

The Pendlebury Witches

Part One



Deena Gomersall



A "New Woman" Novel



Reluctant Press TV/TS Publishers

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The Pendlebury Witches

part 1

By Deena Gomersall

Wednesday 5th October 2016.

“You are kidding me! You’ve got to be freaking kidding me!” Dan exclaimed in a low voice.

His girlfriend, Jodie, looked at him, trying to gauge whether his reaction was something bad or something good. He had just opened up his mail which had included a letter with a British stamp and postmark on it. The letter had looked official.

“What? Come on, Dan, are you going to share with me or not?” she finally had to ask as Dan slumped down into a seat, still holding the letter aloft and gazing at it.

“Honey, I’ve got a letter from the UK here. Apparently I have inherited a house from some Great Aunt I never even knew I had,” he finally revealed.

“Oh my gosh, Dan! I’ve heard of such things happening. People in America finding they have long lost family in Britain and other places and inheriting country estates and manors.” Jodie gasped, suddenly having visions of being a lady of the manor, a wife of a country squire.

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves here, honey,” Dan said, bringing her back to reality. “According to this letter it’s just a country cottage in the north of England... but I bet it will bring in a fair few bucks if I sell it on the market, or we could even use it as our holiday retreat home and let it out when we aren’t using it,” he suggested.

“That sounds pretty cool, Dan. Though, imagine if it was a big mansion home and you were like, related to the Queen, or something.”

Dan just smiled at her daydreaming. “I have to go view it next week, apparently, in order to claim it. I’ll book some time off work. We can have a short vacation over there, do a bit of sightseeing and see the cottage,” Dan then suggested to his very attractive Latino girlfriend.

“What? Why next week?”

“What’s wrong with next week? Is it too short notice for you?” Dan questioned as he saw the look of disappointment on Jodie’s face.

“What’s wrong with next week? You should know what’s wrong with next week, Dan; I have that major modelling shoot in LA starting next week and lasting six weeks. Why can’t you just go view it when it’s convenient to you?”

“I don’t know; it’s just what the letter says. For some reason it has to be next week. Can’t you postpone the shoot?”

“Are you for real, Dan? I cannot just postpone some thing like that; models are coming from all over North and South America.”

“Okay, Okay, I’ll phone the guys and see if I can alter things. I’ll just say I have lots of work commitment,” Dan conceded.

Half an hour later, Dan had to break the bad news to Jodie. “Those Limeys aren’t budging; they say it’s either next week or the home is falling into the hands of the local authority. Apparently they wanted to bring the home down and redevelop the surrounding land... Probably why they are being so unwilling to let me change the date, they don’t want me inheriting it and losing money. Well, I’ll show them, I’m standing my ground and I will be there,” Dan stated resiliently.

“If they want to bring it down and redevelop, then maybe it’s in a pretty bad state; it may cost you more to repair it than it’s actually worth,” Jodie suggested glumly.

“Well, I’ll never know unless I go and look, will I? Maybe the Brits are just trying to put me off from claiming my rightful inheritance,” Dan countered.

“You’ll have to go on your own then; I have to be in L.A,” Jodie told him sadly but firmly. She had never been to Europe and would have loved going along with Dan to see the place and do a bit of travelling.

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Friday, October 14th

Jodie came along to the airport with Dan. She would be flying to Los Angeles herself in two hours after he left; they thought it would be nice to choose the same day to go their separate ways.

“I hope everything goes well over in England, Dan, and that the cottage is all quaint like the ones you see in pictures. I’ll call you every day while I’m away. Love you, honey,” Jodie told her boyfriend before giving him a loving parting kiss.

“Yeah, I’ll phone each day as soon as I work out the time differences... I don’t want to be trying to ring you while you are working. Knock them dead with that, darling, I know you will do well,” Dan responded before they had a longer goodbye kiss.

“LYATF,” Jodie said to him

“LYATF,” Dan replied.

With that, Dan began pulling his medium-sized suitcase to the departure gate and turned to wave Jodie goodbye before going through.

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In the North of England, a woman whom one would have assumed to be in her mid -forties, with long wavy hair flecked lightly with grey, opened the door of her home and stepped outside, looking into the sky.

There was an air of beauty about her even though her mouth was turned down and there was a glint of cruelty in her eyes.

Two slightly younger looking women, with the same air of beauty, both of whom had dark hair; one long and curly, the other with a shaggy mane that flowed halfway down her back, followed her out and stood just behind her. "She is on her way, my sisters," was all that the first woman said.

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Dan slept for long periods of the seven and a half hour flight and it was mid-afternoon when the plane touched down at Manchester Airport in the North of England.

Having done his homework, Dan then caught a service bus to the town of Nelson and from there, booked a taxi that would take him to his destination.

"Where you off to, Gov'nor?" the taxi driver inquired as Dan climbed into the back of the cab.

"I'm wanting to get to High Fell cottage in Pendlebury village," Dan replied.

The driver looked over his shoulder to his passenger. "You're American aren't you? Why you wanting to go to Pendlebury, then?" he inquired with a sound of surprise in his voice.

"I've inherited a cottage there."

"High Fell... you say? That place is well known-of around these parts."

"Really? Why's that?" Dan asked with interest, now wondering if it was somewhere special.

"Just is. Got a lot of history to it. Dunno if everything you read about it is true or not, though."

"What kind of things?" Dan pressed.

“Ain’t for me to be saying, Gov. You just read a thing, that’s all. I’m sure you will make your own mind up.”

The driver couldn’t be pressed any further and concentrated on his driving as they made their way through countryside and then more into the wilds. Dan noticed a large looming hill along the way which had a foreboding look to it. The cottage was actually situated about half a mile outside of the small village and lay close to a huge wooded area. The skies had darkened and light rain was falling as they came to their journey’s end.

Along the way Dan had phoned the estate agent to give an approximate time of their arrival and there was a red Citroen car parked up at the end of a wide muddy path awaiting him.

Two people got out of the car and put up umbrellas as Dan exited the taxi and paid the driver. A woman in her early thirties, wearing a dark trouser suit, and an older, balding man, in a grey suit, approached.

The woman smiled at him. “Mr. Hamilton, I presume? I hope you have had a pleasant journey... I do apologise for the British weather. My name is Jackie Clarke, your estate agent, and this is Mr. Francis Hopewell, the solicitor for your Great Aunt, Ms Mabel Chattern’s estate.”

The two had walked to where Dan was standing as Jackie Clarke had made her introductions and Dan now shook the hand of both people.

“The instructions that I have, as outlined in the letter to you, Mr. Hamilton, is that you are the sole benefactor of the cottage and its contents. I am afraid there is no large amounts of money in the will for you, By all accounts your Great Aunt was an impoverished woman who lived a simple life until her death.”

“When did my Great Aunt die? I haven’t been informed,” Dan asked.

“Two years ago last August. It has taken time to track you down, Mr. Hamilton. We maybe never would have if not for a local woman who came forward to us and gave us details... just as the local authority was trying to get a court order to pull the place down.”

“A local woman? Why would anyone around here know of my existence or where the hell to find me?” Dan inquired, raising an eyebrow. “I didn’t even know of having a Great Aunt over here until you contacted me.”

“I cannot answer that, but from her lead we did a trace and we can confirm from our records that you are indeed a blood relation to Ms Chattern. That is basically all we lawfully need to know.”

Jackie Clarke then took a set of old looking keys from her purse and held them up. “So, if you are ready, Mr. Hamilton, all we need to do now is show you the property and have you sign a few papers. I hope you don’t mind if we get on with it... I wouldn’t mind getting out of here before it gets much darker; something around here gives me the creeps.”

Mr. Hopewell smiled for the first time on his otherwise solemn face. “Women, eh! Out from the bright lights of town and everything is eerie to them.”

Dan smiled back as Jackie led them down a path of small flat rocks. As they cut through overgrown bushes, a very old looking cottage emerged in front of them.

“Welcome to High Fell cottage, Mr. Hamilton,” Jackie announced.

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Inside the cottage Jackie lit wall-mounted oil lamps as they passed through the old oak wood front door, illuminating a narrow corridor. A kitchen was to the left and a living room on the right. The floor was made of stone and other than old rugs here and there, was bare.

More lamps were lit prompting Dan to ask a question. "Pardon me for asking, ma'am, but does this place have electricity?"

"We are pretty much out in the wilderness out here, Mr. Hamilton. I am happy to be able to tell you that there is an electricity supply from a generator down in the cellar, but not for lighting as there are no light fittings. There are a few mains sockets... one in the kitchen for a microwave or kettle... though there is also a stove which has normally been used for cooking by your Great Aunt. There are three sockets in the living area and one in each of the two bedrooms."

Dan was left far from impressed as he was used to modern day living and creature comforts. He would be even less impressed when he learned of the septic tank for toileting.

In the living room was an old threadbare armchair, a bookshelf containing some very old and dusty looking books, a table and a rocking chair and an open fireplace. The whole structure seemed supported by varnished wooden beams.

Dan was led up an old rickety staircase with creaky banister and shown the larger of two bedrooms. An old-fashioned bed with posts was positioned in the centre of the room and there was a large oak wardrobe and a dressing table. The floor was actually carpeted and there was a television set and an

electric bedside lamp. Dan had to admit the room seemed warm and cosy looking.

Back downstairs, Dan put his name to a number of legal documents and deeds to the cottage.

“The home is now yours, Mister Hamilton; you can live in it right away,” Jackie announced, placing the keys on the table and sliding them over to Dan with her finger tips.

“I don’t know about living in it right away. The place needs a lot of work on it and it is obvious it hasn’t been lived in for a few years. I would be really grateful if either one of you could drop me in the nearest large town so that I can get myself a room for the night,” Dan asked.

Jackie pulled on her lip with her teeth. “I was going to go straight back to Manchester from here,” she said apologetically.

“I only want dropping off somewhere, anywhere, that may have a hotel or guest house along the way,” Dan informed her.

“I can give you a ride back with me; I live and work in Burnley, it’s a half hour’s drive from here,” Mr. Hamilton offered.

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Saturday October 15th

The following day Dan was back over at the cottage and loaded with several bags full of cleaning products to start the process of cleaning out the house from top to bottom.

He also ordered two dumpsters to be delivered to throw out lots of the old stuff that cluttered up the

place. He pondered on throwing out some of the old furniture and replacing it with modern and he also wondered about getting in a landscape gardening team to clear much of the overgrowth that was even growing up the sides of the house.

All in all, he wondered just how much this cottage could cost him before he saw any end results.

He had taken many of the old and worn books from the shelves to dispose of and was carrying an armful of them to one of the dumpsters when he saw a woman, standing on the path leading to the cottage, watching him.

“Hi there. Can I help you at all?” Dan inquired inquisitively.

“Good morning to you. You must be moving in. Are you planning on throwing those fine books away?” the woman asked, brushing locks of her long dark hair from her face, blown there by a fresh breeze.

“Well, yes. That is my intention, Ma’am,” Dan answered.

“Oh dear, I don’t think that Mabel would be too pleased at you throwing her books away in that skip. Some of them are well over a hundred and fifty years old, you know and, I would imagine, quite expensive.”

“Oh, you knew my Great Aunt?” Dan questioned, taken by surprise.

“Indeed yes, Mabel and I were very close up to her passing.”

“I never knew her. I was notified of her death and, apparently, I am the only heir of hers, which is why I am here. I have inherited this place,” Dan informed the middle-aged woman.

“Your Great Aunt, you said... which means your Mother is the child of Lottie, Mabel’s sister... and then you must be Daniel.”

Dan was now even more intrigued and placed the books he was holding down upon the ground rather than throwing them in the dumpster. Here was someone who actually knew his Great Aunt and, more so, apparently, knew of him.

“I’m just in the process of cleaning, I only flew in from the USA yesterday... but can I invite you in for a coffee? I’d like to know more about my Great Aunt, if that is okay with you? And this place, if I can.”

“Do you have tea? I do not drink coffee?” the woman asked.

Dan pulled an apologetic expression. “Sorry... just the coffee, I picked some up in a convenience store this morning before coming back over here. I’m staying in a place called Burnslea.”

“Burnley,” the woman corrected. “I’ll pass on the coffee but I would be happy to come in and talk with you. My name is Harriet, Harriet Pendyke.”

Dan stretched out his hand in greeting and was taken back by how cold the woman’s hand was. “Daniel, Daniel Hamilton... but please call me Dan. Your hands are cold. How long have you been standing outside? I’ll try getting the fire going to warm you up... though I’ve been having trouble trying to light it.”

“Don’t worry about me, young man; I am used to the cold around here. You go make your coffee and I’ll get your fire started for you,” the woman offered.

Dan was surprised on his return to the living room to see a fire roaring in the hearth.

Harriet smiled and waited for him to sit down in the armchair; she herself was sat in the rocker.

“I was thinking, Harriet, while I was making my coffee, as you knew my Great Aunt and also knew of me... are you the woman who gave the solicitor and estate agent a heads up as to where to find me?”

Harriet just smiled again without giving confirmation to the question.

“But... how did you know where I lived? How did you even know I was American?”

“The local council was hell bent on knocking down this cottage after your Great Aunt passed away. I stayed them off with a court order. They tried again a few months ago and I then suggested that they try finding an heir to the property before pulling it down.”

“Why are they so keen to pull the place down? I mean, it’s pretty old but the foundations are solid and it’s out of the way out here, not like it’s in the way of some huge development plan.”

Harriet rolled her eyes and there was a fleeting look of anger. “The local councils around here destroy everything. I have had many a dealing with them, as has my past family. They are all worthless souls... the government too... quite worthless.”

Dan decided not to pursue the matter as he could tell it seemed to be upsetting his visitor and the words she spoke sounded chilling. “Well, it’s in my hands now and I’ll make sure it comes to no harm. I’m not sure what to do with the place though... I may rent it out as a holiday retreat.”

“Why not live in it yourself, Daniel; it has been in the Chattertn family for a great many generations,” Harriet suggested.

"I kind of miss home and having the simple things in life like electric lighting, hot water, a proper toilet and air conditioning," Dan laughed.

"You youngsters are so lazy, shying away from a bit of hard work, expecting everything to work for you at the flick of a switch. Well, I mustn't detain you for much longer. I shall be off."

With that, Harriet was up onto her feet and heading for the door. "I shall call back and see you again my dear, and I'll tell you more," she said as she departed.

It wasn't until she was gone that Dan realised he'd not had an answer to his question of how she had known where to find him. He laughed inwardly as he replayed the woman's words in his mind... about how youngsters like him expected all the mod cons in life. Either she was older than she looked or surely she grew up herself with all those expected conveniences. She couldn't be too much older than he was.

