

BOOK TWO

Which Witch Is Which?

Inside the Rainbow

Judith E. Webb

With Lisa's memory having been erased by her aunts and the sudden return of the evil twins in her century, Cerberus knows that he is going to have to be very persuasive if he wants to get her out of the house before they find her. First he must convince her that she knows him and that her life is in danger, and then he has to inform her that she's a witch and get her to use the family ring to take them to the safety of the rainbow, and he must accomplish all of this without revealing the real truth about why he was bringing her there. He certainly was not looking forward to babysitting a stubborn untrained witch again, especially not after his last experience with her, and that's why he was coming prepared this time. Oh yeah, this time he had a plan...

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Which Witch Is Which?

(Book Two)

Inside The Rainbow

By

Judith E. Webb

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Note from the Author

Some of the fictional characters in this story are centuries old and therefore they 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.

Chapter One

(Lancaster, England, 1612)

Amaris set a fresh log onto the dying fire, watching intently as the glowing red embers caught at it hungrily, the flames that now curled around the wood in their quest to devour it, offering her a welcoming heat to warm her chilled bones. Stretching out her gnarled arthritic hands toward it, she slid her gaze resentfully around the small abandoned cave that she and her sister Clovis had been forced to live in for the past several months. *Aye, ever since that white witch we lured back from the twenty-first century took our powers and turned us into mice, leaving us as prey for that hateful creature Withington*, she reflected bitterly, recalling how he had chased them down into the cellar that day, hoping to seek his revenge upon them for turning him into a cat. *Course, it weren't enough for the white witch that the cat was goin' to have us for his supper*, she continued miserably as she stared into the flames. *No, she had to send the entire house crashing down upon the three of us before she was satisfied! Aye... well, she'll soon be wishin' that she had stuck around and made sure that we were dead*, she grinned evilly, chuckling at the memory of Withington scrambling out of the cellar in fear of his life when he heard the walls begin to tremble. *Little does she know that we're still alive! Well, that is to say, that Clovis and I are still alive*, she added thoughtfully, recalling that it was only moments after the cat had disappeared through the trap door that the roof had fallen in.

"Dumb cat!" she mumbled irritably to herself. "He surely must be dead, otherwise he would have been waitin' outside ready to pounce on us after we crawled out from beneath all of that rubble," she determined. "Bah! He's dead all right, and if he ain't, well, he will be if I ever catch sight of him again!" she swore vehemently, flicking her gaze angrily across the cave to her twin when she suddenly heard her begin to snore loudly, the annoying sound grating upon her already frayed nerves.

"Clovis! Wake up!" she snapped moodily, glaring over at her.

Clovis jumped, coming wide awake at the harshly spoken command. "What? What is it? Is somethin' wrong?" she asked worriedly, looking anxiously around the cave.

"Aye, there be something wrong all right, ye were snorin' again!" she scowled, narrowing her eyes at her. "Now get over here, I've got somethin' important to tell ya!"

"Again?" she said wryly, blinking the sleep out of her eyes. "What is it this time?" she asked irritably, angrily pushing a long strand of gray hair back over her shoulder when it fell across her face into her line of vision.

"I've taken me decision," she replied firmly.

"About what?" she asked, looking at her warily when she suddenly noted the stubborn tilt of her head and the tight line of her lips. *Oh no, she's in one of her moods again*, she observed with a scowl. *She's been like this ever since she managed to change us back into our old selves with them magical herbs we had stored down in the cellar. Well, almost back to our normal selves*, she corrected herself, her eyes fixing upon her sister's long hooked nose which was still twitching uncontrollably like a rodents. *Course, what with all of these dumb ideas she's been comin' up with lately, I'm beginnin' to suspect that she may have kept the rodents brain too*, she frowned, sliding her gaze thoughtfully down over her twin's ragged shawl and tattered blue woolen dress, recalling

how they had to dig them out from beneath the rubble of their home that frightful day. *Luckily for us they were still laying near the door where they had fallen after the witch had put the mouse spell on us*, she reflected, glancing down at her own brown woolen kirtle and linen partlet, the sleeves of which were now torn and stained. Hearing her sister sigh impatiently, she reluctantly pushed herself up from the floor of the cave. "I'm comin'," she said irritably, looking over at her sullenly. "Don't know why ye just can't tell me from there, it's not like there be anyone else here, except for maybe a few bats and some fleas," she grumbled, scratching at a large patch of mouse hair that remained on the top of one of her hands as she walked across the cave to join her by the fire.

"Because I don't want to have to scream to speak to ya," she told her moodily.

Clovis frowned. "Ye didn't seem to have a problem with that a moment ago when ye woke me up from me nap," she reminded her irritably.

Amaris narrowed her eyes. "Do ye want to hear what I have to say or not?" she asked tightly.

"I'm here, ain't I?" she replied tartly. "So, what decision are ye talkin' 'bout?"

"Me decision to go into the twenty-first century," she replied significantly, glancing back at the flames. "I've decided I'm goin' to get me powers back and then I'm goin' to take hers just like I had planned from the start," she informed her.

Clovis lifted a doubtful brow. "Are ye now? And just how are ye plannin' to do that without yer powers? Seems to me that ye might need 'em to get..." she broke off, when Amaris suddenly turned on her, her one dark eye flashing angrily.

"I know that!" she snapped angrily. "Ye don't have to be constantly remindin' me!"

"Well then, ye must know that ye ain't goin' anywhere that yer feet can't take ya," she grumbled, stretching her hands out toward the fire.

"Unless... I have help," she said slyly.

Clovis looked back at her with raised brows. "What do ye mean by that?"

"I mean that I intend to use someone else's powers to get there," she informed her smugly.

"Really?" she said skeptically. "Whose? We don't know anyone who has that kind of power," she pointed out.

"Oh, but we do. Aye," she continued at her look of surprise, "he be someone who owes me a favor and has no likin' for white magic."

Clovis looked at her strangely. "I don't know who ye could be referrin' to, unless..." she broke off suddenly, her eyes widening as she recalled the evil little wizard who had banged upon their door in the middle of the night many years ago, nearly half dead after a white witch's attempt to kill him. "Unless it's that old wizard ye nursed back to health a while back?" she finished, eyeing her suspiciously now.

"Aye," she nodded. "He'd be the one to do it, I've no doubt 'bout that," she replied, flicking her gaze thoughtfully back to the fire. "Don't know why I didn't think 'bout him before."

"Well, I don't trust him and I don't think ye ought to either," she said glumly, not liking this new plan of hers any better than the others that she'd been hearing over the last few months. "He's likely to send us into the future and leave us stranded there!"

"He won't cross me if he knows what's good for him," she shrugged, unconcerned.

"Humph!" Clovis exclaimed, shaking her head in disbelief. "I'm afraid that without yer powers

ye ain't much of a threat to anyone, not to the wizard, and most certainly not to the white witch," she told her.

"The wizard ain't aware that we've lost our powers," she pointed out.

"Oh, I'm sure it won't take him too long to discover that!" she scoffed. "I mean, why else would we be askin' for his help, ay?"

"Don't ye worry, I'll think of somethin' to tell him. All ye have to do is keep yer mouth shut when we're there and let me do the talkin'," she said warningly. "Ye've already done enough damage, don't ya think?" she added, looking at her meaningfully.

Clovis made a face. "I told ya, it was yer cat who messed things up the last time, not me," she reminded her irritably. "Now, let's say that ye did manage to get into the future with the wizard's help, how do ye plan to get the white witch to give ya her magic? Did ye forget what happened to us the last time ye went after her powers?" she asked miserably, lifting her hand to show her the patch of mouse hair that remained there.

"Get yer paw out of me face!" she snapped in annoyance, slapping it away. "No, I haven't forgotten, but this time we'll have the advantage. Ye see, she probably thinks we be long dead, Withington's supper if ye know what I'm sayin'? Aye..." she continued smugly, when she saw her eyes widen in understanding, "so, she wouldn't be too worried, now would she? Especially knowin' that we have no powers to get to her and the blond girl even if we had managed to escape that nasty cat," she added bitterly.

Clovis looked at her uncertainly. "I don't know, I don't like it," she said uneasily. "There be two of 'em now to deal with and we still know nothin' 'bout the younger one. Who do ye think she be, her sister?"

"No," she replied with a shake of her head. "I told ye, Hex didn't mention another child except for the older brother, and we got rid of him and his wife, if ye recall? Although, the girl was wearin' the signet ring," she went on thoughtfully, "so I suppose she must have Spencer blood in her. The ring wouldn't have taken to her finger otherwise," she frowned, staring into the flames. "One thing is for certain, she ain't worth troublin' over. She's most likely distant kin, that'd explain why she didn't have much powers and why we didn't know 'bout her."

Clovis frowned, recalling the day she had put a spell upon the car that the white witch's brother had been traveling in with his wife, sending it over a cliff.

