

Rachel's Love Potion 3: Oops, Summoned a Demon Part Five

“When are you going to stop being mad at me? It’s not like *I* was the one who summoned me! How am I supposed to control what your friend did and didn’t do during the ritual?!”

I held up a finger to silence her, turning the page, skimming, scanning, and turning it again. It wasn’t the finger I wanted to hold up, but I was practicing restraint. “You can’t control her. Not even I could control her, and I…” I looked up, not at Kammie, but where Joanna was dancing in the corner. The pole was the latest addition to my home library; I knew neither where she’d procured it nor when. It was useful, however. The display of twisting, gyrating flesh Joanna was providing was both a soothing distraction, yet at the same time a reminder of the stakes. Without Rachel, there would never have been a Joanna. Without Rachel, I may well yet lose her. It was motivating. Useful.

That was higher praise than I could offer up for the other distraction in the room.

Warlocks are not seers, by tradition. Neither are we prophets, soothsayers, oracles, mediums, nor those lying fuckers with the tarot cards. Divination was not a core component of our craft. That said, I was at a loss for how else we might find her. The multiverse, as it turned out, was actually pretty big. Any given plane was theoretically infinite, even if the populated and inhabitable areas tended to be in more limited supply. There was no guarantee Rachel had landed in any such area, of course. She could be ten thousand miles outside the most far-flung settlements at the base of Celestia. Shit, she could be here on earth, here in this city, and I might never find her. Yes, if she wanted me to then I would, but if she wanted to be found and had the means of contacting me, no doubt she would have long since. Weeks, she’d been away. She could be a decomposing pile of devil shit by now, for all I knew. A wisp of steam above the volcano she’d landed in. A tourist in the shrieking tunnels of Pandemonium. She could be anywhere, or nowhere.

That was about as much as Kammie had been able to tell me. Cosmology was not her area of expertise any more than it was mine, and although she had been summoned here, she didn’t understand much of the technicalities of the process. Turns out one didn’t need to be an expert on planar calling to be summoned any more than one needed a pilot’s license to buy a plane ticket. My own limited exposure to the lore may or may not even be of use. After all, I’d studied (and in moderation) the way these things were done, the way they *ought to be* done. Rachel certainly hadn’t done things by the book. Of that, at least, I could be sure. Any straightforward treatise on the ritual of summoning extraplanar beings was sure to be another trap laid by the Legion of the Damned. I mean, duh.

“Scrying... tissue sample. Ocular possession... tissue sample. Djannic consultation... tissue sample.” I grit my teeth. “Thanks again, though, for cleaning every single square inch of both of our houses. Can’t tell you what a relief it is not to have a single stray hair or skin cell anywhere in either. Really. Great work.”

“Like I was supposed to know you’d wind up needing one of her hairs!” Kammie moaned despondently.

Joanna removed one of her earbuds, the only item she wore. “Yeah, Knox, go easy on her. Changing shapes back and forth like that, I bet she didn’t want to go leaving random colored strands all over the house. Right?”

“I don’t shed. Actually, I can account for every strand of hair on my head. Today we’re racking up a solid 185,212 hairs, up two from yesterday. Not the kind of thing I normally pay attention to, but shacking up with Dr. Love Potion over there, a girl can’t be too careful.”

“You should ask him to brew you one. It feels so good. And it would be less unfair to me, having to be the only fuck slave.”

“You want competition?”

“I want to be able to pleasure him in every way a woman can – some of which require another woman.”

“Aw, what a thoughtful little sex slave you’re turning out to be. That’s my girl.”

Reflexively, I grabbed a handful of the nearest objects that wouldn’t actually hurt and chucked it at them. A skittle, it turned out. Sour apple. My helpful khamulan, fetching me the devil’s own candy as a peace offering. “You still pole dance like a daycare worker. Quit distracting me, both of you. And you, keep practicing.”

Joanna’s jaw clicked shut. Too often since Kammie revealed her betrayal, she’d been playing the intermediary. All she wanted was to go back to the three of us non-stop fucking, but her potion wouldn’t let her disrupt my search even for that now that she knew what I was about. I’d worried that the prospect of losing Rachel for good would scramble what was left of her mind, but she’d taken it well. At least, she trusted me to pursue my original fuck buddy with all of my ingenuity. Once in a while her head cleared enough to start panicking over it, but on those occasions I dispatched Kammie to assume Rachel’s form and fuck her back into blissful stupidity. It was the least she could do.

Again, I regretted my prior meeting with Primek. Why hadn’t I thought to use him to seek out Rachel? But no, like an idiot, I’d been preoccupied by the succubus conundrum. If I went into that linen closet again any time soon, he’d drain me dry before I could finish the opening tea ceremony. It left me without my best resource to access otherworldly knowledge.

I threw another skittle, this one at nothing in particular. It didn’t help. It didn’t make things any worse, though, either.

Three days, I'd been poring through every book on my shelves that could offer even the dimmest hope of finding Rachel. I'd barely slept. How could I, when every minute I delayed was a minute where the sex toy who loved me best could be suffering or dying? I was her best friend, and she, my very favorite place to put my penis.

"What if you called your friend Jerry?" Kammie suggested. "He seemed pretty knowledgeable."

