

Rachel's Love Potion 2: Rachel's Love Potion's Love Potion

I woke up not to an alarm, but to the soft pink haze of the sun dribbling through the east window of my bedroom. I'd always been an early riser, and even when I'd had a Job job it had been common for me to wake up before my alarm. Nowadays, I could sleep in as late as I wanted every day, all thanks to Knox, the best best friend any girl could ever have.

The man I was careful not to wake as I slipped out of bed.

So yes, my best friend was in my bed, as naked as I was, but I want to be clear about something. Knox is *not* my boyfriend. I know some women call their boyfriends and husbands their best friends, but I've always thought that was kind of (and pardon my French) bull poop. Those girls have friends who know stuff about them that their husband would never even guess at. For me and Knox, it really was a totally platonic arrangement. He was my best friend, and I was his, and that was far as it went.

As for the nakedness thing, that was one of those things that was kind of an inside joke between the two of us. I know a lot of people wouldn't really get Knox and I, which is why I don't bother trying to explain. When it comes to a best friend who comes over whenever he wants, help himself to the fridge and then fucks your face without so much as a how-do-you-do, that was pure Knox. But I didn't mind! Heck, ever since I'd gotten over my hangups about my "bestie who molests me," (my jokey term for him), we were thick as thieves, the two of us, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

I mean, I guess it'd be nice if he didn't feel like he could just use me as a "cheap stupid fuck toy" (his jokey term for me), but hey. I know I drove him crazy when I made him join me for Sponge Bob marathons, so we're all putting up with stuff from each other. That's what friendship is, right?

Last night, he'd been fucking me so hard and so late into the night that by the time he came in me, we were both too exhausted to bother with PJs. For a while, I'd *never* bothered with them – Knox said it was a crime to cover up a body like mine with the shapeless flannels I favored. I'd pouted that I got cold when I slept naked, and we'd soon reached a compromise. He could pick out my pajamas for me.

We didn't exactly have the same tastes, but hey, that's what compromise is all about. I got to wear PJs again, and he got to see me in all sorts of skimpy little outfits that I would have never normally worn, even if it was only me in the house. Negligees, camisoles, things so sheer they may as well have been saran wrap (but surprisingly breathier). My favorite was an outfit that looked (and fit) like he'd bought it out of a children's catalog. It was flannel – yay! – but skin-tight. The top buttoned down, or it had anyway, before Knox removed all but the bottom button. The pants were normal except for the butt flap, which he always had me leave open for easy access. He's such a character like that sometimes, my best friend.

I headed to the bathroom and started with a quick shower to rinse away all the dried sweat and spit and cum from last night. I made sure not to scrub too hard; the ointments Knox had massaged into my skin were soaked in, but he'd warned me it might dilute the effect.

Did I mention Knox is into alchemy?

I guess I shouldn't say "into alchemy," like I'm into knitting. He's a warlock, as in full time. I didn't even know warlocks were a thing until Knox told me about it, and to be honest, I sort of doubted it. At first, anyway. Once he'd proven it to me with this hilarious ritual that made me act like a horny bitch in heat – literally, a female dog who couldn't wait to mate – I became a believer. Nothing quite like howling out an orgasm while your best friend takes you from behind to make you realize he is what he says.

So what does this ointment do? Knox says it's a beauty enhancer – keeps my skin soft and supple, and it's helping make my boobs a teensy bit bigger, my butt a little rounder, my vagina a little tighter, and a bunch of other little changes. Knox had actually needed some of my blood to make it – crazy, right? But day by day, I was reaping the dividends. Not that I'd wanted any of that, but I guess it couldn't hurt to look a little more attractive, right? One of these days, I'd be able to keep a boyfriend again, and it wouldn't hurt to look good. (Dating was hard, after all, when guys never understood why I'd let my best friend drag me by the waist of my pants out to their car for a quickie fuck in the middle of a date. And I *hate* jealous guys – what would I do without Knox to help me screen my beaus?)

Speaking of looking good, though, time to be out of the shower and into the makeup drawer. Getting ready used to be such a breeze. A little eyeliner, some lipstick, maybe some concealer if I was having a bad skin day. Now it was a whole thing, and it took like a half hour. I'd given my bestie a lot of design input on it, and the end effect was actually a little over the top – "whorish" my old best friend Joanna had called it, and she kinda had a point – but it kept Knox happy.