"Wait a minute..." she said, her eyes widening as a thought suddenly occurred to her. "What if the brother had a child? Now that I'm thinkin' 'bout it, his wife had golden hair and she didn't have no magic in her," she told her, worrying her bottom lip. "Aye," she continued thoughtfully, "and if the girl is indeed theirs, then she'd have been born of mixed blood, and that would explain why her powers were not strong."

Amaris glared at her. "I thought ye told me that there was no child!"

Clovis took an anxious step back, wringing her hands. "I uh... I didn't think that there was cause the two of 'em were always alone," she explained hastily, looking away.

"Ye mean to say that ye never checked?" she asked her incredulously. "Bah! Yer hopeless! Don't know why I let ye do anything. Ye bungle every darn job I give ya!" she grumbled, looking angrily back at the fire. "I can't believe ye let that one slip by ya. Now I'm goin' to have to clean up yer mess again!" she grumbled, shaking her head in disgust. "Humph! Well, if indeed she be his offspring, then they would have kept her hidden away all of these years to protect her until her

twenty-first birthday, which is when she'd be recievin' the full force of her powers. Course, being the daughter of the mother's son with human blood flowin' in her veins, she'd just be a regular witch, certainly not as powerful as the one who was born of both witch and warlock, but still... she could cause trouble for us later. From the look of her when she was here, I'd say that she's still got a year or two to go before she reaches her twenty-first year," she continued thoughtfully, "so we're just as well to get rid of her now while she's still weak, but first we'll use her to get to the other one," she said slyly. Pulling her shawl tightly about her shoulders, she abruptly turned away from the fire and hurried toward the mouth of the cave. "Clovis!" she snapped impatiently, when she didn't hear her following behind her. "Get over here, there's no time to waste! We're goin' to see the wizard!" she told her urgently, disappearing through the opening seconds later.

Clovis swallowed nervously, hastening after her. "Are ye sure ye don't want to think 'bout this a wee bit first?" she asked anxiously, shivering as the cool damp air outside penetrated the threadbare blanket that was wrapped tightly around her shoulders, her own shawl having been lost beneath the rubble of their house. "I mean, in case ye've not noticed, things haven't been goin' too well for us lately," she pointed out, as she hurried through the trees to catch up to her.

"No they haven't, and it's all cause of ye too," she reminded her bitterly. "So just be quiet and do what yer told for a change," she frowned, glaring at her as she stepped up beside her.

"I did do what ye asked," she said touchily. "Ye told me to get rid of the brother and his wife, and I did. It was yer darn cat who bungled the job I tell ya," she mumbled irritably. "He was supposed to find out if there were any more Spencer brats alive," she reminded her, glancing curiously into the trees when she suddenly noticed that they weren't taking their usual route through the Forest of Bowland. "Where does that ugly little wizard live? I hope it ain't far because I ain't too fond of trampin' through all of this damp underbrush," she grumbled miserably, angrily jerking the hem of her long woolen skirt off of the prickly branches that kept snagging at it, causing her to miss her step and fall behind.

"He lives in the County of Pink, just over there," she replied, nodding toward a colorful rainbow that arched down over the treetops, the end of it hovering just above the ground in the center of a small grassy clearing, the early morning dew glistening upon the crabgrass like diamonds beneath its glowing hues of purple, green, yellow, and pink. "Oh, and ye had best be watchin' what ye say from here on in. The trees in this neck of the woods have eyes and ears," she warned her quietly as they walked toward it. "They be watchin' us, and... listenin', ye can be sure of that!"

"Aye, well, perhaps we ought to turn around and head back to our cave then," she said, looking anxiously at the trees. "Cause without our powers we ain't got nothin' to defend ourselves with. Which reminds me," she continued moodily, glancing back at the rainbow, "how are we supposed to get in there without any magic?"

Amaris frowned, having wondered the same thing herself. "I'm not too sure, but I do know there's a way. I'm tryin' to remember what it was the wizard had told me, but t'was a long time ago, ye understand? Course, now that I'm thinkin' 'bout it, I seem to recall him mentionin' a sentry of some..." she broke off, stiffening, when she heard a deep voice suddenly boom across the clearing from behind them.

"State yer business!" the voice said gruffly, glaring at them as they spun around to face him.

"Oh! Oh me gosh, it's a tree!" Clovis exclaimed fearfully, when she met the menacing stare of an ancient oak just a few feet away, its one large gold eye watching them from the center of its thick twisted trunk, its branches rippling and crackling with impatience as it waited for them to answer. "Oooh... I don't like the look of him, Amaris! I'm thinkin' we ought to just go!" she

whispered frantically, taking an anxious step back when one of its branches came too close to her head.

Amaris turned to glare at her. “We ain’t leavin’!” she whispered fiercely. “He must be the sentry the wizard spoke of. Now be quiet, and remember, let me do the talkin’!” she warned, forcing up a smile as she looked back at the tree. “Um... our business, ye say? Well, it’s fairly simple really, we’ve come to see the wizard,” she told him, unafraid. “Aye,” she continued with a nod, when she saw his eye widen in disbelief, “the wizard who lives in the County of Pink,” she clarified.

“The wizard, ye say? Is he expectin’ ye then?” he asked curiously.

“Expectin’ us?” she said in confusion, caught off guard by the question. “Um... aye, of course he is,” she lied easily. “The wizard and I are old friends.”

“The wizard has no friends,” he said coldly, eyeing them suspiciously. “What do ye really want with him, ay?” he asked, sliding his gaze over to her twin.

Clovis swallowed nervously, inching closer to her sister. “Just tell him the truth, will ya!” she whispered fervently next to her ear.

Amaris sighed, turning to glare at her. “Well, it looks like I have to now, don’t it?” she said tightly, looking quickly back at the tree. “He um... he owes me a favor for savin’ his life and I’ve come to collect,” she shrugged.

“I see...” he said, studying them thoughtfully. “Tell me, why is it that ye look like witches but yet I can’t feel yer magic? Are ye sick then? Or did someone take yer powers from ye?” he asked them curiously. “Was it the wizard himself?”

Amaris’s lips tightened angrily. “Ye ask far too many questions for someone who could easily end up on me hearth!”

“Ah... a witch with a temper!” he laughed. “Well, that explains how ye lost yer powers then. A bad temper makes for poor judgment ye know,” he told her, chuckling.

Amaris glared at him. “Are ye goin’ to let us in or not?”

The tree sighed heavily, this action setting its branches to creaking noisily once again.

“Oh... I suppose I’ll let ye pass, but ye do know...”

“Just let us in!” she snapped impatiently.

The tree sighed, looking at her thoughtfully once again. “Aye, I’ll let ya in, but first I’ll need to give ya some instructions on how to get to the wizard’s tower, so listen closely because I’m only goin’ to say it the one time,” he told her warningly. “Once yer inside of the rainbow, yer to take the main road up to the golden rock that be shaped like a four leaf clover. There, ye’ll knock three times upon the stone, not four, three,” he warned. “If the wizard gives ye leave to enter, ye’ll be able to see the door to his tower, but if he refuses yer visit, ye must leave post haste or the leprechauns will come and get ya,” he informed them. “Tear ya to shreds they will,” he added nastily, flicking his gaze to Clovis when he heard her gasp in fright, hastily pulling her sister aside.

“I’m not too sure ‘bout this plan of yers, Amaris!” she whispered fiercely. “I don’t think it’s safe to be goin’ in there, especially with no powers,” she added anxiously, flicking her eyes over to the rainbow and then back to the tree who was watching them curiously.

Amaris scowled. “Bah! Ye’ve got no backbone, that’s yer problem,” she grumbled, glancing back at the tree when she heard it sigh impatiently once again.

"Are ye goin' or not? I'd like to get back to me nap," he told them irritably.

"Aye, we're goin' ye old stump of wood. Quit yer complainin'," she grumbled, urging Clovis over to the rainbow.

Clovis glanced quickly back at the tree, frowning worriedly when she saw its eye narrow in anger.

"Yer goin' to get us killed, I can feel it in me bones!" she whispered worriedly, looking back at her.

"Ye always say that. Now be quiet!" she snapped angrily. Stepping up to the color pink, she looked back at the tree. "We're ready," she told him.

"Then by all means, go in," he said indifferently. "Course, I should warn ye that I can only let ye in, not out. Ye need magic to leave the rainbow," he informed them, laughing when he saw the frightened look upon Clovis's face.

"Did ye hear that, Amaris? What if the wizard refuses to help us? We'll be stuck in there for good!" she whispered in alarm, glancing worriedly at the pink door that suddenly appeared in front of them.

Amaris sighed heavily. Pulling the door open, she looked into the rainbow, surprised to see that everything looked just the same as it did in the outside world with the exception of the sky which was solid pink here. Turning back to her sister, she frowned.

"We ain't turnin' back. It's all yer fault we have to go in there in the first place, so quit yer complainin' and get in!" she said irritably, pushing her through the doorway. Quickly stepping through after her, she slammed the door closed and leaned up against it, looking at her smugly.