This was the closest thing to useful she had, providing me opportunities to condescendingly vent when she offered yet another stupid idea. I explained how Jerry bipped around between realities like a flea between dogs, a veritable ghost, drifting through the multiverse on the winds of Etherea.

Plus, I didn't have his phone number.

That didn't stop Kammie, though. She was positively irrepressible, and as someone trying his damndest to repress her, that was saying something. Hour after hour, more nonstarters.

"Isn't it at least worth *trying* to file a missing persons report?"

"What if you banished me? I know it would undo Rachel's binding, but I promise once I'm back home I would try extra hard to find her. And I know some people!"

"Maybe she's with that ex-boyfriend of hers you mentioned?"

"Have you checked your, what do you call it, email? Maybe she left you an email."

"I never cleaned your lab. Have you looked around your lab?"

I looked up. "What was that?"

"Your lab. I wasn't about to go mucking around in a freaking warlock lab. Hey, yeah! You're so focused on finding a tissue sample, but didn't you take one from her for your love potion? Is there any extra?"

I didn't bother answering. Partially because it was stupid. I'd moved heaven and earth to get a urine sample from her so I could brew the love potion's dormant psi levels to mirror her body's natural state. (Not essential, I suppose, but it helped reduce the chance that it would cause her to change religions.) Getting a hair sample without breaking into her house had been deemed too tricky as well, so I'd simply raided her trash by night and found an old tampon for the tissue requirements instead. Blood was always best, a fact which I'd had the opportunity to reflect on its irony while bandaging up the raccoon wounds I'd sustained in the process. Worthless goddamn HOA.

Naturally, I didn't still have any of the presently relevant materials I'd gathered for Rachel's love potion. I hadn't anticipated needing them, and they were going on a year old by now, their potency useless even had I held onto them. I liked to keep a tidy laboratory, besides, and old tampons weren't exactly that.

However, I wasn't the only one who'd been using my lab.

Maybe... Just maybe... I could be the hero.

Rachel, some time earlier...

Knox held up a middle finger behind him as he led my former best friend in the world into my car using one of my ex-boyfriend's neckties for a leash. "Later, ya titless bimbo. Off to enjoy my alpha cunt – see you whenever I get bored of big awesome boobs and easy slutty pussy!"

I waved goodbye to Knox, but it was hard to look as eager as a guy like him deserved. For some reason, and I can hardly believe I'm saying this, I just hadn't been feeling it as much lately. Which was bizarre as heck, right? I was living the dream! And not in that sad, sarcastic way most people say it. I really was! It wasn't a dream I'd ever had before I met Knox, which to my mind only showed how dreamy he was. Not that I liked him that way. You'd think I would, right? We'd been spending so much time together, and I'd loved every single minute of it.

Even if he wanted to do something boring, Knox always had a suggestion ready for something to involve me. I remember one of the first times he'd stayed the night at my place. We were watching this really scary movie and I was hiding under the blanket because I just knew it was gonna give me nightmares. Knox saw how bad I needed distracting and pulled my face right down to his crotch. I'd never thought of myself as a "hot cheap cocksucker," as he endearingly dubbed me, but it was kind of like one of those geeky role playing games one of my high school boyfriends used to play. Sure enough, I didn't see or hear another moment of the movie, and when I woke up crying from those nightmares, he distracted me all over again, just to be sweet.

My life had gotten better every day I'd known him. I was done with my boring old job. Knox paid all my bills! Letting him replace my wardrobe with skimpy little underwears and install webcams all over the house was a small price to pay to exit the rat race. For the longest time I hadn't put two and two together about where the money that paid my mortgage was coming from. Then just the other day a girl I used to work with told me she'd found a link to it on her family computer and accused me of trying to steal her husband of all things! I replied that it was more likely her son than her hubby, and told her to give everyone at the office my best. What else could I do? Make Knox uncomfortable by asking him about it? A little humiliation was a small price to pay for him in my life.

It wasn't all strangers beating off to me on the internet, though. Most of it was actually really great! My old boyfriend, who *never* would have understood this kind of close male friendship, gone. My friends, my family... I hardly missed them, and when I did, all I had to do was skip on down to Knox's house and *poof!* Forgotten. Maybe I was being selfish, but when I had Knox right around the corner, it was hard to make myself want to drive all the way to my folks' place for Christmas. They lived all the way on the other side of town almost! They mailed me my present, a really cute sweater my mom

had spent six months knitting for me. Knox cut holes around my boobs so we could *both* enjoy it. The man's picture belonged in the dictionary under "thoughtful." (It made the sweater unravel before I could wear it again, but like he said, my mom had lots of months left in her to knit me another one.)

Yessir, I was having the time of my life. The greatest friend in the whole wide world, and all the free time in the world to enjoy his company. So why was part of me... Oh man. I can't believe I'm even thinking this, but...

Why was part of me a teensy weensy smidgeon glad to see them go?

To be fair to Knox, which was very important to me, a lot of my feelings centered on Jo. I knew that, and that's what I tried to tell myself about these weird, inexplicable emotions of late. She and I had been so close before Knox came along. I'd seen her a few times after he and I got friendified, but then she was always kinda mad, like me hanging out with him so much was some kind of insult to my other friends. She didn't get it. Introducing them had seemed so obvious! Knox had that libido, and Jo was crazy hot. She definitely didn't need the alchemical titty cream Knox had been making for me, that's for sure. Not that it seemed to be working, but I'd swallow any pill he fed me, smear any cream. And Jo? Well, yes, she'd been happily living with her boyfriend Ian for a long while, but Ian couldn't hold a candle to Knox. If my potion had worked, she'd have thanked me for helping her see the light.

