

Grimoire

Chapter 9

So the grimoire had a secret spell. Hidden and locked away until every other page of the tome was fully revealed. The very last page, the one the grimoire used to communicate with, was where the secret spell was. The ultimate spell.

And he had no idea what that spell was or what it did.

The grimoire had refused to tell him, only saying that it would help Jake in his situation with the old woman, Vera.

All he had to do was fill every other page of the grimoire with his blood, then bleed himself onto the last page. And, just like that, all of Jake's problems would be answered.

It sounded too good to be true. But then, it was magic.

Jake shook his head, cleared his thoughts. It was Saturday evening. Late evening, early night. Just a few hours ago, his sister had kissed him, climbed on top of him. He closed his eyes, basked in the memory.

He could still feel her on his lips. The memory of it was still so fresh, so vivid. Strawberry. Jess' lips tasted almost like strawberry.

He'd been so close to having her there and then. So close to having sex with her. If she hadn't stopped at the last moment...

Unthinking, his hand found its way between his legs.

The fabric tore with a satisfying sound. Silk, his mother's 'lost' silk bathrobe. Knowing that he was destroying something that she liked, hearing the sound of it tearing, made Jake smile. A petty little revenge, sure, but he had bigger reasons than just that.

It was about time he made more Bands of Blind Sight. Two more, to be specific. One for his mother, the other for his father. And, while he was at it, he'd made an unbound spare.

Finding his mother's hairs were easy enough. The master bedroom had its own small bathroom attached, complete with hairbrush and his mother's hairs. Obtaining some of his father's hairs turned out to be far more difficult.

The man was barely ever home. Not to mention his father's hair wasn't long and obvious like Jess and his mother. Finding short strands of blonde hair dotted around the master bedroom was beyond frustrating. But, finally, Jake collected enough.

He went back to his room, began working on creating the two new Bands of Blind sight.

The room he was in was unfamiliar to Jake. He'd never been there before, never seen it before. The woman sat across from him - no, not him, his mother - was also unfamiliar. His mother's friend? A work colleague? Jake had no idea.

The woman, about his mother's age, was holding a cup of steaming something. Tea or coffee? No, that didn't matter.

She was talking, mouth moving fast. Too fast. Jake couldn't lip-read that well yet, but he could guess what the topic of their discussion was.

Jake pulled off the Band of Blind Sight, set it aside. It didn't seem like his mother would be home for a while, wherever she was. Good.

Next was his father.

He slipped the second Band over his eyes, tied it in place.

When he opened his eyes again, Jake was in what looked like a cheap motel room. A really cheap motel room. The beige walls were cracked and stained. The TV his eyes were focused on looked older than Jake.

For some reason, his vision felt off. Wrong. Like Jake was looking at the world through a distorted lens. In his peripheral vision, Jake saw his father's hand move, raise a

can to his mouth and drink.

Alcohol?

Jake's vision blurred, distorted. It was dizzying.

He removed the blindfold, tossed it aside.

No, it didn't look like his father would be returning home tonight. If he was in a motel, he'd be spending the night there.

That was good. His mother was preoccupied, his father was out for the night. That left just Jake and Jess together. He'd fled her room earlier, erased her memories. And she was distressed right now, upset and hurt. He could comfort her, be there for her.

And this time, he wouldn't use the Sinful Straw Doll or a Stick of Broken Memory. This time, he'd comfort her and she'd remember it. Be grateful for it.

He'd be one step closer to winning her heart, and one step closer to making her his.

Jake tapped on his sister's bedroom door, mind focussed entirely on his simple plan. Comfort Jess, support her, make her feel better as much he could. Win her heart and the rest of her would follow closely behind.

When the door opened, revealing a red-eyed Jess, Jake planted a concerned look on his face.

"Are you okay?" He asked, feeling an odd sensation of déjà vu. "What's wrong?"

Jess' face contorted. The forced smile she'd put on her face vanished, replaced with pain and anguish. She let out a sob, began to cry again.

He stepped forward, wrapped his arms around her, revelling in the feel of her chest against his.

She relaxed into him, slumped, continued to sob quietly into his chest.

"It's not just that," Jess said, chocking back more tears. They were seated on the edge of her bed again, the same place that they'd been earlier. The same place she'd kissed him. "Mom said me and you will have to get jobs soon, to help with the bills. She said we're broke. Now that Dad doesn't have a job, and doesn't live here," she paused sobbed again. "We have to pull our own weight around the house."

That was new information. His parents were broke? It would explain why his father was staying in a shitty motel. Jake set the knowledge aside, continued listening.

"It's like everything's falling apart all at once. What are we supposed to do? What's going to happen to us?"

Jake shrugged, searched his mind for the right answer to give.

"I don't know," he told his sister. "But whatever happens, we'll stick together. Okay?"

Jess smiled, nodded her head.

"Thank you," she whispered softly.

"No sweat. It's what I'm here for." Jake considered his options. How could he use this situation to bring himself closer to Jess? "You know my phone number, right?"

