

BOOK ONE

Which Witch is Which?

Double Trouble

TAXI

Judith E. Webb



Lisa is afraid of most everything, especially witches, so when an unstamped letter floats into the house through an open window next to where she is sitting, only to shoot across the floor of the salon to land at her aunt's feet as if it knew where it was going, she is very suspicious that magic is involved, and that her Aunt Harriett, who has always insisted that witches do not exist, was in fact up to her neck in witchcraft!

Harriett knows exactly what her niece is thinking and quickly realizes that not only will she have to come up with a believable explanation for the magical letter, but she will also have to inform her that one of her long dead aunts has miraculously come back to life, and then convince her to come along on this trip to visit her! It was going to take some well placed white lies to do it of course, but it was for her niece's own safety after all.

Unfortunately, the trip turns out to be anything but safe when they are kidnapped at the train station by an evil witch and taken back to the seventeenth century in a taxi where they end up getting arrested for being witches themselves when Harriett's cell phone starts barking. Thrown into jail, and then rescued by the two wicked witches who brought them there in the first place and who have their own diabolical plan for them, leaves Harriett worrying over how much longer she'll be able to keep her secret from her niece, and has Lisa wondering if they will ever get back home alive!

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by Judith E. Webb

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By

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Note From The Author

This story is set in 17th century, England, in the year 1612. I chose this particular setting because of the famous Pendle Witch Trial that took place in 1606, and although my heroines do meet up with a character known as Alizon Device, one of the accused Pendle Witches, this story is pure fiction. Also, I would like to make note that in order to bring a sense of the 17th century to the reader and to bring my characters to life, all characters that I have written in who come from that time period, speak in a slang English, these are not grammatical errors. Finally, with regards to an Irish character know as the Whippersnapper, you will note that whenever he speaks, the letter 'r' is rolled to give him substance.

Prologue

Lancaster, England, 1612

Clovis pulled her shawl tightly about her shoulders to ward off the chill of the cool, damp, spring day, as she hurried down the familiar rough trodden path through the Forest of Bowland, a wicked smile deepening the wrinkles at the corners of her wide, thin lips, as she spied her home just up ahead through the trees. Hastening her step toward the small thatch roofed house that she shared with her twin sister, she pushed open the door, her piercing gray eyes that were quite capable of sending children scurrying away in fear, filled with excitement now as they anxiously sought out her twin's familiar humped back bent over the cauldron hanging in the hearth.

"I've found the girl's family at last, Amaris!" she exclaimed triumphantly. Quickly removing her shawl, she hung it on a wooden peg by the door and hurried over to join her. Tossing her long gray hair back over her shoulder least the ends get caught in the flames, she extended her gnarled hands toward the fire to warm them. "They be livin' in the twenty-first century in a place called Hedgerow," she informed her eagerly. "The records at the adoption agency there speak of a child, female, found in a basket wearin' naught but the skin she was born in. The child bore the mark of a star on her left shoulder, had red hair and light green eyes, an unusual color for a newborn's eyes t'was written. The circumstances surroundin' the discovery of the child were said to have been quite mysterious," she said, with a meaningful glance. "Aye," she nodded, when Amaris raised her brow. "Ye see, all of the doors were locked and yet the babe was found inside the home on the kitchen counter."

Amaris nodded her head thoughtfully. "That'd be her all right," she said after a moment. "Course, she'd be a full grown woman by now. I take it ye didn't actually see her then?"

Clovis frowned, her gaze fixing upon her twin's one dark blue eye which sometimes appeared to look almost black, and always drew her attention, not just because it was the only visible difference between them, but because it had always made her feel uneasy beneath its stare, as if it could see right into her soul.

"No," she replied distractedly, shaking her head. "I watched the house for days, there be only two women livin' there. One of 'em fits the description with her red hair and green eyes, but she's far too old to be her, and the other seems to be the right age, but t'was hard to tell as I only saw that one from a distance," she shrugged. "Anyhow, from what I did see of her, she ain't the one we're lookin' for either. Her hair is not the right color," she added with a frown. "I did find an empty grave with the girl's name on it though. I guess she didn't think that I'd want more proof than a name on a headstone," she chuckled, her smile quickly disappearing when she saw that her sister wasn't laughing with her. "So, um..." she went on hastily, "with no sign of her in Hedgerow, I went in to Lancaster and found me a coven like ye suggested I do should me search turn up empty. Bah! They know nothin' 'bout magic in that century!" she said in disgust. "They did have some interestin' information for me though, 'bout a powerful white witch believed to be livin' in the area," she said meaningfully. "Unfortunately, no one could tell me where she be stayin'. They say she's bein' protected by her coven."

Amaris looked thoughtfully back at the stew that was bubbling in the cauldron.

“She must know we be lookin’ for her then, and from what ye’ve just told me, ye can bet that she ain’t goin’ to make it easy for us to find her. Ah... a pox on her I say!” she snapped angrily, upset at yet another delay. “She should have been destroyed when she was a wee babe and much weaker. If the mother hadn’t of been forewarned and sent the child away to protect her and her magic, we’d of been rid of both of ‘em years ago,” she reflected bitterly, recalling the day she had directed the witch hunters to their door. “We must keep in mind that with each generation their magic grows stronger, so even though we now possess her mother’s powers, the girl’s will be stronger yet than ours. We’ll have to be very careful, Clovis. One mistake and she can destroy me,” she warned, looking away worriedly.

Clovis raised her brow. “I think ye mean us, don’t ye? One mistake and she can destroy us?” she said tightly.

Amaris looked back at her and smiled. “Of course, I meant us. Isn’t that what I said?” she asked innocently.

“No, ye didn’t,” she replied, eyeing her suspiciously.

“Sure I did. Ye must have heard wrong,” she shrugged. “Now let’s get back to the girl, ay? We’re goin’ to need a plan,” she told her, her eyes sliding away thoughtfully to rest upon the fire in the hearth. “It’s clear that we’re goin’ to have to lure her away from that coven and get her back here to this century. Once we’ve accomplished that, I simply have to convince her to give me her powers, and then hand her over to the witch hunters just like we did to her mother to be rid of her for good, like that we’ve not got her blood on our hands and no one is the wiser. We certainly don’t want a coven of angry witches decendin’ upon us, now do we?” she asked, glancing back at her meaningfully. “The question is, how am I goin’ to persuade her to give me her powers? She’s a high priestess, which means she must give me her magic willingly or the transfer of power will not work. I wonder, do ye think the daughter is as weak as the mother was when it comes to protectin’ her family? I’ll bet ya she is. Ye know what they say, like mother, like daughter, ay?” she grinned, revealing several missing teeth. “I’m thinkin’ it just might work again. Aye,” she continued thoughtfully, “and with her powers, I will become the most powerful witch in this or any other century!” she exclaimed excitedly.

Clovis looked at her strangely. “Ye must be losin’ yer memory, Amaris. She ain’t got no real family left, she was adopted, remember?”

Amaris shrugged. “Just because they ain’t blood related don’t mean that she don’t care ‘bout ‘em. White witches, they get all soft inside just like the regular folk do when it comes to family, ye know. There ain’t no understandin’ ‘em,” she muttered distractedly, flicking her gaze across the room to her grimoire. Suddenly she smiled as an idea began to form in her mind. Hurrying over to her book of spells laying open on the long, wooden, trestle table, she quickly began to flip through the pages. “Ah... the messenger’s spell!” she said excitedly, running a crooked arthritic finger slowly down the page. “Aye, this will do quite nicely I think. Although, I’ll have to make a few changes seein’ as how it has to go in to the future. Hum... let me see,” she said thoughtfully, flicking her gaze to the long feather quill and inkwell next to the book. “Aha! I’ve got it!” she beamed, reaching for her wand.

Clovis watched her curiously as she passed the wand three times over the quill and ink, and then lowered the tip of it to touch a blank piece of parchment lying upon the

table, her powerful voice resonating throughout the one room hovel as she began to recite the spell.

*Pen to paper, a most urgent letter, one to navigate time,
To 2012 I send ye now, ye must arrive by nine.
Off ye go, to the house ye know, a high priestess did reside,
Find the one who loves her there and lure her to me side!*

Clovis stared at the parchment, watching with wide eyes as the quill suddenly came to life, hovering above it for a moment as if thinking, before quickly scribbling a message across its center, a dark shadow following in its wake, creeping slowly across the page to swallow it whole. Flicking her gaze back up to her sister's face, she looked at her with a mixture of respect and jealousy, somewhat resentful that Amaris should be the one who was the more powerful witch between them. *It's not fair that she should get both the mother and the girl's powers*, she thought bitterly, looking worriedly up at the exposed timbers beneath the thatched roof when a sudden clap of thunder from outside shook the walls, causing them to creak ominously. *One of these days that roof is goin' to fall in on us*, she determined worriedly, flicking her gaze back to her sister when she heard her move away from the table, her wooden clogs clacking noisily against the floorboards as she hastened over to the window to pull back the ragged piece of burlap that served as a curtain.