Besides, what could be better than your two best friends falling crazy in love? Right?

Right?

Only they didn't click like I hoped. Knox was sore about me "meddling with powers beyond my comprehension," and I think he took it out on her. Even though the potion didn't work, or work right, Joanna had taken quite a liking to him. It made sense. Knox might not be my type of guy, but he was exactly the sort I would recommend to any and every woman I knew. Every single thing about him was great. Sometimes I'd sit around trying to see if I could think up new things I adored about him, and I never ever ran out.

Then he started hooking up with Jo, and suddenly everything got... weird. Not weird, like something was wrong. You'd think being besties with a warlock and all his magic and what-have-you, things would get *weird* weird. No, I mean weird emotionally. Romantically? That's a really strange word to find myself using about my 110% platonic best friend, but every day he didn't use any of my holes to get off, I felt... hurt.

Now I know how that sounds. Knox? Hurt me? It's like saying water is dry or *The Bachelorette* is a bad show. Watching his cum dry on Joanna, though? I couldn't help feeling like that should be *my* cum bath. Not like I enjoyed being, as I liked to call it, a spoozy sponge, but maybe I'd gotten used to our unusual dynamic and was afraid to see it change.

Joanna had always insisted relationships are transactional, both sides using the other. I wasn't as bleak as that in my own outlook, but there was a nugget of truth to it. That wasn't a bad thing, though! After all, I know that deep down, some greedy part of me was using Knox. He made me feel so *good* about myself. I felt prettier, more lovable, more patient, kinder... He brought out my best self. So if he maybe sometimes enjoyed the sexytime stuff more than I did, so far as I was concerned, it was the least I owed him. I only wished I could be a better partner for him.

Like Joanna. Off to enjoy a week away, together, without dumb old deadweight me.

My car backed out of the driveway, my two bestest friends in the front seats. At least I was pretty sure they were. The head rest blocked my view, but I was pretty sure Knox had shoved her head onto his cock before they made it down the driveway. A man who knew what he wanted. So much to admire there! Confidence. Directness. My favorite smile in the whole wide world, especially that twitchy smile he had with his cock inside someplace warm and wet. They were off to have a week of total bliss, a new couple exploring and expanding the boundaries of their relationship.

Without me. The man I cared about most in the whole world, a man I cared for so dearly that I could hardly believe it was even possible to care that much, and...

He had Joanna. Joanna, my beautiful, clever, sassy gal pal, who fulfilled his needs better than I ever could.

As the car rounded the corner, I sunk down to the carpet and had myself a good, long cry.

Knox, presently...

Two days and three nights without a wink of sleep scouring my lab for clues, and I was no closer to uncovering what Rachel had been up to. No hair, either. A mane like hers shed quite a little bit, but signs of that fact were almost conspicuously absent. Materials with linked essences, though, such as hair at the person who'd shed it, a familiar and its master, and so on, might well retain the link into a spell. Ergo, if Rachel had somehow sent herself through a planar rift, her discarded pieces might well accompany her.

Once satisfied that there was no physical trace of her, I began to try to trace the thoughts that had guided her. I'd gathered data, but it was difficult to say which reagents had been spilled and which had been deployed. My accounting was decent, for my purposes, but my purposes largely included knowing if I had enough for my next project rather than counting every grain, pebble and leaf.

It wasn't that I hadn't learned anything. I was gaining a better picture bit by bit, but reverse engineering a recipe in the lab was even harder than in the kitchen. 3-6 cups of wheat flour, 1 or 2 teaspoons vanilla, some butter maybe, either a pinch of brown sugar or an entire two-pound bag, and voila! Chaos. Putrid, stanky chaos.

The girls were no help. Kammie I kept at bay; my trust in her was all but gone, and so now there were things in my lab not meant for her eyes. Joanna happily worked on her dancing in the corner, but it kept her on edge, which meant she was constantly distracting me with more sex begging. To keep me focused, I indulged her from time to time and monitored a couple side projects, including a fresh brew of stamina potion. This time, I meant to use it on Rachel. When I found that beautiful ignorant bitch, I was going to fuck her until neither of us could walk for a day.

Unless I didn't find her. At the rate things were going, I was starting to fear I never would. Not every mystery left enough clues to be solved, otherwise we would all know exactly where Jimmy Hoffa was banished after his push to unionize the gremlins.

I was slumped over my desk, combing through any book that had even the faintest whiff of amateurism about it, things that might sound less daunting to novices. Something Rachel might have set her eyes upon and thought "Sure, an idiot like me ought to be toying with powers like that!" *Common Senses, Introduction to Necronology, The Lesser Portion of Wishbone*. It was hard to inspect the titles with the mindset of the uninitiated, but surely those would sound less daunting to her than *Detcilfni Ssendam* or *Ten Million Headless Orphans and the Smile That Vindicated Them*.

Not that titles had anything to do with their actual threat levels. I reached for *Prince of the Drift*, thinking she might have mistaken it for a romance novel. No. The spine creaked as it fell open. *Simple Twists*? If she'd been in here, she hadn't dog-eared,

bookmarked or left it open to page at any length. I almost opened *On Ephraim's Letter, "My Soul for a Hamsteak,"* but surely not even Rachel would be willing to incur the wrath of the Dusk Brotherhood by opening that one.