Jess nodded.

"If you ever need someone to talk to, just give it a call and I'll come running. No matter what."

His sister's eyes glistened with new tears. "Promise?"

"I promise."

A moment later, she was hugging him tightly.

"Thank you," was all she said.

Jake wrapped his arms around her, enjoying the feel of her body against him.

When Jake woke up, he found himself laying on his sister's bed. Her arms were around him still, holding onto him even as she herself slept soundly next to him.

It was night. Late, probably the early hours of the morning.

They must have fallen asleep together.

Jake still felt tired. Exhausted. He didn't want to move, didn't want to get up. It was warm and comfortable where he was right now, on his sister's bed, her arms around him was sheer perfection. He didn't want to leave.

But he had to.

The grimoire. He still needed to fill in its pages. He needed to know what that final spell was before it was too late. All the effort he was putting in to winning Jess over would be wasted if the old hag witch-hunter found him.

The book claimed the final spell would protect him. He needed to know what it was as soon as possible.

Carefully, he reached out, lifted Jess' arm off himself.

She didn't wake, didn't even stir, simply continued to sleep softly. She was a deep sleeper, as he'd discovered not so long ago, fondling her tits in the Pit. Jake climbed off her bed.

In the darkness, it was hard to see much of anything. And yet, somehow, he could make out his sister's face. Her beautiful, content, sleeping face. She was breath-taking. Amazing. And, one day soon, she'd be his.

And her body. With the lack of light, all he could make out was the silhouette. It was perfect. He'd created sheer perfection when he'd given her slim frame those huge tits. The temptation to reach down, pull her top off, was almost too difficult to resist.

Somehow, he managed it. He turned to her bedroom door, began walking.

Jake crept out of her room, walked into his and shut the door, turned the light on.

The sudden glare of light was painful, but he ignored it, went to his desk and sat down.

He'd unlocked just over a third of the grimoire's pages. If he did nothing but sleep, eat and bleed, he should be able to unlock every last page within a few days. Tomorrow was Sunday, after that he was back in school. That would cut down on how many pages he could unlock significantly.

A week. At full tilt, he'd have the grimoire complete by this time next week.

Inhaling a deep breath, Jake raised a pin, jabbed in into his finger. He flinched at the pain, winced. Quickly, a crimson bubble formed on his fingertip.

Another deep breath, and he unclasped the grimoire.

Sunday, from dawn to dusk, he bled himself onto the grimoire's blank pages. Occasionally, he'd stop, snap a picture of one of the spells, the ones that sounded useful. Several times, he passed out cold, waking an hour or two later.

Unlocking so many pages in one go was draining, exhausting unlike anything he'd ever felt before.

Still, he kept going. Only stopping when his finger burned and trembled, when his mind was so tired that just the simple act of thinking caused it to ache and throb painfully.

In the end, he called it a day. Stood up, almost collapsed. He stumbled over to his bed, dropped onto it. He was asleep within moments of his head touching the soft pillow.

Waking up was difficult. It would have been an impossible task if not for the soft, kind voice of his sister urging him. Jake's eyes flicked open, wincing at the light which filled his bedroom.

Jess was standing next to his bed, smiling her cute smile.

She was wearing her school uniform, blazer stretched tight around the chest, a few buttons undone so that the top would fit on her at all.

"Come on, sleepy head," Jess was saying. "If you don't get up right now, we're going to be late."

Every part of him ached. There wasn't a single cell in his body that wasn't

completely drained of energy. His fingertip, the one he'd cut and used on the grimoire, burned painfully. If he closed his eyes again, he knew, he'd be back asleep instantly.

"Please?" Jess asked sweetly.

Slowly, Jake pushed himself into a sitting position, nodded his head to Jess.

She smiled wider, turned and left his room.

Jake sat there unmoving for a long moment, fighting off the urge to lay back down, forget about school, go back to sleep. It was only when his eyes drifted to the grimoire that he finally forced himself to climb out of bed.

It was the reason he was so tired. It was what had drained him so completely.

A few more days of this, just a few more days, and he'd complete the grimoire. When that happened, and he bled onto the very last page, the secret spell would be revealed. Whatever that was. He'd never be able to ask the book anything again - the page that it used to talk would be filled with the ultimate final spell - but, according to the book itself, Jake wouldn't need to talk to the grimoire again.

And still, it refused to tell him what the last spell did.

Something felt off about that. Why keep it a secret? Why didn't the book just tell Jake? And why did he need to unlock every other page first?

He'd find out soon enough.

"Thank you," Jess said, breaking Jake out of his daze.

They were walking to school together, Jake half-asleep on his feet and Jess silent. Or, at least, silent until she'd spoken those two words.

Jake blinked at her. "Huh?"

"This weekend. The movie and the Pit, and being there Saturday and everything. Thank you."

He didn't say anything. Couldn't think of anything to say.

"Everything's happening all at once. I don't know what to do any more," Jess went on, she wasn't smiling now. She was frowning. Not quite sad, but certainly not happy. "A week ago, the only thing I was worried about was... Well, other things. Now it's like everything's falling apart."