"Aye... and so it is done," Amaris said, watching in satisfaction as the last slice of the sun disappeared behind an ominous black cloud, which despite the strong wind that whipped the trees into a frenzy, remained stationary over the forest of Bowland, blanketing it with an eerie darkness. Smiling, she released the curtain and turned to look back at her sister. "She'll think the message is from the girl and she'll go to her in Lancaster. Ye must intercept this meetin' and bring the woman back here to our century."

Clovis looked at her in confusion. "Which one? There be two women livin' there in case ye forgot."

Amaris sighed impatiently. "Which one do ye think, ay? The older one must have raised the white witch from a babe, so she'd be the one we be needin' for the bait. Do I have to tell ye everythin'?" she grumbled moodily.

"No, ye don't," she replied sourly. "But it don't take much brains to see that it ain't goin' to work. No witch in her right mind would give up her powers to rescue her nanny."

Amaris glared at her. "A white witch would. Aye," she continued at her look of disbelief, "she'll come for her all right, ye'll see," she said confidently, walking briskly over to the hearth to check on her stew. "She'll wish she hadn't of come though, I guarantee ye that!" she cackled wickedly, casting a wicked glance back at her twin.

Chapter One

England 2012

Lisa walked tiredly into the living room, dropping the stack of mail she was carrying onto the small table beside her aunt's chair. Dragging her feet over to the armchair next to the open window, she sat down heavily, her face flushed from the abnormally high temperature outdoors. Lifting her long blond hair up off of her neck, she leaned her head back, sighing in despair when the strong spring breeze failed to cool her hot skin.

"God... I can't believe it is this warm so early in April for heaven sakes!" she said miserably, lifting her head to look over at the grandfather clock across the room when she heard the familiar Westminster chime it played before striking off the hour. Nine o'clock, she noted with a frown, sliding her gaze over to her aunt. "Is that fellow ever going to get here to fix our air conditioner? He did say that he'd be here first thing in the morning, so... where is he? I am dying here in case you haven't noticed!"

Harriett raised a skeptical brow toward her. "I hardly think you're dying, dear," she said mildly, taking a sip of her tea.

"Well, I am," she responded sourly, her gaze sliding critically down over her aunt's black silk blouse and black dress pants in disgust. "Not everyone can wear black, drink hot tea, and not sweat when it's eighty degrees outside," she informed her sarcastically. "You are obviously not normal. Everybody knows that you're not supposed to wear dark colors when it's hot. What? Did somebody die?" she asked wryly.

Harriett chuckled. "Not as far as I know. Of course, the day is still young," she teased, unaffected by the glare her niece sent her in response. "Why don't you try a cup of this tea, dear? You do look rather flushed, I dare say. Trust me, it'll do you good," she smiled.

Lisa looked at her dubiously. "I don't think so, I'm hot enough already, thank you. I surely don't need to be pouring scalding tea down my throat," she told her glumly.

"Oh well, suit yourself," she shrugged, setting her cup down on the coffee table in front of her. Smoothing back a stubborn auburn curl that had escaped from the neat chignon at the back of head, she leaned back in her chair and picked up the mail. "I would just like to point out that you are the one who is sitting over there by an open window in shorts and t-shirt sweating, while I... am not," she informed her, as she began to sort through the letters.

Lisa frowned. "Uh huh, well, I have a thousand and one reasons not to believe anything you tell me," she responded moodily, letting her head fall back against the chair once again. "God, I can't take this much longer! That repairman had better get here soon," she mumbled dejectedly. Turning her head towards the open window, she looked out across the lawn towards the highway, sighing heavily when after a few moments she still didn't see any sign of his vehicle. Lifting her gaze up to the thin veil of clouds in the sky, she suddenly noticed something white being tossed around in the wind. Following it curiously with her eyes, she watched as it drifted closer and closer to the window. Intrigued by the flying object, she lifted her head and leaned forward in her chair in an attempt to get a better look at it.

Hum... it looks like a sheet of paper, or no, wait...it's an envelope, she realized, her eyes widening in surprise when the wind suddenly caught at it and blew it in through the

window onto the floor in front of her. Staring down at the flowing handwriting across the front of it, she frowned. *Humph... that's odd, it's got Aunt Harriett's name written on it. I wonder why it was blowing around in the...oh no! Oooh... the neighbor's cats! That has to be it,* she realized suddenly, remembering that she had taken the garbage out when she had went to get the mail. *Well, they certainly didn't waste any time, did they? Oh... those pesky little creatures! If Aunt Harriett's dumb dog would be outside doing his job like he's supposed to, this sort of thing wouldn't happen,* she reflected angrily, glaring resentfully over at the large hairy beast who was laying next to her aunt's chair, drooling all over the carpet. *Now I'm going have to go out in this dreadful heat wave and clean up the mess,* she fumed, glancing back at the cream colored envelope on the floor in front of her. Bending over tiredly, she stretched her fingers toward it, her eyes widening in surprise when it suddenly shot across the carpet toward her aunt, stopping at her feet. Frowning in puzzlement, she glanced from the envelope to the open window, then over to Harry when he suddenly lifted his large head with a growl, his big brown eyes staring warily down at the letter. *Hum... now that is very strange,* she thought, looking back at the window in confusion. *Could the wind have blown the envelope across the carpet like that, and why is Harry growling at it? It's not like he doesn't know what a letter is, he's ripped up enough of them,* she thought wryly, looking back at him glumly.

Harriett pulled her eyes away from the letter she'd been reading when she heard the dog growl. Reaching down to pat him on the head, she glanced over at her niece questioningly.

"You're not teasing him again, are you dear?" she asked, eyeing her suspiciously.

"No," she replied sourly. "He's growling at that envelope down at your feet there," she told her, pointing toward it. "It blew in through the window here, and when I went to pick it up, it suddenly flew across the floor to you," she explained touchily. "I saw that it had your name on it though, so I rather suspect that the neighbor's cats are up to their old tricks again. Honestly, Aunt Harriett, I really wish you'd let me do something about those pesky cats," she told her miserably.

"Like what, dear?" she asked distractedly, reaching down to pick up the envelope.

Lisa frowned. "I don't know, I haven't quite figured that out yet. Obviously, having a dog around doesn't work," she reflected miserably, shifting her gaze over to Harry.

"Well dear, not all dogs hate cats, you know. Why don't you simply ask Mr. Thorn to keep them inside until the garbage is picked up?" she suggested, looking at the envelope curiously. Turning it over in her hands, she saw that it was still sealed and raised her brow in surprise. "This letter hasn't even been opened yet. Are you sure it blew in through the window?" she asked, looking over at her suspiciously. "I mean, it wouldn't be the first time you've tried to hide my mail from me," she pointed out, recalling a certain invitation to Transylvania that her niece had desperately tried to hide from her just last month because of her fear of vampires.

Lisa made a face at her. "Yes, I'm sure. I watched it float down from the sky, right up to our house, and right through that window," she said touchily, pointing back at the window in question.

Harriett flicked her gaze across the room to the open window. "I see," she said, somewhat doubtful as she looked back at her. "Well, no need to bite my head off, I was just checking. I mean, you do have a um...a reputation for doing that sort of thing, dear," she smiled, quickly looking back at the letter when her niece glared at her angrily. "Of

course, I suppose it is possible that it was tossed into the garbage quite by accident,” she conceded with a shrug. “In that case, I dare say we should be thanking those cats for uh...well, for retrieving it,” she added brightly, as she reached for the letter opener on the side table next to her. “Yes,” she went on thoughtfully, “a dish of warm milk would make a nice thank you for them, don’t you think?” she asked, slipping the metal tip into the corner under the fold, neatly slicing it open along the crease.

Lisa rolled her eyes. “Oh yeah, sure, Aunt Harriett, that’s really going to get rid of them. Wait a minute,” she said suddenly, watching her pull a folded piece of cream colored paper from the envelope. “Why isn’t that envelope wrinkled or dirty? I mean, if it was in the garbage, that is?” she asked suspiciously, walking over to her aunt’s chair to get a better look at it. “And now that I think about it, it is rather strange that you would throw away an unopened letter. I don’t recall you ever doing something like that before, and yet if you didn’t, then where did it come from?” she said in puzzlement, watching curiously as her aunt unfolded the stationary to see who it was from. “Hey... look at that, it’s dated for today!” she exclaimed in surprise, noting the date that was penned in the top right corner. “That can’t be right,” she frowned, sliding her gaze down to the six words that were written across the center of the page.