Dan continued working through the day, cleaning floors, windows, grimy areas and lots of cobwebs. As it began to grow dark, he phoned a cab to run him back to his hotel and decided it would be worth his while trying to rent a car while he was moving back and forth.

He had just locked the door of the cottage to walk out of the garden to wait for his cab when he saw a young woman standing in the shadows of a thicket of shrubs. The girl was striking. She had long blonde hair and was dressed in a black dress and a long black hooded cape. The dress fell to above her knees and the white nylons she wore on her shapely legs contrasted with her otherwise black outfit.

"You're new around here. Hello to you," she greeted with a smile and a soft feminine voice.

“Hi. I seem to be attracting visitors today. I’m Dan Hamilton, pleased to meet you,” Dan told her as he approached the attractive young girl.

“Oooh... you are an American. I’ve never met an American gentleman before, and so big and strong. My name is Constance...Connie to my friends. Pleased to meet you... Dan,” she replied, rather flirtatiously.

“Yes, I am from the USA, my Great Aunt used to live in this cottage. She passed away and it has been left in her will to me,” Dan informed her as he gazed into her face. The girl had a very pale, porcelain smooth complexion other than her rosy cheeks. Her eyes were elaborately made-up with thick black eye-liner that extended beyond her eye in a tapering streak, making her eyes stand out. Her fine, blonde hair cascaded almost down to her waist.

“All alone in a big cold cottage, let me know if you need keeping warm on these chilly October nights,” she then shamelessly invited with a giggle.

Dan blushed slightly at the girl’s sudden audacious invitation. “Well thank you Miss, but I do have a partner back home who I love very much.”

“All the way back in America...that’s no fun, and will hardly keep you warm over here,” she continued with a flirtatious smile.

Just then a car’s headlights beamed through the growing darkness, illuminated the shrubs and trees as the cab Dan had called made its way down the track to the cottage. “It’s very kind of you, but I’m staying in a hotel anyway. Have yourself a good evening and it’s been a pleasure meeting you,” Dan told her as he made his way towards the approaching taxi.

As they moved away, Dan began wondering if this was the norm for English girls. He had never encountered a girl so blatant before. His thoughts were stemmed by yet another cab driver inquiring about why he was at that cottage, which took a repeat explanation along the way back to Burnley.

"It's a spooky place that is, a lot of stories surrounding it through the years, Mister," the driver told him.

"What? You mean like its haunted? I don't believe in ghosts," Dan told him, suppressing a smirk.

"Nah! I'm not talking about ghosts and stuff. From old folklore, that was one of the cottages of the Pendlebury witches," the driver continued.

Dan now burst into a laugh. "Witches...? That's absurd. That's even dumber than to say the place is haunted."

"You laugh if you want to, mate, but take a look in the Parish records... it's all documented. There were four or five families of witches living around the village back in the Sixteenth Century. Many were burned at the stake but some believe that ancestors of those witches still live around the area to this day," the driver warned.

When Dan got back to his hotel room he took off his shoes, slumped onto his bed comfortably, then rang Jodie on his cell phone.

"Hi there, honey, how's the modelling assignment going?" He asked.

"Hey there, lover. We are between shoots right now. I'm just outside having a cigarette. How's your day been?" Jodie answered.

"I keep telling you that you should pack those things in. My day's been good... interesting really. I

met a woman this morning who actually knew my Aunt, I've been propositioned by a young girl in her early twenties and... get this, I was told by this Limey taxi driver that the cottage used to house witches!" Dan laughed.

"Really?" Jodie answered in disbelief. "What was this girl like? Was she pretty? Tell her to keep her hands off my man, the bitch!" She was not even taking in the witches' story.

"Yes, she was very pretty," Dan confessed, "But you don't need to worry, honey, you know I love only you, and she doesn't even compare to your beauty," Dan assured.

"It's interesting about this woman who knew your Great Aunt. You should have found out more from her," Jodie suggested.

"She said she would be back around again and would tell me more," Dan answered.

Dan continued chatting to Jodie for twenty minutes before going down for a meal in the hotel restaurant, then calling it a night after a few drinks at the bar.

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Sunday October 16th

Dan was annoyed. It was a Sunday and no car rental firms he could find opened on a Sunday. Further, the driver who was running him from the hotel in Burnley told him that he would only drop him off in the village and that he would have to go the extra half mile on foot. The driver made the excuse that it had been raining overnight and the track down to the cottage would be wet and slippery.

At least the driver pointed him in the direction he would need to walk in order to reach the cottage and so he set off walking along cobbled streets through the centre of the village.

He had not got out of the village centre when he saw a girl selling goods from a cart... it was the same blonde haired girl he had seen by the cottage. His route led him past her and he saw she had a cart full of pumpkins.

The girl was again dressed in black dress and black hooded cape, again with the white tights and black two-inch heeled shoes. She smiled at him in recognition.

“Hello again, Mister American...would you care to buy a pumpkin from me?” she asked with a laugh.

“Pumpkin? What would I do with a pumpkin?” Dan asked.

“Well, if you don’t make a pumpkin pie you can always carve out the flesh and make a jack o’ lantern, that’s what most people are buying them from me for... it’s Halloween in a couple of weeks.”

“Halloween! Oh, yes... it will be. I hadn’t thought of that. But no thanks, I’m on foot and can do without carrying a pumpkin for half a mile.”

“It is a very good aphrodisiac,” the girl giggled, looking at him saucily.

Just then Dan realised that there was another girl with her who had been on the other side of the rickety cart which had paint flaking from its sides. This girl was a similar age to the first and was also very attractive, but she had fiery red hair instead of blonde... she too wore a black hooded cape with the cape drawn over her head.

“Who’s this? Is this the man from over the sea we have been hearing of?” she asked the blonde girl before looking intently at Dan with piercing blue eyes.

“Yes... This is the one that they call Dan,” the first woman answered before turning and looking at Dan. “This is my sister Brigitte. She’s not really my sister, but like one, we have known each other and grown up together for many years,” Constance explained.

“It’s very good to meet you, Brigitte. I would stop and talk but I have lots to do today. I hope you both make lots of sales with your pumpkins. Maybe I will buy one when I have transport,” Dan quickly replied. He did have a lot to do but he also wanted to escape from the searching gaze of Brigitte which was somehow unnerving him.

Monday 17th October

On Monday morning, Dan had finally picked up a rental car. His only problem now was driving on the right hand side of British roads, but at least it would save on taxis and he could also now transport provisions to the house during his intended week’s stay in the cottage.

He had loaded up one of the skips already with things that he was throwing away but, now that the woman who had visited him had warned him about throwing out the books, he was hesitant on throwing those or any other things away. Looking at one of the books, he found it was written in a hand he found hard to understand and had drawings and symbols throughout. A second book was in a similar fashion.

He had just sat down for a rest, around midday, when there was a knock on his door. Answering, he found it was Harriet again, holding something out in both hands that was wrapped with a towel.



“Hello again, Daniel. I have brought you some lunch, a nice stew that is steaming hot to warm you on this chilly October day,” she told him.

“Good day to you, I was just about to break for something to eat. I was going to make a sandwich. Your offer is very kind, won’t you come on in?” Dan offered with a gesture of his hand.

Harriet entered the cottage and made her way to the kitchen, placing an earthen bowl on the kitchen table. Dan went to a cupboard and took from it two bowls that he had washed with other crockery the day before.

As the two of them sat to eat the stew that Harriet had brought, Dan told her about the conversation he’d had with the taxi driver.

“I was told stories yesterday about this cottage being involved in Witches. Can you believe the stories that some people will come out with?” Dan said mirthfully.

“You laugh! Do you not believe in witches?” Harriet asked with an expressionless face, surprising him.

Dan’s smile slid a little. “What? You don’t mean to tell me that you do?” he asked the woman with a look of disbelief that she would even consider believing.

“Of course I do. This whole area was known for having a strong witch presence at one time; indeed your Great Aunt Mabel was a powerful witch.”

Dan looked at the woman incredulously. “You are messing with me, right?”

“You asked me yesterday how I knew where to find you. I used witchcraft. Oh yes, I am a practicing witch too,” Miranda revealed, answering the question before Dan could deliver it.

“No... This is some kind of a joke,” Dan continued to disbelieve.

“Really? Well if I am correct in my assumption, you also, my dear, have witch blood in your veins. It is the reason I traced you, it is the reason that I brought you here. You are from the Chattern bloodline.”

The grin had now totally vanished from Dan’s face and instead he just stared at her, scarcely able to believe what he was hearing.

“You will bear a mark upon your shoulder, a birthmark that was prominent with all of those in the Chattern family... your mother would have had one... but she did not possess any of the power that is yet dormant within you.”

Dan now looked scared. “My mother did have a... I’ve got... What do you mean by dormant power?” Dan stuttered out.

“You did meet your great grandmother once, just after you were born. Mabel saw straight away that you carried the power. She informed me. Although she has been gone for two years, it is only now that the time has arrived for us to harvest our powers together as a great event now threatens the world and we must do what we can to prevent it,” Harriet continued.

“No... No, I – I can’t deal with this. Maybe you are telling me the truth and maybe you are pulling a trick on me, but I have no goddamn powers and I want no part in whatever you are talking about.”

“There are just three practicing witches left, myself, Rosella and Pretoria. We need the power of four. *You* are that fourth power,” Harriet continued to tell the now badly shaken Dan.

Dan felt as though he must be in some kind of dream, hearing such absurdities. He shook his head again in disbelief.

“No, no, man, this is insane and just what is this great event that will threaten the world?” he challenged.

“You read the newspapers... you have seen the news? The world is at a great unrest. Threats from terrorism worldwide, fighting in many parts. Once again there are rifts between the North America and Soviet Russia over conflict in Syria and concerns about North and South Koreans... Some believe that peace talks have gone as far as they can and talking is now over. Your country is about to change its presidency. This Earth is on the verge of a third World War, a war that will bring an end to all... we must stop it from happening!” she warned in icy tones.

“No, this is madness. Yes, what you speak of is happening, but nobody would dare engage in a third World War. It would no longer be conventional, it would...”

“Destroy everything,” Harriet finished for him. “This is why we need you now. The world is on a countdown, only the powers of the witches combined can prevent this from happening. It is man’s fears that will destroy him, fears and mistrust of one another.”

“And you think that three witches... and me, can prevent all of that?” Dan challenged.

“No, but the power of four can resurrect the great witches from previous centuries. Witches that were hunted down and burned. They do have the power to turn the tide. Had they not been so badly persecuted, they could have prevented two previous World Wars,” Harriet told him coldly.

“But I have no powers. I am no use to you even if you could do such things.”

“May I look under your shirt? At your shoulder?” Harriet asked him.

“What for?”

“To look at your birthmark,” came the answer.

“Look, I am not saying I don’t have a birthmark on my shoulder... I know I have and yes, my mother had too... but the mark is very faint. I wouldn’t even have known it was there had Mom not told me and shown me.”

Harriet prompted Dan to show the barely visible mark he had confessed to having. Using a mirror, Harriet came to Dan’s rear and held the mirror up for him to see by looking over his shoulder.

“Was it as faint as this... or has it become a little darker?” Harriet asked.

Dan looked at the mark. He had glanced at it a few times during his life but not for quite some years. Jodie had mentioned it but other than that he had given it hardly any thought as it was out of sight. As he looked, he did think it was a bit more visible now than he could remember.

“Well...it’s hard to say. I haven’t seen it in quite some time.”

“Look well at it, Daniel It IS darker now because you are in my presence and in your Great Aunt’s home. It will grow darker still as your powers grow. My witch sisters and I will aid you in strengthening your powers.”

Dan was busy pulling his shirt back over his shoulder as quickly as he could. “None of this is making any sense to me. Maybe you are not lying and I do

have some powers in me that are inherited from my Great Aunt. I'd like to help you mend the world, I really would, but I cannot. Anyway, today is my last day here. I have to return to the USA tomorrow."

Dan was lying; he had planned to return home on Friday, four days away, and Harriet knew he was lying. But Dan was badly unnerved by all that he was hearing and now really did just want to get the hell out of England and go back home. He was willing just to forget all about the cottage. The world would be okay, world leaders would come to their senses. No way would they start pressing the button against each other.

"Thank you for the stew, lady, it was lovely and it has been my pleasure meeting you. I think I would like you to go now. I hope you and your... other witches can resolve things. Goodbye."

Harriet found herself being rather unceremoniously ushered out from the cottage. She stayed herself before passing through the door. "I will see you again tomorrow, Daniel, when you will require our help. Don't be afraid to ask for it," she said before leaving, without looking back again.

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Tuesday 18th October

"What do you mean I don't have enough credit in my bank to book a flight?" Dan boomed at his mobile. "I have more than enough. No, there's nothing wrong with my bank card, I used it only yesterday to hire a goddamn car."

Dan was trying to book a flight back home from Manchester airport but he was being told his card had been rejected. Other than his bank card, he only

had a debit card and he knew he didn't have enough funds in that account to afford the near five hundred dollar airfare.

He tried phoning Jodie to see if she could help by buying the ticket at her end, but his cell phone was now telling him that he could not connect a call to hers.

Matters went from bad to worse for Dan when he tried using his card at several stores only to find, again, the card was being declined. Now he was worried. Luckily he had paid up until Friday at his hotel and the same applied to the car he had rented. But unless he could resolve his bank card problems or get through to Jodie, the small amount of cash he was carrying and the amount on his debit card was going to quickly dry up.

As with Jodie, when he tried phoning his bankers to complain about his card, he was unable to get through. He even spent some of the cash he did have on buying another phone in case his had a fault. He put his sim card in, but still to no avail.

In the afternoon he decided to drive back over to the cottage to keep his mind from worrying. He was met by Harriet who was standing there as if though she knew he would be turning up soon and was there to greet him.

"Have you thought about what we spoke of yesterday?" she asked him.

"Yes I have and the answer is still no. Now if you will excuse me, I am having a bad day," Dan replied rather testily as he got out of the car.

"Oh dear... you mean with things like your credit card being stopped and not being able to get through to your partner or your bank," she responded, stopping Dan dead in his tracks.

“What? How do you know about those things?” he inquired.

“Because I arranged them to happen,” Harriet replied nonchalantly. “I didn’t bring you all the way out here just to have you freak out and go running back home as soon as I mentioned you have witch blood in your veins. I need you here and I need to combine your powers with ours. The time is fast arriving and we do not have time to spare.”

“But how? How could you possibly have done that?” Dan asked.

“Because I am a witch, the high witch. I assure you I am very powerful and I can do a great many things if I put my mind to it. It is my intention to stop you from returning back to America. Now, will you join us?”