He could be a real fussy, I'd learned. When he didn't get his way, watch out! One time I'd tried to insist he not finger me under the table at a restaurant, and on the way home, he'd made me take my skirt off and walk the last mile home in just my top and my panties. It was easier just to mollify him. I liked it when things were smooth between us, and I guess I'm sort of a people pleaser by nature. Especially when my buddy Knox is the people in question.

Once I was all done up, it was time to get in my morning cardio, then off to make breakfast for the two of us. It was funny, in a way. I always used to *hate* cooking. My ex-boyfriend Jim had always complained about how much I spent dining out. But Knox had given me the nudge I needed, signing me up for cooking classes and giving me the best incentive of all to learn – the satisfied look on my friend's face when I got to feed him.

Once I was dressed and ready for the day, I went down to the kitchen and got to work. Like usual, the smell of fresh bacon was enough to wake Knox up. He lumbered downstairs in the robe he kept in my bedroom and a pair of boxers, yawning and stretching to the ceiling. I grinned as always at the sight of him scratching his sparsely haired belly. “Morning, sunshine! Sleep good?”

“Your sweet little cunt really put me through the paces,” he said, sitting down at the table and dumping both breakfasts onto his plate. “I slept like the dead.”

“I’ll say. Usually you wake me up at least once or twice to play with my booty. But last night, nothing.” I stood back up to get to work on making myself something to eat.

“Thanks for the breakfast, Rach. You look super hot today, by the way.”

“You’re welcome, and thanks right back at you. You know, I almost went with the baby blue, but these pink ones are just too comfy to pass up.” It was true. The cotton panties I was wearing were soft and snug without being too snug. The blue ones were cute, but the fact that they were crotchless meant they never felt quite right down there. Of course I wasn’t wearing any other clothes either, so I wanted the little I was wearing to be cozy.

It had surprised me how quickly I could get used to sitting around mostly naked every day. When Knox had donated my wardrobe to Goodwill, at first, I was honestly pretty upset. Thousands of dollars of clothes, gone overnight! Even aside from the practical aspects of owning nothing but underwear and swimsuits, those clothes had been a part of me, my style, you know? It felt like he’d given away a piece of me. So I ordered us dinner and sat him down to tell him about my feelings. I’d even had to quit my job, since I couldn’t exactly go to the office in my bra and panties.

At first he insisted he didn’t care – that’s my Knox for ya – but after a few days of watching me mope around the house naked, I think he started to come around. When I stopped by his house to visit him one night, crying because someone had seen me sneaking over in a string bikini and cat-called me really crudely, he cracked.

How on earth does a girl afford a whole new wardrobe? It’s simple – she doesn’t. She just has the best best friend in the whole world! For the next couple months, Knox took care of me completely. First, he installed this whole new ultra-high-end security system – cameras in every room of the house, even the bathroom. (Three in the shower alone!) After all, who’s more vulnerable than a young, attractive, perpetually near-naked girl trapped in her house?

I was skeptical at first about having a security company I’d never heard of able to look at me naked whenever they wanted, but Knox assured me they were top-rated professionals. Plus, this was part of a pilot program for them, so they would actually pay me just to let them run their service in my home! Now I’m not stupid; I was pretty sure it was all nonsense, and the cameras were streaming yours truly to the entire pervy world. Still, if he was willing to go to such lengths, and then lie about it to my face, he

obviously needed the money really badly, and I wasn't about to wound his fragile ego by calling him on it. If he wanted to pretend it was all legit, I played right along – because that's what best friends do.

As for my clothing problem, Knox solved that too! He bought me all sorts of new clothes to wear so I could finally leave the house again. Maybe they weren't exactly my style, but they were gifts, and I've always said it's the thought that counts. If it means I have to constantly be tugging down the back of my shorts because it feels like half my ass is exposed (which is pretty close to the reality of it), or trying not to notice every red-blooded guy with an eyeline to me leering, so what? They were free! And so thoughtful. Mortifying, yeah, but every time I thought about saying something, I remembered the time I'd sneezed out a mouthful of cum all over him on this one really high-pollen afternoon, I remembered that he was putting up with some embarrassment on my account, too.