I slumped my head down, exhausted. Defeated.

Then there was the sudden presence of a woman's fingers massaging my scalp. It was divine. It would put me to sleep in seconds. Not that I could afford to sleep. So much time lost already, but now I knew what that conniving extraplanar whore had been hiding. Rachel could still be out there somewhere. Could be lonely, or afraid, or hungry, or captive, or injured. If I couldn't be sure Rachel was able to sleep in peace and comfort, then neither could I.

Those fingers, though.

"Nothing, huh?" Joanna observed.

"Nothing *yet*," I amended.

"So those books of yours can really help you find someone anywhere in the 'multiverse,' huh?" She still balked at the term.

"How many times do I have to tell you, I don't have time to bring you up to speed on several thousand years of collective exploration of the forbidden art of the warlock?"

"That would be the first time, so... one. I wasn't trying to tell you your business or anything. You know I'm just worried about Rachel, same as you." Her fingers paused, though only for a moment. "Maybe not exactly like you. Close enough. It sucks to not know where she is. Scary. You want a blowjob, by the way? I could kill for your dick in my mouth. Getting drooly just thinking about it."

"No, the scalp thing you're doing is nice. Keep doing that while I..." I didn't know how to finish the sentence. What was I even doing? To say I was grasping at straws would be charitable.

Joanna continued while my thought processes sputtered into futility. My eyes slid closed, and it was as though that blackness became my dimming hopes of finding her. I was on the very cusp of that sweet oblivion when Joanna decided to keep pestering me. "It must be pretty wild, the life you lead, warlocking. Your friend disappears, and here you are consulting tomes and brewing potions and... whatever that creepy thing with the doll, over there, is. Wilder – and I can't believe I'm saying this – is that I actually think you have better odds than anyone of finding her. Nothing like living under a love potion to make you believe in the supernatural, I guess.

"Me? I'd be doing like they do on cop shows. Checking in with her friends, her family. Putting up posters. Snooping on her social media for anything weird. That kind of thing. Are you *sure* you wouldn't rather get your dick wet, by the way?"

I sat upright so fast I headbutted her chin. We both groaned in pain and surprise. "Damnit, Joanna! I'm on the cusp of a great discovery, and here you are as usual getting

in my way and putting yourself first! Do I need to send you back to Kammie for more training?”

“N-no!” she stammered quickly, rubbing her chin. “No, I’m good. I obey. I serve. I pleasure. Sorry, it won’t happen again. Here, let me suck your cock to make up for it.”

I left her on her knees, crawling after me, as I hastened up the stairs. Only when I reached the top did I remember the last time I’d left someone alone in my lab and barked for her to get her deliciously rounded ass out of there, to come upstairs and wait for me with her mouth open. That way she wouldn’t follow me back to Rachel’s.

How could I have been so stupid? Rachel had told me she’d frequented these eldritch discord servers while making Joanna’s love potion. All I had to do was check her laptop, and I’d know exactly what she’d tried to do.

Kammie was lying in wait for me. Or rather kneeling in wait, trotting out her purloined visage in some portion of an ultra-slutty schoolgirl uniform on all fours on the living room floor, glancing over her shoulder with a look of surprise so earnest it could only be feigned. “Oh, hi! I wasn’t expecting you. Say, while you’re here—”

I brushed right past Kammie without a word and into what had once been Rachel’s home office/vision board stockpile, converted more recently to a photo studio where she took slutty pictures of herself for me to unknowingly sell to her cam show fans. She still had a desk in there behind the white screen, though, and on it still sat her laptop.

I flipped it open, practically salivating at finally being on the precipice of discovering what my friend slave had done. Here on this screen, I would at last learn that—

That she password protected her laptop.

Well, fuck.

Rachel, some time earlier...

I clapped my hands in exultation. It was all the more thanks these horny boys watching me on their newly gifted webcam subscriptions needed. Or sorry, all the more thanks the Esteemed Council of Archwarlocks needed. Those silly boys got so darn fussy when I forgot to use their titles. I'd have to remember to thank Knox for setting that site up for me – as always, he knew what was best for me better than I knew myself. I admit, it felt a teensy bit trumpy to stream my help request in the “I heart my warlock” t-shirt I'd gotten myself to surprise Knox on our two-month friendiversary. He'd taken scissors to it, like all my normal-fitting tees, and now it was cut off to show off the lower half of my boobs, even the nipples if I breathed in too deep. Half of “warlock” was lost except to the imagination, but it was still super cute. Knox loved it when I wore it. I loved that he loved it. The web warlocks loved it, too, judging from the gross creepy comments they made about how my tits jiggled when I clapped.

I jotted down the important bits on my phone's note app, making sure to get every detail exactly the way they'd said it. Not all of it made sense, but I felt more confident than I had during my admittedly dimwitted attempt at making a love potion for Joanna. Even aiming for triple strength, she still barely even liked Knox. Some physical attraction, maybe, but nobody nowhere would call what they had “love.” Still, its ineffectuality gave me confidence that even if I screwed up here and there, fudged this and that, there probably wouldn't be any major consequences. It was so sweet of Knox to worry so much, though. Joanna was so lucky to have a protector like that.

