

Grimoire

Chapter 10

It lies.

She meant the grimoire. What else could *it* possibly be?

It lies.

Could the grimoire lie? It was a book. Paper and leather and a bit of magic. Did it even have the ability to deceive, let alone the will and intelligence to do so?

It lies.

Yes. The grimoire was more than just a book. It certainly had intelligence enough. But what reason would it have to lie to him? What could it possibly have to gain?

It lies.

Jake shook his head, tried to clear it. Jess was with him right now, shaken from the whole ordeal. He needed to focus on her and not the old woman. He needed to comfort her, reassure her and let her know everything was fine.

He wanted to think it was his job as her brother to be someone she could rely on at times like this. But a deeper, darker part of him whispered to Jake, told him the real reason he wanted to comfort Jess right now.

Get closer to her. Make her thankful. Make her love you.

Use it to seduce her. Make her yours.

He tried to ignore that dark part, tried to convince himself that he only wanted to help Jess. But, try as he might, he couldn't ignore the stiffness in his pants.

A teacher escorted them both to an empty classroom, sat them down and began questioning them.

Did either of them know who that old woman was?

No.

Did either know why she grabbed Jess or what she was shouting and raving about?

No.

Thankfully, it seemed like everyone was more than willing to believe that Vera was just a crazy old woman. Nothing more, and nothing to cause a big fuss over. She'd left the school grounds willingly after Jake and Jess had gotten away, had been warned against returning.

When the teacher left, Jake turned to his sister.

Jess was trembling, hands shaking on her lap. She wasn't crying, didn't have watery eyes. It wasn't pain, more like she was shocked and scared.

A perfect opportunity, that dark part of him purred.

He reached out, placed his hand on one of hers.

Jess' immediate reaction to the unexpected contact was to flinch, shudder. Then, when she realised it was him, that he was trying to comfort her, she relaxed.

He squeezed her hand, smiled.

One step closer to winning her over.

Soon after that, the teacher returned. Jess was escorted away to whatever class she was meant to be in, and Jake was taken to his.

From there, the hours passed impossibly slow.

It lies.

No matter how hard he tried not to think about it, those two words kept coming back to him. The look she'd had on her face when she'd said it that last time. The defeat. Her eyes had been sunken, hollow. She'd looked old. Ancient. And utterly broken.

According to the grimoire, Vera was a witch-hunter, a woman to be feared and avoided at all costs. She was someone who could and would end him, if given the chance.

Why, then, did she look so weak and frail?

Could it have been an act? Was she trying to trick him?

Or...

Or was it the grimoire trying to trick him?

The questions swirled around in Jake's mind, stacking on one another, mixing and merging and clashing. More and more and more questions, and not a single answer in sight.

One of them was trying to fool Jake. Either the grimoire or the old woman. One of them was trying to manipulate him.

But which one?

By lunch time, he'd had enough. Couldn't take the not knowing any longer. Carefully, making sure no-one would see him go, he left the school grounds.

He knew where the old woman lived.

One way or another, he'd get his answers.

Ignoring the doubt, ignoring the uncertainty, Jake raised his knuckle, bashed it on the hag's front door.

He knew he didn't look intimidating. A schoolboy in a school uniform, school-bag slung over his shoulder. Not exactly the most fear-invoking sight. Still, he needed information. If bravado would help him get his answers, he had to try it.

Unfortunately, the moment the old woman opened the door, all that bravado vanished.

Vera stared hard at Jake, said nothing.

She stepped aside, signalled him to enter her house.

A moment of hesitation, then Jake obliged.

The first thing that hit him was the smell of the place. Musky and odorous. Not so bad that Jake needed to cover his nose, but close enough that he was tempted to.

Vera led him to a sitting room, lowered herself onto a rocking chair, wincing at the effort. She looked up at him.

"The grimoire wants you to reveal the final page and unlock the hidden spell there, yes?"

The old woman's voice was cracked, gravely.

Jake didn't answer, didn't move. His heart pounded away heavily in his chest. The last page - the spell that was meant to protect him from the very person he was talking to right now.

Maybe this was a bad idea after all. He could still get away, all he needed to do was turn and-

"Whatever it told you was a lie," Vera said, eyes never leaving Jake's face. "A lie hidden between two truths, but a lie all the same. It told you enough to whet your appetite and make you want more, same as it did with me.

"Sit down. Its time you knew what - or who - is using you."

It was impossible. Unbelievable. Utterly insane.

And yet, despite how crazy it sounded, despite how crazy he'd have to be to believe it, Jake did.

Vera had once been the owner of the grimoire, or so she claimed. She'd found it randomly one day, got a paper-cut and learned about its magic. She, like him, had unlocked page after page, spell after spell to use to her own ends.

Only, where Jake still had spells to go - a good portion of the grimoire still to unlock - Vera had unlocked the entire thing.

"It refused to tell me what the last spell was. Only that it was the most useful spell in the book, the 'ultimate' one. It said that, once I unlocked it, I wouldn't be able to talk to the book any more. But also that I wouldn't need to."

