

New Friends

The next day was full of cleaning and organizing the store. I rearranged the teahouse a little, too. I wanted to make sure the energy ow would harmonize with the new layout. It seemed to work out well.

I loved just working in the shop and not having to deal with questions and people showing up to 'check in' on me. It was like I never had a moment alone with my thoughts when I was at home. This new freedom made me super happy.

An email came in around noon welcoming me to the collective and letting me know what other businesses were owned by other members of the collective. It was to encourage supporting each other. I loved that.

There was a vegetarian restaurant on the list. It excited me a lot more than it probably should have. My entire life, I had to deal with people trying to convince me to eat meat. Restaurants, cafés, and the cafeteria at school never had vegetarian options.

Our coven was mostly re witches. I was the only animal witch in the coven. They just didn't understand that I didn't want to eat animals because I could talk to them as easily as I could talk to my friends and neighbors.

At the bottom of the email was the contact information for the local coven. I didn't know if I wanted to join, or be a free witch like my great aunt was. There were benets to each. I would have to see what kind of coven it was.

In some covens, the leader was a guide, in others, the leader was like a little ruler. That was what my father's coven was like. He and my mother made rules and laws, they decided on things when people had issues, they were the king and queen of our little town.

I didn't want that, because it meant they could try and arrange a marriage for me to strengthen the coven. My parents loved me, that was why they backed off. A different coven leader wouldn't have the same attachment to me.

Just because it was what was always done. I couldn't let myself be pushed or bullied into marrying someone I didn't love. I decided it would be a better idea to stay a free witch. Auntie Tonya said coven witches came in for ingredients from her. They'd have to do the same for me.

After replying to the email with my thanks, I returned to my work. I couldn't worry over a coven I hadn't even met yet. I would get to know the leader sooner or later.

-

Thursday nally arrived. The girls from the teahouse would be coming to meet me and prepare for the new opening. Jen and Emmalyn would get to know them as well, I fully intended to keep the two sections separate.

I went downstairs and started getting everything ready. I was brewing tea so we could have our meeting with something to drink. I'd made some sugar cookies the night before to go with the tea. I wasn't fantastic at cooking, but there were somethings I could manage.

Soon, I heard knocking at the teahouse door. Jen and two other girls were waving through the glass in the door. I got up and unlocked it. Just before I was about to close it, Emmalyn ran up. I smiled and let her in too before locking the door again. I seated everyone at the biggest table in the teahouse and served the tea and cookies.

The two girls who worked at the teahouse introduced themselves as Nixie and Maya. I was grateful to have them. They were bubbly and sweet. Water witches and re witches didn't always get along, but I was a little different. Plant witches get along well with water witches.

"Are any of you in the local coven? I know Jen isn't." I asked.

"I am." Nixie said.

"Will the coven leader have any problem with you working under a free witch?"

"Never had a problem before, but Tonya was older. She might have an issue with you being unmarried. You said you have more than one anity. Didn't your parents try to nd you a husband? They really should have." She smiled.

"If I joined the coven, would the coven leader be trying to arrange a marriage for me?" I questioned.

"Oh, denitely! We have some dual anity men in our coven. There's even a triple anity male witch who lives a couple hours from here. Our coven leader would love to have him in our coven. You're pretty enough, we could probably catch him with you. He's turned down all the offers we've put out." Nixie said.

"I will not be joining the coven then. Thank you. I would rather not have an arranged marriage. I'm betting that's what the male witch feels too." I told her. "Your information was very useful to me."

I went over the schedules and duties with all of them. Nixie and Maya told me about how shifts normally went for them and that they would sometimes help out with the shop. I let them know they would be in charge of the teahouse primarily. I didn't want people shifting around too much, and I didn't want Jen anywhere near boiling water.

We worked out exactly how the reopening would go. We were set to open on Monday. I would be working in the oce and popping over to both sides of the business. I let them know about my dizzy spells and that I would need to have help if we had shapeshifters in the building.

I let Maya and Nixie get comfortable in the teahouse and arrange things as they liked them while I took Jen and Emmalyn for a tour of the storage rooms and main shop. I got them familiar with the point-of-sale machine and the register.

Everything was coming together. The girls were all getting along. We set up what times Emmalyn would offer rune readings. She would have a jar for tips and she would get to keep whatever she made on it. I wanted her to feel that her contributions were appreciated, and the girls who did the leaf readings told me they got to keep the tips they were given from those.