Then it was off to the laboratory. I made sure to say it the right way, even in my head. The Supreme Muckety-Muck had been emphatic about that, that words had power even if you didn't say them out loud. Getting in was tricky, but nothing I couldn't handle. Knox had denied me a key to his place, see, even though he'd changed the locks on mine without asking. Such a kidder. Still, he was pretty bad about remembering to lock the windows, and this was important.

The web warlocks had been right. Nearly all the books they'd said I'd want, the ingredients they'd said I'd need, Knox had in stock. Some I had to harvest from the herb garden, but that was fine by me. I'd always had a green thumb, and the privacy fence Knox had put up so we could play without the whole neighborhood watching meant that even on my hands and knees, even in that skirt, even with no underwear, I wasn't putting on a show for anybody. Anybody but the Flechtner twins, anyway. Ever since the first time they'd seen me giving Knox a hummy-hum back here from their observation post in their treehouse, it seemed like they practically lived up there, the scamps. I'd complained about it to Knox, to commiserate, and he'd promised he'd talk to them about how to treat a lady with respect. I loved him for trying, even if the boys had proven themselves immune to his good influence.

Ah, well. I gave their peery eyes a little wave and went on about my work.

Lucky for me I'd paid attention in high school chemistry. Science was always really hard, but I'd been good at following directions, finding a smart lab partner, and making sure we could reproduce the results our teacher was looking for, like good scientists should. It came in handy now. This was complicated stuff, and sometimes some ingredients needed to be prepared at certain times while others were cooking, or steeping, or "confabulating," which was a word I didn't know but the description Mad_Morveg69 had given me was specific enough to let me confabulate when I needed to. This whole process was *hard*. Like, *really* hard. Like, Knox when I agreed to roleplay master and sex slave as a fun birthday surprise hard. It made the diamonds I used to etch the arcane symbols in the stone seem soft.

My friend was worth it, though. For Knox, anything. Absolutely anything, at any time, any place, for any reason. (So many times I'd offered to get a tattoo that proclaimed my feelings for him, and always he'd said that if he wanted to "brand me," he would do it himself. But that phrase? That was the one time he said he'd almost let me do it.)

A week, he'd said. A week by my lonesome while he and Jo were off... *ahem*. "Getting better acquainted," you could say. A good thing, too! Four different times I messed something up and had to go back and try again from scratch, and twice I ran out of an ingredient. Knox's library was less comprehensive for my work than it had been for the potion brewing, so for a ritual described in something called *Harmony of the Spheres*, I had to trade a screenshot of my boobs to some guy who told me he was a member of something called the Dusk Brotherhood. Embarrassing, but what choice did I have? *Not* saving my relationship with the best friend anybody ever had? Telling Knox when he came back that I'd used half the stuff in his laboratory and had nothing to show for it? I could show him my boobie pics, I guess, but he'd seen those a bajillion times.

That was what I kept telling myself. Onwards. Keep trying. Be brave. Do it for Knox! Every time I got frustrated, or confused, or couldn't pronounce an alphabet the boys showed me, I buckled down. I was no Knox, but I could try to be clever like him. Determined. Fearless. I performed the rituals, even when the goo I had to baste myself in was cold and slimy and smelled icky squicky. I called out the words, even when the directions warned that I might be doing something a tiny smidgeon evil. ("Irredeemably," it said, but I knew full well how melodramatic warlocks could be.) Even if it was "evil," so what? Knox wasn't willing to do these kinds of things because he was so incredibly good, but me? I had to do what I had to do.

Poor little bunny. It was the littlest critter that the boys told me would satisfy the soul sacrifice requirement in the part about piercing the planar shroud. I'd tried it over and over with fishies, but I think the folks at PetSmart were starting to get suspicious when I kept coming in and asking which ones seemed least lovable.

At last, it was time. I'd been preparing myself for it mentally for days. The final step, I would only get one try at. No foot dragging, no flinching. I made sure the diagram was perfect, exactly the way it looked in the sketch. Content as I could be with something so far over my head, I raised the knife, pressed it firmly to my open palm, and spilled my blood into the center. Spooky, right? I must have done it right, though, because immediately my blood began to sizzle on the floor, and then the whole diagram with it. The fumes rose into the air in this really icky reddish vapor, and hand to god, I thought I could see faces in it! Even my own, I think. They hadn't said anything about that. All I was supposed to need to do was draw the diagram with the powdered whosywhatsit and tincture of whatchamacallit, offer my blood with a spooky curvy knife, then say the magic words and—

Oh fudgicles, the words!

I blurted them as fast as I could, before the mist went away – or was I supposed to wait until after? Too late now! – and I'm 90% sure I got them mostly right. At least, the blood fog grew thicker and thicker until it was all I could see. I held my breath, because gross, and tried to fan it away. Then, all of the sudden it melted away, and I could see.

I looked around. Knox's laboratory suddenly looked... different. It was fully stocked, again. And then some! Labels in one of those trippy warlock languages were on every bin, every nook, every artifact. My symbol, my blood, the books, the candles, all of it – gone. It even *smelled* clean.

Had it worked? Had I done it?