Knox finished breakfast and headed out for the day, probably off to do some kind of amazing warlocky things. After that I was free to put said wardrobe to use. I hit the gym, trying not to notice all the guys checking me out in my booty shorts. It was a good day, too. I added more than a quarter mile to my routine, and none of the staff members took me aside to complain about my nipples peeking out of my skimpy sports bra. (They *were* peeking, of course – Knox had spent a whole weekend finding a sports bra that skimpy – but the male manager, Jack, was on duty today, and he never minded. I bet he and Knox would get along great, if only I were willing to share!

After the gym, it was finally time for something I'd been really excited about for a long while. I got to actually spend a little time catching up with my old best friend, Joanna.

We've been friends since forever. We rode the same bus together back in elementary school, believe it or not! If you go back far enough, there was a brief time where she was sort of a bully, but my mom had taught me that people who are cruel are doing it because so much cruelty has been heaped on them that it spills out on those around them. (Words that help relax me when Knox twists my nipples or spanks me too hard, as well.) So one day I invited Joanna to sit next to me on the bus, and the rest was history.

A lot of people don't really get me and Joanna, a lot like how nobody gets me and Knox. She and I are sort of an opposites attract kind of duo. Physically, for starters. I'm short and skinny, but she's like six inches taller than me and has curves for days. I'm tan and blonde; she's pale and dyes hers wine red. I guess we both have long hair? Either way, it's more than just physical. Our personalities were opposites, too, and it always cracks us up how people just can't pigeonhole us. Joanna is clever, and witty, and a little mean (but not a bully any more, not since ages and ages!), but she's also one of the most

confident women I know. I'm nervous about a million stupid things, but Joanna is *fearless*.

As I settled into our usual booth in the coffee shop, I tried to think of the last time we'd hung out. Not since I started hanging with Knox, probably, or thereabouts. She'd always been bad at texting and relied on me to set up engagements, but lately I'd been having a hard time fending her off. How do you tell your old best friend she's been replaced? And that her replacement doesn't want you hanging out with any of your other friends any more? I was secretly sort of giddy with how Knox wanted me all to himself – it showed how he cared about spending time with me the same way I did with him. So I made up some excuses about how I'd had a hard time coping with my break-up with whathisname, and finally set up a time to meet. I could only hope Knox didn't find out. He was *not* gentle when it came to the corporal punishment. (Such a goofball!)

Joanna got there ten minutes late, like usual, and I immediately squealed in delight and rushed over to give her a hug. “Joanna! I've missed you so much! How the heck have you been, girlfriend?”

I'd already gotten Joanna her usual order, so she settled right in across from me. I could see she was nonetheless put off right away. “Doing good, yeah... good to see you, too. Especially... so much of you.”

I glanced down at my outfit and laughed. “Oh, this? Yeah, I know, it's a little much.” A crop top and volleyball shorts that would have been too small for me in middle school... “little much” was putting it mildly.

This wasn't lost on my friend. “Little much? More like a little little. Jesus, you look like a fourteen-year-old slut trying to attract a sugar daddy.”

I rolled my eyes. Typical Joanna, cutting and direct. “Yeah, I know. But I lost all my old clothes a while back, and these were free, so...” I shrugged. “It's a long story. And hey, I see you finally went and got that purple streak you'd been talking about. I love it. Super punk.”

She brushed it over her shoulder. “Yeah, it's not the color I told the stylist, but my usual lady wasn't in that day and I didn't wanna take off for it again, so... here we are, ten percent fuchsia. You look like you lightened it up a bit yourself, Barbie doll.”

That had been Knox, too. Funnily, he'd put it almost the same way – his own “babealicious blonde fuck doll.”

“Yep, thought I might finally ditch the honey blonde and go all the way, see how it suits me. You like it?”

“Eh.” She sipped her coffee, sighing contentedly. “So, what's been going on with you? You practically dropped off the face of the earth all summer. At first we thought you eloped with Jim, then we heard you guys broke up and we thought you were having some kind of depressive episode. What gives, Rach? You doing OK? Looks like your

self-esteem is either totally shattered or raging wildly out of control. I can't tell which yet."

"I'm so sorry. I guess I've been on this kind of a weird roller coaster thing with my neighbor, and it's sort of gotten kind of all-consuming. I'm really sorry I haven't been better at communicating. It's been... well, it's been something else, all right." How could I even say how an awesome dude like Knox had totally up-ended my life? I was barely the same person any more. Man, was I lucky to have him.