A growing bitterness had seeped into Vera's voice as she told her tale. Now every word was dripping in it, soaked in resentment.

"So I did. I revealed every other page, and then I pressed my bleeding fingertip onto the last one. Only this time, it wasn't words that appeared. Just these strange symbols, magical runes of some kind or another. And pain. So much pain."

Vera shook her head. Looked down at the floor.

"The next thing I knew, I was trapped inside the book. And the book - the intelligence that had been inside it - was in my body. We'd swapped places. Malath von Graas=Weix, the Undying. He uses the grimoire to steal the bodies of others, all so that he can live forever."

It was too much to process. Jake's mind was reeling, searching for any hint of a lie.

"I was around the same age as you when my mind was trapped inside that book. It was only a few weeks ago that Malath decided to give my body back. Sixty years. That's how long I was locked away for. That's how much of my life was stolen from me. Sixty years. I tried to destroy the grimoire. I tried everything I could think of. Fire, acid, everything. It's indestructible. So I buried it and hoped no-one would ever find it."

She looked at Jake accusingly now, eyes narrowed.

"How do I know you're telling the truth?" Jake asked, throat dry. This was the first time he'd spoken since arriving. "How do I know you're not lying to me?"

The old woman shrugged.

"That's a potion in the book that forces a person to tell nothing but the truth. Go home, make it, come back here with it and I'll drink it. Then you can ask if I'm lying or not."

The walk back to school was filled with even more confusion and uncertainty than he'd left with in the first place. Sure, he had a few answers now. But more and more questions had spawned from those answers. Too many questions.

Only one thing was for certain; he wouldn't be feeding the grimoire any more of his blood. Not until he knew what the fuck was going on.

Lunch hour was probably over at this point. Sneaking back into school wouldn't be easy. And who sneaked *into* school anyway?

He could just go home.

No. Not while there was a chance to get even closer to Jess.

She'd probably still be shaken up by the events of this morning, wouldn't want to walk home alone. If he was there, if he walked with her, it might help her feel even closer to him.

He'd try the Sinful Straw Doll again tonight. See if he could get things to go a little further than last time, see if all the effort he was putting in was paying off. Maybe if he combined the Doll with another spell he'd have better luck.

But which one?

Jake mulled the idea over as he entered school grounds, made his way into the building.

Lunch was definitely over. All of the students and teachers were in classrooms already, lessons having begun. Jake was already thinking up an excuse about why he was late when a teacher rounded the corner in front of him, eyes locking on to Jake instantly.

He spent the rest of the school day in solitary detention. Locked away in a small cubicle with only homework to do. All things considered, it was more of a win than anything else. He had time to sort out his thoughts on Vera's story, time to come up with a plan for Jess.

Not to mention it was nice and quiet, relaxing even.

Jake almost felt regret at having to leave the place when school finished.

Jess, as he expected, was waiting for him at the school gates.

She was facing away, looking out at the street beyond, perhaps on guard against

the possibility of another old woman grabbing her out of no-where.

Jake allowed himself a moment to look his sister over, admire her body.

Giving her those tits was probably the best decision he'd ever made. Even from behind, the hourglass shape that they helped to create was fully visible. Jess' ass was fantastic, phenomenal. Round and cute and firm. She was wearing a school uniform, of course. Her skirt ending just above the knees, fluttering slightly in the breeze. No doubt Jake wasn't the only one looking, imagining bending Jess over right there and then.

But Jake, unlike all the others, would fuck Jess. He, not any of them, would have her.

As he approached, Jess turned, saw him. The smile that spread her lips made his heart spasm in his chest. God, she was beautiful. So amazingly beautiful. And all his.

"Hey," Jess said when he reached her. "I hear you got detention for ditching. Spill the beans, where'd you go?"

"It's a secret," Jake answered.

He felt calm. Confident. It was unusual, odd.

The grimoire was trying to steal his body, he'd pretty much accepted that as fact now. And yet, even knowing that, he felt free and in control.

Magic. All this time, he'd been waiting for the penny to drop. Waiting for something to go wrong. Something like the grimoire you didn't just get without there being a price to pay. Power without consequence? No chance. Now he knew what the price was. And how to avoid it.

The book thought it could trick and use him? Fuck no.

Knowing what the book wanted was like having a weight lifted that he hadn't even known was there.

"That's no fun," Jess pouted, still smiling. Always smiling. "Come on, tell me."

"I'll tell you my secret if you tell me one of yours."

Jess rolled her eyes.

"What kind of secret do you want to know?"

The walk home was light-hearted, nice. Arriving home was another matter entirely. Jake and Jess entered the house to find their mother on her hands and knees, scrubbing the floor in front of the stairway. The carpet, usually a dull brown, looked far darker around her, almost black. Next to her was a bucket filled with soapy water.

Unthinking, Jake's eyes roamed his mother's backside.