Clovis narrowed her eyes. "Ye didn't have to shove me!"

"Aye, I did," she nodded. "Ye were digging yer heels into the ground like a mule. Nothin' is goin' to stop me from gettin' me powers back, Clovis. Nothin'!" she said warningly. "Now," she continued, looking around curiously, "all we have to do is find the wizard's home and we'll be all set," she said thoughtfully, urging her quickly down the dirt road to what looked like a crossroads marked by a wooden post with four arrow shaped signs nailed to it, each one pointing in a different direction.

Clovis glanced back at the magical door, watching uneasily as it disappeared.

"Aye, well, I only hope that we ain't stuck in here for good," she frowned, looking back at her. "I don't like leprechauns, ye know that. I heard that they're mean little devils, and that ye can't trust 'em. Puts me in mind of yer cats," she mumbled miserably, thinking of Hex, and then Withington who replaced him when Hex turned up missing after they had sent him into the cellar to spy on the girl and her aunt. "Humph! Spawns of Satan those cats were!"

Amaris stopped beside the post, looking up at the road signs. "Aye, and if ye don't shut up I'll be turnin' ya into one when I get me magic back," she scowled. "That ought to put an end to yer complainin'," she grumbled, reading the arrows. "Let me see now... Leprechaun Cove, Clover Hill, ah... here we go, Main Road!" she smiled triumphantly, looking down the winding dirt path in front of them. "That'd be the one we're supposed to take. Well, come on then, let's get goin', and keep an eye out for the rock," she said, pulling her forward.

"Don't worry, I don't want to be walkin' out here any longer than necessary," she scowled, looking warily into the trees along the sides of the road.

Amaris shook her head in despair. "Yer supposed to be a witch, so why don't ya start actin' like one, ay?"

"Aye, well, I'm feelin' ill at ease without me powers, and me witch's instinct is tellin' me that there be eyes watchin' us from behind those trees out there, little devil eyes," she added glumly.

"There ain't anyone watchin' ya but me, and all I can see is that yer not doin' what yer supposed to be doin'," she said, glowering at her.

"I am!" she said tightly, looking away. "I just want to be prepared in case one of those leprechauns jumps out at me," she explained, stiffening when she saw a flash of blue suddenly streak through the forest, disappearing behind the wide trunk of a tree seconds later. "Amaris!" she whispered frantically, looking back at her. "I swear I just saw one!"

"Bah! Yer seein' things again!" she scoffed. "Ain't nothin' out there but trees," she frowned, following her gaze. "I swear ye must have done some damage to yer head the day ye brought them women back and crashed into the forest," she said, looking at her strangely. Swinging her gaze back to her side of the road, she suddenly stopped, her eyes filling with excitement when they fell upon a portion of a large gold colored rock sticking out from a break in the trees a short distance away. "I've found it, Clovis! Come on, hurry!" she said urgently, hastening toward it.

Clovis cast a final glance into the trees, then quickly followed her sister over to the huge clover shaped rock that sat at the entrance to a clearing filled with crabgrass and brush, the pile of gray stones that sat in its center giving one the impression that something grand had once stood there. The sudden cawing of a crow nearby pulled her gaze up to the barren gray limbs of a dead tree still rooted into the ground next to her, the crows yellow eyes looking down at her curiously. Quickly deciding that it wasn't a threat, she looked back at the golden rock, anxious to get into the wizard's tower and away from the leprechaun that she suspected was lurking in the woods at that very moment, watching them.

"How many times were we supposed to knock on the rock?" she asked her sister in confusion.

Amaris reached up to scratch her head, her nose twitching as she tried to remember the instructions that the tree had given them.

"Let me see, hum... I think t'was three. No, wait, t'was four! No, just a minute, that wasn't it either," she frowned in puzzlement.

Clovis rolled her eyes, looking back at the rock thoughtfully. "I say t'was three. Aye, I remember now, that was it all right," she nodded.

Amaris raised her brow. "It was, was it? Well, if yer thinkin' three, then it has to be four cause yer never right," she said nastily.

Clovis glared at her. "I'm tellin' ya, it's three!" she said tightly, watching as her sister stubbornly made a fist and knocked upon the stone four times, then stepped back, waiting, a puzzled frown marring her forehead when nothing happened.

"Humph... nothin'," she said in disappointment. "Not even a wee leprechaun jumping out at... oh!" she exclaimed, grabbing frantically onto Clovis when the ground suddenly opened up beneath their feet, swallowing them whole, their screams of terror all that could be heard as they were swept down a long winding chute, their arms and legs flailing helplessly in the darkness as they spiraled down it for several moments before it finally spit them out into a large dimly lit cavern, Amaris being the first to hit the hard earth floor with a thump and a curse, immediately followed by Clovis who tumbled out on top of her.

"I told ya t'was three!" she fumed.

Amaris narrowed her eyes. "And I still say t'was four," she insisted tightly. "T'was the tree that lied, he tricked us. Now get off of me, ye big rat!" she snapped, pushing her off onto the ground. "What are ye tryin' to do, kill me?" she asked miserably, looking around for her shawl when she realized that she didn't have it anymore. Suddenly spying a corner of it hanging over the edge of the chute behind her sister, she quickly shoved her out of the way and grabbed it, yanking it out of the shaft.

Clovis scowled, hurriedly getting to her feet. "The tree didn't lie," she argued. "T'is ye who..." she broke off, her eyes flying across the candlelit room when she suddenly heard someone clear their throat rather loudly.

Amaris followed her gaze, her eyes lighting up with recognition as they fell upon a little man about three feet in height wearing a dark blue velvet robe that swept the ground, a tall cone shaped hat upon his head, his long white beard with its familiar deep gray stripe running down the center, swinging toward them as he turned and stepped away from his work table, looking at them in puzzlement.

"Who are ye and what do ye want?" he asked gruffly.

"Ah... Aegis! It's me, Amaris," she grinned, hastily getting to her feet. "Sorry to um... to drop in on ye unexpectedly like this, but it's concernin' a most urgent matter," she told him, her gaze sliding quickly over to the experimental beakers on his work table that had long thin tubes running from one to the next. "I uh... I need yer help it seems," she explained, dusting off her hands as he walked toward them, stopping just a few feet in front of them.

The wizard looked up at them, his eyes appearing much too large for his face as he studied them through large, round, wire rimmed spectacles that sat perched on his pointy nose, lending him an owlish look, his pudgy hands tucked into the bell sleeves of his robe.

"Yer the witch that helped me out of a tight spot a long time ago," he said finally, before flicking his gaze over to Clovis. "Aye," he continued with a nod, looking back at Amaris, "yer the twins. I remember ya all right. What is it ye want from me then?" he asked her curiously.

"I need ya to send us into the twenty-first century," she replied, not wanting to tell him more than was necessary.

Clovis watched him worriedly as his eyes widened in surprise, giving her the impression that they might pop out of his head at any moment. Grimacing at the thought, she took a hasty step back, eyeing him warily as his gaze slid over to her, coming to rest upon her face for a moment before flicking back to her sister once again.

"I see..." he said thoughtfully. "Tell me, why do ye need me to do that for ya? Can't ye do it yerself?"

Amaris looked quickly at her sister, when she suddenly leaned toward her.

"Be careful what ye tell him!" Clovis whispered warningly. "Don't let on that we ain't got no powers and don't tell him nothin' 'bout the high priestess, cause if he finds out 'bout her he'll want her magic for himself!"

Amaris nodded, looking back at the wizard. "The uh... the reason we need yer help is that um... that I'm havin' a wee bit of a problem with me powers," she grimaced.

"A problem?" he queried, looking at her intriguingly.

"Aye," she nodded. "Ye see, there be this young girl, a witch, nothin' special 'bout her," she added hastily, when she felt her sister poke her in the back. "She uh... she came here to our century to try and kill me, or rather... us," she explained, nodding toward her sister. "Of course, as ye can see she didn't succeed, but uh... she did manage to put a wee spell on us when our backs were turned which has caused us some difficulties as ye can well imagine," she told him, offering up a nervous smile.

The wizard flicked his gaze over to Clovis whom he noticed was hovering over her sister's shoulder watching him warily. *Somthin' is amiss here*, he thought suspiciously, looking back at Amaris.

"What sort of difficulties are ye havin' and who be this witch?" he asked.

Amaris sighed, quickly losing her patience with the little man's questions. "Ye know, difficulties," she replied irritably. "Like um... like me spells only workin' half way, people fallin' off the walls where I put 'em, imps who don't do what they're told, that sort of thing," she grumbled, bitterly recalling the witch hunter she had turned into a cat.

"Aye, and that bite ya too!" Clovis offered, recalling how Withington had bit her sister's finger. "Don't forget that, or that ye can't light the fire like ye..." she broke off, her eyes widening fearfully when Amaris turned her head to glare at her.