"Your neighbor? You're dating your *neighbor*?" She scowled. "Hon, that is the worst idea I've ever heard! What are you going to do when things fizzle? Move? It's like dating a coworker, only a million times worse. You can't possibly be—"

I squeezed her wrist to calm her down. "No no no no no. It's not like that. We're not dating – we're just friends. But we hit it off, and we've been spending a ton of time together, and I guess I sort of leapt before I looked."

Joanna took a moment, then laughed at her own outburst. "Oh my god, I took that in a totally different direction. I don't know why I assumed your neighbor was a man, but... geez."

"Oh, he is."

There was a long silence as I downed the last of my own cup. When I set it down, I saw she was once more glaring. "What?"

"What?" Joanna mocked my question with her tone. "Do you seriously expect me to believe you spontaneously dove into an 'all-consuming' relationship – *platonic* relationship – with a *male* neighbor, and that it's kept you so busy you completely blew me off for like three months?"

I tapped my chin. "You know, when you say it like that, it does sound pretty implausible. But really, that's what it is. We're friends. Really, really, really good friends, but just friends."

"Look me in the eye and tell me you haven't fucked him."

I rolled my eyes. "I didn't say we never messed around, Joanna." I sure as heck wasn't going to tell her exactly how much Knox and I had messed around. He fucked me almost every day. It was almost weird for us to hang out and have him *not* fuck me. "But it's not romantic."

"What? Come on, you, little miss I can't wait to meet my one true love, and suddenly you're fuck buddies with the guy on the corner? Bullshit!"

"It's true," I insisted. "Trust me, I could never ever date a guy like Knox, much less marry him. He's not my type at all." Was that ever true! Knox was pushy, abrasive, controlling, manipulative, condescending, and shared almost none of my interests. Plus, not to be shallow, I didn't even find him attractive. He and I actually becoming a couple? Not in a million years.

Sometimes, though, I thought about how nice it would be for him to find someone special, the way I'd thought I'd felt about Jim. Not only would it be fantastic to see my best friend fall in love, but it might also give him an outlet for all his sexual appetites so that when he and I hung out, we could do something other than exchange fluids. Heck, maybe I could even start wearing dignified clothes again.

The only thing was, I loved the guy like a brother. A twin brother – no, a conjoined twin. Like he was part of me and I'd die if we were ever pried apart. So naturally, on the rare occasion I saw him interacting with another woman, I could only think that she was nowhere remotely good enough for him.

Only suddenly... I was having an idea.

“Just meet her,” I pleaded, sponging gently along his chest.

“Why would I want to meet this girl? The way you talk about her, she sounds like a total bitch. Plus, I have you to cum in whenever I want, so what the fuck would I want a normal girlfriend for?”

I rested my cheek against his damp shoulder, squeezing my naked thighs around his midsection. It had probably been a mistake to offer to bathe him. He knew that I knew it relaxed him and made him pliable, and that self-awareness was making him cagey as hell. In hindsight, I should have asked him over text. But oh, well. Here we were. I wetted the sponge and gently rubbed it across his chest.

“You’ll always have me, Knox. You know that. You’re stuck with me until the end.” I giggled at just how deliriously happy that truth made me, because I was stuck with him, too. “I just... I dunno. I want what’s best for you. You’re the greatest guy I know, and you deserve the greatest girl. I really think you two might hit it off.”

“If you really wanted me to have the greatest girl, you’d be offering me yourself.”

I laughed. “Oh my gosh, could you imagine us as a couple? You’d be all ‘how come you always want me to take you out,’ and I’d be all ‘you know I don’t do anal, so stop shoving things up there!’” I kissed the back of his neck. “We’d be the worst. But Joanna... she’s funny, she’s kind of dark like you, she’s got a body like you wouldn’t believe...”

“No way she’s hotter than you, Rach.”

I was glad he couldn’t see me roll my eyes, but still, I humored the guy when he moved one of my hands to his cock, creating sudsy ripples as he made me stroke him off under the bathwater. “You’re just too sweet. I don’t know about a contest or anything, but she’s really pretty, and she’s got huge boobs, which I know you love, and a booty to match. Trust me, guys throw themselves at her.”

“Yeah, yeah, you showed me the picture. She’s hot. But she’s not *you*. She’s going to expect things from me that I’m not really interested in doing.”

