

Love Potion

by zambonigirl

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Note: Not a happy story!

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Chapter 1 of 1

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From The Sacred Text:

A Love Potion

Some of the country people have still a traditional remembrance of very powerful herbal remedies, and love potions are even now frequently in use. They are generally prepared by an old woman; but must be administered by the person who wishes to inspire the tender passion. At the same time, to give a love potion is considered a very awful act, as the result may be fatal, or at least full of danger. A fine, handsome young man, of the best character and conduct, suddenly became wild and reckless, drunken and disorderly, from the effect, it was believed, of a love potion administered to him by a young girl who was passionately in love with him. When she saw the change produced in him by her act, she became moody and nervous, as if a constant terror were over her, and no one ever saw her smile again. Finally, she became half deranged, and after a few years of a strange, solitary life, she died of melancholy and despair. This was said to be "The Love-potion Curse."

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Harlan Osgood always called the folks living on the outskirts of town in little tents and mobile homes "Gypsies", and spread all kinds of crazy stories about how they could perform magic and make potions. Faith Turner always thought he was full of himself and never listened when he went on and on about them at his barbershop, the sounding board of the town. A lot of the villagers agreed with him and didn't like the vagabonds, but Faith was ever curious about them.

"I ran over one of their damn cats," Otis Landry said as he took a clean towel from Faith to wipe freshly cut hair off of his thick, red neck. "Woke up this morning with a rash all over my back. Damn spooks. Why can't they find another town to terrorize?"

Faith didn't give him an answer, mostly because he didn't need or want one. She simply took his towel from him and added it to an ever-growing pile next to the washing machine that resided behind a small cubicle in the back corner of the barbershop.

Faith, an only child, was a wisp of a girl, born too soon by two months due to a tragic car accident that left her without her mother and a father who was a paraplegic. She worked at the barbershop after school to supplement the family income as her father was unable to return to work after he lost the use of his legs. The money she made helped her buy clothes and school supplies, and when her father was too drunk to buy groceries, food.

"Faith, Mr. Griffin here will be our last client of the day. Why don't you get those towels going with some bleach, and then get to sweepin' the floor?"

Faith nodded and set to work, sorting the black towels and capes from the white shampooing towels.

Mr. Osgood was a good man, well-respected, and the mayor of the town as well as the barber. He opened his shop at six in the morning and closed it at six in the evening, six days out of the week. In a town of eight hundred people, give or take, he was constantly overbooked and overworked, but he never complained. Faith often suspected that he offered her a job out of pity, but she had no pride when it came to money, and never shied from hard work, so she never questioned him. Mostly, she was thankful that he was kind to her and gave her a place to do her homework if she so chose so that she would not have to go home until at least eight in the evening.

"How's your daddy doing these days, Faith?" Mr. Griffin asked as he began to pat what hair he had left dry with a white shampoo towel.

"He's fine, Sir."

"Still inventin' things out in his shed, is he?"

Faith stood stock still in the middle of the shop, very self-conscious. "Yes, Sir."

"Always was a dreamer, that man. Your mamma was the same way, allus thinkin' of ways to make life just a bit easier."

"Faith has all the fire of her mamma, Jess. She's a right fine worker, and a good little student to boot. She sits at our table and does her homework before going home. Fine little girl, great concentration."

"You keep that up, Faith, and you'll be able to go to college some day."

Faith always felt a mix of mortification and pride when people in the shop talked about her, especially if they said nice things. She never knew how to answer them except to say an embarrassed "Thank you, Sir" and continue with her work.

"Right pleasant girl, too, Harlan. You did a good thing in hiring her."

Then again, they always did talk about her as though she weren't there.

"Her mother would have wanted us to look after her, Jess. I'm sure she would have."

Mr. Griffin left a few minutes later, and Faith continued to wash towels while completing her homework during the different cycles.

"Have you thought about college, Faith?" Mr. Osgood asked, sitting down next to her and her calculus book.