"I swear, I'm goin' to seal yer lips together yet!" she whispered threateningly. "I thought ye didn't want him to know how bad it was?" she asked tightly.

"Well, ye pretty much told him already that ye've got no more powers," she frowned, sliding her gaze worriedly over to the wizard who was watching them with raised brows, his large eyes flicking back and forth between them.

"So she took yer powers, did she?" he asked in amusement. "Well, well..." he continued, studying them thoughtfully, "and now yer wantin' me to help ye get 'em back I suppose?" he asked knowingly.

Amaris scowled. "Aye, it appears so," she admitted reluctantly.

The wizard nodded. "Well, I do owe ya for savin' me life from the white witch. Tell me 'bout the girl then? Does she have the white magic in her or the black?" he asked curiously.

"Why?" she asked guardedly.

"Well, I need to know what kind of spell to prepare for ya, don't I?" he said with a shrug.

"Aye, of course ye do!" she laughed nervously.

"Well?" he asked impatiently. "Which one is it then, white or black?" he asked curtly.

Amaris cleared her throat. "Um... white," she replied hesitantly.

"Oh?" he said intriguingly. "From which blood line does she hail? She must have very powerful white magic to have taken the powers from the two of ya at the same time. A crafty one too I'd say, seein' as how she was able to sneak up on ya without ye knowin' 'bout it," he added with a smirk.

Amaris narrowed her eyes. "She didn't sneak..." she broke off abruptly, when her sister poked her in the back once again. "I mean, aye, she's a crafty one all right," she frowned.

The wizard smiled. "Ye didn't answer me question."

"Which one?" she asked dryly.

"Which blood line does she hail from?" he reminded her.

"I don't know," she lied.

"I see..." he said, staring curiously up at her nose when he noticed that it was twitching back and forth. "Well, I'm afraid I can't help ya then," he said, turning away abruptly.

Amaris stared at his back in shock. "No! Wait!" she exclaimed frantically, realizing that she might lose the only chance she had to get her powers back. "It's um... it's comin' back to me now," she said hastily, anxiously wringing her hands.

The wizard turned around, a pleased grin upon his face. "Is it now? I thought it might," he said smugly.

"Aye," she nodded. "I believe that she's um... a Spencer," she confessed reluctantly, hoping that he hadn't heard of them.

The wizard's eyes widened as the hated name rolled off of her tongue. Quickly hiding his surprise, he looked away. *Spencer*, he thought angrily, feeling his blood begin to boil as he recalled the night the white witch and his minion, the three headed beast, had chased him through the Forest Of Bowland nearly killing him. *Well, well*, he continued thoughtfully, *the girl must be his daughter then. It's no wonder she was able to take their powers*, he realized. *I thought the Spencer line had all been wiped out, but I guess one of 'em must have survived*, he thought, looking back at the witches intriguingly.

"How um... how old would this witch be then?" he asked them curiously.

Clovis swallowed nervously, scratching at the patch of mouse hair on her hand once again.

"She'd be less than twenty I suppose," she shrugged. "What does it matter? We told ya already, she's just a regular witch," she scowled, anxious to put end to his questions.

"Less than twenty, ay?" he said, raising his brow. *So, she wouldn't even have come in to her full powers yet. Perfect! I can't believe my luck*, he thought with a grin, hardly able to contain his excitement.

Amaris looked at him strangely. "Have ye heard of her then?" she asked suspiciously.

"Um... heard of her? No... no," he replied quickly, shaking his head. "I've never heard of her," he smiled. "So tell me, was she alone when she came here? I mean, did she have her familiar or um... or any other companion with her?" he asked curiously, not relishing having to run into the three headed beast again.

Clovis quickly poked her sister. "Don't ye dare tell him 'bout the others!" she whispered warningly, hastily leaning away from her when she whirled around to glare at her.

"Will ye quit poking me? I wasn't goin' to tell him," she said angrily, lowering her voice to a whisper. "Do ye think I'm crazy? Now be quiet before ye ruin it for us again!" she grumbled, looking back at the wizard. "Um... no, she was alone," she lied.

"Ah... good," he nodded. "That'll make it easier for us to get to her," he said thoughtfully. "Well then, I had best start preparin' what we'll need to take with us, ay?" he grinned, anxious to get going.

Amaris and Clovis looked at him in surprise. "Us?" they both said at once.

"Aye," he nodded. "Ye see, the spell won't work without the magic and the magic is in me," he informed them smugly. "Besides, once ye get what ye want from the girl ye'll have no further use

for her, ay?”

Amaris looked at him warily. “Um... well, no. Why?”

The wizard shrugged. “It gets mighty lonely out here in this tower all by meself, and uh... I’ve been thinkin’ ‘bout takin’ me a wife,” he lied.

“Ye want the girl for yer wife?” Clovis said in surprise. “Hell’s balls!” she swore, quickly pulling her sister aside. “Listen, that evil little wizard is up to no good. I told ya we couldn’t trust him!” she whispered fiercely. “We can’t give him the girl, we need her! If he comes with us he’s goin’ to find out that we’ve been lyin’ to him and then he’s goin’ to find out ‘bout the other witch, the one who really has our powers,” she stressed, glancing down at him worriedly when he suddenly turned away, humming a merry tune as he hurried back over to his work table to prepare the spell.

Amaris followed her gaze. “Aye, well, we can’t have that now, can we?” she said, looking back at her thoughtfully. “He thinks we need him to get our powers back but we don’t, the blond girl is goin’ to do that for us, so once he gets us into the twenty-first century, we’ll get rid of him,” she said meaningfully.

“Ye mean, kill him?” Clovis asked incredulously.

“Aye,” she nodded.

“Ye can’t kill a wizard, ye ought to know that, they’re too powerful,” she scowled. “It’d take someone whose magic was equal to his or stronger to do the job,” she reminded her.

“Oh, there be other ways to kill a wizard, don’t ye worry,” she grinned, opening her shawl to reveal what was hidden beneath it. “Aye,” she continued, when she saw her eyes widened in surprise at the object that was tucked into the waistband of her skirt, “a stake of pure silver straight through his black heart!”

Chapter Two

England 2012

Lisa came awake with a start when she felt someone pressing something sticky down over her mouth. Opening her eyes in alarm, she saw a tiny man with a long white beard, sitting on her stomach, his arm looped through a roll of duck tape, grinning at her as he touched the tip of his black bowler hat in greeting, the full moon shining through her bedroom window glinting off of the gold earring in his ear. Recognizing him to be the ugly little man she had seen a couple of months previously, who had been chasing the neighbor's cats, she frowned, quickly regretting have done that when the duck tape that he had placed over her mouth pulled at the tiny facial hairs on her skin causing her to wince in pain. Flicking her gaze past her hands, which she saw were also bound with tape, she glared at him angrily.

"This stuff is grrreat!" he chuckled, patting the roll of tape he was holding. "We've no got anythin' like it in Grrreen," he told her, chattering on nonstop to her amazement as if they were having a friendly conversation over tea. "I found it down in yerrr cellarr, ye know, so don't ye be given' me them looks, its yerrr tape," he pointed out. "If ye no wanted me to use it ye should no have put it therre," he shrugged. "Aye, I like talkin' to ya a whole lot betterrr this way," he grinned. "It's much saferrr too," he chuckled, sobering quickly when she narrowed her eyes. "Ah, well, I uh... I suppose ye must want to know why I taped yerrr mouth shut then, ay?" he said, raising his brow when he saw her eyes harden. "I'll take that to be a yes," he chuckled.

"Ye see, ye no rrremember me cause yerrr aunties errased yerrr memorrry, but I'll come back to that parrrt laterr," he frowned. "Ye and yerrr aunty werre kidnapped by a couple o evil witches who brrrought ye back to the yearrr 1612, which is the time perrriod that they be livin' in. The rrreason they took ya in the firrrst place was that they werre plannin' to use ye as bait to get Esmerralda to go back so that they could take herrr powerrrs and then kill herrr. They werre hopin' she'd be willin' to trrrade herrr powerrrs forrr the two of ye. They had done the same thing with herrr motherrr, only herrr motherrr managed to get Esmerralda to safety beforrr the witches' arrrived at herrr home, and that's how she ended up herrre as a babe," he explained. "Now gettin' back to how we met," he continued, looking away thoughtfully. "When yerrr aunty, that'd be Esmerralda, discoverrrd that they had taken ye along with yerrr Aunt Harriett, she sent me to keep an eye on the two o ya until she could get therre, cause she was havin' a baby and could no come forrr ya strrraight away," he said, glancing back at her curiously when he heard her mumbling furiously behind the tape. "Oh... all rrright!" he scowled, when she glared at him furiously. "I'll take it off, but ye have to prrrromise that ye'll no go and starrrt scrreamin' like ye did that firrrst time ye saw me. That's why I put it therre, ye underrrstand?" he said, looking at her meaningfully. "So, do ya prrrromise to be quiet?" he asked, looking at her uncertainly when she slowly nodded her head. "Well, all rrright then, but I'll no be firreein' up yerrr hands until I'm surrr yerrr no goin' to trrry and strrrangle me," he told her, reaching for the strip of duck tape across her mouth. Suddenly getting an idea, he paused, his fingers hovering above the corner. "Um... I uh... I should tell ye that beforrr they errased yerrr memorrry we werre grrreat firrriends," he grinned. "Aye, ye werre quite fond o me," he assured her, when she raised a skeptical brow. "Ye even invited me herrre to yerrr home to visit with ya. In fact, ye prrractically begged me to come," he added with a shrug. "Aye, ye werre holdin' me on yerrr lap like a wee babe, huggin' me, and..." he broke off, swallowing nervously when he saw her narrow her eyes. "All rrright, I'll take it off," he grumbled.