With everyone bustling around and getting all the cleaning nished, I went outside. The planters in the front of the building were in good condition. I watered the owers and helped them shed dead or dying leaves that they just couldn't support.

As I bent over to grab the watering can and move on to the next planter, Jen's goong around in the shop caught my eye and I nearly tipped over. She was juggling three expensive crystal orbs using her air magic. If I startled her, she might drop them. My nerves were going crazy.

It wasn't great for things around me. The owers started getting stressed, and the nearby birds started chirping and swooping. I took a couple steps back, to stop myself from running in there, and tripped over the watering can.

I braced myself for an impact with the ground that never came. Instead, I found myself cradled in strong arms. I opened my eyes and looked up.

A man with a half smirking smile gazed down at me. He licked his lips slightly. Things inside me tightened. It had been months since I'd slept with anyone, but my body remembered and ached for it.

He had a suave, hunk next door, look with pale brown hair, light blue eyes with little green ecks, and full, kissable lips. His arms constricted around me and I was pulled against his rm chest. A small, quivering squeak escaped me, and he chuckled.

"Are you alright?" He asked.

"Y-yes. Thank you for catching me." I whispered.

"It's not every day a beautiful woman falls into my arms." He replied.

"Not every day that a handsome man is there to catch me when I fall."

"What's your name?" He asked.

"I'm Clover. This is my shop." I answered.

"Nice. I'm Joshua. You can call me Josh if you want. Do you think you can stand on your own?"

"If I say no, will you carry me up to my bed?" I purred.

Josh looked surprised for a moment, his eyes seemed to darken and smolder. He was an inch or so taller than me, maybe 5'11", but not much taller. I didn't mind. It made everything more intimate when a man was so close to you in height.

"I can certainly try... or I would if I didn't have to get back to work." Josh chuckled.

"You know where to nd me, if you change your mind." I winked, pulling from his grasp.

"Wait." He said.

He pulled out his wallet and started digging through it.

"Please tell me you're looking for a condom." I smiled, nibbling my lip.

"My card." He said, presenting me a simple white rectangle of card stock with his name and number on it. "That's my cell number. Text instead of call, I can't always answer right away, but I'll text back as soon as possible."

I took the card and made a slow show of sliding it into my bra. His eyes followed the card as it disappeared, with a healthy glimpse of my breast. I reached out and traced his jaw line.

"I'll text you, then." I murmured and turned to go back into the shop, picking up the watering can as I went.

"Damn." I heard him mutter as I closed the door behind me.

I walked into the back and put the watering can away. I pulled out the card and looked at it. I wasn't looking for a boyfriend, just for a good time, and he looked like he could be a very good time.

Dropping the card back in the oce, I returned to the store to scold Jen for goong off with the merchandise. She insisted she didn't know how much they cost and apologized. If not for the incident being somewhat benecial, I would have given her a warning. As it stood, her stunt had helped me out.

The rest of the day went smoothly. I only had to worry about the coming deliveries and what to do with myself over the weekend.... I wondered if Josh was free to help me with that problem.

-

After I closed for the day, I went up to my apartment, pulled out some portobello mushroom caps for grilling, and texted Josh. I hadn't been able to stop thinking about the feel of his arms. I wondered if he was up for going out tomorrow night.

I set the phone down and worked on my dinner. It smelled amazing. I had mushroom steaks, mashed potatoes, and a salad. My phone chimed just as I was sitting down with my food.

Josh had messaged back. He told me he was totally up for grabbing a drink tomorrow night. I was excited and horny as hell. Our mild conversation turned hot and heavy pretty quick. I was quite adept at sexting and he was begging to meet up tonight instead, by the time I told him I was going to my bed 'all alone'.

Getting him really worked up was part of my plan. I needed him willing to do anything if I was going to have him the way I wanted a man. I had... unusual... desires.

Some of my exes had really been into it, but there were some men who would balk at it. I didn't know which way he would trend. With luck, I would have my cake and eat it too.

Curling in my bed, I thought about Josh in my bed as well, tied up, helpless, begging for his release. I touched myself thinking of him on his knees and eager to please me. It made for a very exciting climax.

Mostly sated, I fell asleep. Tomorrow would be another long day in the shop and, hopefully, an even longer night in my bed. I couldn't wait.