Dan looked at the woman incredulously. In spite of his day, he had an amused look on his face. “Aw, come on now, lady. Don’t you start with all that crap too. What’s with you Brits? Don’t you live in the real world?”

“Scoff if it makes you feel less anxious, but then ask yourself how else I could know of the troubles you are having? You will not fix your problems... and I can make them infinitely worse. I will do all that I need to do in order to keep you here,” she warned.

There was something about the way she spoke and her intense gaze upon him that unnerved Dan. In spite of himself, in spite of the absurdity of what he was being told, Dan believed she at least believed herself in what she was saying, and that made him feel very uneasy.

“Come with me, if you will, to my home. It is but twenty minutes on foot. You will meet the others and I will give you definite proof of what I am telling you,” Harriet then challenged.

Just why Dan followed the woman he simply had no idea; he just followed her along her path. Harriet was wearing a long grey skirt that swished around her ankles as she walked, a shawl was wrapped around her and covered her head and shoulders from the biting October breeze as they walked through open countryside until, finally, they arrived at a very large grit stone-built house.

The building had lots of windows, all with six frames, a single large white door in the front and a smaller door at the side of the house. Dan judged that it was large enough to house eight to ten bedrooms. The building looked very old, maybe even a few centuries old.

“Come on inside, Daniel, make yourself at home. Don’t look so frightened, I am not going to put a fire to a cauldron or turn you into a toad,” she chuckled. “Rosella, Pretoria... we have our visitor,” she then called out into a hallway.

Dan did feel frightened. Was this woman really serious that she was a witch and she had the power to prevent him from getting back home to the States?

He was led down a large wide hallway towards a kitchen at the back of the building. As he walked along, he glanced at large, framed, oil paintings that were hung along the wall. One in particular caught his eye. It was a very old looking portrait of a very beautiful young woman with long dark hair.

Soon two women, about the same age as Harriet, came into the kitchen where Dan was now sitting at a large oak table. One of the two new women was very striking; she had a strong yet beautiful face framed with long glossy brunette hair. She wore quite heavy eye makeup and fuchsia-coloured lipstick on her full lips. She was dressed in a black dress with a low neckline that showed her ample breasts and deep cleavage. The other was much more severe looking

though still attractive. Her shoulder-length hair was permed; she wore eyeliner and a pale lipstick on her well-defined lips.

“Pretoria... Rosella, this is Daniel Hamilton from America, whom I told you about.”

Dan took in that the more beautiful of the two and, he thought, the youngest of the three, was called Rosella.

“Where are the girls?” Harriet then asked.

“They are on their way down,” Pretoria answered as she gazed severely at Dan without a hint of a smile or friendliness.

Soon three younger women came into the room, all wearing dark hooded capes. Dan was shocked to see that he knew two of them... the blonde and the red-head that had been selling pumpkins.

“This is Felicity, Brigitte and Constance,” Harriet introduced.

“See, I told you he was very handsome and manly,” Constance told the new girl amongst the three. Felicity was equally attractive as the two Dan had already met and had long, straight, brown hair, parted in the middle. She had a pure, youthful face and a pleasant smile.

“Shut up, Constance,” she giggled, pushing the blonde playfully with her hand before turning back to look at Dan, using her fingers to pull her hair back from her face and tuck it behind her ear. “Pleased to meet you, Sir. I hear you will be joining us?”

“Well, I er...uhm,” Dan faltered.

“Daniel doesn’t really believe in the existence of witches even though his Great Aunt was one of the more powerful of the coven and even though he has

witch blood in his veins," Harriet announced to the small congregation of females. The four witches all smiled at Harriet's words. "Brigitte, how about a small demonstration from you?" she then suggested.

The flame-haired young witch's eyes gleamed momentarily. She started moving her arms in and out from her body as if she was gathering something. To Dan's amazement, two orbs of fire began to materialise in her hands which became the size of footballs before she cast them away and they vanished into puffs of smoke.

"Brigitte, Constance and Felicity are underlings, young and mostly inexperienced witches with limited powers which we term Level One. They will advance no further," Harriet then told Dan. "Constance now show our guest one of her own capabilities."

Constance looked at Dan, smiled, blew him a kiss and then looked towards the kitchen sink. With a flash of her eyes, a glass that was standing by the side of the sink suddenly flew up and hurtled across the air to her hand. She caught it.

"Pretoria and Rosella are full, powerful witches with a much stronger and greater ranges of powers... which you can achieve too, as you have true witch blood. The girls are not strong enough to make our incantations... but you are, which is why we need you."

Dan didn't want this. He didn't want to have witch blood, he didn't want to be able to create fire or make things fly. Why couldn't he just be left alone? More than anything he just wanted to go back home to America, go home to Jodie.

"You do not have much choice in the matter, you have no means of contacting anyone and you have no access to your money. I cannot force you to learn what we teach but stuck in a strange country with

nothing to eat or drink and no money to do anything with... well, the choice is yours.”

“I can go to the American embassy, tell them about you, tell them what you have done. They will help me,” Dan said boldly.

Harriet laughed. “American embassy, around here? You would have a long way to travel and I can render your hired car useless with a mere thought and a spell. And, if you did manage to find your way to an embassy, how do you think they would react to your tale of witchcraft and sorcery?”

Dan felt thoroughly defeated. He now had to believe every word that Harriet told him, as outrageous as it sounded.

“You said you needed to harness this so-called power that I’m supposed to have in order to stop some world wide tragedy... is that it? If I can achieve this, if together we can achieve what you say needs to be done... what then? Then can I go home? Will everything be back to normal for me?” Dan asked.

“Yes, I promise. You will be released; you will have done your part in saving mankind and you can return back to America with the pride of knowing what you have done. I can also remove your new powers if you wish a normal life,” Harriet told him. “Return here tomorrow at sunrise and we will start showing you how to bring out and control your powers.”

Harriet then had the three younger witches escort Dan back to his great Aunt’s cottage while she talked to Pretoria and Rosella.

“We need her to reach Level Five. With her powers channelled to ours, it should give each of us, herself included, at least a further one hundred and twenty years lifespan as well as putting the great wrong to right and exacting our revenge,” she told her two

companions. "But we must work fast, the door is only thirteen days from now."

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Felicity and Constance insisted on each taking one of Dan's hands along the way back, not that they feared him trying to run away, but merely for the sake of holding his hand.

"You can call me Flick if you like," Felicity told him with a smile.

"And you can call me Connie," added Constance; "We can come in with you if you like, keep you warm and make you feel good. We know how to make a man feel good. It could be a long and boring night for you otherwise."

"That should be okay, I'm not going to be long at the cottage and then I'm driving over to my hotel in Burnley."

"We can come and stay over there with you if you wish," Felicity continued, getting a roll of the eyes from Brigitte who was just listening and keeping out of their flirtatious conversation.

Dan laughed lightly. "I appreciate your concern, Connie, but as I have already mentioned to Flick, I have a girl back in the States whom I love very much. I would never cheat on her."

Flick pouted, "Oh, Poo! You're not much fun just yet," she told him with a frustrated frown. Dan let her words go over his head.

After they had arrived back at the cottage and once the three girls had left to return to the house, Dan walked out to the car after locking up the cottage, got into the driver's seat and switched on the engine. It

was totally dead. After several futile attempts, Dan began to wonder if this was more mischief from Harriet, intent on keeping him close. She had told him she could render the car useless.

With nothing more he could do, Dan walked reluctantly back to the cottage. It seemed he would be stopping there for the night.

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Wednesday 19th October.

Dan woke with the early morning dawn chorus and immediately thought he was in some terrible dream. Instead he was in his Great Grandmother's four poster bed, in the cottage he had inherited. It was no dream, as unbelievable as it all was, this was all real... *very* real.

He suddenly remembered Harriet's words about him having to return to her house at Sunrise. The first flickers of daybreak were already starting.

Getting up, Dan filled the kitchen sink with hot water to wash his face and have a shave, leaving his small thin moustache, which he'd worn for eight years, intact, whilst quickly preparing himself something to eat. As much as he did not want to return to the house, he also did not want to be late.

He had no choice but to try walking back to the house where Harriet and the others lived, recalling the way that he had been taken there and brought back from the day before.

As he arrived he gazed upon the building from outside. Dan had a great reluctance to go in but Harriet had been waiting for him from inside and knew he had arrived. She came to her door to greet him and beckoned him inside.

The three younger witches had already gone out and so it was Harriet and the other two whom she referred to as high witches, Pretoria and Rosella. They would be attempting to bring powers that they said Dan already had dormant, inside of him, out.

Harriet it was who took the lead and prompted Dan to think deep within himself. She and the other two witches chanted words he could not understand. He had little faith or belief that he could do anything magical but Harriet pressed and pressed. The day went by and into late afternoon.

“Concentrate, Daniel, imagine and use your will power. This is but a simple trick that, as you saw, even Brigitte can do. Concentrate deeply.”

Dan thought the whole stupid thing was futile but he really tried hard to do as he was being requested. Suddenly, in his hand, was a ball of burning fire. So startled was he that instinctively he tried to get rid of it, throwing out his arm and casting the fiery ball through the air. The ball landed and burst into flames which could have been quite serious but Harriet immediately extinguished it with just a stare and her hands, with fingers spread, pointing at the fire.

Dan was still in shock and panicky with what had just happened... what he had just ‘made’ happen.

“You see? You *do* have the power in you,” Harriet told him, “You just have to believe in yourself.”

From there, Harriet worked Dan even harder and he managed a few more small things. Only now did he truly believe in what Harriet had been telling him... but Harriet was not at all happy.

“You are much stronger than what you are demonstrating; whilst you may be impressed with the abilities you have discovered today, you have so much more within you,” she said in frustration. “If we do

not raise the true powers within you in ten days' time, then we will be too late to evoke the power of four."

"Why ten days' time?" Dan asked.

"We need your full power in place before the eve of All Hallows. It is the time when we will be at our strongest."

Dan had not even given thought to the fact that Halloween was approaching. He knew the stories that surrounded it, that it was a time when ghosts and ghouls were supposed to roam the world. Surely, that was just silly tales from centuries ago and meant nothing more than for kids to get dressed up and go around trick or treating.

"Are you trying to tell me that there is some real truth in the stories regarding Halloween?" he asked.

"It is the strongest and most powerful day of the year. There are many yarns and untruths surrounding the day but make no mistake of its power and influence on the world," Harriet warned.

In the evening, Harriet called time on the training of Dan for the day and said he should return again the following morning. "You are barely at First Level, by far the easiest. I thought we may have progressed much quicker and we need for you to be at least Level Five," she said in frustration, "But tomorrow we will try raising magic among the four of us. Together we will make incantations to bring your power to the surface."

Thursday 20th October.

The following morning Dan was back at the home of the witches as the morning light began to chase

away the dark of the night. He still had great difficulty in believing just what was happening in his life, believing he was mixing with real life witches and training to be one himself. That kind of thing only happened in dreams. He constantly expected to wake from some bizarre nightmare but the nightmare just kept going on and on.

He joined the other three in sitting for a drink of hot tea in the kitchen before they went to a room down in the cellar that was cold paved floored. Here he really did believe he must be dreaming. There in the middle of the floor was a large black cauldron, sitting on a fire of logs and steam rising from it.

“Oh, surely not! A cauldron? Aren’t cauldron’s just in silly children’s tales?” he asked.

“So, you believe now in the truth of witches existing on earth but you find it difficult to believe that we use cauldrons?” Pretoria remarked with her usual expressionless, humourless face.

“Yes, we do use cauldrons to make our spells. The truth of their use was passed down through the years and then both cauldrons and witches were just morphed into fairy stories. We do not use wings of bats, eyes on newts or whatever but there are mystical powers in herbs and plants that are cast into the boiling waters of the cauldron,” Harriet cut in.

Soon Dan found himself standing around the steaming bubbling cauldron with the other three. He had been given papers with words written in a foreign language and he was prompted to utter the words with the others, lead by Harriet.

After twenty-five minutes, Harriet stopped. “This is not working, something is wrong. Something is preventing Daniel from lifting his powers,” she said in frustration.

“May I make a suggestion?” Pretoria cut in.

“Yes, what is it, Pretoria?” Harriet had been waiting for the other witch to speak up.

“It is not happening because Daniel is not right for our spells. Our sisters of old, in the power of four, were always female. Daniel is simply the wrong gender.”

“But he is the one. He is what was foretold to us. He bears the mark, the descendent of Bernadette Chattern; surely we cannot be held up in our mission simply because of a matter of gender? What can we do?” Harriet lamented as if she had been struck with some immovable obstacle preventing her from rising Dan.

Dan felt a sense of relief wash over him. If he was of no use, even if he had inherited some witch power from long dead ancestors, he was no longer needed. He was free, he could go home.

“The witches of old would have known of this barrier, they would not have led us astray. Daniel has simply been born in the wrong gender, but we should correct that. We *can* correct that, can’t we?” Rosella then suggested.

“Uh! What are you suggesting?” Dan became alarmed by what he had just heard and ran the words back in his mind to ensure he had heard correctly on what Rosella was asking.

“Yes, yes, we do have the powers of the three to change a person’s sex by chants, potions, and incantations,” Harriet replied, suddenly looking relieved.

“HEY! No!” Dan suddenly exploded. “Are you seriously suggesting what I think you are? Even if you could, there is no goddamn way I am allowing you to turn me into a female.”

“But it is the only way; unless we can free your powers for you to make full use of them we cannot reach the power we need in order to change the dynamics of the world and save it from self-destruction.”

“No. No way, that just simply isn’t happening.”

“So you would remain stubborn and allow all life in the world to end? You cannot allow yourself to be female for short periods but you can allow an event that would kill everyone you hold dear... your parents, your family, your friends... even you yourself?” Pretoria asked.

“What do you mean by short periods?” Dan questioned.

Harriet seized upon the question. “We are not talking about changing your gender permanently; indeed we do not have the power or the right to do that. An incantation of what we suggest would have no more life than a couple of weeks at the most before the spell was broken. It’s the laws of magic.”

Dan was still very hesitant.

“You do not even have to be female for two weeks Daniel, but if we can only reach your power by you being in female form then all we need is for you to be female for the durations needed to raise your powers. We could make you of female form just for when we are making the spells and change you back, each day, afterwards. We need for you to reach a power Level Five that would be making you female five times for a few hours each day and then change you back again afterwards,” Harriet explained.

Dan was still very unhappy about the idea; he couldn’t even bring himself to think about having a woman’s body. But if all he was being told was true, and if he didn’t do it, then he would be responsible for

allowing his parents to die... Jodie to die... everyone in the world to die! He also could not allow that.

“You promise? Just a few hours each day while we do all of this chanting stuff?” he asked hesitantly.