You must come at once. Hurry

“Really, this must be someone’s idea of a joke!” she said in disbelief. “I say we toss it back out the window, or better yet, I’ll go and stick it in Mr. Thorn’s mailbox. Let him figure out who wrote it,” she said vengefully.

Harriett frowned, staring worriedly down at the message. “Leave poor Mr. Thorn alone, dear,” she mumbled distractedly.

“Poor Mr. Thorn?” she said incredulously. “What about poor me who has to pick up the garbage those cats of his rip up and drag all over the yard?” she asked miserably, glancing back at the letter. “Oh! Oh my God... look at that!” she exclaimed in shock, watching in horror as the message began to float up off of the paper, fading away before her eyes. “Those words just disappeared! What the heck is going on here, Aunt Harriett? That... is no ordinary letter!” she said in alarm, eyeing it uneasily now as her aunt set the blank piece of paper down on the table and quickly rose up out of her chair, startling Harry who shot to his feet, looking up at his mistress worriedly.

“Come on, dear,” she said, hurrying from the salon with Harry following closely at her heels. “We must pack our bags. It appears that there’s been a family emergency.”

Lisa frowned, flicking her eyes worriedly back to the letter. *Something very strange is going on here*, she thought, hastening out into the hall after her aunt.

“A family emergency?” she said skeptically, catching up to her on the stairway. “Really, Aunt Harriett, I hope you don’t expect me to fall for that,” she frowned. “There’s something very fishy about that letter that smacks of witchcraft and I do not like it! Letters are not supposed to fall out of the sky, and ink is not supposed to float up off the paper and disappear into thin air, and please do not try and tell me that I was seeing things,” she warned her irritably, suspecting that she was going to try and squirm her way out of this by trying to make her believe that the heat was getting to her or something “Now really, what was that message all about and who is it from?”

Harriett frowned. “Who is it from? Well, um... it’s from your uh, your aunt of course,” she shrugged. Stepping into the corridor at the top of the stairs, she hurried

toward her bedroom, worrying her bottom lip as she tried to think up believable responses to the questions she knew were coming next.

"Are you saying that Old Aunt Pearl wrote that message?" Lisa asked incredulously, following her into her room. "How gullible do you think I am? Aunt Pearl is no witch, even though she might look like one with all of those wrinkles and half of her teeth missing," she frowned. "Oh no, it definitely wasn't her that sent that letter, and since the only other aunt I have is you, then that means that you're lying," she said, eyeing her suspiciously. "Family emergency, ha!" she scoffed. "You made that up to try and get me to go with you, wherever it is you're going. You know, I have to say that for someone who swears that witches don't exist, you certainly didn't seem surprised when that ink disappeared," she pointed out, watching her closely as she pulled her suitcase out of the closet and carried it over to the bed.

"Really, dear, you can buy that ink in any joke shop, or magic store for that matter, and I am not lying, there really is a family emergency," she said mildly. Flipping open the top of her suitcase, she walked back to the closet, studying her clothes. "Now do run along and get packed," she smiled, glancing back at her. "We must hurry. We still have to drop Harry off at Mrs. Bittle's place before we go."

"Why do we have to drop Harry off at Mrs. Bittles?" she asked in confusion. "Aunt Pearl only lives a few miles from here," she reminded her. "I'm sure that Harry can stay home alone for a couple of hours. I mean, he is a dog after all," she pointed out wryly.

"Well, um... it's not your Aunt Pearl that we're going to visit," she told her hesitantly. "I uh, I guess I must have forgot to tell you that your um... your Aunt Esmeralda has uh... well, that she has miraculously come back to life, hum?" she smiled. "A real miracle I dare say, and after all of these years too!" she said, shaking her head in amazement.

Lisa raised her brow. "Aunt Esmeralda is dead. We went to her funeral a long time ago, remember? Twelve years ago if I recall correctly," she pointed out, looking at her strangely.

"It's been that long, has it?" she frowned thoughtfully. "Humph! Well, um... now she's alive!" she smiled brightly. "The good Lord certainly works in mysterious ways, doesn't he?" she asked, carrying over a couple of blouses on their hangers.

Lisa lifted a dubious brow. "You don't believe in God," she reminded her.

"Of course I do!" she chuckled. "Where would you get an idea like that?"

"Well, let me see, when you wondered why they put their hands together in church perhaps?" she replied wryly.

"Oh, I was just teasing when I said that," she laughed. "Goodness, one of my best friends is a priest, Father O'Leary. Surely you remember him?"

Lisa rolled her eyes. "How could I forget? He's the only priest I know who lies through his teeth," she replied dryly.

"Really, dear, you don't know any other priest, so how can you compare? Besides, I've known Father O'Leary for a very long time and I assure you that he is the most honest man I know."

"Uh huh, sure," she said skeptically. "He's about as honest as you are, which makes me wonder if he really is a priest at all, which would make more sense to me since your friends are usually more the criminal type," she told her. "Actually, now that I think about it, Father O'Leary, if... that is even his real name," she continued wryly, "was the

priest at Esmeralda's funeral. That means it really could have been a fake funeral," she said, studying her aunt thoughtfully. "Oh my God, it was a fake funeral, wasn't it?" she asked in alarm, an uneasy feeling stirring in the pit of her stomach when her aunt didn't respond. "What kind of trouble are you in now, Aunt Harriett?" she asked angrily.

Harriett looked at her innocently. "I don't know why you're always so suspicious of me. I'm not in any sort of trouble," she replied mildly. Quickly turning away, she walked over to her dresser and pulled open the top drawer. "My sister is somewhat of a recluse, that's all," she shrugged, coming back with an armload of socks.

"A recluse?" Lisa said incredulously. "The woman faked her own funeral! Oh no, something much more devious is going on here. People fake their own deaths when they're hiding from someone," she told her, watching her suspiciously. "Now if that letter was from her, and it obviously was, that means that she is a witch, which means that this has something to do with witchcraft, and don't even try to lie your way out of this one," she warned her. "I saw that envelope drop out of the sky, it knew where it was going, and don't think for one minute that I fell for that joke store crap you just tried to feed me," she added with a frown. "Oh God," she continued, her eyes widening in alarm, "we have a witch in our family! I always thought that she was strange. You know, with those weird green eyes of hers and that odd birthmark on her shoulder in the shape of a star. Well, I guess I was right!"

Harriett laughed. "I think the heat really is getting to you. First of all, she is not a witch, she is a healer, or so she says," she added with a shrug. "Second, her birthmark looks more like a blotch than a star, and third, she was adopted, remember?"

"Uh huh, and that's another strange thing," she said, looking at her thoughtfully. "I remember when I was little, my mother told me that grandma had found Esmeralda in a basket on the kitchen counter one morning, and that she was naked except for a ring with a green gemstone in it that was on a string around her neck. Mother thought it was quite mysterious as to how the child got there because all of the doors and windows were locked. Of course, grandma, who couldn't have any more children, thought the baby was a gift from God," she continued wryly, "and so she didn't question it. But I have to wonder, especially now, with this magical letter dropping out of the sky, and after learning that Aunt Esmeralda has been faking her own death all these years. I mean, how did that baby get into the house, and why leave her a piece of your jewelry and nothing else? Not a single piece of clothing, not even a diaper?" she asked suspiciously.

Harriett shook her head, looking at her in amusement. "Really, dear, your mother was quite the storyteller, you know. Actually, now that I think about it, that must be where your talent comes from," she chuckled. "My mother most certainly did not find Esmeralda naked in a basket. She was adopted in Hedgerow at the local adoption center, and as far as the letter is concerned, obviously the postman didn't see it when he dropped off the other mail and so he came back and tossed it through the window," she shrugged.

Lisa looked at her in disbelief. "Well then, how come the letter was dated for today?"

"I'm sure Esmeralda simply penned the wrong date on the letter, that's all. She's always doing that sort of thing. She has a terrible head for dates, she always has," she explained. "So there, you see, there is nothing strange about your aunt," she smiled. "Now run along and get packed. We have to get to the train station."

"Train station?" Lisa said uneasily. "Oh no, I am not going on any more vacations with you. Nope," she said, crossing her arms stubbornly in front of her. "Something bad always happens, and I am not talking about lost luggage here," she frowned.