Grabbing the corner of the tape, he quickly pulled it back, his eyes widening in fright when she suddenly yelled. "Aw... Jazus! I knew ye'd no keep yerrr prrrromise," he scowled, glancing worriedly over his shoulder at the bedroom door.

"Ouch! Oooh!" she exclaimed angrily, grimacing in pain. "Did you have to pull it so hard?" she asked tightly.

"Well, how else was I supposed to rrremove it?" he asked touchily, staring at the angry red skin around her mouth. "What happened to yerrr face? Arrre ye sick?" he asked curiously.

"Get off of me!" she said warningly, glaring at him.

"I'm goin'!" he exclaimed anxiously, hastily sliding off of her stomach onto the bed. "Jazus, I don't know how yerrr aunty can live with ya!" he grumbled, watching her warily when she quickly sat up and lifted her bound hands to her mouth, trying to grab the end of the tape between her teeth. "I can see t'was a mistake to uncoverrr yerrrr mouth so soon," he frowned, moving cautiously to the far end of the bed.

Lisa smiled tightly. "Yes it was, and as soon as my hands are free you're going to find out how big of a mistake it was," she threatened. "Now, who are you and what are you doing in my bedroom?"

"Well, I'm uh... a whipperrsnapper," he replied, watching her pull the tape back with her teeth. "Me name is Cerberrrus. Um... ye had betterrr watch out forrr them long locks o yerrrs," he warned, watching as a length of her long blond hair slipped past her shoulder and swung forward, dangerously close to the tape she had already pulled back. "Me bearrd got stuck on it earrrierr when I was playin' with it down in the cellarr and let me tell ya, I've a few bald spots on me chin now. Aye, it's terribly sticky... ouns! Too late," he grimaced. "I trried to warrn ya," he shrugged, when she glared at him angrily.

"Get over here and help me!" she said tightly. "It's your fault that I'm in this predicament after all," she reminded him.

Cerberus raised his brow. "I didn't stick yerrr hairrr to that! Ye did that all on yerrr own."

"Get over here!" she snapped impatiently.

"All rright, I'm comin'!" he grumbled, putting his arms out on either side of himself in an effort to keep his balance as he walked across the soft mattress. "Don't know how ye get yerrrself into these situations," he frowned, carefully pulling her hair from the tape.

Lisa looked at him incredulously. "My hair wouldn't be stuck to the tape if you hadn't of broke into my house, snuck up to my room and taped me up!"

"Aye, well, and I wouldn't of had to do it if yerrr aunties would no have errrased yerrr memorry, and therre werre no two witches and an evil little wizarrd outside watchin' yerrr house, wantin' to kidnap ye, orrr... worrrse," he added, looking at her meaningfully.

"Oh for God sake, somebody pinch me and wake me up, please!" she said, rolling her eyes. "I am obviously having a terrible nightmare."

"Yerrr no drrreamin', girrrl, but I'll pinch ye if ye like. T'would be me pleasurre," he grinned.

Lisa narrowed her eyes. "Don't you dare touch me!" she warned. "Just get this tape off of my hands and get out of my house before I scream for my aunt, who...I assure you, will call the police."

The whippersnapper looked at her in alarm. "Ye can no call yerrr aunty! I'm no supposed to be

herre,” he informed her.

Lisa raised her brow. “No kidding?” she said wryly.

“Aye,” he nodded quickly, looking anxiously back at the door. “I’m supposed to be farr away frrom herre on vacation. If she finds out I’ve been rrright herre fillin’ me belly with imps all o this time, she’ll no be too happy with me,” he told her, sighing heavily when she continued to look at him questioningly. “All rrright, foin, I may as well just tell ye again and get it overrr with. I’ve a weakness forrr cats all rrright!” he confessed, his eyes widening when she suddenly flung herself back onto her pillow and yanked the cover up over her head. “Just the ones that arre imps, no the rrregular kind, they no taste the same. Ye did tell me that I could eat all the cats I wanted. Ye know, when ye invited me up herre?” he frowned, staring at the blanket that was covering her face.

“I did not invite you up here and I most definitely do not want to see you again in this dream or in any other one, so go away,” she told him firmly from beneath the cover.

“This ain’t no drrream, I prrrmise ye that! Do ya no rrremember anythin’ at all after everythin’ I just told ya?” he asked incredulously. “Blimey, we’ve no got time forrr this rrright now! Get up, we have to get goin,” he scowled, tugging impatiently on the covers.

Lisa sighed. Flipping the blanket off of her face, she glared at him. “Look, I don’t know what you’re talking about and I am most certainly not going anywhere with you. Aunt Harriett says that you are a figment of my imagination, and frankly, after what you have just told me, I have to agree with her, and furthermore, my other aunt, Esmeralda? She’s dead, she died when I was six,” she informed him smugly. “Now with that being said, I am going to close my eyes and imagine up a giant fly swatter to smack you with,” she smiled. “Wait a minute...” she continued thoughtfully, “why do I feel like I’ve said that before?”

“Because ye have,” he frowned, crossing his arms over his chest. “Ye thrreatened me with that the last time I had the pleasurrre o meetin’ ya,” he informed her moodily.

Lisa raised her brow. “But I thought you said we were friends?”

The whippersnapper’s eyes widened. *Blimey, she would have to rrremember that*, he thought with a frown, dropping his gaze worriedly to the tips of his shoes.

“Um... aye, I did say that, to be surre,” he nodded, looking back at her. “But uh... that was laterrr on, afterrr ye got to know me,” he grinned.

“Yeah, right,” she said wryly, flicking her gaze over to the bedroom door when she thought she heard a floorboard creak out in the hall. “Aunt Harriett? Is that you?” she asked curiously, staring at the door. “Hum...” she continued after a moment, when no one answered, “I guess I’m hearing things now too,” she shrugged, glancing back at him.

Cerberus frowned. “Perrrhaps ye ought to go and check just to be surre,” he suggested worriedly. “I mean, therre arre a couple o witches outside watchin’ yerrr house ye know,” he reminded her.

Lisa raised her brow. “Yes, of course, the witches,” she nodded, looking at him strangely. “The ones who are coming to kidnap me because they want to use me as bait to get my dead aunt’s powers, right?” she smiled. “Um... correct me if I’m wrong, but didn’t they already do that?”

Cerberus rolled his eyes. “Aye, they did, but they werre no successful.”

“Ah... I see,” she nodded. “Well, maybe that’s because my aunt is dead, hum?” she suggested.

“She ain’t dead,” he argued. “That’s what I’m trrryin’ to tell ya!” he said impatiently. “She was

just prrrretendin' to be dead."

"Really?" she said, lifting a doubtful brow. "Well, I went to her funeral and I can assure you that she was buried six feet under," she told him smugly.

"So ye saw herrr then? In herrr coffin?" he asked curiously.

Lisa frowned. "Well, no... nobody saw her. She had requested a closed coffin in her will I was told," she shrugged.

Cerberus smiled. "Humph... I wonderrr why? Could it be because she didn't want cerrrtain people to find herrr? Like those witches that arrre outside o yerrr house rrright now, orrr rrrather, um... out in yerrr corrridor," he said, glancing worriedly at the bedroom door.

Lisa rolled her eyes. "Oh for God sake, you're driving me crazy! There are no witches out in the hall, or... outside. Now shouldn't you be getting back to the retirement home for elves?" she asked wryly, raising a brow at his pointy ears and long white beard.

Cerberus scowled. "I'm no an elf, I'm a whipperrrsnapper, and I'm only thrree hundrrred and six," he informed her stiffly, lifting his chin.

"Gee... is that's all?" she frowned.

"Aye," he nodded, looking at her unhappily. "And I'm herrre to help ya if ye'll let me."

"Well, if you really want to help me, then you'll leave," she said, looking pointedly at the door.

"I ain't leavin' without ya," he insisted stubbornly, crossing his arms firmly in front of him.