“I promise you we will reverse the spell after each session,”

Dan really did not want to utter words of agreement but it seemed there may be no choice. “Well, I guess if I must, I must,” he conceded, feeling quite sick at what he was allowing to happen.

Harriet threw several powders into the cauldron, bringing up puffs of yellow or red smoke and she and the other two witches chanted incantations. Dan had expected to feel himself changing, but nothing happened and eventually the witches’ chants stopped.

Dan looked at Harriet baffled.

“The spells will take time to materialise. Your form should change overnight and you will join us here tomorrow in your new female form,” Harriet told him.

Dan would have preferred to have it over and done with while he was still in agreement. Now he had to return to the cottage and worry about changing. He was released by the three witches to make his way home.

After he had left the witches’ house, Pretoria looked at Harriet. “Do we not need her to be permanently female in order for us to achieve that which we intend?” she asked.

“Do not worry, Pretoria my dear, all is at hand. We can only follow the rules of the high magic. We could not change Daniel’s form without his consent, which we were given, and we cannot keep him permanently in that form. Again, it has to be his own request,” Harriet replied with a chuckle.

“And how do we achieve that? He is most against being female even for only a short duration,” Rosella then inquired.

“In order to make our spells work, we cannot lie. I told him his form would only be for short periods each day. I cannot break that promise and we must abide by it, though I feel Daniel himself may give consent to stay female to the end of the power rising. For the incantation for him to stay permanently one of our sisters, he needs to do the most female of acts and surrender his female virginity... willingly, and for him to utter the words ‘I want you,’ ‘I need you,’ ‘I love you,’” Harriet informed the other two.

“Surrender his virginity to a man... willingly? He will never do that,” Rosella said with a sigh.

“We have no choice but to follow the rules of the ancient spell casters for the spells to work. That does not mean those rules cannot be slightly twisted in our favour,” Harriet then laughed, “Trust me, my sisters, there is always a way.”

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Dan felt he wouldn't be able to sleep that night. The thought of soon being transformed into a woman played so heavily on his mind, but he didn't just want to sit and wait for the event to happen either so he got into his Great Grandmother's bed and pulled the sheets over him as he stressed upon how the transformation would work. Would it be instantaneous, would he see his body changing? Eventually sleep took over and he drifted into slumber.

Outside of the cottage, dark clouds were gathering and a strong wind was blowing through, bending the trees nearby.

During the night, Dan began to toss and turn restlessly. He was aware of a prickling sweat forming on his brow and he used his hand to wipe away the film of cold sweat that had been building. He began to perspire more and now he could feel beads of sweat seeping through his scalp and trickling down in several paths over his face or the back of his head.

Dan woke fully only to feel the first contortions of his body. It was happening, he was starting to change, and it scared the hell out of him. His heart began pounding and soon he began having spasms of pain in his back... severe back pain and muscle contractions through his torso, arms and legs. His toes and fingers began to cramp, his legs cramped and it was all happening at once.

He had pain in his groin as if he had been dealt a heavy kick in his scrotum. He felt his very bones aching with a deep ache and every part of his face was now hurting him severely. So severely that he was now racked with pain and the intensity was growing. Dan felt as if he had been hit by a high speed train that had broken or crushed every bone in his body and he cried out in agony. Eventually the pain became so intense he could endure it no more and he passed out.

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Friday 21st October.

As Dan began to come slowly around, the first thing he was aware of was that all the pain was now ended, he was pain free. Did that mean that he was now transformed into a woman? He let his eyes open slowly. The first thing he explored was his chest... it HAD happened. He had breasts... female breasts, and they felt huge!



Eventually he dared to sit up and look properly. His new breasts jutted out from his chest... they looked totally wrong being there. They still seemed huge to him but as he analysed it in his head, he decided that they were not overly large to the proportion of his body... maybe the size of Jodie's and she was a C cup.

He felt a tickling at the side of his face and on his back and he reached to take hold of a long lock of hair. His hair had grown long. He looked at it, it appeared finer than it had been, and silkier.

It was the confirmation that his penis and balls were now gone that shook him the most. He now had a vagina. It just all seemed so wrong; there was no longer any 'junk' between his legs and it seemed his whole body was aware of that fact.

The pyjamas that he had slept in were soaked from sweat and he was forced to strip naked, desperately trying to avert his eyes from looking at this womanly form he now possessed. In order to cover himself up as quickly as he could, he pulled on a simple white robe with a silky collar that he found.

It wasn't just the more obvious things, like the addition of breasts or the disappearance of his cock and balls; he knew he felt slimmer, much slimmer, his arms and legs were more slender and all of his body hair had gone, leaving smooth skin. He would discover his voice had changed to a feminine one and that he had decreased in size from 6'1" to 5'7".

For a long time he just sat curled up on his bed, taking in all of the changes. It was almost as if he had been put in someone else's body but there were certain tell-tale signs that this was his own body, just vastly altered. He still had small moles on his arms that he'd always had, a few small scars about his body. All were still there, plus a single tattoo on his right wrist with the word Jodie.

Eventually he got up and found out just how different it was for him to walk, from the roundness of his hips, the plumpness of his bottom, the awareness that he no longer had his manliness between his legs. to the weight and bounce of the breasts that now occupied his chest.

He dared to look into a mirror to find his face was now completely different from how it had been. He was not only feminine but younger looking and, he was beautiful!

There was something about the face that he looked at, though. He knew it, he had seen that face before but he knew not where.

He was still trying to come to terms with the changes when there was a knock on his door. If it was someone he did not know, he wouldn't dare present himself like he was but peering through the curtain, he saw that it was Brigitte standing there, sent by Harriet to take him to her home.

He was, nevertheless, still extremely embarrassed to present himself in his new form to the young girl. Before opening the door to his visitor, he had to take a deep breath and steel himself. When he did open the door, Brigitte seemed surprised by what she saw, even though she knew he would now be in a female form. She remained silent for a long moment before speaking.

“Oh! Ah! So the incantation worked okay then... obviously,” she said chirpily.

Dan just nodded as he held his robe tight against himself.

“Well, Harriet is wanting for you to get to the house as soon as... Now that you are in female form she says she can begin to raise your power levels. They lost a day yesterday.”

“What... What do I wear?” Dan asked innocently, momentarily surprised by the soft female voice that was now coming from his mouth. He knew he had both lost some height and was considerably slimmer than he had been in his male form so his own clothes would no longer fit. And only now did he realise his voice had also changed.

“That’s okay... Harriet has sent you some clothes for now and she will have plenty of new clothes for you by the weekend.”

“I don’t really need plenty of new clothes if I am just becoming like this for a few hours a day. I’m only asking at all because I doubt my own clothes would fit anymore,” Dan responded, still alarmed by his new voice and hoping that Brigitte hadn’t brought along anything too feminine.

In a bag Brigitte had given him, Dan found a pair of blue jeans and a black woollen top which, although obviously for a female, was acceptable. It had a blue and white band around the wide neckline and the ends of the sleeves. Less favourable was a bra and panties set which he threw to one side. There was also a pair of women’s flat heeled slip-on shoes... also acceptable. Dan was amazed that everything sent fit him perfectly.

Once he was dressed, he walked with Brigitte back to the big house, his walk, the feel and the weight of his new breasts all seeming so different, so wrong to him now.

It wasn’t until he was in the house he recalled where he had seen the face he now possessed... he looked just like the girl in the old painting that hung in the hallway.

“That’s me! Or rather, that’s what I look like now,” he told Brigitte.

"I know. I was surprised myself when I first saw you. You look just like her," Brigitte replied.

"Who is she?" Dan then inquired.

"That is Bernadette Chattern," came the reply from Harriet who was approaching from behind.

Dan turned around to face the woman, forgetting he was presenting himself to her in his new form for the first time. "Chattern... That was my Great Aunt's name, wasn't it?"

"Yes. The family resemblance is quite amazing. Bernadette was the grandmother of your Great Aunt. I think she was twenty-one when that portrait was done; it is two hundred years old.

"But I look just like her, and I am thirty six... fifteen years older than her," Dan remarked.

"So, in this female form, you have shed fifteen years... that cannot be a bad thing, can it? Don't try to understand deep magic, we have successfully changed you from male to female. That was our purpose, but that doesn't mean the magic wouldn't also make you years younger, as well as carbon copying your looks from a distant relative. By the way, how was your transformation?"

"Incredibly painful. I have never felt pain quite like it" Dan answered.

"Not surprising, the spell had to change your entire structure. You are one hundred per cent female in body now. You could even get pregnant if you are not careful," Harriet added as if making a joke.

"No chance of that happening," Dan retorted. "I believe I would have to have sex in order for that to happen ...and that certainly isn't going to happen."

Harriet just gave a look and a grin at the transformed man in front of her. "Well, whatever... now we have much work to do and many spells to cast. Come along." With that, she quickly led Dan and Brigitte down into the cellars.

So once more, Dan found himself instructed on spells and chants. Harriet again was joined by Pretoria and Rosella plus Brigitte. He wasn't asked to try performing anything; he just had Harriet assuring him that, from the witches' chants and things cast into the bubbling cauldron, his powers were growing... she could feel them. Indeed, even Dan himself could feel a vibrancy in his new body.

The witches kept to their task until mid-afternoon when Harriet announced that Dan had now achieved Level Two in his power building. Now they would rest for the day and Dan was invited to stay and join them.

He had nothing else better to do, he was alone in the cottage, he couldn't drive back to the hotel and, even if he did, they would not recognise him, plus his money was going to start running low. Dan accepted the invite and to have a meal with them.

"When do I turn back into myself?" Dan asked eagerly as Harriet led him and the other three to a large spacious lounge.

"Are you so keen? What is wrong with how you are? Can you not abide being female for a few hours more?" Harriet questioned.

"It's not that, it's just... I feel strange... weird! I have things moving that I have never had before, my walk is different. I have this sway of my hips, this long hair around my face... I just don't feel right."

"Pretoria and I will cast a changing spell after we have eaten. It will take time for the transformation to

start to take effect as it did when you became female but you will return to male before you leave here as we promised. We shall place a spell to change you to female again tomorrow so you can reach your Level Three... or at least get close... It is a much more difficult level to reach.”

After talking for a while. Harriet left with Pretoria to go make something to eat, leaving Dan with Rosella and Brigitte.

“I’m interested to know more about Bernadette, as I have been made to look like her and, after all, it seems she is distant family,” Dan asked Rosella who had curled herself up in a large oval chair.

“You would need to ask Harriet for most of her history. She knows everything, but I do know a few things. About six years before that portrait, Bernadette fell pregnant to the son of a powerful lord around these parts, the Earl of Pendlebury.”

“Six years before! But that would have made her only fifteen... sixteen at the very latest,” Dan gasped in his high feminine voice.

“Indeed it was a great scandal at the time. It was demanded that the baby be killed but the Earl attempted to get the young baby girl out to safety. He succeeded, luckily for you as that baby was to give you your lineage. At twenty-three, Bernadette was to fall pregnant again but she had been practicing witchcraft ever since losing her baby girl. She was caught, tried and burned at the stake... along with her unborn child,” Rosella went on.

“Burned at the stake! That’s terrible,” Dan exclaimed.

“That is what they would do in those days; either burnt, hung or drowned. They set up a Witch Finder General and an army of men to track practicing

witches down. They believed a witch would float on water, even with a rock tied about her. Many an innocent woman lost their lives by drowning... and that stupid floating notion wasn't even true."

As Rosella continued her tale, Harriet was cooking on her stove and mixing a drink, watched in amusement by Pretoria.

"I recognise the potion you are mixing; I take it that the drink is for our guest?"

Harriet smiled. "Indeed, a little something for when Dominic returns from Europe in a day or two," She answered.

It was after his meal that Dan began to feel warm and queasy. Both Constance and Felicity had now returned from selling their pumpkins and Constance looked at Dan.

"Are you okay?" she inquired as Harriet looked up from her reading of a very old looking book.

Dan didn't answer, he just groaned as his body began dripping with sweat.

"She is transforming... Connie and Flick, be dears and strip her from her clothing. She is going to be tightly packed otherwise as her body returns to her true form."

Both young witches did as they had been bid, Constance complaining about how unfair it was that Dan's breasts were larger and fuller than her own as she removed the jumper.

"It is nothing I contrived; it is how she was meant to look," Harriet told the girl.

Suddenly, Dan started crying out loudly in pain and twisted and contorted as though he was going into a fit as the pain increased through his body.

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Dan's eyes flickered open and he looked around the room he was laid in; all six witches were sat nearby.

"He has come around," Rosella announced, seeing his movement.

"What, what happened?" Dan asked as he lifted himself slightly and saw he had a blanket draped over him. Underneath he was totally naked. He was relieved to hear his masculine voice again which brought about his realisation that he was also back to his male form.

"You passed out during your transformation," Harriet answered, walking up to check on him.

"Yeah, I seem to remember. The pain is just so intense; I don't ever want to go through that pain again," he complained.

"Oh, but my dear, you must. Remember we can not build your powers with you in male form. You are only on a Level Two and we need to raise you to Five. Level Three would take two days of chants, spells and incantations with Levels Four and Five being likely to take three days each. That's eight more transformations, plus the reverse transformations... sixteen all together."

"Then I quit. I'm sorry, I cannot bare that pain anymore.... Not once, never mind sixteen more times."

"So to spare your own pain you will inflict a great pain on others? You will allow those you hold dearest to you, to be vaporised, burned to death or worse? We have already been through this," Harriet rounded on him.

“But sixteen times... it’s too much!” Dan wailed, “I can’t take it.”

“How then, does just twice more sound to you? Is that more acceptable?” Pretoria then suggested, coming into the conversation.

“What? What do you mean?” Dan inquired, confused.

“We need to make you female again, at least once more, for us to complete your powers and for the power of four to come together. So, you just remain female next time until that is done... then you just endure one last time in order to return to your former self,” she explained.

Dan did not relish being constantly in a female body for an whole eight days but it did beat the twice daily pain of being transformed. He either was transformed or, going by what he had been told, the world would plunge into a third, and final, World War.

“Also, you have nothing to wear back to your cottage as the clothes you had been given are all far too small for you to wear, including footwear,” Brigitte added with an amused smile.

“That is true. I cannot transform you back into female form so soon now anyway. Whatever you decide, you either can be given some larger female clothing to walk home in, or you can stay here for tonight, which would also be more suitable than going back and forth from your cottage to here. Then we can start earlier,” Harriet put across to Dan.

Nothing that was being suggested met Dan’s approval. “Is there no other way?” he asked sorrowfully.

“None. We have gone to great trouble and expense just to get you over here. Do you think we would have

endured all of that if there was any other way?" Harriet responded.