Harriett laughed. "But this is not a vacation, it's a family emergency," she pointed out, hurrying over to her dresser for more clothes. "Now please run along and get packed," she told her urgently, glancing back at her.

"Ha! I don't think so," she said moodily, refusing to budge. "I am not falling for your story about a family emergency, not this time. You're obviously lying. I can tell by that innocent little smile of yours and by the way you're running around this room avoiding eye contact with me," she frowned, making a sour face at her as she came back with a couple of sweaters, placing them neatly in her bag. "Besides, Esmeralda is not really family, she was adopted," she continued with a shrug, "and I hardly even know her. I was only six when she died, which was shortly after my parent's passed away, if you recall? Of course, now that I know for certain that she's a witch, I definitely do not want to know her! Nope, I am staying home this time, and please don't make up another one of your stories about a murderer running loose in the neighborhood to try and scare me into going with you, because it won't work," she said irritably, recalling the last story her aunt had told her about a jelly killer in the area to get her to go with her to that vampire infested castle in Romania.

Harriett studied the articles in her suitcase. Satisfied that she had everything she needed, she closed it and reached for the zipper, glancing back at her niece.

"Are you referring to the young girl who was found dead, face down in her bowl of jelly?" she asked with a chuckle.

"Uh huh, that's the one," she said dryly.

"That story was true, dear. I don't make the news, I only read it," she laughed. "And uh... while we're on the subject of news, if you really insist on staying home, then I think there is something you need to know about our new neighbor. You know, Mr. Thorn?" she said, looking at her worriedly.

"Like what?" Lisa asked guardedly.

"Oh, um... well, perhaps I shouldn't say anything, I don't want to scare you. Besides, if you're staying here there's no need to bring Harry to Mrs. Bittle's, he can stay home with you. You'll be safe enough with him around, I dare say," she smiled. Lifting her suitcase up off of the bed, she stepped past her and hurried out into the corridor.

Lisa frowned, quickly following on her heels. "Safe with Harry?" she said incredulously. "Are you crazy? He's afraid of his own shadow! Heck, he was afraid of that envelope that flew in the window. How is he going to protect me, hum? Wait a minute, why do I need to be protected from Mr. Thorn?" she asked worriedly, following her down the stairs to the main floor.

Harriett stopped at the bottom of the steps and turned to look at her. "Well, you do know that Mr. Thorn has a wife, don't you?"

"He does?" she asked in confusion, unable to recall ever having seen his wife since their strange neighbor moved in three weeks ago.

Harriett nodded her head. "Yes, well, I guess I should say that he did... have a wife," she frowned.

"What do you mean, he did have a wife?" she asked uneasily.

"Well, no one has seen her yet, and uh... one of the neighbors saw Mr. Thorn burying something in his back yard shortly after he moved in. Apparently, he had dug quite a large hole," she shrugged.

"You mean to say that he killed her and then buried her in his very own yard?" she asked incredulously, her eyes widening in fright.

"Well, it certainly is suspicious if you ask me," she replied, shaking her head sadly. "You see, Richard's wife, Sarah, who lives..."

"I know who Sarah is, Aunt Harriett!" she interrupted impatiently. "Everybody knows who she is," she added wryly. "She lives right behind Mr. Thorn, and next to you, she's the biggest snoop in the neighborhood. Now will you just get on with the story?" she said tightly.

Harriett frowned. "Yes, well, Sarah has been having um... you know, garbage problems too?" she said meaningfully. "So she went over to his place to speak with him about his cats, and he told her that they belonged to his wife but that she wasn't there."

Lisa looked at her in confusion. "So what's your point?"

"Well, it's quite simple really. Since no one has ever seen his wife, we can only presume that he has either killed her, or that she has left him. Now if she left him, and those cats are her pets, you'd think that she would have brought them with her, wouldn't you?"

Lisa looked away thoughtfully. "Yeah, I suppose so," she said uncertainly. "Hey... wait a minute, you suspect that he's a murderer and you want to send me over to ask him to keep his cat's indoors?" she asked in disbelief.

Harriett shrugged. "I would have kept my eye on you from the window, dear. I certainly wouldn't have let him bash you over the head with his shovel and toss you into a hole in his back yard," she smiled. "Now, I've really got to get going. I don't want to miss my train. Oh, and one last piece of advice before I leave," she said, glancing back at her as she hurried toward the door. "Keep the lights on at night, and the windows closed and locked," she added, looking at her meaningfully. "Even if the repairman doesn't show up and you're sweating like the dickens. No point in taking any chances, right? Well then, good bye, and don't forget to keep the phone handy in case of a um... well, in case of an emergency. Not that I'm saying there will be one," she added hastily. "But one never knows, do they? It's better to be safe than sorry, I dare say! Yes indeed," she chuckled, reaching for the doorknob. "Have fun, be nice to Harry, and well, you know how to reach me," she smiled, disappearing through the door.

Lisa frowned, staring worriedly at the door as it closed behind her aunt. *Have fun, after a story like that? Ha! I don't think so,* she thought, miserably. *Of course, she could be lying,* she realized, recalling the story about the jelly killer once again. *Yes... I wouldn't put it past her. I mean, it's funny that she just told me about Mr. Thorn's wife being missing now, when she's leaving. Oooh... she is devious,* she thought, narrowing her eyes at the door. *But what if she really is telling the truth this time? What if Mr. Thorn did kill his wife and bury her in his back yard, and even worse, what if he suspects we saw something? He could be watching our house at this very moment, and if he sees Aunt Harriett leaving with her suitcase he's going to know that I'm here all alone,* she realized, shifting her gaze worriedly back at the entrance to the living room when she suddenly remembered that the window in that room was wide open. Turning on her heel, she ran into the room, her heart beating fearfully as she hastened toward it. Reaching up,

she grabbed the frame with shaking fingers and slammed it shut, quickly turning the small metal clasp, locking it securely.

Whew! Well, he is certainly not going to come in through there now, she thought in relief, glancing cautiously out into the yard before pulling the heavy drapes closed. *Unless... he's already in the house*, she thought in alarm. *I mean, the window was open the whole time I was upstairs with Aunt Harriett. He could have easily snuck in then. Oh crap, now what am I going to do*, she wondered, hurrying back out into the entry hall. *He could be anywhere in here*, she realized in rising panic, looking fearfully up the stairwell when she heard a sudden creaking noise coming from above her. *That's it, I can't do this! I am not staying here by myself*, she decided firmly, envisioning Mr. Thorn hiding behind her bedroom door, waiting to bash her over her head with his shovel. Swallowing nervously, she rushed toward the front door.

"Aunt Harriett! Wait!" she yelled frantically, fumbling with the handle in her haste to catch her before she left. "Darn door!" she swore, kicking it angrily when the handle wouldn't turn. "Oh... I can't believe it's stuck, now of all times!" she fumed, glaring down at it in frustration. Hearing Harry's familiar whine coming from behind her, she sighed heavily, glancing back at him with a frown. "Great, you would choose this moment to want to go out and pee, wouldn't you? Of all the rotten luck!" she said miserably, looking back at the handle in despair. Suddenly she gasped, quickly stepping away from the door when she saw the handle begin to turn slowly.

Good lord...someone is out there, she thought in alarm, hastily reaching for the broom that was leaning against the wall by the door.

"Harry!" she whispered urgently, flicking her gaze down to the dog as she lifted the broom up in the air. "Get over here you little coward, you're supposed to protect me!" she told him angrily, glowering at him when he didn't budge, his big brown eyes watching her curiously. "Can you at least look mean? You know, stand up and growl or something?" she asked impatiently. "Oh for heaven sakes!" she exclaimed, rolling her eyes in despair when he simply yawned and laid down on the floor, resting his large head on his paws. "You're pathetic, do you know that? Yeah, that's right, you are, and you're a poor excuse for a dog too!" she added miserably, looking fearfully back at the door when she suddenly heard it begin to creak open.

"Oh God, I hope I don't miss!" she prayed fervently, adjusting her hold on the broom handle. She was just getting ready to strike when she recognized a very familiar head of auburn colored hair peeking around the edge of the door.

"Aunt Harriett?" she said incredulously.

Harriett looked up intriguingly at the broom poised above her head. Dropping her eyes to meet her niece's frightened gaze, she smiled.

"Doing a little housework?" she chuckled, lifting her eyes back up to the broom.

"Ha, ha, very funny," she said sourly, lowering the broom in relief. "I suppose you were holding the handle so I couldn't get out?" she asked, suddenly suspicious.

"Holding the handle?" Harriett asked in surprise. "Now why on earth would I do that?"

Lisa made a face. "To scare the living daylights out of me so that I'd go on this stupid trip with you perhaps?" she suggested wryly.