“Are you saying I let you get away with too much?” I asked as I carefully caressed his balls.

“I’m saying... I don’t even know what I’m saying. Why are you pushing this so hard?”

“I just want you to be happy is all. I mean, neither of us are getting any younger. You know I’m going to be your friend, just like now, no matter what. But don’t you want to have love? Romance? Passion?”

But Knox rose up out of my grip, seating himself on the rim of my bathtub, clearly displeased. I wasn’t surprised when he grabbed a handful of my hair and impaled my face on his dick. Face fucking me was a pretty standard go-to when he was feeling out of sorts, and even though he always went too deep and made me cry when I choked on his cock, I was only too happy to let the guy blow off steam. I simply hadn’t thought this

would be such a sore subject. Most of the guy friends I'd ever made had *begged* me to set them up with Joanna.

A few minutes later, he came, right down my throat and into my belly without my even having to swallow. Which was nice of him, I supposed. Knox knew how I totally hate the taste of cum, and this way I could barely notice it, skipping my taste buds altogether. Then he suddenly bucked me off and grabbed a towel while I gasped for air, nearly inhaling a mouthful of bathwater in the process.

"I'm a warlock, Rachel. If I wanted a girl to fall in love with me, I'd brew up a love potion and make her fall in love with me. Now drop it, OK?"

"OK."

But it was not OK.

By the time I wore Knox down to the point of agreeing to meet Joanna, more than a month had passed. Fall had officially arrived according to the calendar, and though it was really a bit late in the year for a pool party, Joanna had always been envious of my pool, and having not had a chance to take a dip all summer, she took the bait. Besides, I could tell she was secretly curious to meet my new friend, perhaps even jealous of all the attention he was absorbing that had once gone to her. I couldn't blame her. I missed her a lot too.

I was reclining on one of my deck chairs waiting for her when the gate to the back yard swung open and in she came. Joanna was looking great as always, her bright red swimsuit contrastingly gorgeously with her skin. Every time I saw her in a bathing suit it made me think I was doing it wrong with the tan; her porcelain complexion was too perfect. I hopped up and rushed over to take her bag, giving her a hug.

"You made it!"

"I said I would." She looked me over. "That a new suit?"

"Yeah, you like it? Knox picked it out for me." I spun in place. It was a g-string and a top so small I was constantly having to adjust it to keep my nipples covered. That was sort of embarrassing I guess, but the polka dots were admittedly cute.

"You let a 'friend' pick *that* out for you? I mean, I guess it should've been obvious. Only a man would ever think of putting a woman in something like that." She hopped into the water near the middle of the pool, and I dove in after her. It was only sixty-some degrees outside, so with the heating element running all day, the water was actually warmer than the air outside.

For a while, Joanna and I just bounced around the pool, catching up on gossip and girl talk. I did my best to keep her in prime viewing positions for the underwater cameras; after weeks of my hinting (bordering on nagging), Knox had agreed he would consider meeting Joanna, if and only if she looked hot enough on the occasion. He hadn't been enthused, but it had shut me up at least, which had been sufficient.

For her part, Joanna had all sorts of questions about him. Glad the cameras didn't transmit sound, I did my best to help her make sense of things without getting into too much detail about the hard-to-explain stuff. I knew full well I was the beta in the friendship, and it was kind of awkward owning up to how much of a follower I'd become where Knox was concerned. I'd been the same way with Joanna, though she'd never taken it to the level of tattooing a warlock sigil on my butt cheek that proclaimed me as her property.

(On the rare occasion someone in the gym locker room said something, I said it was a Gaelic symbol for peace. Easier to explain.)

"So let me get this straight," she said when I'd filled her in on the basics, avoiding the more controversial things like how he'd destroyed my clothes, dressed me up like an inflatable sex doll, used me for his gratification whenever he wanted, and always left the

toilet seat up. “This guy comes out of nowhere, you randomly decide to befriend him, and then... Rachel, I barely understand half of what you’re telling me, but it sounds like from the moment this Knox asshole walked into your life, you’ve turned into his fucking pet!”

How had she gotten *that* out of my description when I’d left so much out? Maybe my old friend simply knew me better than I knew myself.

“It’s not like that! I do stuff for him, yeah, but he does lots for me, too.” Like be my friend, which was all I’d ever need from him. I wished there were awards for being the most awesome friend imaginable, so I could nominate him for one. For all of them. “I know how it sounds, but he’s actually a really cool guy. If you met him, I think you’d really like him. Who knows, you two might even hit it off.”