The door at the top of the stairs swung open. Marching down them in a hustle came an imposing figure that anyone at all would have thought “warlock” upon seeing. A coarse wool robe over a vest and shirt, each more black than the layer above it. A gnarled staff crowned with a silver disc imprinted with a nifty little symbol, and another on a pendant around his neck. A crow perched on his shoulder, even! That was pretty cool. Even with the cowl drawn and his features in shadow, though, I would recognize that face anywhere.

“Knox? Did you get a bird?”

“Like I'm going to investigate a prowler in the laboratory without my familiar?” He sneered.

“Your familiar... what?” I braced myself with my unbloody palm on one of the tables. I was getting ever so slightly dizzy.

“What? No, never mind. Explain what you're doing in my laboratory uninvited. And what in god's name you did to yourself! Good heavens, woman, you're... plain. Hideously plain. You know I like it when you gross me out a little, but there's such a thing as too far.”

My head was spinning. “I... Sorry. I, um, I’ve sort of lost a lot... of blood? Whoa, think I might need to sit down for a spell. Not a *spell* spell, but...”

Needless to say, Knox caught me when I lost my balance. Effortlessly, powerfully, and with weirdly chiseled facial features. His eyebrows were so... *warlocky*! But then the world went dark.

Knox, presently...

“Why couldn’t the little twit write it on a post-it on her desktop like every other twit?” I snarled. Joanna’s ass, bent over my lap, received another hard smack. That had been her only real utility of late, an outlet for frustration.

“Try ‘bacheloretterules,’” she suggested. Like the last hundred times she’d offered a glimpse into the resident imbecile’s psyche, it went nowhere. I tried a few permutations with capitalizations, underscores, spelling rules with a z, every conceivable misspelling of bachelorette I could think of, but nothing. Again. I didn’t remember inviting Joanna to join me, even, but after hours of hearing my grunt, swear and kick my way through every guess I could think of, Kammie must have thought I needed the help.

Turned out, I was more than capable of making no progress all on my own.

I’d racked my brain, but hundreds of attempts in, we’d gotten nowhere. Her high school mascot, old pets, family names, family birthdays, her ex-boyfriend’s name, her ex-ex’s name, and, obviously, my own. What if it was Knox4321 instead of Knox1234, though? It was downright maddening, knowing I might have been a single character off at any given point. Part of me was grateful her security hadn’t locked me out, but part of me wished it would so I could redirect my energy to something productive.

“OK, how about ‘iheartknox?’”

I merely flicked her ass this time. “We tried that, yesterday. Along with iloveknox, knoxisawesome, knoxisgreat, knoxismybestfriend, bestfriendknox, and every other banal goddamn expression of platonic love for me we can think of!”

“Oh! Try ‘iplatonicallyloveknox’ this time?”

I reared back for another swat, but first, I gave it a try. No. Of course. The brat was probably getting it wrong on purpose just so I’d keep spanking her. Between Rachel’s love potion and Kammie’s brainwashing, there wasn’t any way left for me to touch her that she didn’t respond to as a reward.

I folded the laptop shut. After a few minutes of silently fuming (and kneading Joanna’s poor over-reddened ass), it was time to resume. For the tenth time, I scoured the desk inside and out looking for a clue. No post-its, no notebook with sensitive information scribbled inside, not even a well-concealed something on the underside. She hardly used the thing any more, so little I hadn’t even remembered she had it. Should have destroyed the thing after she used it to help her brew that potion in the first place.

Too late now, though. Now, it sat here gathering dust next to a picture of us from last Halloween, set in a custom frame with pumpkins and spiders. The Rachel in the photo was seated sideways on my lap, legs spread indecently in her slutty witch costume. I’d picked it out for her after she’d asked for some input. It would be more flattering on a girl with a more ample bust, but she still looked plenty fuckable. She was

still Rachel, after all. Fuckable enough that I'd even given in and donned my blackest cloak and pretended I was in costume, too. We were both smiling. That was unlike me, smiling to have my picture taken.

Oh right – her witch's dress was hiked up in the back and my cock was inside her. Plenty of reason to smile after all.

I held the frame in my hands, trying to remember the feel of her pussy around me. Her weight atop my lap. The smell of her flooding the room with her cumwhile she pretended she didn't love being my toy every bit as much as I liked toying with her. Cheap-ass plastic frame, and she'd still managed to make it cheaper with another one of her insipid attempts at affection. *My Bestie Who Molests Me*, it read. I wonder what the dickhead whose 3D printer had spat this out had thought when she'd ordered that.

Suddenly the picture tumbled from my hands, bouncing off Joanna's cushy backside and down to the floor. I threw open the laptop's lid. The cursor blinked in line, and with trembling hands, I typed.

bestiewhomolestsme

I hit Enter.

A tinny chord sounded from the speakers. The machine booted up.

"Looks like she'd written it on her desktop after all!" I laughed exultantly.

"Told you," muttered Joanna. She arched her back, ready for a slap for her petulance, but instead I thrust two fingers in her pussy and went to town. It didn't take ten seconds before she was coming her head off. Once she'd been adequately rewarded for her accidental contribution, I wiped her cum off in her hair and began to investigate.