"Really, dear," she said, looking at her reproachfully. "I was just getting into the car when I thought I heard you call out my name rather um... well, rather urgently, so I came

back to see what was going on, that's all," she explained with a shrug. "I uh, I gather you've changed your mind about coming with me then?" she asked, a knowing smile tugging at the corners of her mouth as she dropped her gaze to the broom her niece was holding in front of her.

Lisa narrowed her eyes, smarting at the smug look upon her aunt's face. *Oh... she's lying, I'm sure of it*, she determined, her fingers tightening angrily around the wooden handle as she jerked it out of her aunt's sight and leaned it back up against the wall. *She was probably standing outside the door the whole time, knowing I wouldn't stay here after hearing that story about Mr. Thorn murdering his wife, she thought angrily. Humph! I should have smacked her with the broom when I had the chance, I'm sure she deserves it! Getting into her car... ha! A likely story*, she thought, glowering over at her.

"Yes, I've changed my mind," she replied finally, walking over to join her by the door. "So let's go, your dog has to pee," she informed her, lifting her chin.

Harriett glanced down at the dog who was sitting complacently at her feet, his long tail making swishing sounds against the ceramic tiles as he wagged it back and forth across the floor.

"He doesn't appear to be in a rush, dear. I'm sure he's just happy to see me, and quite honestly I can't say as I blame him. He probably thought you were going to hit him over the head with that broom you were holding in such a threatening manner," she frowned.

Lisa rolled her eyes. "Trust me, his little flea brain is not big enough to have figured that out even if it had been my intention. Now, let's go," she told her impatiently.

"But um... don't you want to pack a few things first?" she asked curiously, glancing at the kaki shorts and t-shirt she was wearing.

"Nope," she replied firmly, unwilling to admit that she didn't want to go upstairs alone.

"Not even a pair of pants and a sweater?" she asked in surprise.

Lisa frowned. "There is a heat wave outside, Aunt Harriett. Can we go now, please?" she asked, looking anxiously back at the stairwell.

Harriett followed her gaze, trying not to laugh. "All right, but we might be gone for a few days you know," she warned her, glancing down at the dog as she opened the door. "Out you go Harry," she told him, standing back.

"Aunt Harriett!" Lisa cried out angrily, stumbling backwards when Harry plowed into her legs in his haste to get outside. "I thought I told you to warn me before you go opening the door for him!" she fumed, glaring outside at him as he ran to the nearest bush and lifted his leg.

Harriett frowned. "I didn't think I had to warn you, dear. I mean, you were the one who told me he had to pee," she pointed out, glancing outside at Harry. "Hum... I guess he did have to go bad after all. He must have been nervous, I dare say. You know, thinking you were going to kill him with the broom?" she said, looking back at her reprovingly. "I have to say I was a wee bit nervous myself when I saw it looming over my..."

"I was not going to hit you or your stupid dog with the broom!" she interrupted angrily. "Now let's get going before we miss that train," she said impatiently, urging her outside.

"Well, all right, but I really do think you ought to bring along some warmer clothing," she told her worriedly.

“Uh huh, well, I don’t. Besides, I don’t intend to stay in the house of a witch for very long, thank you. I don’t care if she is part of the family, she is still a witch, and they are all evil, trust me, I know,” she said glumly, closing the door firmly behind them. *Nope, I am definitely not staying there longer than I have to*, she thought determinedly, as they walked toward the car. *Just long enough for me to report Mr. Thorn to the police. Once he’s been arrested for murdering his wife, which shouldn’t take too long, then I can come back home*, she smiled.

“Esmeralda is not a witch, dear, I assure you,” Harriett said mildly. “I told you, there is no such thing as...”

“Yeah, yeah, I know,” she interrupted moodily. “There is no such thing as a witch. You’ve told me that a million times,” she continued irritably, opening the back door for Harry. “But it’s funny, I keep running into them. Oh, and another thing,” she said suddenly, as Harriett climbed into the driver’s seat, “you know that letter, the one that the mailman delivered through our window?”

“Uh huh, what about it, dear?” she asked, slipping the keys into the ignition.

“Well, it had no stamp on it,” she informed her smugly. “Gee... I wonder when the post office started delivering mail for free.”

Harriett laughed. “I’m sure they don’t. The stamp most likely fell off when it was being sorted at the post office, or when it was in the postman’s bag,” she shrugged.

Lisa rolled her eyes in disbelief. “Honestly, Aunt Harriett, you don’t expect me to believe that, do you?” she asked incredulously, hurrying over to the passenger side of the car. “The stamp fell off? Yeah, right, that’s a good one!” she scoffed, shaking her head in disbelief as she climbed in and reached for her seatbelt. “Yep, well, I know there’s something very strange about that letter even if you won’t admit it. I believe that your sister is a witch and I’m going to prove it to you. I don’t care what you say, witches do exist, and I can’t wait to say I told you so,” she said, smiling across at her. “You know, I think I’m actually going to enjoy myself on this trip!

Chapter Two

Harriett and Lisa stepped outside of the train station in Lancaster, surprised to see a little old lady holding up a card with Harriett's name written across it in bold black letters.

"Look at that, dear! Esmeralda has sent someone to pick us up, and here I thought we were going to have to fight the other passengers to get a cab," she smiled.

Lisa frowned. "I think you mean that I would have had to fight the passengers, don't you?"

Harriett chuckled. "Well, you are the mean one in the family. Besides, you never want me to do it," she reminded her.

"Uh huh, well that's simply because I don't want to listen to you sulk about all of the injuries you claim to get from people while trying to secure us a cab," she pointed out wryly, observing the driver's unkempt gray hair and her long, brown, woolen dress, as they walked over to her. "What is wrong with people today? It's eighty degrees out here, for goodness sake!"

"Well, it is still early in April, I dare say. Most people haven't taken out their summer clothes yet. I do hope for your sake that this heat wave continues for a few days longer though, since you um...since you didn't want to take the time to pack," she said, glancing worriedly down at her niece's bare legs. "With the weather being so unpredictable these days we could easily be seeing snow tomorrow. Yes indeed, and with your luck I could definitely see that happening!" she laughed.

Lisa narrowed her eyes. "I'll just bet you're praying that it happens too, hum?" she asked irritably, lowering her voice when she realized that the driver was listening to them. "Well, I hope it's even hotter tomorrow!" she whispered vengefully, looking at her aunt's clothing with a nasty smile.

"Yes, me too," Harriett nodded. "It'll give me a chance to wear those new shorts that I packed in my bag," she smiled.

"Oooh... you think you're so smart!" she fumed, looking back at the driver when she suddenly spoke to them.

"Miss Rotherfield?" the woman asked, her gray eyes fixing curiously upon Harriett.

"Yes, that's me," she replied kindly, grateful for the interruption.

The woman flicked her gaze to Lisa. "I wasn't expectin' ye to be here," she frowned.

"Oh, well, my niece insisted on coming along," she explained. "I must say, this is quite nice. I mean, not to have to wait around for a cab, that is," she clarified. "You see, Lisa usually has to fight tooth and nail to get us one. It's a very ugly scene with a lot of pushing and shoving, and uh... well, some rather colorful language, which is exactly why I let her do it," she confided.

Lisa raised her brow in surprise. "You let... me do it?" she asked in disbelief. "You mean to say you lied about all of those injuries? Oh, you have got serious problems up here!" she told her irritably, tapping her finger against her temple.

Harriett frowned. "I thought you said you were going to be nice on this trip, dear? You don't sound very nice to me," she told her, passing her suitcase to the driver.

Lisa rolled her eyes. "I did not say that I was going to be nice. I said that I was going to enjoy myself when I finally proved..." she broke off suddenly, noticing that the driver

was listening once again. "Shouldn't you be putting my aunt's suitcase into the trunk?" she asked her, slightly annoyed that she was eavesdropping on their conversation.

"The trunk, Miss?" she asked in confusion.

"Yes, the trunk. You know, the storage space in the back of your vehicle?" she said impatiently, glancing pointedly at the back of the car.

The woman followed her gaze, frowning in puzzlement until she noticed one of the other cab drivers placing his customer's baggage in an opening of some sort behind his vehicle.

"Ah...yes, the trunk," she said finally, looking back at her with a troubled frown. "I uh, I don't have one of those," she shrugged.

"You don't have one?" Lisa said incredulously, flicking her gaze to the back of her cab once again. "But I can see it from here!"

The woman frowned. "It's broken, which is just the same as not havin' one, ain't it?" she asked testily, reaching for the door handle.