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Dan could not believe he had just agreed to be female for eight days but he also knew he could not endure the pain of transformation over and over. He had little choice but to accept sleeping in the witches' house, at least for one night. He hated the very thought that he would have to suffer the extreme pain of yet another body transformation to make him female one more time.

Dan had tried making a deal with Harriet, asking, if he agreed to remaining female, could he use a phone to call Jodie, whom he had been out of touch with for the last three days? But he had been told that there were no phones in the house... the witches had no use for such things. He asked if the hex could be lifted off his cell phone but was informed, even if it was, there would be no signal out where they were.

"If he is staying here tonight, Harriet, would it be okay if he slept in my double bed with me? It is so cold on nights," Constance suggested. "Plus, if he will be in female form tomorrow, then tonight may be the last opportunity for me to have him thrust his meaty cock into me."

"Why should Connie have him?" Felicity challenged, "My bed is much comfier than hers, and I am a much better lover than she is." Constance was just about to counter that remark when Harriet raised her hand with a scowl on her face.

"Silence! You three girls are far too promiscuous... maybe I made a mistake with you. If our guest wants to sleep with any of you, then it is down to his choice, or I can put him up in a guest room."

"I think, so as to save on any bad feelings or falling out, I should sleep in a room alone," Dan told them with an apologetic look, though he was pleased for Harriet's intervention. He was taken aback by how eager the two girls were to sleep with him.

Harriet led Dan to the room where he would be sleeping, a very large bedroom which, although the interior and furnishings were old fashioned, the room was very definitely one for a female.

"This will be your room for tonight, or you could even use this room for the full duration... saving you shunting from your Great Aunt's place to this," Harriet suggested as she poured some water into a jug along with an empty glass. Dan missed the white powder that she added and swirled in. "Water for you, in case you are thirsty during the night. I'll bid you sleep well," she said with a smile before exiting the room.

Dan found it hard to get off to sleep that night in this old house and large, strange bedroom but at last sleep did take him.

He was stirred by the sound of his door being opened. From the light out in the corridor, he could make out the shape of a woman standing in the doorway. His first thought was that it was one or other of the young girls. Whoever it was suddenly caused a low light to radiate around the room and he could now see it was Rosella.

Rosella was wearing a black corset that revealed the cleavage of her large breasts, her long shaggy mane of dark hair fell over her bare shoulders and arms. The corset had garters that held up sheer black stockings on her long shapely legs and upon her feet she wore high-heeled black pumps.

“Rosella... What, what are you doing in here? What time is it?” Dan asked in surprise as he tried to shake off his sleep and take in what was happening.

“It is time for you and I to make love, there will be no other opportunity and it has been so long since I last felt a man inside of me,” Rosella told him unashamedly.

“What! No! No, Rosella, I have someone else, someone I love and I am not a cheater,” he told her firmly as he scrambled to sit upright, pulling his sheets up around himself.

“I must have you. Nobody else needs to know,” she told him as she seemed to glide silently over to his bedside. Rosella seemed to stare right into him and suddenly he felt powerless to stop her advances as she stooped to place her full firm, red-coated lips to his.

Dan found himself responding to the kiss as he felt his member growing and stiffening. He took her in his arms and began kissing her passionately, unable to control his urges, almost as though his willpower had been taken from him.

Kicking off her shoes, Rosella smoothly slipped under the sheets and into Dan’s bed, lying to the side of him, her left leg sliding between his own legs as she kissed him all the more fervently. Dan felt Rosella’s hand taking control of his fully erect penis and he freed her left breast to begin sucking on her nipple.

Under her spell, Dan made love to Rosella for several hours that night before she parted with a kiss, a few hours before daybreak.

Saturday 22nd October

It was with the first rays of the sun that Dan roused again. He wondered if last night had been real. Had he dreamt of making love to Rosella, he wondered, as a trickle of sweat ran down his forehead and onto his cheek. Soon he felt a spasm of pain in his back.

“Oh, no! Not again,” he moaned as he knew the process of him turning from male to female was starting again. He really didn’t want to feel the pain and agony of his transformation and closed his eyes and gritted his teeth waiting for the expected.

Dan passed out again, from the extreme pain, stirring to find that he was once more female. At least he would only ever have to go through that ordeal again, just once more. He had been aroused by a knocking on his door.

“Who is it?” he asked weakly in his female voice.

The question was answered by Felicity and Constance opening the door and letting themselves in, each carrying a large armful of clothes.

“Goody... you are awake and transformed. Harriet has sent us up with some appropriate clothing for you to wear. She said you should wash and get dressed as quickly as possible as there is much to do today in processing you,” Constance informed him.

The two girls then took it upon themselves to start placing the clothing in drawers or hanging things up in a large wooden wardrobe. Dan waited for the two of them to leave before getting himself out of bed.

It was twenty minutes later that Dan came down the stairs of the large home and found where most of the other inhabitants were congregated. Harriet took

one look at him on his arrival and rolled her eyes. "What the devil are you wearing, child?" she asked.

Dan was wearing a grey blue and white tartan shirt with the sleeves rolled up to the elbow, a grey short-sleeved cardigan was pulled over the top of the shirt. On his legs he wore a pair of red cord trousers and on his feet a pair of girl's black, low-heeled slip-on shoes. He also had a baseball cap on his head.

"There was nothing really appropriate for me to wear, other than these," Dan explained.

"So you thought you would dress as though you had just fallen headlong into a jumble of clothes. There is nothing that matches. And as for appropriate wear, I think you must try and remember that you are now in the form of a female so, female clothing is, in fact, most appropriate," Harriet berated.

"Does it really matter how I am dressed? As long as I am in this form, I can gain more power, isn't that right?" Dan blasted back.

"It will certainly matter tonight. We are all going down into the village for the Village Dance. It's a dance that is held in the village hall each and every Saturday. You are going to be a female for eight days. In that time it is inevitable that you will be seen by locals, so you need to look the part and act the part," Harriet told him.

"And as such you will need a female name," Pretoria added. "We have decided on calling you Phoebe."

All of what he was being told was not going down well with Dan. He did not want to go out and be seen by people, as a woman... and now they were talking of calling him by a female name. "Why Phoebe?" he moaned.

“There was a Phoebe Chatter in your lineage,” Harriet informed him, “She was the daughter of Bernadette, born when Bernadette was just....”

“Fifteen,” Dan cut in, “Yes, Rosella told me yesterday.” Having mentioned her name, Dan now looked around the room for Rosella, still wondering if he had been dreaming about the incident during the night. Rosella was not there yet.

“That is correct, we had to get the baby away as they were talking about killing it. Had that happened then, you would not be here to help us now. Phoebe went on to have two children herself, Mabel and Lottie, your Great Aunt and your grandmother.

“So was my Grandmother also a witch?” Dan asked with a gasp.

“Like Mabel, she had some degree of power, not as great as her sister’s and much less than that which is in you. She chose not to use it much and your mother didn’t use hers at all. She fled the country to escape the witchcraft, but the power is always greatest in each third generation. However that is by-the-by. Now, come. We need to start working towards your Third Level.”

Just then, Dan stopped, as everything that he was being told began to register. There was one thing he had just heard that sounded wrong.

“Wait! You just said ‘we’ had to get the baby away, as though you were there. Don’t you mean ‘they’? I mean, if you had been there before even my great grandmother then you would be...” Dan began to laugh at Harriet’s mistake. Harriet did not laugh along with him, nor try to correct herself.

“I am a little older than I look, Phoebe,” Harriet stated with a straight face and using Dan’s new feminine name for the first time.

“No, No... That’s impossible!” Dan exclaimed.

“Is it? I was there when Bernadette herself was born. Indeed, I helped deliver her. I also watched as they burned her and her unborn child at the stake,” Harriet said, her last words becoming cold and steeped with a deep anger.

In an instant, Harriet’s face changed, her looks of an attractive middle-aged woman became one of an extremely old and wrinkled woman with rotting teeth and almost straw-like grey hair. Dan was startled. The vision was brief.

“You must start opening your mind and believing in what you deem as impossible. Sorcery and witchcraft are very powerful things... as you will learn. Now come, Phoebe, time is running away with us.”

“I’m not called Phoebe, I’m called Daniel,” Dan tried protesting but he was ignored as he was led down to the cellars with Harriet, Pretoria, Felicity and Brigitte.

Down in the cellar he found Rosella and Constance setting up candles. They already had a fire burning away under the cauldron and steam rising from it. Dan noticed Rosella give him a glance and a knowing smile as she then began placing a variety of large jars on a table by the cauldron.

For several hours the witches and their young helpers made chants, threw things into the cauldron and daubed things on Dan’s face and hands. He could again feel a power growing inside him, a vitality he had never felt before. They broke for lunch and resumed again for two more hours in the afternoon.

“I feel so energetic... so alive and strong,” Dan stated afterwards.

"You still have a long way to go and you still need another day to reach your Level Three," Pretoria informed him.

"May we help get Phoebe ready for the dance tonight?" Connie then asked Harriet excitedly. Harriet took a glance once more at the absurd clothing that Dan was wearing. "Yes, I think you had best. I do not intend travelling into the village with her looking like that," she replied with a laugh.

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Dan returned to the bedroom that he had slept in the night before. In a few hours, his hosts were all planning on going down to the village... a thing he really did not want to do, especially in the form he was occupying. There was not enough time to return to the cottage.

As he sat in the room, thinking, he dwelled on whether or not he had cheated on Jodie the night before. It seemed so real and yet it was entirely possible that he had dreamt it. Under any normal circumstances he would never have cheated on his gorgeous fiancée, but he was in the company of witches... and they could put spells on people.

The whole scenario was just so bizarre. A few weeks ago he would have laughed at anyone who tried telling him Witches were real. Now, not only did he know better but he had found he was one himself, from a long line of witches! And never, in his wildest dreams, did he ever believe he would have the face and body of a beautiful young woman.

It wasn't too long before all three younger witches were knocking on his door and entering.

"I'm going to find you what to wear, Flick is going to do your make up and Connie is going to paint your nails," Brigitte informed him matter-of-factly.

"Make up! Paint my nails! I don't want any of that stuff... I'm a guy!" Dan protested.

All three girls just laughed at the comment. "Have you looked in the mirror? You are drop dead gorgeous," Constance informed him.

Although Dan tried protesting more, it all fell on deaf ears and he was told that Harriet herself had told them to 'dress him up good'.

While her three young witches were upstairs getting Dan ready for his evening out, Harriet was down in the basement, holding a medallion up in front of a large roaring fire that she had lit.

"My son, my dearest child, come through now. You are needed this eve; the moment for us is here. Come through from wherever you are," she said softly. Her eyes closed and then opened to look though the flickering flames.

On the other side of the flames the image of a young man began to materialise as he walked towards the fire. Harriet smiled.

Not only did Dan have to endure having his fingernails painted but Constance also insisted on painting his toenails too. "What's the point of that? They won't even be seen when I am wearing shoes," Dan tried to dispute.

"That all depends on whether Brigitte chooses you shoes or sandals. Even if they are shoes, you may be taking them off to dance and you'll want your feet to look pretty," Constance countered.

"No, I don't want my feet to look pretty and I am *not* going to be dancing."

Dan would have complained further but Felicity now wanted him to close his mouth and pout so she could apply lipstick to his mouth, having already done foundation and his eye makeup.

Dan felt foolish. Although he knew he had the image of an attractive female, inside he was male and he definitely didn't feel right having all this feminine stuff done to him or wearing makeup.

He was in for more of a shock when Brigitte handed him a matching set of bra and panties that were beige and covered in black polka dots.

She offered to help him put the bra on but if he had to wear such a thing, then he insisted on doing it himself and went into the bathroom to put the feminine items on. He had to admit that, yesterday, when he was bra-less his unharnessed breasts had become sore from the weight and sway and his nipples rubbing against his jumper.

More than once he wished he had not turned down the offer of help as he repeatedly lost grip of the back straps as he tried hooking them together. Eventually he had the idea of fastening the bra in front and twisting it around to the back. He felt confident he had just invented an easier way for women to fasten their bras.

It felt weird to him having to cup 'his' breasts in order to place them into the cups of the bra, but they did make a great difference in supporting them.

The panties were easier but their snugness only indicated that which was no longer between his legs.

He returned to the bedroom to find Brigitte had selected him a short-sleeved shift dress which was plain and quite simple, which he was grateful for... except for the fact that it was pink!



The dress had a zipper in the back. He was instructed to step into it and it was pulled up by the girls.

"Oh, wow! You've got the Chattertn birthmark," Brigitte exclaimed.

"Yes, apparently so, I've had that mark all of my life but it is quite faint. I'm surprised you noticed it," Dan informed her.

"Faint? No it's really vivid," Brigitte then remarked. She brought a hand mirror and had Dan stand to the full-length wardrobe mirror as she held the hand mirror behind him. Dan was amazed at how clear the mark was. "Harriet said it would become darker and more prominent as my powers grew," he muttered, almost to himself.

The dress was then pulled up over his shoulders and zipped up. Dan was then dismayed to see that Bernadette had a pair of black shoes for him to wear. The shoes had a bow at the front and a 2" heel."

"I won't be able to walk in those," he informed them.

"What? Two-inch heels? They are the smallest I have for you; they are easy to walk in," Bernadette informed him.

"Why can't I wear those flat ones I've worn today? They are women's shoes."

"You are going to a dance; no woman goes to a dance wearing flat shoes," Felicity joined in.

Before they were finished with him, they put a necklace on him that had an intricate medallion hanging from the chain, a few rings for his fingers, brushed his hair out and then produced a pair of earrings.

"Those are no good for me. I know from my girlfriend those are for pierced ears, and mine aren't pierced," Dan informed the girls smugly.

Nevertheless Brigitte held the post of the earring to his earlobe. Dan felt his ear becoming warm and just a slight pressure as the post was pushed through his lobe and fastened with a keeper on the opposite side. The same was done to the other ear and before he knew it, Dan was sporting pendant earrings, in pierced ears, which felt heavy and swung as he moved.

The final act was a spritz of perfume. The girls then guided him out of the bedroom and down the stairs, Dan feeling wobbly as he walked in the shoes.

"Can't I just stay here and await you coming back?" he tried pleading with Harriet . She insisted that they were all going out together and he would soon become accustomed to walking in heels. She would see to that herself.

The seven of them walked from the house down to the village. Dan's feet were already protesting in the unaccustomed heels and he felt weird from the unaccustomed feel of the night's breeze blowing around his naked legs.

When they reached the village and walked through the doors of the village hall, Dan was both surprised and unnerved by how many people were in there. The hall was large and there were easily a hundred and fifty people in there with lots of small groups of people talking and laughing. Music was being played by a D.J.