Not quite as perfect an ass as Jess had, but it was still up there. Who knew, maybe once he had Jess in his pocket, he'd have a ride on his mother too.

"Mom?" Jess asked beside him, forcing Jake to look up from his mother's rear end. "What are you doing?"

Jesus, Jess cried a lot.

If finding out that their parents breaking up and that their father was a cheating asshole was bad, then this was catastrophic.

Jess was crying, Jake was pissed.

Their father, the shithead, had broken in, tried to steal half the fucking house's contents - Jake's grimoire included - before falling down the stairs and nearly killing himself.

That's what their mother had been trying to clean. The stain left behind from a pool of blood.

The fucker had tried to rob them. He was in hospital now, unconscious and unresponsive.

He'd tried to steal the grimoire. The bastard.

Jake would have to do something about that. Make it so that the grimoire was safely

hidden. But that could wait until later.

Right now, Jess needed him.

Right now, she was open and vulnerable.

"Everything's going to be okay," he told her, pulling her in close. "It's all going to be fine."

He reached into a pocket, pulled out a small vial filled with an ugly brownish mixture.

"Here, drink this. It'll help make you feel better."

Jess looked up, eyes red, saw the glass vial.

She eyed it dubiously.

"What is it?"

"A herbal remedy," Jake answered. "Made it myself. Trust me, it'll help."

And trust him she did. After hesitating for a brief moment, she took the vial, pulled off the stopper and downed it all. Her face scrunched at the taste.

"There see, feeling any better?" Jake asked, eyes watching carefully. Studying ever shift in Jess' expression.

"I don't feel any different," she answered honestly.

Good.

"Jess, have you ever masturbated thinking about me?"

The question jarred Jess out of her depressed sobbing. Her face turned an embarrassed bright red.

"What?! Of course I have."

It took her a moment to realise what she'd just said. No doubt she'd meant to say she hadn't.

"I mean yes, I have," she blurted, trying to correct herself but unable to lie. "I mean..."

Jake stood, grinning. The potion worked. In time, he'd have the old woman drink a batch. Get the full truth from her. For now, he had another plan to see through.

Without saying another word, he walked out of his sister's room, into his own. Two Sticks of Broken Truth were waiting on his desk. He picked one up, snapped it and tossed the pieces aside.

Next to the other stick was a Straw Doll, and next to that a small cut of paper. He picked up both, along with a third item he'd created after getting home.

It was a charm, a simple coin wrapped in ash and paper and long blonde hair. Once activated, it would heighten the senses of whoever the charm was made for - in this case Jess. Her sense of sight, hearing, touch, all would be amplified. And all he needed to do to activate it was drop it in some water. There was a glass of water on his desk for just that purpose.

He dropped the charm into the glass, slipped the Sinful Straw Doll and the Lust note into his pocket.

One quick glance at the grimoire - clasped shut and unopened since he'd found it amongst the pile of shit his father had tried to steal - and Jake left his bedroom, knocked on his sister's door once again.

"How are you feeling?" Jake asked, voice laced with sympathy.

Jess blinked at him. "Strange. Sad. Weird." She shook her head, as if to clear it.

"Strange how?"

"I don't know," Jess sighed. "Like everything is so detailed. I can feel... I can see *everything*. And when I talk... I don't know what's going on."

"You're probably just in shock. It'll pass. No worries."

Jess nodded her head. She looked dazed, confused.

The dark part of Jake saw how out of it Jess was, considered how it could be used

to take advantage of her. If she was so dazed, it might make the plan work even better than expected.

Slowly, he reached into his pocket, fingers curling around the little piece of paper.

"We should go on another practice date," Jake said. "Like before. It'll be a nice distraction."

For the first time, Jess smiled.

"Yeah, that would be nice."

As he pressed the slip of paper into the Straw Doll, he watched his sister's reaction. Saw how her pupils dilated. Witnessed how her body shuddered once, relaxed.

Whatever mess of confused emotions Jess had been feeling seemed to all vanish at once, overwhelmed by the sudden overwhelming lust.

The dazed expression remained, morphed slightly.

"Are you okay?" Jake asked, heart pounding. "How do you feel?"

"Yes," Jess breathed. "I feel... horny."

She was staring into his eyes, panting softly now. Her face flushed red. And then she blinked, seemed to come back to herself a little.

"I-" Jess stammered. "I think you should leave."

Usually, those words would have been a blow. A defeat. But not today. Not now.

Jake smiled.

"Do you want me to?"

She was panting more heavily now, hand above her crotch twitching and shaking. She was holding back the urge to start touching herself there and then, resisting it with everything she had. But she couldn't hold it back forever.

"No," Jess answered.

The truth potion couldn't be resisted. She had no choice but to tell Jake the truth. And, right now, Jess' truth was controlled by that overwhelming lust.

"Do you want me to stay?" Jake asked, eyes locked onto his sister's, taking in the desperation. She was about to crack. Any second now, she'd start touching herself, fingering herself. She wouldn't last much longer.

"Yes," Jess gasped, hand slipping inside her jeans.