Lisa looked at her in disbelief, shocked by her rudeness. "Aunt Harriett?" she whispered quickly, leaning toward her aunt. "Did you hear her? I hope you don't think I'm going anywhere with her now, because I'm not!" she told her firmly, watching as the grumpy old woman opened the door and shoved her aunt's suitcase onto the back seat. "Hey! Excuse me, Ma'am?" she said in disbelief, taking a step toward her. "I am not holding that heavy suitcase on my lap!" she informed her angrily. "If you don't have a trunk, then we'll simply get another cab. You shouldn't be picking up passengers here if you don't have a place to put their luggage. In fact, I don't think you should be working with the public at all. Now if you don't mind, we would like our suitcase back," she told her coldly, crossing her arms stubbornly in front of her while she waited for her to return their bag.

God... I don't believe this! The nerve of the woman, she fumed, observing her long hooked nose made more prominent by the dark, puffy, half circles, beneath her strange pale gray eyes, which were glaring back at her angrily now, she noted, dropping her gaze to the tiny wrinkles that framed the tight line of her wide thin lips. Shifting her gaze to the hump on her back, she grimaced, quickly looking back at her face. *Good lord, I certainly wouldn't want to run into her in the dark!*

Harriett looked from her niece to the driver in concern. "Um...listen, dear," she said hastily, touching her niece's arm to get her attention. "I'm sure there is no need to get another cab. Esmeralda obviously sent her to pick us up, and since it's not all that far to her house, and well..." she continued, lowering her voice to a whisper, "honestly, I think the woman is just having a bad day. She's probably new at this. You know, her first day and all?" she shrugged.

Lisa looked at her incredulously. "Her first day, you say? She looks like she's ready to retire! No way, I am not getting into that cab with her!" she insisted stubbornly. "I'm sure she is lying about her trunk being broken and she's terribly rude, and furthermore, I don't like the look of her! Her hair is... well, it's a mess, and her clothing is rather questionable if you ask me," she frowned, curiously eyeing the brown woolen kirtle, and long sleeve white linen partlet that she was wearing. "She doesn't look like any cab driver that I have ever seen before and she's got shifty eyes too, like a criminal," she added suspiciously, lifting her gaze back up to the woman's face. "In fact, the more I think about it, the more I am convinced that the real cab driver is laying in a ditch

somewhere with a knife sticking out of his back. Really, Aunt Harriett, let's just get another cab. I don't trust her!" she whispered worriedly behind her hand.

Harriett chuckled. "I'm sure she hasn't murdered anyone. Although, it is a wee bit strange about the trunk being broken, and I have to agree that she is rather eccentric looking," she admitted grudgingly, eyeing the woman's clothing. "But Esmeralda did send her to pick us up," she reminded her once again, smiling kindly at the driver who was watching them rather worriedly now. "I don't see how we can refuse," she said, looking back at her niece.

Lisa sighed in defeat. "Fine, but I'm telling you I've got a bad feeling about her. If we don't make it to Aunt Esmeralda's house alive it's going to be your fault!" she whispered fiercely. Lifting her chin, she walked up to the open door of the cab, her eyes narrowing angrily when she observed the smirk upon the driver's face.

Oooh... I can't wait to get to a telephone so I can call the company that she works for and put in a complaint, she fumed, reluctantly climbing into the back seat. *We'll see if she's still smiling after that,* she thought vengefully. *I can't believe this, there must be fifteen cabs out here and we get the one with the broken trunk and the little old lady from hell,* she thought miserably. Grabbing the handle of the suitcase, she pulled it onto her lap with a groan and slid across the seat, looking sullenly at her aunt as she climbed in beside her.

"Thanks to you I am not going to have any feeling left in my legs by the time we get there, not that it matters of course, since we're going to be dead soon anyway," she reflected miserably.

Harriett laughed, reaching for her seatbelt. "My goodness, I'm almost willing to pay Esmeralda to tell you that she's a witch just to see you smile!"

Lisa made a face at her. "Don't bother wasting your money, I already know that she's a witch, it's you who needs to be convinced," she said moodily, lowering her voice when she heard the driver's door open. "I still think we should take another cab, it's not too late you know," she told her quietly, watching uneasily as their driver climbed in, looking quite pleased with herself as she slammed the door closed and snuck a quick peak at them through the rearview mirror. "I'll bet she doesn't even have a driver's license," she whispered miserably, quickly reaching for her seatbelt.

Harriett raised her brow, looking at her strangely. "Honestly dear, you really ought to consider taking an appointment to see Dr. Peabody, I'm sure he can help you out with some of your um... well, you know, your problems?" she said meaningfully. "They seem to be getting much worse lately. I mean, you don't trust anyone from what I can see. First it's our neighbor, then it's Esmeralda, and now you suspect the taxi driver is a murderer for goodness sakes!"

Lisa frowned. "Well, she looks like one, and you are the one who said Mr. Thorn was a murderer, not me," she quickly reminded her.

"I never actually said that he was a murderer. I simply told you that no one had seen his wife, that's all," she smiled.

Lisa looked at her incredulously. "That is not what you said, Aunt Harriett!" she argued hotly. "You practically told me that he buried his wife in his back yard for heaven sake!"

"No, I said he buried something in his back yard, I didn't say that it was his wife. You're the one who said that, dear," she shrugged.

Lisa narrowed her eyes angrily. "So, what you're trying to tell me is, you lied, right?"

Harriett looked at her innocently. "No... not at all! It's true that no one has seen his wife yet, and he did indeed bury something in his back yard, but I can't say for sure what it was. I mean, it could have been his wife, or it could have been that one of his cats died from eating out of the garbage. You know, say... if it ate something rotten, or if someone had put something in the bags deliberately to uh... to be rid of them?" she said, looking at her pointedly.

Lisa sighed heavily. "I did not kill any of his cats if that is what you're trying to say, so stop looking at me like that!" she told her irritably.

"Ah... well, that's a relief!" she smiled. "So, I guess that means he was burying something else then," she shrugged.

Lisa rolled her eyes in despair. "That's it, I am not talking to you anymore! You obviously made up that whole story about Mr. Thorn to trick me into coming along with you on this trip," she said accusingly, looking away.

Oooh... she makes me so mad, she fumed, glancing up at the driver when the car suddenly jerked forward and then stalled. Frowning, she shifted her gaze to the rearview mirror, watching curiously as the woman stared down at the steering wheel and speedometer, clearly confused as to what to do. *Oh my God... she really doesn't know how to drive*, she realized in rising panic. *Wait a minute, if she doesn't know how to drive, then she is definitely not a taxi driver, which means that she could very possibly be a kidnapper, or a murderer, or... both*, she thought, her eyes widening in alarm.

"Aunt Harriett!" she whispered urgently, looking back at her. "I have a horrible feeling that I was right about her not having a license!"

Harriett sighed. *Here we go again*, she thought in despair, turning to look at her.

"I thought you weren't talking to me, dear. That certainly didn't last long. I was kind of hoping that you'd at least keep your promise for a wee..."

"Aunt Harriett, listen to me!" she snapped impatiently. "That woman does not know how to drive, I'm sure of it! We have to get out of here before she figures out how to start this car. I suspect that she may be a kidnapper!" she whispered anxiously.

Harriett lifted a dubious brow. "Are you saying that sweet old lady is a kidnapper and a murderer?"

"Sweet old lady?" she said incredulously. "Are you serious? Look at her!" she whispered fiercely. "I'm telling you, she is not normal. She doesn't even know how to start the car for goodness sake! Does that sound like a taxi driver to you, hum?" she asked angrily, glancing back at the driver when she heard her speak. "Oh no, she's talking to herself now," she whispered uneasily, watching her through the mirror. "She really is crazy!"

Harriett frowned, glancing curiously up at the old woman. "She's probably just upset because the car won't start," she told her, unconcerned. "I mean, we all talk to ourselves once in a while, that certainly doesn't mean we're crazy," she chuckled. "You do it all the time you know, especially when you're mad, which is um... rather often lately I'd like to point out."

Lisa made a face at her. "Uh huh, well, that's because you make me mad!" she informed her moodily.

Harriett looked at her innocently. "Me?"

“Yes, you!” she replied tightly. “You lie to me all the time, you force me into the company of your criminal friends, and you never believe a word I tell you. Now be quiet, I’m trying to hear what she’s saying up there!” she told her impatiently, leaning over the top of the suitcase she was holding so that she could hear the driver.

“But you’re the one who keeps talking to me,” Harriett pointed out, watching her. “I certainly didn’t...”