Although Dan knew his new image was that of a very pretty, shapely girl, it didn't stop him from feeling as though everyone in there would suddenly stop and point out the man who had come wearing female

clothes. It took a while before he realised that he was being stared at, other than by admirers.

Harriet talked to various people and introduced him as being a cousin from America; although he now had a female voice, he still also had his accent. The people whom he was introduced to were all very friendly and welcoming. Dan quickly realised everyone was there just to have a good time.

It was Rosella who went and brought drinks over for herself, Harriet, Pretoria and Dan. The three younger witches went off by themselves mingling with some of the clusters of villagers.

“Don’t stand about like a fish out of water,” Harriet told the sex-changed man, “After I have introduced you, return and chat, tell them some background story of where you are from. They will be interested in meeting an American.”

“But these people are all strangers. Worse, I’m a stranger to myself and I’m not very comfortable with having a woman’s body and wearing a dress!” Dan tried to explain.

Soon the hall was filled with all who would be attending, a mixture of ordinary villagers and the better off; business people or people who worked as local councillors. People began to dance to the music on a large dance floor. Dan noticed that Connie, Flick and Bernadette had wasted no time mingling in with a group of younger people they knew and being rather flirtatious with the young men amongst them.

After a few drinks of wine, Harriet suggested that Dan dance with them. Dan was going to say the heels on his feet were hurting him too much when he realised he had not noticed wearing them for about twenty minutes. He had no idea how to move or dance as a woman but he tried copying the moves the other three were making.

Harriet broke away after a while to say she really must go have a chat with someone she had seen. This was followed by Pretoria excusing herself to go to the toilet which then left Dan dancing with Rosella. "I enjoyed our night of passion last night. Maybe we can do it again when you return to being yourself," she said, bringing her head close to his ear and whispering.

Dan immediately flushed. It hadn't been a dream at all. And now he felt guilt and shame for cheating on Jodie with another woman.

Hardly was there any time to dwell more on the subject when a man came across and took Rosella's arm. "Rosella, I was hoping that you and your sisters would be coming tonight," he said.

"We always come, Charles," Rosella replied. The man then looked at Dan. "Would you excuse Rosella and me, young lady?" he apologised and removed her out of Dan's presence to dance with her alone.

Dan was now stranded alone on the dance floor and was ready to hurry off and put himself in some corner, in safety.

"Excuse me, would you like to dance?" Another man suddenly asked him, approaching from the side.

"What? Oh... er no, I...," Dan fumbled out words, taken by surprise and not knowing how to deal with the situation. The man had already taken a hold of his right hand and drawn his own around Dan's waist. Dan had no idea of what to do other than place his loose hand to the man's shoulder.

"My name is Stewart, Stewart Forsythe," the man began to introduce himself. "I work for the district council. I have not seen you in the village or at any function in the hall before."

“Uh.. No, I, I have not long since been in this country, I’m Am...”

“American,” the man finished for Dan, “I can tell by your accent. So, you know who I am. What is your name, if I may ask?”

“Oh, I’m... my name is Phoebe... Phoebe Chattern,” Dan replied, remembering to use the name given to him by Harriet.

The man raised an eyebrow. “Phoebe Chattern, that’s an interesting name! Tell me Phoebe, are you related to Mabel who passed away a couple of years ago?”

Dan suddenly relaxed a little as here was someone who knew of his relation. “Yes, she was my Great Aunt... I have inherited her cottage.”

The man was going to say more until his gaze was distracted by something or someone to his left. Suddenly he leaned forward towards Dan’s ear. “Don’t react badly to what I am about to say to you. Its okay, Phoebe.” Stewart then paused before continuing. “I know who you are, who you really are.”

Dan was startled and embarrassed but tried to keep himself composed until he heard what the stranger had to say. “Your secret is safe with me but just be careful in what you are doing or what you may be led into doing. Do not trust the three. We will be keeping an eye on you to ensure you are safe.”

Dan’s mouth became agape. What was the man saying? He knew who Dan really was? Did that mean he knew Dan was really a man? ‘Don’t trust the three.’ Was he referring to Harriet, Pretoria and Rosella, or maybe the three younger ones? He had said ‘we’ will keep an eye. Who were ‘we’?

Just then another man appeared, a tall and well built man. "Excuse me, old chap, but would you mind if I cut in?" he said in a well defined, manly voice to Stewart.

"No, of course," Stewart conceded with a false smile and moved away nervously as this new man replaced him.

"I noticed you when you arrived. You are very beautiful and I just had to have this dance. But, excuse me, how negligent. I should introduce myself; my name is Dominic. And yours?" The new man began telling Dan as he took over holding Dan's hand with the other around Dan's waist.

Things were all moving a little too fast for Dan but for some reason he couldn't take his eyes off this new man. Strangely, he had felt flattered when he had been referred to as being very beautiful.

"My name is Phoebe," he replied in a small, almost whispering and shy voice. The new man was, undoubtedly, very handsome with strong facial features. His blonde hair was quite long and a little scruffy. He had a well-defined, cleaved chin, strong cheekbones and a nice smile. His eyes were piercingly blue.

"Phoebe. What an enchanting name, like a delicate flower. I think I would like to get to know Phoebe better."

Dan was now feeling hot and flustered. He was being easily led, on a dance floor, by a man who was undoubtedly coming onto him. And he had no clear idea of how to get out of the situation.

Looking around the room for any of the others he noticed Connie sitting in one of the young men's lap and snogging with him. Bernadette was talking to two other men, no sign of Felicity... then he saw Har-

riet, Pretoria and Rosella standing together, watching him.

“Oh! If you would excuse me. My friends are back and I really need to go talk with them,” Dan said hurriedly.

The man looked deep into his eyes then smiled; Dan felt an unusual feeling in his body, in his heart, which scared him. “What a shame, so brief an encounter. Well, perhaps another time, my delightful Phoebe?” the man told him, lifting Dan’s right hand and kissing it.

“Yes, yes of course... another time,” Dan replied as he broke away and made for the safety of the three women.

“You seem to be a big hit on the dance floor, Phoebe. What a dashing young man you were just with,” Harriet said with a smile as Dan rejoined their company.

Dan reddened in embarrassment. “You all left me. I felt so embarrassed having to dance with those two men,” Dan responded, his face reddening furiously with embarrassment.

After that, for the rest of the evening, Dan kept off the dance floor. He did find himself, a number of times, looking around to see if he could see anything of the blonde-haired man, though just why, he didn’t know. He did see two of the younger girls making a bit of a show of themselves with some of the young men of the village, but nothing more of him, nor the first one who had given that strange warning.

When it was time to leave at the end of the night, there was still no Felicity as the others grouped together. “I saw her going outside with that Timothy Kendall,” Constance let it be known with a giggle, “Guess she has had her wicked way with him.” Ber-



nadette laughed at the remark but the older witches didn't look impressed.

"She's too loose, is that one," Pretoria remarked with a frown. "Don't you think she could maybe do with some moderate adjusting, Harriet? This is an important time for us and she should be concentrating."

They spoke as they made their way out to the door. Dan was just about to go through it when he was stayed by a hand on his shoulder." Turning, Dan saw it was the tall, good-looking man who had danced with him last.

"I feared that you were going to leave without saying goodbye, Phoebe," the man spoke in his manly voice.

Dan smiled a friendly smile at him, trying to behave as he would expect a real woman to do. "No, no, of course not. Thank you again for the dance, Dominic," Dan uttered rather shyly. Dan had no idea how he could have remembered the man's name, yet he did.

The man placed his hands softly to the sides of Dan's head, pushing Dan's long hair back from the sides of his face, in a rather controlling way as he gazed into Dan's eyes. Dan immediately felt strange, almost powerless before the man and, unable to look forward, he cast his eyes down, almost submissively.

"There will be a dance here, next Saturday. Please say that you will come as my date."

Date! Dan suddenly had no idea how to respond. A man was coming onto him and asking him to be his date.

"She will be at the dance next week, won't you, Phoebe? If you want to go along with this young man

rather than with us, that is quite alright, my dear," he heard the voice of Harriet just before she exited the hall.

Dan had no choice but to look back up at the man who still held his head softly but firmly. "I... I don't really know you. I won't come as your date but I may give you a dance again," he replied, hoping that would pacify the amorous man.

Dominic seemed to be looking into his very soul and he felt weak before it, almost submissive.

"I respect your wishes, fair maiden. If it just be a dance, then that is what it will be. Perhaps I can get you to know me better," he said with a smile. Dominic gave every indication that he wanted to lean in and kiss him goodnight. Greatly surprising to Dan, he felt the nerves in his own lips quivering, almost yielding as if ready to receive a kiss.

"I really must go... Aunty is waiting," he suddenly said, breaking away from the situation.

They found Felicity outside with her hands around Timothy Kendall. She was waiting for the others coming out but it didn't go unnoticed by anyone that she had some grass stems on the back of her jacket.

Dan had to endure some light remarks from the others about the tall man as they filled in Felicity on what had happened. But Dan's mind was in other places, not really taking in the banter. Why had he felt that he was ready to respond if the man had kissed him? He wasn't gay! Surely, being in a female form wouldn't change his sexual orientation? And why had he referred to Harriet as his Aunty? Was it just to put the man off, saying she was an authoritative family member?

They were all heading back to Harriet's house and it was obvious he was going to be sleeping there

again. Harriet had said as much about him being there so that they could get early starts on all their spells and potions. Spells and potions, witches and magic... Dan found it hard to grasp that this wasn't all some weird dream he was in. He never would have taken any of it seriously before all of this.

As it was late, all five women were ready to turn straight in. Harriet it was who came up to Dan's bedroom this time. She took out and handed him an old-fashioned looking, white, billowing, cotton and lace nightdress.

"You should sleep in this," she said in a way that told Dan she was not suggesting.

"I think I would rather sleep naked, if that is okay by you," Dan said as he looked in dismay at the feminine item.

"It would be preferable to wear it. Plus, I do not think you realise how uncomfortable it would be for you to sleep with your boobs loose. Now come along and put it on, it's not going to harm you," Harriet insisted.

Dan was way too tired to argue further. Once Harriet had left his room, he began stripping off his dress and bra and pulled the nightdress over his head and down his body. He hesitated about taking the earrings out... how had they even gone in without any pain or bleeding? He decided, though, that they may be uncomfortable to sleep in and found they threaded out easily. They left two small holes in his lobes.

Last of all, Dan sat on a cushioned buffet in front of a dressing table mirror to use wipes to remove the makeup from his face. He sat with his legs delicately crossed at the knee, a thing he had never done before.

Sleep, even though he was tired, didn't come easily as his mind was full of all of the happenings and events over the past eight days, not least the events of the night. When he did fall off, he had weird dreams of himself dressed in a long black dress and wearing a peaked, crooked black hat, throwing potions into a bubbling pot and flying around on broomsticks. In his dreams, he had the face of Phoebe and not his own.

Then he dreamed about dancing with the man, being swirled and gliding around the dance floor. His steps were dainty, elegant and ladylike as he smiled and looked up into the handsome man's face.

Sunday 23rd October.

"Phoebe... Phoebe..."

Dan stirred to the sound of a voice. It took him a minute or two to register that someone was calling him, was calling his name... no, not *his* name, the name that had been given to him.

"Yes, what is it?" he asked with a yawn, as usual, being initially surprised by his own feminine voice.

"Harriet wants you up and down to breakfast so that we can start Phase Two of your power Level Three," Felicity told him.

Dan sat himself up rather moodily. His active mind through the night had left him still feeling tired. He crossed his legs and idly ran his hand up his smooth hairless shins, almost without thinking.

"I've picked out some clothes for you to wear for the day rather than leaving you to choose as you did yesterday," Felicity giggled. "Don't be long, okay honey?"

With that, the young witch was gone and Dan had to force himself to get ready to meet the day.

“Phase Two of power Level Three... why am I even interested in reaching any power level?” Dan grumbled to himself as he started looking for something to wear in the wardrobe. “I came here to inherit a god-damn cottage and, I find myself with a female body, having to wear women’s clothing, out of touch with my girlfriend and residing with a bunch of witches. You couldn’t write this shit!”

Nothing in the wardrobe was the least bit manly; anything that had two legs had been removed after the previous days so-called wardrobe malfunction... except pantyhose, and he sure as hell was not wearing those.

Finally he had to accept the white shift dress that Felicity had pulled out for him. It was simple and plain except for a sash belt to tie around the waist, but it had no sleeves which showed off his slender arms which had lost all of the muscle or hair that he’d had, and it fell to the knees, again exposing his legs.

There were a pair of white leather shoes that had a slight heel which he also accepted to wear. Then he dragged a brush through his tangled long hair, brushed his teeth and went to meet the others for breakfast, still feeling grumpy.

“Good morning Phoebe,” Constance greeted.

“Did you sleep well, Phoebe?” Bernadette inquired. Dan just grimaced at being called by this new feminine name... he was not feeling it at all today.

“No, not too well. There was a fox screaming during the night that woke me up, then some damn owl calling that stopped me from getting back off,” he grumbled.

"There is some fresh tea mashing in the tea pot," Pretoria told him with that usual straight, expressionless face of hers, "Rosella is doing bacon and eggs for you."

"I don't suppose there is any coffee going?" he inquired.

"We don't drink coffee," came the direct reply.

"Where's Harriet?"

"She's setting things up down in the cellars, we'll all be going to join her after breakfast so we can raise the powers that you need," Constance answered.

Dan endured a full morning of chanting, casting into the cauldron and drinking several potions... all needed to raise his Power Level. After it was over, unlike the time before, he didn't feel any different than he had the previous day.

"That will be all for today, we cannot do too much or else we will exhaust our energies. We shall have lunch and then we shall go to church," Harriet revealed to Dan.

Dan was surprised by her last words, "Pardon? Did I hear you say we shall go to church?"

Harriet looked amused. "Why yes, Phoebe... it is Sunday, people attend church on a Sunday," she replied.

Well, yes... a lot do but... you're witches.

"We *are* witches, Phoebe. What do you view witches as being? Evildoers and devil worshippers? That is a negative view and one that caused great harm centuries ago. Some in the village are suspicious of us, especially with the tales passed down through their ancestors. We do not broadcast that we are witches or delve in magic and make potions but

for those who do have suspicions of us, it does no harm for them to see us attending church. I shall see you upstairs... you may continue to wear that dress. I guess it is presentable.”

After Dan had gone back upstairs from the basement, Pretoria remained with Harriet.

“I was surprised Harriet... talking of making potions. Didn't you give phoebe an extra potion to drink? One that I failed to recognise for power raising," she asked the head witch.