“What, you mean he might dress me up like a baby hooker and cut me off from the world, too?” She sneered. “Fat fucking chance of that.”

“Come on,” I pressed. “I’ve let you talk me into going out with some really sketchy guys over the years. I’m telling you, I think you guys have a lot in common. What could it hurt to meet him? Let me call him. Knox lives around the corner and down the block. He could be here in three minutes.” He was actually in my bedroom, peeping on Joanna via the pool security cams, but she didn’t need to know that she was being auditioned, too.

Joanna looked like she was going to need more convincing, but to my relief, her face softened, and she relented. “Fine. You know what? I’m actually kind of curious to meet this asshole. I want to know what kind of guy turns my sweet, level-headed friend into a fuck buddy who dresses like a porn star on her way to an audition on the casting couch.”

“So you’ll meet him?”

“Bring the son of a bitch on,” she said, whacking a beach ball out across the deep end.

“Great! Wait here. I’ll run inside and call him over. And you want a drink? Margarita?”

“Margarita sounds awesome,” she called out after me as I darted inside.

“Well, what’d you think?” I asked Knox as I made my way up to the bedroom, still dripping, shivering from the cool fall air on my almost naked skin.

“OK, you were right. She’s definitely super fuckable, OK?”

I squealed in triumph. “I told you!”

“But she just *looks* like a bitch. I could see it on her face while you guys were talking about whatever you were talking about, but she has resting bitch face like nobody I’ve ever seen.”

“Oh, don’t go so hard on first impressions. She just doesn’t like sharing me any more than you do. Come on. I’m making us all drinks. Take a minute to put yourself

together, run a comb through your hair maybe, then come down and join us. I told her I was calling you over from home, FYI, just so our stories are straight.”

“Fine. Hopefully we’ll drive her off soon, because your ass looks crazy fuckable in that bikini.”

“Play your cards right, tiger, and who knows, you might just talk Joanna out of hers.”

“Yeah, sure.”

Poor Knox. The guy didn’t have half the self-esteem he ought to. I know it’s easy for guys to be intimidated by a fox like Joanna, but I wish I could make him see he’s deserving of her. If he isn’t, who is? Really, I was more worried Joanna wasn’t good enough for Knox. She could be a handful, all right.

I poured the drinks, and waited.

I heard Knox leave through the front door, and sure enough, a moment later he strolled into the back yard through the same gate Joanna had. She was still in the pool, drifting along the edge near the diving board, when she noticed she wasn’t alone. She lowered her sunglasses and gazed up at him; I’d known her long enough to know she wasn’t impressed by what she saw. I got it. Admittedly, there was something about Knox that was simply a little bit... off. At least on first impression. Maybe it was a warlock thing, or maybe weird bone structure. I didn’t know, but I got why she’d made the face she did. Heck, there had been a time I’d been super creeped out by my neighbor, too. Joanna would have to get over it, same as me.

I couldn’t hear their conversation, and between the distance and the fading light, there was no reading lips either. Faces I could make out. Joanna, haughty and disdainful, probably making some heavy-handed attempt to defend what she perceived as my besmirched honor. Knox, oscillating between sneer and scowl, no doubt annoyed at being made to. It wasn’t her fault. Joanna was doubtless identifying with the part of my friendship with Knox that sometimes bothered me, too – all the groping and sucking and fucking and fingering and spanking and titty-fucking and being jizzed on and called demeaning names and being told how and when to dress or undress and having my body permanently stamped like I was a shipping crate. No relationship was perfect, after all. But she hadn’t had a chance to see all the awesome yet, like how he made me smile when he walked into a room, or how close I’d gotten to getting him to take interest in some of the things I liked.

I watched for another minute before I decided I better get out there. It didn’t look like things were going well.

“... get off telling Rachel how to dress? Where did you even find a bikini like that, some truck stop sex shop? I don’t–”

“Hey guys!” I called out. “I brought the good stuff! Knox, long time no see.” I gave him a quick hug as I handed off his beer. Hopefully Joanna didn’t see him squeezing my

ass as I did so. “Joanna, I see you guys already met, so I guess no need for introductions.”

