

Blurb:

Christine Douglas was your average, run of the mill witch, just trying to eke out a living through her small coffee shop. With the exception of a little family drama she'd be the first to admit that her life was pretty ordinary. Well, if you called having a voyeuristic spirit lurking about normal.

Twelve hundreds years was a long time to be alone, unless you were Falcon Dragoon. His kind enjoyed the solitude of their existence, preferring their own company to the illogical and irrational activities of earth's other inhabitants. If it were up to him he'd have remained in stasis another twelve hundred years. Fortunately for him an eccentric little witch did the impossible. She awoke a Sleeper.

Chapter One

A flick of the wrist had the sign in the picture window tapping gently against the glass before settling on the flat, tinted surface. Closed. Finally. Ten o'clock couldn't have come too soon for her. After a near sixteen-hour work day Christine was happy to see the backsides of her last customers as they strolled leisurely across the street hand in hand. She was certain if she'd kept her mouth closed the couple would have remained at their corner table whispering and giggling for another hour or more. Young love. There was nothing like it, well, except maybe the utter joy of realizing a long-time dream.

She gave her small coffee house a proud once over. At twenty-nine she was a first time business owner. It was still a little unreal to her. A couple years of scrimping and saving was well worth having the ability to terminate her employment from the Los Angeles marketing firm she'd worked at since graduating college. What added icing to the cake was accomplishing it all on her own, even after it looked like her loan wouldn't go through, or when the health inspector balked over some minor evaluations that delayed her grand opening, and despite her eldest sister's predictions to the contrary. In the end things worked themselves out. She shook her head recalling her sibling's litany of reasons why she would fail. Christine wasn't even sure why she'd paid any attention to Alexis when she was

nothing but a bundle of negative energy these days.

Her sister had become the queen of naysaying ever since her ex-husband left her for a younger, more driven version of her former self nearly two years earlier. She'd shaken her head at the unfortunate situation but had stopped feeling sympathy a long time ago. What was the point? Alexis hated even hearing mention of her former husband, and any topic surrounding the cause of their divorce was strictly taboo. Christine could understand the desire to purge her ex from her life, but it looked as if that included anyone who could be linked to her past relationship. Hell, Alexis was working overtime to push her family and friends to the periphery of her life. Over the last year Christine had stopped calling her altogether, instead choosing to rely on updates from her parents to get the latest happenings in her sister's life. The sad part of it all was she doubted her parents were able to gain much information.

To say that she was hurt by her sister's cold response was the understatement of the year, but Christine was done allowing Alexis' misguided anger to rip away at her heart. They'd been close their entire lives, and she was certain they would be again. If Alexis wanted to excise her pain without the help of family, she'd give her the needed space, at least a little longer anyway. Thank Creation for her coffee house and the distraction it offered her.

Three and a half months, that's how long she'd been in business, and at the end of the week, her parents would be flying out to see their little girl's venture firsthand. Her mother offered to come sooner, but Christine wouldn't hear of it, not with her father recovering from foot surgery. Besides, she knew they were there in spirit. Their love surrounded her no matter the distance. Of course, having a witch and warlock as parents it stood to reason they would send nurturing spells, in spite of her protests.

Christine was certain both her parents would like the café. Why not when it reflected so much of her tastes and upbringing? She'd hand-picked cushioned chairs to complement five, sporadically placed, two-person tables. A large retro sofa, scored at the Salvation Army, with its combination of orange and brown 1970's upholstery, lined one wall. She'd only needed to use a simple cleaning spell to bring it up to her standards. In the shop's four corner she'd tucked brown leather chairs with ottomans. The bamboo like potted trees offered seclusion for those seeking quiet and privacy. While some might call her decorating style eclectic, she classified it as pure funk. The walls were littered with framed clippings and posters of events in American history from Lincoln's assassination, Angela Davis

with her black and proud Afro, to the towering infernos of the World Trade Center. Also included in the shop's decor was an assortment of things from her childhood, like her Nana's hand quilted protection blanket, the broom her parents jumped at their wedding. She used her middle sister's first conjuring cauldron as a centerpiece on a large table in the middle of her café. She'd even given the candelabras used in Alexis' sweet sixteen ceremony a place of honor. Christine took to heart one of her father's favorite expressions, "A person who doesn't know their history has no future." She embraced every aspect of her biracial heritage and witch legacy wholeheartedly. Some would probably guess her love for history was one reason she'd purchased the town's old general store and converted it into *Any Witch Way Café*.

The location of her shop was ideal, right on the edge of the up and coming New Mexico town. She'd fallen in love with the surprisingly well maintained turn of the century building. Whether the growing community began or ended with the old general store was a topic for discussion amongst the elders of the area, a debate that was actually carried on in the early morning hours by a few retired regulars. Either way people passed her café to and from their jobs in Albuquerque each day, usually stopping in for a quick fix, or to kill some time. She'd also had a recent infusion of grad students and yuppie wannabes from the new apartment complex across the street. *Any Witch Way Café* was most assuredly turning into the community's social hub.

Christine clicked the light switch that would immerse the entire shop in darkness, save the glow from her fluorescent orange lava lamp. Tired, she stretched her neck, thankful again for the end of the day. If the shop were to keep its current hours, she'd definitely need to hire an assistant soon.

It was a particularly long climb up the wooden stairs leading to her modest two-bedroom apartment. The door to her living room creaked on its hinges, one of the building's old quirks missed in her restoration endeavors. She didn't bother with lights as she shuffled through her apartment. There was no need since she wouldn't be coming back to turn them out.

Thank Creation for "The Clapper", she thought, striking her hands together rapidly to bathe her bedroom in a soft yellow light. She'd just hooked her thumbs in the waistband of her ankle length skirt when a familiar warmth washed over her. She sighed heavily easing the skirt down full hips, shimmying the remainder of the way out of the light filmy garment.

"Are we still playing shy?" she asked. Other than her, the room seemed empty, but Christine knew better. He was there watching her, like he'd done every night for the past four months since she'd

taken up residence in the renovated upstairs apartment. She'd used every communing spell she knew to conjure him up, and when those didn't work she'd called her mother for stronger ones. Nothing. It was obvious the fellow didn't want to show his physical form. His daily silent observances should have made her uneasy, yet somehow she knew he wasn't a threat. After a while she'd even found herself looking forward to his quiet presence, taking pleasure in knowing he watched over her until she fell asleep. In the morning he would be gone without so much as a peep.

"Maybe you're just a voyeur. Well sorry to disappoint you tonight, buddy, but I'm beat so there'll be no show," she mumbled leaving on the T-shirt that blazed the name of her shop. Sliding into her unmade bed with a groan of contentment, she briefly wondered about her resident spirit again and why he refused to respond to her many attempts at communication. *Clap Off*. Hell, tonight she was too tired to really care.

Christine woke to the sounds of moaning. She arched her back, pushing her bared breasts into the air, eyes widening as she felt the very real pad of thumbs brushing her stiff, elongated nipples.

"Oh... you've got to... be kidding meee," she crooned. There was no mistaking the pressure of lips against the naked flesh of her belly, a tongue dipping into her navel teasing the concaved flesh. Hot breath and lips trailed further, kissing the tiny thatch of hair that covered her mons. Firm hands traveled down the outline of her body.