Harriet laughed. “Phoebe is a work in progress, not only for her to gain her powers so that we may enjoy those extra years on earth and to help bring the elders back to earth to reek our vengeance. She has a vital part to play in maintaining the line of the witches. She needs to feel easier in the presence of a certain man we know.”

Pretoria laughed with Harriet now that she was aware of what the extra potion was. They both went upstairs chuckling.

Being allowed to wear the shift dress, Dan was ready for another walk into the village, except that the younger witches were quite vocal in suggesting that Dan at least wear some makeup. Nothing heavy for church, of course, but they did put on him a foundation, eyeliner and mascara... much to his resentment.

Again Dan felt like he was standing out, wearing a dress, heels and makeup. He looked like a woman but he still felt and thought like a man. He felt nervous as he walked into the church with its entire congregation and he felt embarrassed.

After the Sunday service, the witches all stood outside the church talking to other villagers. Many had

attended the dance and had seen Dan so had come to talk to him and welcome him to their village.

Amongst the groups of people standing outside was the man who had given the strange warning, standing amongst a cluster of people and gazing at him.

As they prepared to leave for home, Dan suggested that maybe he should return to his own cottage for the night, but Harriet wouldn't hear of it.

"No, I think that it is vital you remain with us so that we can channel our energies towards you and keep you safe. Plus you will be at the house and ready for our power raising within you in the morning," Harriet told him.

Dan was only partially listening to Harriet as he could see the man from the dance making sign indications with his hand, asking Dan to go over somewhere.

The village vicar arrived to thank Harriet and the others for coming to church as he did each Sunday. His intentions were to greet the new woman in the group but as they began chatting, Dan used the opportunity to go and see what the man wanted. He was curious to know more about what he had meant the previous evening.

There was a side entrance into the church where the man walked to and beckoned the following Dan. It could well have been dangerous as Dan really did not know him, but he really was wanting to know more about the strange warning.

As he stepped inside through the door, he saw that there was another two men, which shook him. Now he did feel as though he may be in danger... but surely... this was a church!

“What is it that you want?” Dan asked in a shaky feminine voice.

“Don’t be alarmed, this is Ben Arkwright and Adam Millington,” Stewart quickly introduced. “We have teamed up to keep an eye on the witches. Adam and Ben are both practicing white witches,” he began explaining.

“We don’t have much time to talk as Harriet will realise you are not with her,” Adam began. “Her son has probably returned. You need to know that the witches have an hatred for everyone in this town, they mean harm. We have tried coming to your Great Aunt’s cottage for the last few evenings to talk with you but you have not been home.”

Dan was shaken. “No, I...I’ve been living at Auntie’s house the past few days,” Dan replied, using the cover story that Harriet was his Aunt as he did not yet know these men or if he could trust their words. For all he knew, they may just be people who knew Harriet and the others were practicing witches and wanted rid of them.

Stewart raised a disbelieving eyebrow at the mention of Harriet being Dan’s Aunt.

“We know you do not know us, we need a chance to talk to you,” the third man, Ben, spoke, “As Adam has mentioned, Harriet’s son has likely returned. He is a Warlock of some power. Two centuries ago he was to have had a child born, a child born to a warlock and a witch which would have given the infant child a great power but mother and baby were burned at the stake. He has waited all of this time for revenge.”

Just then Harriet was heard calling, “Phoebe? Phoebe?”

“You must go,” Stewart quickly warned, “When are you back at your cottage so that we can talk more?”

“I’m... I’m not; I have to stay at Harriet’s house,” Dan quickly told them, feeling totally confused and flustered. He took a last look at the three men, trying to gauge their sincerity, then quickly exited the church.

“Phoebe. What on earth have you been doing? I’ve been looking for you,” Harriet said as she saw Dan coming back out of the church.

“Sorry Harriet, I wanted to take a good look at the interior of the church. It’s very ornate and beautiful, and those coloured glass windows showing pictures of Christ... we have nothing like that where I come from,” he lied as he made his way to her.

“Well, come. The vicar is wishing to meet you,” Harriet responded as she sauntered the sex-changed man back around to the front of the church.

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Back at Harriet’s house that evening, Dan took himself up to the bedroom given to him; he had much on his mind.

Were those men sincere? Or were they saying that Harriet and the others were cruel because they knew the true reason for him being there, to raise his powers, but feared the witches and wanted to try breaking Dan away from them?

Harriet had never mentioned having a son. He was a warlock and he was returning. The men had said about him having a baby to a witch who was burned at the stake. Could that witch have been Bernadette? It seemed to fit the picture. Obviously, that son of Harriet would be angry, having had his unborn child

burnt alive. Harriet herself had said about the harm people had done to witches centuries ago.

But was Harriet truly good and wanting to save the world, yet just angered by the deaths of witches? She would have been the grandmother of the unborn child, after all... or could she really be evil? She had used her powers to prevent him from returning to the States. She had even threatened death on his entire family if he did not do as she wanted.

Dan gazed at his reflection in the mirror. He didn't want to be female... but he was so beautiful. If he had to be a woman, if he had to be a witch, better that he be a stunning looking one.

He needed to try finding out more, from both parties... who was lying to him, who was on the side of good and who was on the side of bad. Maybe if he talked to Stewart and the others and told them about the danger facing the world and that the witches were trying to prevent it, they would not be so scared of them.

Day Ten – Monday 24th

Dan was feeling drained. He had been up from the crack of dawn as the witches began the raising of his powers to Level Four. Harriet had warned, rather than him feeling powerful at this stage, he would begin by feeling sapped as it took a lot out of him putting the powers in.

He perched himself on a high white stool to rest after the incantations were over, splaying out a pair of long, smooth, shapely legs, legs like he was not used to seeing.

He was wearing a black crop top and black skirt that only settled as far as mid-thigh; on his feet he was wearing three-inch stiletto shoes. Since going to the dance on Saturday he found wearing heels more comfortable and he could walk in them easier. In fact, they hurt a little less than flats which now seemed to cause a bit of strain at the back heel for some reason.

"You have done well this morning, Phoebe. You may not feel like it but I can feel the power within you," Harriet told him as she came to his side.

"I feel exhausted," Dan responded.

"Drink this, Child," Harriet said, handing Dan a beaker with a yellowish liquid inside.

"What on earth is that?" Dan exclaimed, pulling a face.

"It is an energy potion that I have mixed to revitalise you. It will not taste as bad as it looks; I have given it a strawberry flavour. Drink up. We shall have lunch, then I'm taking you down to the village to do some clothes shopping for you," Harriet announced.

"Clothes shopping! You mean female clothes? Really, Harriet what is the need? I am only going to be like this for a short while. What is the point in wasting money?" Dan complained. "...and there are clothes in the wardrobe still."

"We have been through this already, Phoebe. Whilst you are in female form, you need to be in female character and dress appropriately for a young lady of your age. I also want the villagers to see 'my niece' acting like any young lady would. Now let's not hear any more about it," Harriet gave the sharp reply.

Although Dan had twice referred to Harriet as being his Aunt, he didn't cotton to her referring to him

as niece and she had not been around twice when he had called her Aunt.

Dan took a sip of the potion. "Mmmm.... this tastes very good," he complimented as he drained the beaker of its contents.

The potion actually worked. Not only did Dan feel more energetic and lively, he felt different inside himself. He felt quite lighthearted and happy, the most lighthearted and stress-free that he had felt in quite some time.

Dan enjoyed his lunch at the table with all of the others; sandwiches and fruit with a fruit juice, then went up to his room to get ready for going to the village with Harriet.

It had snowed outside, not too heavily, but it was cold and he didn't want to go into the village with near bare legs and a top that failed to cover his middle. He decided to wear the same white dress he had worn to church the day before and there was a coat to wear over it to keep him warm.

Dan found a necklace in a drawer which he thought he should wear as otherwise there was too much exposed upper chest from the dress' neckline. The necklace was a curious thing. It was silver and had what looked like two long bars that crossed over and the ends were fashioned like an animal's paws with claws.

As he looked in the mirror to view the necklace, he scrutinised himself and made a decision. Other than mascara and eyeliner that Connie had helped him with earlier, he was not yet wearing any lipstick. He decided that he should if he was going into the village and it would be an opportunity to see if he could put it on by himself.

Twenty minutes later he was looking at himself in the mirror again. He was impressed; he had put the red lipstick on perfectly as well as painting his fingernails in a black lacquer. He had also managed to put his long hair up in the back quite successfully.

He took a good look at himself, he really was a beautiful girl who would be able to attract any man... not that he had any intentions of attracting men, of course.

He put his fingertips to his lips to feel them; his lips were so much fuller than they used to be. As he did he saw in the reflection of the mirror the tattoo on his wrist with his girlfriend's name written upon it. He wondered what Jodie would make of him if she could see her boyfriend right now. He smiled at the idea.

He made his way gaily down the stairs to let Harriet know that he was ready for their shopping trip, with much more enthusiasm than he'd had earlier that day.

Harriet looked at Pretoria and Rosella with a knowing smile. "You look gorgeous, sweetie. I shall just get my coat, it's rather chilly outdoors today," she said, turning back to Dan.

It was the usual forty-minute walk into the village but Dan didn't even stop to think that he was still wearing three-inch heels on his feet

"Good afternoon, Sally, and how are you, my dear? I have brought my niece in to choose new clothing as I mentioned to you the other day," Harriet greeted the owner of the village dress shop, whom she knew quite well, as they walked inside.

"I'm very well, thank you, Harriet. So, you must be Phoebe. You were so right, Harriet, she is beautiful," Dan blushed at the compliment.

The shop was closed while Sally entertained her customers, bringing many dresses, tops and skirts, shoes and underwear out for them to see. Dan was then invited to go behind a dressing room curtain to try some of the outfits on for inspection by Harriet and the owner.

He emerged first wearing an off-the-shoulder black dress in rayon and lace with lots of black netting around the shoulders and hem. He was informed it was a Bardot-style dress. On his feet he wore black stiletto heeled sandals with an ankle strap and a strap across the toes.

Dan felt a bit embarrassed about posing himself in a number of ways for the two women at first but he felt a little easier come the second dress. This was a Dip hem dress with a low back. This time he wore black court shoes with an ankle strap.

The third dress which Sally pulled out was to go with a pair of glossy dark brown, wet look leggings. The dress was a bodycon dress with black and white spangles and had two diagonal black details at the front. He let his hair down to model that one, at Harriet's request.

The fourth dress was another bodycon style in a small leopard print with scooped neckline; the hem fell and clung to his thighs just a few inches from the groin. With this dress, Dan had been given a pair of glossy black opaque tights with Lycra to wear, and black shoes with a Cuban heel.

He wore the same tights and footwear to model the fifth and final dress which was a sleeveless gypsy style with a tile print in blue and grey. Harriet was impressed with this one.

"Oh, Phoebe... that outfit looks adorable on you, you must wear that one home," she gushed.

It was strange, Dan had thought he would absolutely hate shopping for female clothes with Harriet but instead he found he quite enjoyed the experience.

Three of the five dresses were bought along with panties, bras, and three pair of shoes together with two negligees. As requested by Harriet, Dan kept the last outfit on to go home in, which he really didn't mind as it meant not having to do yet another change.

Harriet was not ready for going home at that moment. She asked Sally if she would parcel the purchases up and have them delivered to her home, along with the clothes and shoes that Dan had worn to the village.

"Right, Poppet. As it is so frightfully cold outside and snowing, I will take us to the local café for a drink and a bite to eat. There you can have that cup of coffee that you have been so nagging about," Harriet laughed.

Dan followed Harriet to the café which was just around the corner of the main shopping street. There were only three other people inside so he didn't feel overly conspicuous.

"They have a variety of coffees here so you may have to choose which one is more suitable to you. I'll also buy us a cream bun each," Harriet informed him as Dan sat to a table and crossed one leg over the other without even thinking.

Dan went for an espresso. As he sat taking bites from his cream bun, he pondered again at the three men who were warning him off from Harriet and the other witches. Harriet had been really good company and pleasant all day, he couldn't see her as being wicked in any way... Pretoria maybe. She should learn how to smile. Rosella was naughty but didn't

seem bad and the three younger ones were just very flirtatious.

He wondered if maybe these three men were related to those, centuries ago, who Harriet had said had persecuted witches. Maybe they had an engraved resentment of witches, hatred even, and were just telling him mean things about them.

But how did they know about him? They had said they knew who he was, but they hadn't *said* who he was. Did they even really know he was really a man?

Dan thought he may get some answers at the church; maybe ask the Vicar if he could look through the old parish records. He knew most churches held documents of events in the parish over long periods of time. Yes, he should try that.

After they had eaten and drank, the two of them stepped outside back into the cold. The snow had stopped falling but there was a covering everywhere. Dan was grateful he was now wearing a shoe with a smaller, thicker heel than he had worn coming. He was also grateful for the tights to keep his legs warm. He wrapped his coat around him for the walk back.

"Harriet, we seem to have established a story that I am your niece. Do you think it may be a good idea that I always refer to you that way? Kind of get used to calling you by that," Dan asked along the way back.

"Would you like to think of me as your Auntie? I am perfectly fine with the idea if you are," Harriet replied.

Dan thought briefly about it. He now knew that Harriet, unbelievably, had lived for centuries... but her appearance was that of a woman maybe in her early to mid-forties. At thirty six, that meant she was in a way, only about ten years older than he... but

then, he himself was younger now. He smiled. "Yes, I would like that, Auntie," he replied.

Harriet linked her arm in his as they continued along their way.

Back at Harriet's house, Dan was still feeling in a cheery contented mood and accepted an offer of taking a bath in the evening. So far he'd only had warm showers at the cottage and wash downs at Harriet's. It felt luxurious to be bathing in hot soapy water.

Of course, Dan was still trying to get used to the feminine figure that he had. Having his breasts floating above the top of the water was a new experience, as was washing more intensely around his groin and pussy. After a good wash, he just relaxed and enjoyed soaking whilst the water became cooler.

Meanwhile, Harriet, downstairs, was quite happy that her guest was starting to accept his new sex, mostly thanks to the cocktail of potions she kept brewing for him.

That night, wearing his new negligee, Dan slept the best sleep he'd had since he had arrived in the country.

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Day 11 – Tuesday 25th

The following morning Dan woke with a headache. It was almost like a hangover, except he hadn't been drinking.

The effects of yesterday's potion given to him by Harriet had worn out of his system and now, rather than feeling on a high, he felt like crap. As he lay in bed, not wishing to get up, he thought back on the previous day. He felt embarrassed as he reflected about trying on all those feminine dresses and shoes and being so okay about it.