“Shhh!” she whispered fiercely, turning her head to glare at her. “I can’t hear what she’s... oh!” she exclaimed in surprise, when the cab suddenly shot forward unexpectedly causing her to fly back against her seat with a thud, the suitcase jamming up against her stomach. “Oh my God... the woman is insane!” she cried out in alarm, her eyes widening in fright as they sped away from the train station, the tires screeching against the pavement as they turned sharply onto the highway into heavy traffic, weaving dangerously between the other cars.

“Looks like you were wrong, she does know how to start the car,” Harriett smiled, quickly recovering from the speedy take off. “Although, she does have a wee bit of a heavy foot for her age, I dare say,” she admitted, observing her niece’s pale face in concern. “Oh my, you don’t look too good. You had better roll down the window in case you um... you know, in case you get sick?” she said worriedly.

Lisa swallowed nervously, her eyes glued to the rear bumper of the pick-up truck their cab was quickly approaching.

“I don’t think I’m going to live long enough to get sick, thanks to you!” she said bitterly, watching fearfully as their driver swerved into the adjacent lane at the last second, the humming sound of the motor intensifying as she pressed the gas peddle to the floor, flying past the truck. “Oh crap!” she whispered in alarm, when the headlights of an oncoming vehicle suddenly appeared from around a curve a short distance in front of them. “We’re never going to make it! I knew we shouldn’t have gotten into this car!” she said wretchedly, trying desperately to look past her aunt’s head when Harriett suddenly leaned across her, blocking her view. “Get out of the way, Aunt Harriett! I can’t see anything! Hey... close that stupid window!” she exclaimed angrily, feeling a sudden blast of wind in her face. “Aunt Harriett!” she snapped impatiently, fighting to catch the long lengths of her hair that were now flying up into her face, blinding her and stinging her skin. “Oooh! Now look what you’ve done!” she fumed. “Would you please roll that window up and get out of my way, and put your seatbelt back on for heaven sake!”

“I’m sorry, dear, but I am merely trying to prevent a very smelly accident from happening,” she explained mildly, turning a deaf ear to her demands. “I’m sure that the driver doesn’t want you to dirty her car,” she frowned, looking up at her.

Lisa rolled her eyes. “The driver is about to smash this car and... us into a million pieces any second now, so I hardly think she’s going to care if I get sick in it!” she pointed out irritably, quickly pushing her aunt’s head down so she could keep her eye on the vehicle that was frantically flashing its lights at them as they sped toward it. “Oh my God, we’re going to hit it!” she exclaimed in alarm, swinging her gaze to the driver. “Listen Ma’am, if you don’t get this taxi out of this lane and pull over onto the side of the road I’m going to kill you myself!” she warned her fiercely, her eyes widening in surprise when the old woman suddenly veered sharply to the right, sending her aunt flying back across the seat, slamming into the door.

“Oh!” Harriett exclaimed in surprise, quickly reaching for her seatbelt. “Oh my... I do believe you may have been right about that driver’s license after all,” she told her breathlessly, holding tightly onto the armrest as the rear end of the car swung dangerously one way and then the other before finally straightening out and gathering speed once again, the tires sending small stones flying up to hit the metal beneath the car as they sped off down the narrow gravel road they now found themselves upon.

Lisa immediately began to cough on the thick cloud of dust that was rolling in through the open window next to her. Waving her hand in front of her face in an effort to clear the air, she glowered across at her aunt.

“Oh yeah, sure, now you believe me!” she exclaimed angrily, fumbling for the handle in an effort to try and close the window. “Oh no!” she exclaimed in despair, when the handle suddenly came off in her hand. Lifting it up in front of her face, she stared at it in disbelief. *This can’t be happening*, she thought wretchedly. *Really, this is just too much! How unlucky can I be?*

Suddenly hearing the whirring of the engine intensify, she flicked her gaze past the back of the driver’s head and through the front window, her eyes widening in fright when she saw the huge hill they were climbing at an alarming rate of speed. Quickly leaning toward the front seat, she tapped the driver on the shoulder.

“Look, I insist that you stop this car right now and let us out!” she said crossly, her lips tightening angrily when the woman responded by pressing the gas peddle all the way to the floor. Glancing at the speedometer, she watched in horror as the needle slid quickly past 100. Flicking her gaze up to the rearview mirror, she gasped, startled to discover that the old woman was staring at her, her eyes glowing a strange yellowish color. “Oh... crap, I knew it!” she mumbled fearfully, hastily leaning back in her seat. “Aunt Harriett!” she whispered frantically, pulling her eyes away from the mirror to look at her. “Our driver is a witch!” she told her anxiously, glancing back at the old woman uneasily when she heard her cackling up front. “Do you hear that? She’s crazy!”

Harriett looked at her strangely. “Honestly, dear, you have got to stop this. Now, I’ll admit that she is not a very good... oh!” she broke off in fright, gripping the armrest once again when the rear end of the taxi veered suddenly, sending another thick cloud of dust rolling in through the window beside her niece. “Oh my goodness, that certainly gets the old heart pumping, doesn’t it?” she chuckled. “Yes, well,” she continued hastily, when her niece simply glared at her, “um... what was I saying again? Oh yes, I remember now,” she smiled, squinting through the dusty air at her. “I was about to say that she’s not a very good driver, but that doesn’t make her a witch. I mean, you don’t drive very well either you know and I certainly wouldn’t call you a witch, although I have to admit that sometimes you do sound just like...”

“Aunt Harriett, this is not about me!” she interrupted angrily. “Now will you listen to me, please? I saw her eyes glowing in the mirror!” she stressed anxiously.

“Well now, I’m sure that they weren’t glowing. You probably saw the headlights of a vehicle somewhere behind us and mistook them for her eyes,” she suggested mildly, dropping her gaze curiously to the handle her niece was holding in her hand. Leaning forward, she glanced past her to the door panel, raising her brow at the round hole where the handle was supposed to be. “I uh, I see you’ve changed your mind about closing that window then, have you?” she smiled, waving the dust out of her face as she leaned back in her seat.

"No, I have not," she replied tightly. "The stupid thing fell off!"

"It did?" she said in surprise. "But it was working fine a moment ago," she frowned, looking back at it in puzzlement. "Are you sure you didn't knock it, or um... or something? Accidentally of course," she added hastily, when she saw her lips tighten angrily.

"I did not break it, if that is what you're trying to say," she replied touchily. "If it was working fine a moment ago, then either you broke it or she... did it," she told her, nodding toward the driver. "Oh crap, what is she up to now?" she whispered worriedly, watching as the old woman bent low over the steering wheel and began to mutter some sort of children's rhyme about a bird, her long hooked nose almost touching the dashboard above the speedometer. Lifting her gaze to the front window, she saw that they were nearing the top of the hill and she quickly closed her eyes, praying that there wasn't another car coming up the other side.

"Um... are you all right, dear?" Harriett asked, watching her in concern. "Perhaps you ought to move a little closer to that open window, because frankly, you don't look too good," she told her.

"Yep, well, wait till you see what I look like in a few seconds from now!" she snapped angrily, too afraid to open her eyes. "Ha! What am I saying? You won't be able to see me because you'll be dead too. The only one who'll see us is that witch up front, and she'll probably laugh at us while she's flying away on her broom!" she told her miserably, trying to block out the sound of the old woman's voice as it grew steadily louder, the words of the rhyme she was reciting rising above the hum of the motor. *Oooh... I do wish she'd be quiet! How can she even think of nursery rhymes at a time like this? Hey... wait a minute,* she thought suddenly, as her words became clearer. *That's not a nursery rhyme. Hum... let me see,* she frowned, listening intently.

*Up, up, up like a crow, back to Bowland Forest we go,
Let not the time hinder me way, back to 1612, I say!*

Oh... crap! It's a spell, she realized in dawning horror, her eyes flying open in alarm. *She's casting a spell on us,* she thought frantically, flicking her frightened gaze to the driver, and then over to the taxi meter where the numbers displayed in red were now flying by so quickly she could barely see them until finally they came to a jarring stop at nine hundred and ninety-nine dollars and ninety-five cents.

"Aunt Harriett!" she exclaimed anxiously, swinging her gaze to her aunt. "Have you looked at the meter lately? Something very, very, strange is happening here!" she whispered fiercely.

"Really, dear, if this is still about the driver being a witch, I..."

"Just look, will you?" she snapped impatiently.

Harriett sighed in despair. Flicking her gaze past the front seat to the meter mounted on the dashboard, her eyes widened in surprise.

"Oh my goodness, that does seem like a rather high number, doesn't it?" she frowned in puzzlement. "Well, obviously it's broken," she shrugged. "I mean, we've only been sitting in the cab for about fifteen minutes. Ah... there you go! Look at that," she said, when the numbers on the meter suddenly went back to zero and began to flash. "You see, it is broken," she smiled.