Lisa narrowed her eyes. "Well, I'm not leaving, so I guess you're going to have to stand there and watch me sleep," she told him irritably. Throwing herself back down onto her pillow, she sighed heavily and closed her eyes, frowning in annoyance when she heard him begin to hum a tune. Opening her eyes, she glared across the bed at him. "Do you have to make that noise? Why don't you go and chase the neighbor's cats for awhile, hum? No, wait... even better, go down the hall and into the second door on the right and tell my aunt your story. I'm sure she'll love the part about the witches and the evil little wizard," she told him, chuckling to herself as she imagined that little scene. Pulling the blanket up to her neck, she closed her eyes once again. "Yep, she will definitely..." she broke off suddenly, her eyes flying wide open when she heard something knock up against the outside of the house. "What was that?" she whispered anxiously, swinging her gaze over to the window. "You heard it too, didn't you?" she asked worriedly, glancing back at the whippersnapper.

Cerberus nodded, putting his finger warningly up against his lips. "Shhh... I told ye they werrrre comin' to get ya, didn't I? Now will ya get out o the bed? We've got to get out o herrre rrrreal quick," he told her urgently, tugging on her blanket.

"Stop pulling on my blanket!" she snapped angrily. "No one is coming to get me! You're just trying to scare me," she said, narrowing her eyes at him. "Well, it's not going to work. I'm sure it's just the neighbor's cats out there making noise. They're always hanging around here, getting into the garbage, digging up the flower beds, that sort of thing," she shrugged.

Cerberus lifted his brow. "Aye, and puttin' ladderrrs up against the house too I suppose," he said wryly, pointing toward the window.

Lisa flicked her gaze back to the window, her eyes widening in fright when she saw the tip of a ladder leaning up against the window frame. Gasping in fright, she threw off her blankets and scrambled out of the bed.

“Oh my God, someone really is out there!” she whispered frantically, running toward the door.

“Rrreally?” he said wryly, rolling his eyes. “I’ve only been trrryin’ to tell ye that forrr the last twenty minutes orrr so, although it feels morrrre like twenty hourrrs to me,” he told her miserably, promptly disappearing. Reappearing at her feet seconds later, he looked up at her, sighing impatiently when he saw her take a couple of steps back toward the bed, her head turning from side to side, and then up and down as if searching for something.

“Arrre we goin’ orrr arrren’t we?” he asked testily, hastily stepping back into the door when she jumped in fright, startling him. “Jazus... ye nearrrly stopped me tickerrr!” he scowled, glaring up at her.

“How did you do that?” she asked, looking at him strangely.

“Do what?” he asked in confusion.

“You know, that?” she said, nodding toward the bed.

Cerberus followed her gaze, frowning in puzzlement as his eyes passed quickly over the tousled blankets to the roll of duck tape at the foot of the bed.

“Ye mean the um... the tape?” he asked, looking back at her uncertainly.

Lisa sighed in frustration. “Forget it!” she snapped irritably. “You know what? I don’t even want to know. I’ve got to go and wake up my aunt,” she said moodily, hurrying out into the corridor.

Cerberus looked up at her in alarm. “Wake herrr up? Arrre ye crrrazy?” he asked, popping onto her shoulder this time.

“Oh!” she exclaimed in surprise, when his ugly face suddenly appeared next to hers. “Stop doing that! What are you doing there anyway? Get off of me!”

“Yerrr legs arrre too long, I can no keep up with ya,” he grumbled, his eyes widening in alarm when he saw her put her hand on the handle of Harriett’s bedroom door. “Wait! Ye no can open it!” he cried out anxiously. “I tell ya, I’m goin’ to be in rrreal big trrrouble if ye do. Besides, we’ve no got time to waste. Them witches will be in the house any second now,” he warned, glancing worriedly back down the hall.

Lisa raised her brow. “Oh please... will you stop trying to scare me with that witch story? Those aren’t witches trying to break into the house, those are burglars, and you do not exist, so I’m not listening to you anymore,” she said, making a face at him.

“If I don’t exist, then how come ye keep talkin’ to me?” he asked smartly.

“Because you won’t go away!” she replied tightly, pushing open the door. “Aunt Harriett?” she said urgently, looking toward her aunt’s bed. “Wake...” she broke off, her eyes widening in surprise when she saw that she wasn’t there. “That’s strange, where would she be at this time of night?” she said with a puzzled frown, noting that her bed hadn’t been slept in.

Cerberus looked around the room in relief. “I don’t know, but I’m beginnin’ to think it just might be me lucky day,” he replied with a grin, his smile quickly disappearing when she turned her head to glare at him. “I mean, um... if it werrren’t forrr the witches and the wizarrd that be comin’ thrrough yerrr window, that is,” he grimaced. “Oh, and o courrrse yerrr aunty bein’ missin’,” he added hastily. “A terrible trrragedy,” he said, shaking his head sadly. “I wonderrr where she is?” he said innocently, looking away.

Lisa rolled her eyes. “Oh please...” she said in disgust, stiffening when she suddenly heard

noises coming from her bedroom. "Oh my God, they're in the house already!" she whispered in alarm.

"I told ya we should o left while the goin' was good, but oh... no, ye had to stop by yerrr aunt's room to trrry and turrn me in. Some frriend ye turrned out to be," he scowled.

"I am not your friend, and as much as I'd love to get rid of you that is not why I came in here," she said tightly. "Now come on, we're going downstairs to call the police," she said, hurrying toward the door. "Aunt Harriett has to be down there. I mean, she obviously never went to bed yet," she said, peeking cautiously around the door frame into the corridor.

"Aye, well, maybe that's because she ain't herrre, did ye think o that?" he asked wryly. "She might o gone out to take some frresh airrr, orrr um... to have tea with the neighborr," he shrugged.

"Fresh air and tea with the neighbors?" she said, looking back at him with raised brow. "Do you know what time it is?" she asked, glaring at him now.

"Um... do ye mean rright now?" he asked hesitantly.

"Yes, right now!" she snapped in frustration. "It is the middle of the night, so I hardly think my aunt is out having tea with the neighbors. Now be quiet!" she told him irritably, stepping out into the hall when she saw that the way was clear. Suddenly hearing a door creak open behind her, she whirled around, her eyes widening fearfully when she saw two old crones with humped backs and long straggly, gray, hair, peeking out at her from the doorway of her bedroom, their hooked noses and evil grins striking a chord somewhere in her memory. "Oh my God... I've seen those old crones before!" she whispered in surprise. "It was in a dream I think," she continued thoughtfully, dropping her gaze to their long tattered skirts when a little bearded man wearing a tall pointy hat and a long robe suddenly pushed his way out from between them and stepped into the hall, his huge eyes staring at her from behind a pair of large spectacles perched upon his pointy nose. "Although, I don't remember him being there," she frowned, eyeing him uneasily.

Cerberus followed her gaze. "That'd be the wizarrd I told ye 'bout, and trrrust me, ye no want to meet him," he warned.

Lisa swallowed nervously, lifting her gaze back up to the old crones. "Are you sure I'm not dreaming? I mean, I'll admit it feels like I'm awake, but... well, look at them!" she grimaced. "They can't be real," she said, looking quickly back down at the dwarf when she saw him pull a short stick out from the long bell sleeve of his robe. "Um... what's that he's got in his hand?" she asked uneasily.

Cerberus rolled his eyes. "Ye rreally no rrremember anythin', do ya?" he scowled. "That'd be his wand. Ye know, the little stick that witches and wizarrds use to turrn people into mice, orrr cats, orrr um... to kill 'em with?" he said, looking at her meaningfully.

Lisa gasped, suddenly recalling the black cat and the mice from her dream about the two old crones who were now standing in her hallway.

"How do you know about the cat and the mice?" she whispered fiercely, remembering now that her aunt had also mentioned them.

"Cause I was therre," he replied smugly.

"Oh... God, you're right, you were there!" she said incredulously, suddenly seeing an image of her hands around his neck flash across her mind's eye. Looking quickly back at the wizard, she swallowed nervously. "Okay, well, on that note, I think it's time to go," she said anxiously.

Turning abruptly on her heel, she ran to the stairway, her hand skimming over the railing as she flew down the steps to the first floor. "If this is real, then my aunt has something to do with it," she told him, hastening across the hall to the living room. Sticking her head through the doorway, she swung her gaze around the room in search of her. "Yep, because this kind of stuff only happens when she's around, so where is she and where is that poor excuse for a watch dog hiding?" she fumed, flicking her gaze over to the telephone on the side table next to her aunt's chair when she saw that neither she or her dog Harry, were in the room.

Cerberus shrugged. "I told ya she was no herrre. Trrrust me, if she'd have been herrre she would have... um... she would have..." he broke off, his eyes widening when he realized he nearly slipped up. "We've no got time forrr this!" he grumbled, when she looked at him with raised brows. "Ye must want to die orrr somethin'," he frowned, glancing worriedly back at the stairway. "Oh, oh," he said anxiously, when he saw the wizard come around the corner at the top of the stairs.