Today though, he had to find a way of going back into the village. He needed to go back to the church and see if he could learn anything from the church archives. How he would explain to Harriet, he wasn't sure. She seemed to have a tight rein on him, but first he supposed he should get up before they came knocking him up.

After showering and brushing his teeth, Dan selected his daywear from the wardrobe. He knew he would be frowned at if he didn't wear something acceptable and so, after putting on the compulsory bra and panties, he went with a white lacy blouse with three-quarter sleeves and a long straight denim skirt. He didn't bother with any makeup.

Today he would be trying to raise the second phase of attaining his power Level Four and he went down with the other witches after breakfast to the cellars to begin.

"You look worn, child, did you not sleep well?" Harriet asked as she looked at him.

Dan explained how he felt to her, that he had a headache and felt unenergetic. Harriet had already expected him to feel that way and was ready for it.

"Oh dear, that's no good. We will be trying to reach the second part of your Level Four today. That is a big one and it will require a lot of energy from you. Before we start, I will mix you a few potions to take... one to clear your head and the other just to reenergise you," she told him before going off to where all of her jars and phials were stored.

Soon Dan was being presented with the two drinks in tumblers; the first did not taste too nice, the second was like the one the day before, a rather thick yellowish liquid but this time, instead of tasting like strawberry, it tasted like cherries.

It wasn't long before Dan's headache disappeared and he was starting to feel much better; there were definite benefits to living with witches.

Once the morning rituals were over, Dan was starting to feel a power coursing through his body.

"Tomorrow we will complete your Level Four, Phoebe. We will channel all of the levels we have reached together and do some experimenting with you to see what abilities you can conjure up.

Dan nodded his head in agreement. Although he'd had no desire to be a witch or have any magic powers, he was interested in what he may now be able to do with all that he had been storing up.

"If you like, I can pull out some spell books for you to read in the library. They are very old. It will give you something to do with your day," Harriet suggested.

Dan was just about to reply and ask if it was okay to go down to the cottage and do some tidying as an excuse for leaving the house, when Felicity spoke.

“Connie and I are going down to the village market street to see if we can sell any more pumpkins, Harriet.”

Dan seized on the opportunity. “Oh, would it be okay if I went along with them, Aunty? I could really use some fresh air as my head still isn’t totally clear,” he asked.

Harriet knew her potions well and looked in surprise by Dan’s statement that his head was still a little bit foggy, but she saw no harm in him going with the two girls.

“Yes, that’s fine, Phoebe; I think it would be nice for you to have more bonding time with Flick and Connie,” she replied.

“You will need to get dressed up, Phoebe. You’re not wearing any makeup and we are going into the Swan Inn for a drink after we are done,” Felicity then mentioned.

Strangely, Dan didn’t mind the idea too much. The cherry-flavoured potion was starting to do its work on him and he was feeling content and in tune with his new body once again.

“Okay, I’ll go find something in my room. What time are you leaving Flick?” He asked.

As the two young witches also planned on getting dressed for the occasion, they agreed to give each other three-quarters of an hour to get ready, setting off at twelve-thirty.

In his room, Dan pulled out his makeup bag and a mirror, then sat splayed girlishly on the floor with his smooth hairless legs folded under and to one side of

him. He began rummaging through, pulling out foundation, eyeliner, shadow, mascara and lipstick to begin his task. He used a hair band to take his long hair back from his face.

By twelve-fifteen he was fully made-up, his hair brushed out and now wearing a short red skirt and white vest top and perched on a pair of black 3” stiletto-heeled sandals.

Tottering downstairs to await the other two, Constance arrived first in a blue sleeveless dress followed by Felicity in a grey lace dress with a black design feature which she looked gorgeous in.

Harriet, upon seeing the three together, clapped her hands together in joy. “Oh! How wonderful you three girls look, just like sisters. I really must take a photograph.”

She went off to get a camera, then the three of them posed together for the photograph.

Both Flick and Connie wore their hooded capes over their dresses to wear down to the village and also whilst they were selling the pumpkins. They gave a spare one to Dan. Now they really did look like siblings.

Dan was surprised at how much money they made from just one small village. It was amazing how three attractive young girls could draw a crowd. He learned later that day that their attraction also brought in customers from several nearby villages and the girl’s sexy banter and flirtatiousness with the men certainly helped sales.

They had to reload the cart three times from a local farm and by three-fifty they were all sold out.

“Okay let’s go get a drink at the Swan. Flick and I are meeting two lads, Phoebe, but we can introduce you to one of their friends.”

Dan hadn’t planned on joining them anyway but he reddened at their suggestion. “Oh, I don’t want you going to any trouble. Actually, I was wanting to look inside the church again so I will go there and see you later. What time are you in the bar until?”

“No later than seven. Harriet will go spare if we are late for the evening meal.”

Felicity laughed. “You’re weird, what interest is there in some grotty old church?”

“We just don’t get them so ornate back in the States. I’ll see you about quarter to seven then.”

Dan began walking easily in the heeled sandals towards the church. From the corner of a building, he was being watched along his way by Stewart Forsythe.

Dan called in at the vicarage to ask the village Vicar, Hector McCormack, if he could peruse some of the old village records, telling him that, because he’d had no idea about his Great Aunt Mabel, he wanted to find out what he could about her and to read up on family history in the area.

Hector found the reason Dan had given to be a perfectly acceptable one. “The archive room where we keep all of the parish records is an extensive one; I shall come along and see if I can point to anything that may have useful information for you,” he said.

Dan sat in the archive room surrounded by walls of books, some looking quite new, some looking ancient. He watched as the vicar pulled out a few books for him and thought to himself that the middle-aged

vicar looked quite dishy. He didn't even realise just what he was thinking.

"I shall leave you to your research. When you are finished, kindly put the books back where you found them. The door is on a latch; please make sure it is locked and secure when you leave."

"Okay, I will. Thank you for all of your kind help... Hector," Dan replied, rather flirtatiously touching his/her hand to his chest.

Although Dan formerly would have been interested in knowing more about his Great Aunt, he was now more interested in knowing her witch background and any information of witches in the area, historically.

Looking at the books brought out by the vicar, Dan began searching the book titles on the spines and not really doing too well.

It had been about ten minutes from the vicar leaving when there was a knock on the door and Stewart walked in.

"I take it you are looking for the history of witches in Pendlebury, Daniel?" he asked as he approached the table where Dan was sat.

Dan blushed at the calling of his real name, it was embarrassing being referred to by his male name whilst in female form and dressed as he was.

"Uh, could you please call me Phoebe while I am like this? It's obvious you know of my real sex but it is very embarrassing for me in front of someone who knows my real name and sex, dressed and looking

like I do," he asked, blushing furiously. "What are you doing here, anyway?"

"Don't worry; I understand why they have made you female. They need the coven of four and the coven has to be all female. If you are looking for records for proof of what I have been telling you, then I am here to help. And I think here is a safe enough place for me to tell you more," Stewart replied as he sat himself down.

Stewart knew where to find the various books but he also was very much aware of the history of the village and its witches.

"Over two centuries ago, there were at least three main families of practicing witches in this area alone, with others spread across Lancashire and Saddleworth Moor, the Moors in Yorkshire, the Chattersns, the Pendykes and the Storrages," Stewart began.

"Although they were practicing witches, most of them meant no harm, not like the witches over several centuries earlier. But laws were brought against anyone practicing malevolent sorcery and a witch Finder General was installed to hunt them down, killing them by hanging, beheading or being burned at the stake. Many people were drowned to find out whether they were witches or not.

"The truth of the matter was that the hunting and killing of witches was used as a shield by land barons who were dealing in illegal trading and white slavery in the area at the time.

"Yes, there were some malevolent witches, established throughout Europe from as early as the Twelfth Century and these were hunted out and killed, but the families around Pendlebury Hill, were not evil," Stewart continued.

“But you were warning me, saying they were dangerous and I should take care; now you are saying they are just innocent spell makers,” Dan quickly reminded.

Stewart sat back in the chair. “I am a practicing white witch. White witches were also persecuted, but we are not vengeful... The Government brought out an act to stop the hunting and killing of witches, but the damage was done and people were now in fear of these sorcerers. Illegal lynchings continued. Overall, between 40,000 and 60,000 people across the world were put to death, accused of being witches and that figure does not include all of the illegal killings.”

Stewart rose from his seat and went straight to a file, showing he knew exactly where it was and what it contained. He took out a sketch portrait of a woman.

“Does the woman in this picture look familiar to you?” he asked as he placed down the drawing of Bernadette Chattern.

“Yes, she looks like me... well, as I look now,” Dan answered, “I already know of her, from Harriet,” Dan replied as he looked at the portrait, different from the one he had seen before. This one had a symbol drawn in the top right corner, a symbol that looked just like the birthmark on his shoulder.

“And do you know she was burnt at the stake for being a practicing witch? That she was burnt alive carrying her unborn child? The child’s grandmother was Harriet Pendency. Harriet had already lost three sisters and a brother to the witch hunters, and now her first and unborn grandchild.

Dan was rocked. Harriet had told the tale of her being there at the birth but had made no mention of the infant child being her own grandchild.

“We know that Harriet and other witches have a long and festering hatred for those people who persecuted their families... maybe justifiable. We know that her son, the baby’s father, is set to return here soon to help exact revenge. They plan to raise Griselda from the dead, a very powerful witch from the Twelfth Century, using necromancy. They require a coven of four witches... and they have but three.”

Dan was hearing what was being spoken and much that Stewart talked about he already knew to be fact but there had been no mention to him of raising a powerful sorcerer from the dead and being hellbent on punishing people for crimes committed over two hundred years ago.

“You obviously know why I have been brought over here from America, what Harriet is trying to do with me... but it is because the world is in danger, the apocalypse is imminent?”

“Is that what she is telling you? Harriet has her own evil ways and she has already punished some villagers for the sins of their fathers. Jeremiah Moore, Marmaduke Stritch and Samuel Blakely; all three were sons of some of the villagers guilty of lynching hers, Rosella’s and Pretoria’s families. All three of those men were innocent themselves.”

“What did she do to them?” Dan asked, horrified.

“She altered them, made them work for her as part of her coven. Jeremiah is now known as Felicity. Marmaduke is known as Constance and Samuel is Bridgette.”

Dan’s mouth dropped agape in shock. “No! Connie, Flick and Bridgette are... *were*, once men?”

“Yes indeed. She gave them limited powers of spell casting and internal life. Plus, in addition to making

them female, she made them lustful and immoral, yearning sex with men. They are insatiable, as you may well have found. The spells cast on them make it so that they cannot help themselves.”

Dan now could not take much more in; what he had just heard had shaken him badly.

“What of Pretoria and Rosella?”

“Oh, they are real enough, born female. Both practiced witchcraft from being young, they are cousins from the Storage family, both with their own grievances. The Storages were persecuted and only the two from that whole clan still exist.

“Yes, you are the heir of your Great Aunt’s cottage and you are from the Chattern lineage. Your Great Aunt died two years ago. The witches knew about you. When she died, myself, Ben and Adam, whom you have met, tried hard to have that cottage pulled down. It is the last ancestral home of the Chattern witches... but Harriet moved against us.”

“She only called for you over from America now as we near an eventful time, with the line of the planets set to create a great influence on the Earth at All Hallow’s Eve, when the walls between the living and the dead are at their most porous, when Harriet and the other two plan to raise Griselda from her long sleep.”

Stewart’s words were chilling. “What can I do? What can I do to prevent this from happening?” Dan gasped, taking in the enormity of it all.

“Nothing just yet, we need to know more of their plans. Meanwhile let them continue bringing your dormant powers out. Your full powers may help us at the end.”

Before their talk together ended, Stewart showed Dan several books about the history of the

Pendlebury witches. They mentioned inside about the persecution of the three main families and of how the villagers set about, illegally, to kill them.

Dan was startled to see a painted image from 1875 of three young witches dancing around a fire. The faces were well drawn and looked exactly like Bridgette, Constance and Felicity. Nearby, but unrelated, was a paragraph about how three young men had mysteriously gone missing, believed the victims of sorcery.

Dan suddenly was concerned about the time; they had been talking for ages. He asked Stewart. It had gone twenty past six.

“Oh, I had best be going, I arranged to see the girls...” he suddenly stopped talking as he remembered that they were not girls at all but had been forced into a change of sex just because of their parents. “Um, the other two in a bar at quarter to seven,” he apologised.

“Okay. We’ll keep in touch. Don’t do anything differently just yet, we don’t want to raise suspicion that we are onto them,” Stewart said with parting words as Dan left to find the Swan public house.

As Dan made his way along the main street of the village, his mind was again in conflict. Now it seemed that he had to believe Stewart who knew so much about him and the history of the witches. He simply couldn’t believe that the three young girls had all been male, changed against their will as some form of punishment. They certainly seemed as though they had adapted well.

He didn’t want to believe Stewart, he had started to feel a part of the... the family. He was getting on with

Harriet and that morning, with Felicity and Constance, as they had their photograph taken. He had felt like one of them, and so close.

Walking into a public bar was nerve-wracking for Dan, in his female form and wearing the clothes he was wearing. It was full of men, all drinking alcohol, all probably lusty, and all looking at him.

He saw Constance sitting on the lap of a man by the corner of the room, her tongue down his throat. Trying to ignore the lusty stares of the men in the pub, mostly ogling his breasts or legs, Dan made his way to the table where they were.

“Constance... it’s time for us to be going back to Auntie’s,” he spoke out after a cough to draw attention.

“Oh, Phoebe. Shit, is it that time already?” Constance exclaimed, looking a bit put out that she couldn’t continue what she was doing.

“Where’s Flick?” Dan asked, then gasped as he felt a passing man fondle his butt; Dan blushed rather than reacted to the assault.

“She’s in the bathroom with Tim. Come on, we’ll go get her. See you tomorrow, Darren, lover,” Connie then said to the man, kissing her fingers and pressing them to the man’s lips.

Connie then led Dan towards the men’s toilets with Dan thinking what a rough, unsavoury place the bar was... and Flick in a men’s toilet.

As they opened the door of the dirty toilet, they saw Flick standing with the man by a dusty, cobwebbed window. She had pulled down the top part of her dress and her left breast was over the top of her bra... with Tim’s lips attached to it and sucking on her nip-

ple. He was supporting Flick's raised right leg with his hand.

"Oh, Felicity, you wanton bitch, it's time for us to be going," Connie laughed gaily.

As the three made their way back, Dan did not feel the same way about his two companions as he had on their way to the village, now that he knew about them and who they were. A part of him felt sorry for what had happened to them but he couldn't tell them that. He also had that image of them in that painting in the book, dancing a ritual around a fire.

End of Part 1