The pieces were easy to find, but it still took a while, putting them together. All that time trying to crack the password, I'd been telling myself I could simply head down to the public library, get online, and see if I could find those discord servers myself. I didn't know the first thing about them, though, so I'd put it off. Now I was glad I had. Even if I'd been able to locate the servers, she'd done so much of her "research" in direct messages, doling out glimpses of her loveliness for tips and direction, with bonuses bestowed when advice panned out. It didn't mean all their advice was good, or even intended to be, but I'd grant her that it was some solid bargaining under the circumstances. I was living proof that warlocks would do quite a bit for an opportunity to have carnal knowledge of a girl as beautiful as my Rachel.

"Well?" asked Joanna a while later as I closed the laptop. I'd learned what I could there, and even got a few follow-up tidbits by doling out more free subs to her camgirl feeds.

"I know what she tried to do," I announced.

Joanna couldn't hide her eagerness. She cared about Rachel almost as much as she lusted after me. "Yeah? What did she do?"

I shook my head. “I didn’t say I know what she did. In fact, I’m quite sure she failed at what she meant to do. But I know what she *tried* to do.”

Even brainwashed into submission as she was, Joanna managed a brief roll of the eyes at my theatrical imperiousness. “All right, Dumbledore, what did our girl *try* to do?”

“She tried to make herself perfect.” I sighed. “For me. Damnit, but I feel stupid. If I hadn’t used you the way I did, making her feel replaced, she might still be here.”

Joanna reflected on that with a sour expression. “So where is she?”

“Any number of a thousand things could have gone wrong, but since Rachel wasn’t here when we got back, and a woman who looked like a ‘perfect’ version of her was – a woman from the Silver Mirror demiplane, where supposedly perfect versions of our world are reflected – I’m working up a theory.”

“I’m not sure I understand.”

“I’m not sure you *can* understand, poppet. But we have something to go off of, at long last. Now suck me off so I can come at this with a clear head. Make it fast and sloppy.”

Joanna giggled with a delight I’d not seen in her since the cabin, and obeyed with vigor. Myself, I was thrilled to have a lead, but there was no giggling. Not when that no-good lying khamulan was still sitting under my friend’s roof.

Time for her to come clean.

Rachel, some time earlier...

“That’s a lot to take in,” I said, fanning myself.

“Rachel, that was five sentences. How did I lose you in five sentences?” Knox – the warlock calling himself Knox, anyway – shook his head irritably. “You know, never mind. If you are what I assume you are, I’ll save myself time by not probing the depths of your inadequacy.”

“That’s a really mean thing to say, you know. You’re *sure* you’re Knox? Not that he wouldn’t say something like that, but he’d say it, I dunno... better. Like it’d make me laugh.”

“Because you’re under the effects of a love potion. You’d laugh if your version of me shit down your throat.”

I tried to sit up again. He’d bandaged the cut on my hand while I was out and carried me upstairs to the living room. It was so very similar, but nothing quite the same. The coffee table in our world – who knew that I came from a “world!” – was covered in soda can rings and cum stains. This one was a proper warlock coffee table, with clawed feet and all. Literal feet, like big scary chicken claws that actually moved a little if you looked close, like it was alive. It was pretty awesome. Everything here was like that. Normal, but... warlockier.

I made it upright, with no help from my supposed friend. “Now how would I laugh with my throat full of poop? You don’t make a lot of sense, ‘Knox,’ if that’s your real name.”

His eyes sparkled, literally. An honest-to-gosh magic sparkle. “So again, it’s simple. Whatever you were trying to do, what you did was transposition yourself with your reflection here in the demiplane of Silver Mirrors. This is a place with the most perfect, best expressed iteration of everything in your Prime Material plane. Ordinarily I’d kick you out on your modestly shapely behind, but since you deprived me of my favorite pet and may be required to attempt retrieval, I’m not ready to oust you just yet.”

“Pet? That crow?”

“Talnas? Talnas is no mere crow.”

I nodded. “Yeah, looked more like a grackle posing as a crow.”

“What? No, Talnas is my familiar. Do I not have a familiar in your world?”

“Oh gosh no. I asked you if we could get a pet a bunch of times, but you said they’d just get in the way and watch us while we... Um, you know.” I grimaced. “Sorry, it’s really weird to talk to you about Knox stuff, even if you are, kind of, Knox.”

“Suffice to say, Talnas is a bird in much the same way you are a primate. Familiars are magical creatures, their spiritual essence bound in the physical forms of lesser order beings like yourself. He is mine, completely. Even more so than was Rachel, right up until you siphoned her off to the Prime.”

“So you’re saying, when I magicked myself here, I magicked the other me there?”

“That’s it in a nutshell, yes. An oversimplification, but if my Rachel’s charm lies in her simplicity, perhaps that flaw is common to all versions of her.”

I couldn’t tell if he was trying to be mean or not. Still, you’d catch more flies with honey. “For what it’s worth, I’m sorry. It isn’t what I meant to do. Why do I keep trying to play with magic when I obviously don’t know anywhere near as much as you Knoxes? Did your Rachel do things like this? Oh! Did she love potion Joanna? Is there a Joanna here?”

His eyes bulged in offense, though I had no idea why. “You cannot be serious. My Prime self allowed an uninitiated girl to infiltrate his laboratory? And not once, but twice? Of course my Rachel never did any such thing! What an insufferable cretin! Set a ward, you numbskull!”

“HEY!” I barked. “Knox is my best friend in the whole world. In all the worlds, even this one. Don’t you talk about him like that. If you’re his reflection, then that means you wouldn’t even exist without him, so maybe show a little gratitude?”