She slid off her floatie and held up a hand for help. I still had our drinks, so Knox actually had to help her. She shot me a look like she begrudged me for having to touch him. Oh, please let this work. I couldn’t stand any more months of not seeing my second-best friend, and I definitely couldn’t stand the thought of choosing her over Knox.

For a moment, I was about to hand her the drink in my left hand until I remembered myself and offered the right. To think, I came that close to ruining everything!

No more forced small talk. I lifted my drink, and she hers.

“Yech, what the hell is in this?” she said, grimacing.

“Oh, yeah, we were all out of margarita mix, so I had to improvise. Just keep at it.” I gulped down the rest of my drink as she eyed me skeptically. “Mmm, yeah, that’s what I figured. The tasty stuff sorta sunk to the bottom. Just go fast and try not to think about it.”

She didn’t see me holding my breath. Knox, beside me, was sipping from his beer bottle, looking profoundly disinterested in the whole exchange. Finally, after a look of suspicion so faint that I might have merely imagined it, she tipped back her glass and chugged. YES! I’d done it! It was all I could do not to jump up and down in glee...

... right up until the moment she passed out.

Knox looked as startled as I did. One moment she was wincing at the foul taste of her drink, and the next, she crumpled onto the pavement. Thank goodness I’d had my eyes trained on her, or she might have really wanged her head! As it was, she still hit the ground pretty hard, and once she was down, she wasn’t moving.

“What the... is she OK?” Knox demanded, crouching over her next to me.

“I don’t know! This wasn’t supposed to happen! Oh my gosh, she’s not breathing!” My heart was suddenly racing. What had I done wrong?! “Oh gosh oh gosh oh gosh oh gosh oh gosh oh gosh...!”

“Supposed to... what? What do you mean, ‘supposed to happen’? Why was something supposed to happen?”

Oh thank goodness Jim had taken me along with him when he got CPR certified back in the spring! I tried to remember the training. Check the area to make sure it was safe. Sure. Of course. Yes. OK, then what? Look for an AED. What? Of course I didn’t have an AED! Darn it, Rachel, start pumping and breathing!

Knox didn’t interfere, though neither did he help. I tried to do the rhythm we’d been taught, *Stayin’ Alive* by the Bee Gees. Suddenly the song felt way too slow. She wasn’t breathing, for crying out loud!

“Rachel?” Knox was saying. Again? I think he’d said my name a few times now. “Rachel, what in the hell is going on? Why did she pass out? What did you do?” I was too focused on what I was doing to answer, but he grabbed my shoulder and forced me to look at him. “Damn it, answer me, Rach! What in the flying fuck did you do to her?!”

“It was a love potion!” I answered, barely managing not to break down into tears. “You said you wanted... and I knew she wouldn’t... unless I...” I broke free from his grip and resumed compressions. It was at least something to do so I didn’t panic.

“A love potion? Love potion! What in the hell does a know-nothing bimbo like you know about brewing a love potion!” he thundered. Somehow he sounded more upset by intruding on his expertise than he did at the girl not breathing on the ground.

I responded once I finished breathing into Joanna’s mouth. From the taste of things, no wonder she’d rebelled against drinking it. “OK, try not to get mad, but... I went over to your house and looked through some of your things. You had all these notes about it, formulas, a whole chapter of this one book that was very step by step about it all.”

“You went through my things!”

More breathing, then back to compressions. “Look, just call 911 already!” Oh god, what if we’d waited too long!

“Rachel, you don’t know what you’re doing! Do you have any idea what could happen from a normie like you meddling with...” He looked at where I was pounding between Joanna’s breasts. “I suppose you know now, at least. How could you have even attempted it? You need materials someone like you couldn’t possibly have acquired.”

“Knox, I’m sorry, and I really will let you yell at me as much as you want later, but right now, please, *please* call 911, OK? We need medical assistance! Like, *now*! She could die!”

“Oh, for fuck’s... here, move out of the way.” Knox nudged me aside, yet he didn’t take over compressions. Instead, he reached into his pocket and started fishing around for something. His phone? Surely he had to realize we needed to keep doing CPR while he called, didn’t he? I was about to say as much when he withdrew not his phone, but... what the heck was that? It looked like a crudely constructed figurine of a turtle, or maybe a badger? No, a turtle, about the size of my thumb. It looked like it was made of some sort of pale blue crystal, but the shell was unmistakable. Before I could get a closer look, however, he popped the thing in her mouth and pressed on her chin to close it.