"It is not broken!" she argued hotly. "Why is it that you never believe me when... oh!" she exclaimed, startled when she felt the car shift awkwardly beneath her, throwing her back against the seat when it suddenly tilted upward at a sharp angle. "Oh my God, this car just lifted itself up into the air like a plane! I think we're flying!" she whispered fearfully, looking anxiously through the windows. "Oh crap, we are flying!" she exclaimed in fright, her eyes widening when she saw nothing but a thick white mist outside.

Harriett frowned. "Nonsense, cars do not fly. We're merely climbing a very steep hill, that's all," she explained mildly.

"Yeah, well, where is it then? Because I don't see anything but mist out there!" she said fiercely.

Harriett glanced through the window, surprised by the thick wall of fog that met her gaze.

"Well, I don't know where it is exactly. I can't see any better than you right now, but I can tell you that we were very near the top the last time I looked, so I imagine it won't be long before we begin to go down. Actually," she continued thoughtfully, shifting her gaze up to the driver, "after seeing that fog I'm beginning to change my mind about her."

"Really, well it's about time," Lisa said wryly.

"Yes..." she nodded, looking back at her. "I rather suspect that she's quite a good driver after all. It takes a lot of skill to drive through the traffic like she did you know, and now to drive through all of this fog and at such a high speed? You have to give her credit, dear."

Lisa looked at her incredulously. "She's a witch, Aunt Harriett! She is using her powers to drive this car, and that is not fog out there, that is a cloud," she informed her. "In fact, there are clouds all around us right now. Why? Because she just cast a spell on this taxi and made it fly!"

Harriett looked at her strangely. "I'm going to get you some help when we get back home because you're really beginning to worry me now. A flying taxi indeed!" she scoffed.

Lisa glared at her. "I do not need help. You're the one who needs a doctor. I'm just not sure whether it's a head doctor you need or an eye doctor," she frowned. "You probably need both. I mean, you do have a lying problem, that is quite obvious," she continued glumly, recalling the story about their neighbor Mr. Thorn, "and you don't see too well or you would have never gotten into this cab with her. You don't seem to find anything strange about her reckless driving or the fact that we can't hear the sound of gravel hitting the underside of this car anymore, which backs up my theory that we are now air born, and you can't seem to tell the difference between clouds and fog!" she finished angrily.

Harriett raised her brow, feeling slightly affronted by the accusation. "I most certainly can tell the difference between the two. You see, fog forms from condensation just as clouds do and is considered to be a lower level cloud, or a ground level cloud if you prefer, and I can tell you that what we are looking at through the window here is a ground level... oh!" she broke off suddenly, when the nose of the car unexpectedly tilted downward throwing her forward, her seatbelt the only thing stopping her from flying into the front seat. "Oh my goodness... are you all right, dear?" she asked in concern, looking worriedly across at her niece, whose wide frightened eyes and pale face told her

immediately that she was not doing well at all. "It's a good thing that we had our seatbelts on, I dare say! This is quite a steep hill," she told her, flicking her gaze worriedly up to the driver when the car suddenly began to shake, making a horrible rattling sound.

Lisa glared at her. "It is not a hill, Aunt Harriett! We are falling out of the sky and we are about to crash!"

Harriett chuckled. "We are not falling out of the sky, I assure you. Now take a deep breath to calm your..." she broke off, studying the driver curiously when she suddenly noticed that the woman was slouched over the steering wheel at an odd angle, her head rolling back and forth with the motion of the car. "Oh my! I uh... I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but it looks like the driver may have suffered a wee injury when we took that nose dive at the top of the hill," she grimaced, looking back at her niece worriedly.

Lisa raised her brow. "A wee injury?" she queried, looking at her uncertainly. "Like what? Did she poke her eye? Hurt her finger? What?" she asked in rising panic. "Oh never mind, I'll look for myself!" she snapped finally. "You'll probably just lie to me anyway," she grumbled moodily, craning her neck to the side to look past the driver's headrest. "She doesn't seem any different to me," she said, spying her long, straggly, gray hair, her head still bent over the steering wheel. "Well, except that she has finally shut up," she added glumly, her eyes widening in surprise when she suddenly saw the woman's head roll slightly to the side. "Wait a minute... she's face down on the steering. She's out cold!" she exclaimed in alarm, looking frantically back at her aunt.

"Yes," Harriett nodded thoughtfully. "Either that, or uh... or she's dead," she suggested hesitantly. "That would definitely explain the blood that I see on her temple there, I dare say," she frowned, looking worriedly back at the old woman, watching as drops of blood trickled down from her forehead onto the steering wheel.

"Dead?" she whispered uneasily, following her gaze. "Oh my God... no one is driving the car!" she realized suddenly, her eyes widening in alarm. "We're going to die!"

Harriett frowned, quickly reaching for the buckle of her seatbelt. "Calm down, we are not going to die. I'll simply climb into the front seat and pull the car over onto the side of the road," she told her.

"No, wait!" she cried out frantically. "That's not going to work! There is no road, remember? We're flying, or rather, we were flying, now we're just falling," she said wretchedly.

Harriett sighed heavily. "I do wish that you'd give that up. I assure you that this vehicle has not left the ground and I'm going to prove it to you," she said determinedly, pushing in the snap on her seatbelt. "Oh!" she exclaimed in surprise, when she was suddenly thrown forward, slamming into the back of the front seat. "Oh dear... I guess I should have expected that!" she chuckled, quickly grabbing onto the headrest to prevent herself from being tossed over the front seat and into the dashboard. "I mean, this is quite a steep hill after all," she went on, positioning herself to safely climb over the back of the seat.

"Wait! Listen," Lisa interrupted urgently, dropping her eyes to the floor of the car where a strange scraping sound was coming from. "What's that noise?"

Harriett followed her gaze, and then looked around in puzzlement, glancing curiously through the window, trying to see through the fog.

“I don’t know, I can’t see anything out there,” she shrugged. “But it sounds like we could be driving over long grass or brush, which would suggest that we are in a field of sorts. One thing is for sure though, grass doesn’t grow in clouds,” she pointed out, smiling at her niece who quickly narrowed her eyes at her. “Which also means that I had better climb up front and stop this car before we hit something or um... or drive over a cliff,” she added with a chuckle.

Lisa glared at her. “That is not funny, Aunt Harriett! Now will you get up there and stop this vehicle!” she snapped impatiently.

“That’s what I’m trying to do, dear. You’re the one who told me to wait,” she reminded her, tightening her grip on the headrest as she lifted her leg over the back of the seat. “Goodness, I do wish that you’d make up your...” she broke off, quickly looking back at her, when she suddenly heard her scream in terror, the scraping sounds now coming from all around them. “Oh dear...” she worried, grimacing when she saw the large branches that were whipping in and out of the open window, leaving leaves and broken twigs in their wake, her niece’s hands the only visible part of her that she could see as they gripped the sides of the suitcase that she was hiding behind. Suddenly she heard a loud bang and felt her fingers slide away from the headrest as she was tossed forward, slamming painfully into the dashboard, the driver’s hideous face and humped back leaning awkwardly over the steering, the last thing she saw before darkness swept in to claim her.



Lisa is afraid of most everything, especially witches, so when an unstamped letter floats into the house through an open window next to where she is sitting, only to shoot across the floor of the salon to land at her aunt's feet as if it knew where it was going, she is very suspicious that magic is involved, and that her Aunt Harriett, who has always insisted that witches do not exist, was in fact up to her neck in witchcraft!

Harriett knows exactly what her niece is thinking and quickly realizes that not only will she have to come up with a believable explanation for the magical letter, but she will also have to inform her that one of her long dead aunts has miraculously come back to life, and then convince her to come along on this trip to visit her! It was going to take some

well placed white lies to do it of course, but it was for her niece's own safety after all.

Unfortunately, the trip turns out to be anything but safe when they are kidnapped at the train station by an evil witch and taken back to the seventeenth century in a taxi where they end up getting arrested for being witches themselves when Harriett's cell phone starts barking. Thrown into jail, and then rescued by the two wicked witches who brought them there in the first place and who have their own diabolical plan for them, leaves Harriett worrying over how much longer she'll be able to keep her secret from her niece, and has Lisa wondering if they will ever get back home alive!

Which Witch is Which? Book One Double Trouble

by Judith E. Webb



White magic versus black in this comedy adventure novel.

Which Witch is Which?

Book One (Double Trouble)

by Judith E. Webb

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