“One could say the same for an absentee parent,” Knox mumbled, but he did mumble this time. “Very well. I suppose I can’t resent a woman for finding me, even a lesser me, irresistible.”

“Good. You were getting pretty out of line there for a minute.” Why was this Knox so much worse than mine, despite *seeming* so much better?

“Yes, let us speak of our frustrations, then, as ‘friends.’ Imagine my own distress, being awakened to find... *you*. I spent a great deal of time and energy binding my Rachel. How could he rule you with such a loose fist?”

“Rule me? Knox doesn’t ‘rule me,’ OK? He’s my *friend*. The bestest best friend who ever lived. The only reason I’m sitting here talking to you with you being so mean and grouchy is because I’m hoping that deep down, some part of you is still my Knox. My Knox would fix this, if it were him. Because he loves me the way only a best friend can. Like a brother.” A brother in a porno, but still.

So-called Knox looked at me like he was a bug scientist studying a bug. It was an expression I’d seen on Real Knox’s face many times, but now it was creeping me out a bit for some reason. “My, but he did a number on you. Not a love potion, it would seem. I considered that here, once upon a time, but it seemed so rudimentary. Uninspired. Unworthy of a vision like Rachel. Even in a plane of paragons, she is a remarkable creature. So lovely, and yet, so... damaged.”

“Thanks...?” I decided to respond to the compliment and ignore the other part. Poor, sad Fake Rachel. To think, she’d wound up with her Knox because he magicked her into it instead of being the most awesome person a person can awesomely be.

He stood up, then perched beside me on the sofa. I tried not to recoil. “You really do resemble her, you know. Perhaps not so... exquisite. But there is a charm in your simplicity that I find...”

“Charming?” I smiled awkwardly.

“Charming,” So-Called Knox echoed. “This effect you’re under, this beguilement, it’s obviously magical, but no love potion would leave you so backwards in your affections. Inadequate lunar caustis? Without enough of a catalyst, it might activate the affection and devotion portion of the full potion without triggering the full lust. Would quite likely overdo the former, though. Hmm. Something I would be curious to study. Does your Knox study? Has he ever read a book on proper potioncraft?”

“The Real Knox is a gosh darned genius, thank you. And no way would he ever give me a love potion. Why would he even need to? I already love him with every single scrap of my heart! In fact, I think I had to grow my heart even bigger to try to love him as much as he deserves.” I sneered down my nose. Making up such things about my bestie!

Knox laughed, and it was a laugh like in a scary movie. *Muahahaha*, all deep and rich. “You are a gem. For my own Rachel, I devised a hex that would simply remove her inhibitions where I’m concerned. Allowed me to do essentially whatever I wanted, while leaving her utterly docile, totally unable to resist. A tesseractational loop in Craddok’s psychic node and any resistance she might offer me is transmuted into a desire to aid me. Or more simply put, the more she wants to fight me, the harder she tries to help. Not that there’s much fight left in her now. As a khamulan, it’s already core to her nature, and now her nature conspires against her. No doubt she’ll be working on finding a way back to me all on her own?” He stroked his chin. “Perhaps the other Knox will even find a way to return her. I wouldn’t say no to two...” Knox suddenly looked up from my boobs to my eyes. “Two new friends,” he finished in a suddenly brighter tone.

“Knox will find me. Don’t you worry about that.”

“No doubt, dear girl. No doubt. If I am his reflection, he must be a powerful force in your realm. Though I still can’t imagine what would possess him to give you free reign of my laboratory.”

“He didn’t. I snuck in while he was off with Jo,” I corrected him.

“Ah yes, Joanna. We collaborated to bring in that one, Rachel and I, though she’s little more than a pet slut. She lacks the more intriguing illusion of freedom I bestowed upon your counterpart.”

“Oh. That’s cool.” I shook my head. “No, actually that’s kind of horrible. You turned my friend into your – pardon my French – fuck buddy? Against her will? That’s horrible.”

“Is it? Because someone just told me they tried to do the same to a woman on the Prime Material, one who thought she was in the care of a trusted friend.”

“Seriously? Whoa, now that’s a weird coincidence, because I—” I caught myself. He still laughed. “Very funny. It’s not the same at all. But you seem to know a lot. Can you send me back? Reverse what I did? Then you’ll have your Rachel back, and I’ll... I’ll...”

When I burst into tears at realizing I’d be even worse off than before when Real Knox got home and found I’d wrecked his laboratory, So-Called Knox surprised me by whistling for Talnas, who, after a moment, alighted on the armrest and offered me a handkerchief, regarding me with his decidedly unbirdly gaze. Knox even patted my back, and it was so much like Real Knox I even let him. Maybe even liked it, if only because I hadn’t seen my friend in almost a week and I wished so badly for it to be him.

“Stay with me, Rachel.” He wrapped an arm around my shoulders and I threw myself into a hug. It wasn’t right, wasn’t the way it was supposed to feel, but maybe I could pretend until things were back to normal. If this man could help return me to Knox, I’d do whatever he said. “Stay with me, pretty little mortal girl, and I’ll see if I can’t brew up something to fix you. Your situation, that is.”

I sniffled, made myself look up. “You promise?”

“Of course I promise, dear girl.” So-Called Knox smiled, a proper but chilling warlock’s smile. “Isn’t this a face you can trust?”