



66 THE WITCH IN THE WOODS

It was a good thing that they were in the Crescent Pack. 1

It was not so far from where they were going.

As they rode their horses, Coral complained.

"How long are we going to ride?"

"Patience is a virtue." Cherry reminded herself as she held on to her reins.

Coral frowned as her horses galloped faster.

Cherry was born the first daughter of the King and Queen of the Royal family.

She had been born with a blazing red head, and as was the custom, she would be queen.

But then her younger sister Rose was born and had red hair.

Regardless, she was supposed to be queen.

Then tragedy struck the royal family.

The King and Queen, along with her other siblings, including her younger brother Crimson,



had died in a shipwreck.

Cherry had been made queen instantly.

But the moment she sat on the throne, her wolf howled, and her hair turned black.

It had never happened before.

The goddess had rejected her.

Her younger sister, Rose, was placed on the throne, and her hair remained the same.

Cherry had been furious and felt betrayed by everyone.

She had grown to hate the entire kingdom, the kingmakers, the members of the council, and most of all, her sister, for stealing the throne. 5

That is why, when Rose gave birth to twins, she set one sister against the other.

Coral had grown to be jilted, and she had taken her into her enclave and raised her in her way.

Her evil ways.

She was going to make herself queen.



She had her plans, and her grand niece Belle would never sit on that throne as long as she lived.

Finally, she came down with her horse and tied it to a tree.

"Are we there yet?" Coral asked, coming down from her horse.

"No, not yet," Cherry said. "We walk from here."

"Why can't we just keep on going with our horse? That way, we make it faster." Coral said sensibly.

Cherry informed, "This is sacred ground. You are not allowed to desecrate it."

And then she adjusted her fur coat and went on leading the way.

Coral followed her behind as they walked over stones and past little ponds.

The forest creaked, but Cherry knew they were getting closer.

Just as Coral was about to complain, Cherry turned to her.



"This is a problem you caused." Cherry warned her. "You better take it while I fix it."

Coral went silent, and Cherry returned on her way.

She knew this road very well. It had been years, but she was close by here.

After a while, she saw the little cabin.

Smoke came from the chimney, and Cherry walked towards the door. Coral was right behind her.

Before she touched it, the door swung open.

Coral jumped behind her.

Cherry smiled and stepped in.

The room was clean and trimmed.

Everything has the perfect touch.

"Where are we?" Coral asked.

A beautiful brown-skinned woman with curly red hair came inside with her hands on her hips.

"Cherry." The woman said, "What brings you to



my cabin?"

Cherry smiled. "Aren't you happy to see an old friend?"

And as the two women hugged, Coral watched on.

"I like the new face," Cherry said.

"It's my original face." The woman said it with a smile. "I decided to return to my original beauty for a while."

Then Cherry let go of the woman and turned to Coral.

"Coral, this is Madame Maria Laveau," Cherry said. "The most potent dark arts witch that lives. Marie, this is-

"Coral, daughter of the King and Queen, Jilted heir and murderer." Marie said, cutting in.

Coral's face became red instantly.

"I know you. You forget that I know everything," Marie said to Cherry.

Coral swallowed and said nothing.

"Marie is a witch," Cherry informed. "The one who taught me all that I know."

Coral looked around at the clean house.

"Wondering how a witch has a clean place?"

Marie said she was reading Coral's thoughts.

"What were you expecting? Cobwebs and black cats?"

Coral began to stammer.

"Don't worry, I'm used to it, and all they said to you is a lie," Marie said. "I do have a cat."

At that moment, a pitch-black cat came into the room.

Meow.

She climbed up the table and rubbed her arm at Coral.

"No help?" Coral asked.

"I had one," Marie said.

"Had? What happened to her?" Coral asked as she began to pet the black cat.

"She stole from me, so I turned her into that cat."



Marie said as she turned a brewing pot over the fireplace. 1

Cora jumped and took a frightened step back, away from the cat and Marie.

"I take it you didn't come just to see me." Marie asked.

"Yes." Cherry said. "There was a girl. I met her in the crescent pack. She is a slave, but she has red hair, and she smelt like royalty. I drew her blood, and sure enough, it emerged blue."

Cherry showed Marie her finger.

Marie examined it and licked the finger again.

"Yes, this is a member of the royal family. Her blood is powerful."

Marie frowned. "I've never tasted anything like it before."

Cherry and Cora exchanged looks.

"But we don't know who she is. Or how she comes to have my blood."

Marie sighed. "Hmmm."

She turned around and tossed her dreadlocked



hair to the side.

She walked to a cauldron and stirred it.

Then she pulled out a dagger.

"Bring your hand." Marie invited Cherry.

Cherry handed her hand, and Marie dipped the tip of the dagger to where the dried blood had been and drew blood.

Then she put it inside the cauldron.

After that, she turned to Coral.

"Give me your hand."

Coral did as told, and Marie pulled the dagger over her palm.

Coral closed her eyes in pain, and Marie put in the blood.

Then she opened a bottle and tossed some other ingredients inside.

"Manila." She called, and then the cats jumped down from the table they had been sleeping on and approached her.



"Come here, my girl," Marie said.

The cat jumped into her arms, and she gently massaged its ears.

"Such a good girl," she said.

And she snapped the neck of the cat. 7

Coral jumped and closed her mouth.

Cherry glared at her, and she quickly behaved.

Then Marie tossed the dead cat inside the cauldron, and a puff of green smoke ascended.

And then a skull showed its head, and it all returned in.

Marie went to the cauldron and looked down at it.

She frowned and looked back up at Cherry.

"Who did you say you thought this child was?" She asked.

"My brother-in-law," Cherry said. "The King."

Marie looked back in. "This is no daughter of the king."