“She’s going to choke!” I warned, but he persisted, holding firm. Then there was a sudden burst of blue light from inside her mouth. It was so bright it shined out her mouth, her nostrils, even through her eyes! It was only then that I realized that I was witnessing *magic* firsthand – not the magic I’d thought I’d see when I’d fed her my potion, admittedly, but magic nonetheless!

The light faded an instant later, and the yard was once more dark save for the lights filtering out from within the swimming pool. Still, my heart sang with joy as I saw Joanna was at least breathing again. She wasn't moving, but she was breathing.

"Let's get her inside," Knox said. "Then you tell me more about this so-called potion of yours."

"OK." Joanna was coming to, but only barely. We put one of her arms around each of our shoulders and ushered her into the living room. "Thank you, Knox."

“You are such a fucking idiot, they ought to require some sort of license to be allowed to sit in the same room with you,” said Knox once I’d explained everything. Joanna had passed out on the couch in the living room, and like he’d said, she hadn’t moved, nor even opened her eyes. Every so often I checked to make sure she was breathing.

“I know. I’m so sorry. I really thought I could do it. With all your notes, it seemed so straightforward! I found these warlock discord channels and they helped me translate some of the ingredients into conventional terms. You’d spelled things out so well I didn’t even need much help. Were... were you thinking of making one yourself? The rest of your book didn’t have anywhere near that many notes in it.”

“I... thought about it, yeah, once upon a time,” he said, frowning. “Interesting theory work is all.”

I put a hand on his knee. “It’s OK to admit you’re lonely, bud. You don’t have to play tough guy with me. Heck, I know how you’re feeling better than anybody.” The truth was, with the voracity of his sexual appetites, it had been clear to me for some time that he was in desperate need of real companionship, the sort of closeness I could never give him.

“Look, whatever, Dr. Freud. The point is, these notes were written to make sense to me – a professional, an authentic warlock. Not you. Fuck, if you found some blueprints for a nuclear reactor, would you just pick up hammer and nails and a little uranium and try to cobble one together?” His glare was positively scathing. “You might have followed the recipe, more or less, but even if you’d gotten it all right – which I seriously doubt – you don’t have the necessary arcane spark to complete the transmutation.”

“Hey, I know that word. Isn’t that from Cal–”

“It’s been borrowed by myriad spurious sources over the centuries. Anyway, if what you said is true, the potion you brewed... it could have done a hundred different things on a huge spectrum, depending on how badly you botched the preparation. She would have been as apt to want to eat me as fuck me!”

“Botched... but Knox, I used your hair sample, your semen. Boiled and pressed and grinded and combined, all exactly like it said. I reached out to people, got help, did it just how the videos showed me, and–”

“Spoken like the pleb that you are,” he said curtly. “The ‘donor’ is the person who provides the sample to the potion, not the person from whom it originates. I’d have to give it knowingly in order to serve as the donor. Hell, when I made it for... for my trial run, I had to do this whole routine where I pretended to be from a urinalysis lab, and... you don’t want to know.”

I nodded. “Ew. I had to do one of those tests at work back in the spring. I had to sign all these release forms and everything – that kind of thing can’t be easy to pose for.”

“I assure you, it was not. Anyway it shouldn’t matter now. The dispelling talisman – the thing I put in her mouth – should have cleared it out of her system. You two were lucky as hell I was carrying one, but I’ve learned that’s something no warlock should walk around without. I have no idea what the fuck you’re going to tell her when she wakes up, but at least she should be OK. Your recipe wasn’t a very strong one.”

Uh oh. “Oh. Right.”

“Look, I don’t want to be here when she wakes up, so whatever bullshit you spin for her, leave me the hell out of it. Swing by once she leaves so I can give that tight little backside of yours a few reminders about who’s the warlock around here.”

I hugged him goodbye, giggling softly as he smacked my ass goodbye.

Now, I realize the right thing to do was probably to stop him and confess about how the warlocks I’d consulted online had told me pretty much the same thing, that what I was brewing was way too weak considering my untested aptitude and lack of experience. So I had done what any well-intended match-maker would do when their best friend’s happiness was on the line.

I’d tripled the dosage.

But hey. Knox had dispelled it, and she was breathing again, so it was all water under the bridge now.

Right?