"What now?" she asked impatiently, following his gaze. "Oh crap!" she swore, seeing the ugly little dwarf step onto the stairway, the two witches following closely behind him. "Great, there are two witches and an ugly old wizard in the house, and my aunt and the dog are nowhere to be found!" she said wretchedly, her eyes widening when she suddenly saw one of the old crones pull a long silver stake out from beneath her shawl. "Oh! Oh my God... they really are planning to kill us, aren't they?" she whispered fearfully, flicking her gaze to the front door.

"Us?" he queried. "Blimey, did I forrrget to tell ya that they no can see me then?"

Lisa rolled her eyes. "Yes, it appears that you did," she replied tightly, frowning in puzzlement when she saw that her aunt's car keys were hanging on the hook next to the door. "Well, I don't know where my aunt is, but she can't be too far because her keys are still here," she told him, hastening towards them. Quickly grabbing them off of the hook, she slipped her feet into her runners and pulled the door open, glancing anxiously back at the strange trio coming down the stairway before dashing outside.

"Hey... watch me hat!" he said angrily, when he felt the back of it brush up against the doorframe on the way out, causing it to tip forward over his eyes. "Jazus... ye've blinded me! I can no see anythin'!" he exclaimed frantically.

"Oh be quiet, you're not blind for heaven sakes!" she said irritably, as she ran down the sidewalk to the driveway, quickly ducking behind her aunt's car. "Where the heck is my aunt?" she asked in confusion, looking across the lawn toward the road. "She's certainly not out here walking Harry," she frowned, flicking her gaze worriedly back to the front door when she heard several loud thumps quickly followed by cursing coming from inside the house. "That's it! I am not waiting around here so that they can kill me!" she whispered anxiously, hurrying over to the driver's side. Frantically opening the car door, she reached up and grabbed hold of the whippersnapper, ignoring his gasp of fright as she pulled him off of her shoulder and shoved him none to gently inside the vehicle.

"Jazus... me hat!" he exclaimed in alarm, when it tumbled onto the seat and he fell on top of it. "Now look what ye've done!" he grumbled, glancing back at her angrily as he pulled himself to his feet. "Ye've squished it," he scowled.

Lisa raised her brow. "I didn't squish it, you did that yourself when you fell on it," she smiled tightly. "Now, move over!" she whispered fiercely, watching as he bent over to pick it up, trying to reshape it. "Will you hurry up!" she snapped impatiently.

"I'm goin'!" he grumbled, scrambling over to the passenger side. Leaning against the back of the seat, he jammed his hat moodily onto his head and looked through the car window toward the

front door of the house, wondering why the witches and the wizard hadn't come outside yet. "Somethin' is wrrrong herrre," he said thoughtfully. "They've no come afterr us yet and I can hearr 'em arrrguin' in therre," he told her, looking back at her curiously as she slipped the key into the ignition and began to wiggle it back and forth. "Is therre a prrroblem?" he asked, looking at her with raised brows.

"Yes, there's a problem," she replied tightly. "I put the wrong key in the ignition," she explained irritably, trying to pull it out.

"So why don't ye just rremove it and put the rright one in," he suggested.

Lisa glared at him. "Because it's stuck!" she snapped.

"Yerrr stealin' this carrr, arrren't ya?" he asked suspiciously.

"No... it's my aunt's car," she replied sourly. "She lets me drive it all the time," she lied.

"Rreally?" he said skeptically. "Well then, ye'd think ye'd know which key to use, wouldn't ye?"

Lisa narrowed her eyes at him. "It's dark out here and I couldn't see," she replied stiffly, as she jerked the key forward and then backward in an attempt to remove it. "Oh! Oh crap!" she exclaimed in horror, when she felt it suddenly snap in two. Lifting up her hand, she looked at the broken key in disbelief. "How is that possible? These keys are not supposed to break for heaven sake! Aunt Harriett is going to kill me!" she said anxiously, dropping her gaze to the piece of metal sticking out of the ignition.

Cerberus scowled. "That's if the wizarrd and the witches don't get to ya firrrst," he said, shaking his head in despair.

Lisa looked worriedly toward the front door of the house. "Yeah, you're right. Crap! What are we going to do now?" she asked fearfully.

"Well, I might have an idea," he said, stroking his beard thoughtfully. "Courrrse, yerrr no goin' to like it I'm surrre."

Lisa frowned. "Well, it can't be any worse than this, can it?" she asked miserably, becoming worried when she saw the uncertainty upon his face. "Can it?" she asked in rising panic.

Cerberus cleared his throat. "Um... well, that all depends on how ye feel 'bout magic," he replied, looking at her meaningfully.

"Magic?" she said in surprise. "You're not going to tell me that you're a wizard too, are you? No, wait, let me see, you're a pirate wizard," she chuckled, flicking her gaze to the gold hoop earring in his ear and then down to his long white beard. "Yeah, and your real name is White beard," she added wryly.

"Verry funny," he said, glowering at her. "I'm trrryin' to help ya herrre. We've no got much time ye know," he reminded her. "Now will ye listen to me forr once?" he asked impatiently.

Lisa sighed in defeat. "All right, so what do you think we should do? Although I just know I'm going to regret asking," she frowned.

Cerberus looked down at the large emerald ring upon his finger. "Well, I no wanted to tell ye 'bout this yet cause the last time ye no took it too well, but um... it looks like we'rre goin' to have to uh... use this," he replied hesitantly, lifting his pudgy hand to show it to her.

Lisa looked at the ring in disbelief. "That? How is that supposed to help us? There are two old

crones with a very deadly looking pick in their hands and an evil little wizard with a magical wand who are chasing us, and you are showing me a ring? What is wrong with you?" she asked angrily. "That's it, I'm leaving!" she snapped, reaching for the door handle.

"Wait!" he exclaimed frantically, grabbing onto the sleeve of her pajama top. "Ye didn't let me finish. Ye see, this rring has powerrrs, it belonged to yerrr fatherrr beforrrr those witches killed him, and now it's yerrrs," he informed her. "Well, it's yerrrs if yerrr rready to accept the magic," he added meaningfully.

"My father?" she said in confusion.

"Aye," he nodded. "Yerrr fatherrr's name was Marrrk Spencerrr, was it not?"

Lisa looked at him strangely. "Yes, but he wasn't murdered, he died in a car accident along with my mother," she told him.

"Aye, an accident arranged by them twin witches that arrre afterrr ya," he said, nodding toward the house.

Lisa followed his gaze. "But why would they want to kill my parents?" she asked, looking back at him.

"They killed 'em to get 'em out o the way. They had no interrrest in takin' yerrr fatherrr's magic, they werre afterrr the rreal prrize, the magic belongin' to a high prrriestess, that bein' yerrr fatherrr's sister, Esmerrralda," he shrugged.

"Wait a minute, are you saying that my parents were witches?" she asked incredulously.

"Yerrr fatherrr was, aye," he replied. "His rreal name was Marrrs, meanin' warr god in the magical worrrld. He was a grrreat warriorrr, yerrr fatherrr was, we fought many battles togetherrr against the darrrk side," he replied, proudly puffing out his chest.

"Uh huh..." she said, lifting a skeptical brow. "Listen, I don't know how you know my father's name, which is Mark, not Mars, but I rather suspect that you're a lunatic who has escaped from an asylum, where I'm sure many of Aunt Harriett's friends live, and that is how you found out that my parents died in an accident and that I had... an aunt called Esmeralda, whom I feel I should tell you, was adopted. The rest of the story came from your sick, twisted, little mind," she frowned, reaching for the door handle once again.

Cerberus scowled. "I'll have ye know that me mind is sound as... all rrright! Wait!" he exclaimed frantically, as she opened the door to leave. "I'll make ya a deal," he grumbled.

Lisa looked back at him disinterestedly. "I do not make deals with crazy people," she told him stiffly.

"But what if it meant gettin' rrrid o the crrrazy perrrson forrr good?" he said slyly.

Lisa raised her brow. "You mean you'll leave? Forever?" she smiled.

"Aye," he nodded. "If I lose," he added meaningfully.

Lisa looked at him uncertainly. "What's the deal?"

"Well, all ye have to do is trrry this rring on," he said, slipping the emerald from his finger. "If it fits ya, ye'll know that what I've said is trrrue and ye'll prrrromise to listen to me when I tell ya how to use it, and ye'll come with me to safety and ye'll no complain," he said, looking at her meaningfully. "If it no fits ya, then I'll leave and I'll nevrrr botherrr ye again," he shrugged.

Lisa looked at the ring he was holding out to her, smiling confidently when she saw how small

the band was.

“This is just too easy,” she chuckled, taking it from him. “This won’t even fit onto the tip of my nail let alone my finger.”

“Well, we’ll soon find out, won’t we?” he countered, frowning when he saw her moving it toward her baby finger. “What arrre ye doin’?” he asked irritably. “It goes onto yerrr middle fingerrr wherrre yerrr destiny line be,” he informed her, rolling his eyes. “It’ll no go onto any otherrr one.”