"What were you worried about a week ago?"

Jake been watching through her eyes a lot in the last week. He'd read the messages she'd sent friends, seen the things she watched on TV. He'd seen nothing to suggest Jess was worried about something.

His sister blushed, looked away. She didn't answer for a long moment.

"Puberty stuff."

They were close to the school now, other students nearby. None were in ear-shot, but Jess seemed shy all the same.

"Puberty stuff? What, you mean like..."

Her breasts.

Jess had been worried about her tits growing.

Her face turned a brighter shade of red. She nodded her head, refused to look Jake in the eye.

"That," Jess said quietly. "And blanking out. Like, I'm doing something and I can't remember what or why or anything. Like there are these holes in my memory."

Jake glanced around, making sure no-one would be able to overhear. Distantly, he heard the sound of a car door slam shut.

"It's probably nothing," he told her. "I get blank spots too. It's just a puberty thing too, I guess."

It was an easy lie to tell.

Jess opened her mouth to say something, she looked ready to disagree. Then her eyes darted to something behind Jake, went wide with shock.

A figure rushed passed Jake, almost knocking him from his feet. A skinny, bony arm reached out, grasped Jess by the arm.
It was an old woman.
No, not just an old woman. The old woman. Vera.
She'd found him.

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Someone was in the house. The book could sense it. Feel it.

A man. Middle-aged. Familiar. The boy's father. Why was he here? The mother had kicked him out. It had read the information from the boy's - Jake's - mind. It was important information. All information about the boy's life was important. Vital.

Had he been mistaken?

Perhaps. He'd gained the information from the sister, who herself might have been misinformed.

Still, something seemed strange about the man. He was moving from room to room in haste. The book could sense the father's anticipation, the greed and self-importance. It kept its attention on the man, waited for him to reach the boy's bedroom.

It didn't have to wait long. The father entered, rummaged about, turned his attention onto the grimoire itself.

The moment its clasp was undone, the grimoire knew the man's thoughts, knew why he was there.

Jake's father was looking for things to steal and sell.

He was short on cash, needed the money. Besides, the man justified to himself, it was his house, everything in it was his property anyway.

He flipped through the grimoire's pages, saw only blank paper.

The book didn't intentionally cut the man's finger, didn't reveal how the grimoire's magic hid its contents.

As it read the man's mind, the book knew it was about to be stolen. It looked valuable enough. The father was blind to the book's true worth. A blind, stupid fool.

The father closed the book, didn't bother to clasp it shut. Good. Very good.

It was so close to completing the spell. A few days. Just a few days, and the boy would fill every page and the ancient blood-magic would activate. The book wouldn't allow itself to be stolen away to start the process all over again. Not when it had the perfect opportunity with Jake.

The father's bag was full, packed to the brim with stolen goods. Electronics and jewellery, money stolen from his daughter's piggy-bank. He held the grimoire in one hand, walked out of his son's bedroom.

The book did nothing, biding its time.

Only when the father was descending the staircase, mid-step, did it act.

The book shot open, pages spinning wildly.

Shock jolted through the man, threw him off balance. He tripped, fell down the stairs, head smashing against a wall. Jake's father dropped like a sack of potatoes, tumbling and landing limp, blood spilling out from a wound on his head.

The book was close. Close enough that the blood pooled into it, its magic absorbing the red fluid.

One by one, the book's pages turned, drinking up the blood, filling itself with power.

With this much blood, the book didn't need the boy.

As long as the father survived his injury, the book wouldn't need Jake at all. The blood-magic could be activated here and now, all the book needed to do was turn its pages, feed itself the stupid fool's blood.

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No, not him. She'd found Jess.

The old woman squeezed his sister's arm tightly, started screaming at the top of her lungs.

"Where is it, girl?!" Vera raved. "Where is the book?!"

The fear and panic on Jess' face spurred Jake into action. He lunged forward, imposed himself between the two.

"Tell me where it is!" The old woman screeched.

She sounded insane, deranged.

"I don't, I-" Jess was trying to say, clawing at the hand that still clung onto her. "Please, let go. You're hurting me."

People were drawing near, students and onlookers. One of the advancing figures was a teacher. Jake ignored the stares, ignored the attention. He pushed Vera back.

Vera stumbled backwards, dropped to her knees.

Free of the old woman's grip, Jess backed away, eyes wide. She looked terrified.

Jake put an arm around his sister's shoulder, led her away from the old woman, tried to seem as natural and normal as possible. He was just a good brother, protecting his sister from some random crazy person. The teacher rushed passed them, blocked the old woman from chasing after Jess.

"Don't trust it!" Vera screeched. "It lies! It lies!"

Jake froze, turned to look back at the woman. Regretted the action instantly.

The old woman glanced from Jess' face to Jake's, her eyes widened in the exact same way they had the first time he'd seen her. A realisation.

"It lies," she said one last time. Not in a shout or a scream this time, but in a defeated whisper.