of the serpent," he shouted to the group of ten people shrouded and hooded in black. "Tonight God's will shall triumph. Tonight . . . the witch will burn."

"This can't be happening," she cried out. "How did you find me? We left no forwarding address. I didn't even get my high school transcripts."

His eyes took on a crazy gleam. He tapped his finger to his temple and smiled wickedly. "Obviously someone in this town knows you for who you are, and they wanted to see justice served."

"Sara . . ." she spat, and he laughed harder. Vicky's eyes took on a cold glare and the wind began to whip up around her. With her hair flying about she took on a regal appearance. The ground began to shake beneath their feet.

His eyes took on a nervous glint. "What . . . What's happening?" he shouted.

She lowered her chin and glared coldly at him. "I'll tell you what's happening," she said coldly. "You have just pissed off a witch." She looked at his feet and lightning struck the ground right next to his foot, sending him flying through the air. He landed hard on his back. He crab walked away from her quickly in fear.

"But . . . but . . . your mother couldn't do any of that . . ." he shouted indignantly.

She raised her chin defiantly. "My mother had a kind soul. My mother was a Saint. *You* are the demon," she growled. She trained her eyes on him again and he paled. He crawled quickly over to the torch and took it in both hands to light the kindle at her feet. "No!" she screamed.

His hands stopped and began to tremble from an unseen force. He gripped the torch harder in determination and shouted, "I will burn the witch!"

Suddenly a low ferocious growl could be heard in the darkness. The man strained his eyes to see and searched frantically in the black void. His eyes grew wide when he saw about ten pair of yellow glowing eyes advancing from the inky blackness. He scrambled away from Vicky quickly on his hands and knees. The group turned to run and the wolves attacked.

The screams echoed though Vicky's body as she watched the carnage unfold before her. Somehow, she wasn't afraid. She watched them all fall, one at a time. The wolves didn't leave one person in the group alive. Vicky stared dumbfounded at the carnage.

The largest wolf looked into her eyes, and took a few hesitant steps toward her. She was somewhat defenseless tied to that stake. Her eyes grew wide when she saw the air shimmer around the wolf and Luke suddenly stood before her.

Her mouth fell open. "Luke?" she cried out in disbelief.

He ran over to her, untied her hands, and grabbed her in a fierce hug. "I told you that there was a lot more to this town than meets the eye. I didn't want you to find out about me this way, but I couldn't let them burn you."

"So this is the secret that you said I would find out sooner or later?" He nodded. She smiled. "That wolf at the edge of the woods at school was you."

He smiled. "Yes, that was me. I told you by your car today that I would protect you with my life."

She smiled. "I thought you were just teasing me." She suddenly drew her eyebrows together,

and she stepped back and gave him a critical look. “You’re able to phase with clothes?”

He shrugged. “We’re enchanted. Whatever we’re wearing when we phase is what we’re wearing when we phase back.”

She giggled. “That must make it convenient.” He grinned and nodded in agreement. She looked around him into the darkness. “Where did the other wolves go?”

“That was my family, and since the threat is gone, they went back home.” He hesitated. “You’re not afraid of me?”

She wrapped her arms around his neck, stood up on her tiptoes, and she met his warm, soft lips with her own. He held her tighter and deepened the freely given kiss. He ran his tongue across her soft, yielding lips, and she opened to him allowing his tongue to caress hers in a soft sensual kiss. It warmed her body clear down to her toes leaving her feeling warm and tingly inside. She broke the kiss and smiled up at him. “No, Luke, I’m not afraid of you. Because of you, I have found a place where I belong. I belong here with you. I am finally home.”

He smiled. “I’m glad to hear you say that, because I’d follow you wherever you went. I’d follow you to hell and back if I had to. Now . . . I better get you home, before your father decides to kill me first and ask questions later. As it is, your father would never accept me if he knew what I am,” he said softly.

She smiled. “You might be surprised. If you had told me that this morning, I would have probably told you that you were right. But . . . now, after all that’s happened today, I don’t think so. I saw a new side of my father today, and I think if he knew you just saved my life, that he would accept you no matter what you are.” She looked into his eyes. “You see, by his own words, I’m all he has left. You just saved me. I think that will count for a great deal in his eyes.”

He shook his head at her crazy reasoning. “Still, I’d rather not tell him that I’m a werewolf.”

She smiled. “Then it will be our secret. Please take me home.”

He grinned. “You’ve got it, darlin’.”



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