“Really?” she said, looking at him skeptically. “You do know that one is even bigger than this one, don’t you?” she asked, wiggling her baby finger in front of him.

“Aye, I know that, I ain’t blind,” he grumbled. “Will ye just hurry up and put it on!” he said impatiently.

“Well, it’s not really fair to you, but if you insist,” she shrugged. Lining the ring up to her finger, she slid it onto the tip of her nail, smiling smugly at him when it wouldn’t slide down any further. “Oh gee... look at that, it doesn’t fit. Well, I guess that means that you lose. Here you go,” she said, moving her finger toward him so that he could take the ring back. “Good-bye, and don’t forget our...” she broke off with a gasp, when she saw the ring suddenly begin to move on its own, the gold band becoming soft and supple almost like jelly as it stretched open and slid easily down over her finger, the large square emerald appearing to wink up at her mockingly as its golden throne stiffened and became hard once again.

Cerberus grinned. “Humph... look at that, a perfect fit! It appearrrs that ye’ve just won me company forrr a wee bit longerrr then, ay?” he said, watching with raised brows as she frantically tried to tug it off. “Oh, I’d no botherrr trrryin’ to rrremove it if I werrre ye. Ye trrried that the last time and all ye got forrr yerrr efforrts was a sorrre fingerrr. It’ll no come off until its rrrready,” he shrugged.

“This has to be a trick ring or something,” she said irritably, eyeing it suspiciously.

“Aye, ye said that the last time too,” he frowned.

Lisa glared at him. “You are beginning to get on my nerves!”

“Aye, ye told me that...”

“Stop it!” she snapped impatiently, narrowing her eyes.

“All rrright!” he said anxiously, looking at her warily.

“So then, what kind of ring is this?” she asked irritably, upset that she had lost the bet.

“I alrrready told ya, its yerrr family rrring. It belonged to yerrr fatherrr and his fatherrr beforrrr him, and so on, and so on. It is verrry old, and if yerrr fatherrr had lived long enough to have a son, it would have went to him, but unforrrrtunately, he had ye instead,” he scowled, looking at her unhappily. “Now hopefully, yerrr goin’ to live up to yerrr parrrt o the deal and listen to what I have to tell ya cause we’ve no got much time herrre in case ye’ve forrrgotten?” he stressed.

“Fine, but if I find out you’ve tricked me, you’re in big trouble,” she warned.

“Fairrr enough,” he nodded, casting a quick glance toward the front door of the house in search of the trio before looking back at her. “Ye see the rrring has powerrrs and so do ye. Well, ye did, until ye killed the guarrrd back at the prrrison,” he added with a shrug. “That’s when yerrr aunties decided to block yerrr powerrrs. Ye werrre neverrr told ‘bout yerrr herrritage beforrrr cause they wanted ya to have a norrrmal childhood,” he explained.

Lisa looked at him strangely. "I assure you that I have never killed anyone, nor have I ever been to prison, and I most certainly do not have any powers."

Cerberus sighed impatiently. "That's cause yerrr aunties blocked them to prrrotect ya cause ye werre makin' things happen without realizin' ye werre doin' it. Blimey, I can see yerrr no goin' to make this easy forrr me once again. Yerrr just goin' to have to trrrust me when I tell ya that ye arrre a witch, and no a verrry good one at that eitherrr," he added moodily. "Now, arrre ye rrrready to go?" he scowled.

Lisa raised her brow. "Oh, I'm ready to go all right," she replied, reaching for the door handle.

"What arrre ye doin'?" he asked worriedly, watching her.

"I'm leaving," she replied, smiling tightly. "Yeah," she continued when he looked at her in alarm, "because you are obviously crazy," she finished, opening the car door.

"Yerrr no livin' up to yerrr end o the barrrgain," he grumbled, looking at her accusingly. "Well, beforrrre ye leave ye might want to know that I'm no goin' to leave ya alone until ye do. Nope, I'm goin' to keep poppin' in and out onto yerrr shoulderrr, into yerrr rrrroom and onto yerrr bed. I'll be followin' ya 'rrround like a wee doggie. Oh, and I suppose I should tell ya that I snorrrre somethin' terrible," he added vengefully. "Well, at least that's what I've been..." he broke off, when he she suddenly slammed the door, glaring at him angrily.

"Fine, you win! So tell me, what exactly did I agree to? Let's just get this over with so that I can get rid of you for good, hum?" she fumed.

Cerberus smiled smugly. "Ye agrrrreed to come with me to safety and no to complain 'bout it," he reminded her.

"Go with you? Where? The key broke in the ignition in case you've forgotten," she said irritably.

"We no need the key, orrr this carrr to get to wherrre we'rre goin', that's what I've been trrryin' to tell ya," he scowled.

"No, you've been trying to tell me that I'm a witch," she argued. "Now, where is this safe place and how are we supposed to get there without a vehicule?"

Cerberus swallowed nervously, knowing that she wasn't going to like the answer.

"It's um... the rrrainbow," he replied with a grimace. "And uh... that rrring ye be wearrin' is goin' to take us therre," he informed her.

Lisa raised her brow. "Of course it will," she nodded. "To the rainbow, huh?" she said, eyeing him strangely when he slowly nodded his head. "Yeah, well, I should have expected something like that from you," she frowned. "So tell me, is there really a pot of gold there?" she asked mockingly.

"Ye know 'bout the pot o gold?" he asked in surprise.

Lisa rolled her eyes. "No, I was being sarcastic. You can't go to the rainbow, nobody can, and there is no pot of gold, that's a myth. You know, a fable, like the Loch Ness Monster, the Lake Fairy, and... leprechauns," she added, looking at him pointedly. "You see, that's how I know that this is all just a bad dream, because you don't exist," she told him with a tight smile.

"This ain't no drrream and I'm no a leprrrrechaun," he grumbled, offended. "But I prrrromise ye that they arrre as rrrreal as the pot o gold which has been missin' forrr overrr a hundrrred yearrrs now if ye must know. In fact its disappearrance has caused a terrible unrrrest between the

counties and prrovinces within the rrainbow,” he informed her, shaking his head sadly. “Aye, I’m afrraid that therre’ll no be peace again until it’s been rrestored to its rrightful place,” he said, looking quickly back at the house when he heard voices there. “Blimey! They’rrre comin’! Quick, close yerrr eyes, picturrr the end o the rrainbow in yerrr mind and wish us therre!” he instructed her urgently.

“But I just told you that we can’t go to the rainbow, and even if we could, I don’t want to go,” she said stubbornly.

“Well, would ye rrrather stay herrre and die?” he scowled.

Lisa narrowed her eyes. “Oh all right, fine! I’ll try, but this is never going to work. I’m telling you, we can’t go there!” she snapped, squeezing her eyes shut.

“And I’m tellin’ ya that we can,” he argued, bravely making a face at her since her eyes were closed and she couldn’t see him. “So now once ye’ve got the image in yerrr head, ye must pass yerrr hand overrr the rring and make the wish at the same time,” he instructed her. “Hurry!” he whispered urgently.

“Oooh... you really are an annoying little creature! How am I supposed to concentrate with you yelling in my... ouch!” she exclaimed angrily, when she suddenly fell through the seat onto something hard. “What the...” she broke off, quickly opening her eyes. “Oh my God, it worked!” she said in surprise, seeing the end of a colorful rainbow just a few feet in front of her from where she was now sitting upon the ground. “How is this possible? Unless... I really am a witch?” she whispered worriedly. *No, no, that’s impossible, I can’t be a witch! This has to be a dream because if it’s not, then that means that all of this is real, the evil little wizard with the huge eyes, the two very ugly witches with their humped backs and long hooked noses, and... and... him,* she thought worriedly, glancing at the whippersnapper who scowled over at her as he got to his feet, rubbing his derrière.

“Yerrr goin’ to need a whole lot o prractice on yerrr landin’s it seems,” he grumbled.

Lisa made a face at him as she pushed herself up off of the ground, brushing dirt and grass from the seat of her pajamas.

“Uh huh, well, I’m afraid there won’t be time for that because I’m going to wake up from this nightmare any second...” she broke off, her eyes widening fearfully when she heard a deep raspy voice behind her.

“Who are ye and what do ye want?” the voice asked brusquely.

“Oh... crap! I don’t know who that is, but it is definitely not human!”

With Lisa's memory having been erased by her aunts and the sudden return of the evil twins in her century, Cerberus knows that he is going to have to be very persuasive if he wants to get her out of the house before they find her. First he must convince her that she knows him and that her life is in danger, and then he has to inform her that she's a witch and get her to use the family ring to take them to the safety of the rainbow, and he must accomplish all of this without revealing the real truth about why he was bringing her there. He certainly was not looking forward to babysitting a stubborn untrained witch again, especially not after his last experience with her, and that's why he was coming prepared this time. Oh yeah, this time he had a plan...

**Which Witch is Which?
Book Two**

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