Faith sighed and willed her tears to the backs of her eyes. "I work here just so's I can afford pens and paper for high school, Mr. Osgood. How could I afford college?"

"You could apply for a scholarship. With your grades and your brains, you'd be sure to make it in somewhere. Even a university!"

Faith felt hot tears falling from her eyes, tears of frustration and failing. She would never be able to go to college, let alone a university. "The closest university is all the way in Georgetown, and the nearest college is two towns away. My daddy would never let me go. You know that."

Mr. Osgood put his hand over Faith's and gave it a squeeze. "Your mamma would've wanted you to make something of your life, Faith. Get out of this town, see the world. I want it for my own kids."

Just then, Mr. Osgood's eldest son walked into the shop, and Faith held her breath.

Ricky Osgood was considered to be a plain boy, neither tall nor short, not fat not thin, not smart, not stupid, just an average boy but from good stock. He was well respected for his connection to his parents and his love of hard work.

Faith admired him pure and simple for no other reason than she thought he was the brightest, handsomest, funniest man in the town. She thought everyone mad for not agreeing with her, but then that meant less competition.

"Dad, Mamma says that supper's just about finished, and that you and Faith should wash up and come on in."

Mr. Osgood turned to Faith with a smile. "Ricky goes to the college out in Three Pines, Faith. I bet he could drive you every day, couldn't you, Ricky?"

Ricky looked a little taken back, but shrugged. "S'long as her schedule is the same as mine, I don't see a problem."

Faith felt mortified and shook her head. "I just don't see as how I can go on to college, Mr. Osgood."

"Are you going to sweep my dad's shop for the rest of your life, Faith? 'Cause I don't see too many options if you stay here," Ricky said, leaning casually on a counter.

Faith quickly began shoving her books and notepapers into her bag. "I'm sorry, Mr. Osgood. Please tell your wife that I just can't make it to supper tonight..."

Both men began protesting at once.

"Now hold on there, Faith, I'm not trying to force you into anything..."

"Your dad would understand, he can't expect you to stay around forever..."

"We can talk about it over supper, and then I'll talk to your daddy if I have to."

"And if I can't drive you, we can find you the bus schedules."

Faith was sure that her face was the color of beets, so she stared at her bag, allowing her long hair to cover her face.

"It's not that I don't appreciate your offers, it's really not. I just couldn't leave my daddy like that. What would I do if something happened to him?"

"You work here all day," Ricky said. "It'd be no different."

"I can run down the road and be home in ten minutes, Ricky. It wouldn't be the same if I was two towns over. My daddy...he can fall sometimes."

Ricky and Mr. Osgood exchanged a look that let Faith know that they were well aware of her father's drinking problem.

"Look," Mr. Osgood began, "let's not talk on this again. Just promise me you'll think about it, Faith?"

Faith nodded and put her book bag back on the table. "Okay. I'll think about it."

Ricky drove her home that night, talking about the college all the while. He was even thinking about taking an apartment close by so he could stay in Three Pines during the week and then come home on the weekends.

"It's a big town, Faith, not like here. There's more than just a Wal-Mart and a Quick Shop. They've got lots of shops with fine clothes and fancy restaurants, and a huge

picture show! No run down seats like we got here. It's a different world, Faith, and I know your mamma and daddy would want you to be a part of it."

Faith felt that it was a cruel twist of fate that Ricky was finally talking to her, and all he wanted to do was talk her into leaving the only home she had ever known. Unfortunately, that didn't mean he was asking to marry her.

"And if your daddy says no right away, my dad will talk to him. He'll help him see the right way of things."

Faith stared out the window at the dark night. Her father already resented Mr. Osgood for giving her a job. *"I bet he thinks that we don't have enough money without it, too!"* If Mr. Osgood were to become involved in talking him into sending her off to college, she'd never be allowed to go.

"Leave it to me, Ricky. I'll see what I can do, okay?"

She decided that she didn't want to argue any more.

"Sure, Faith. And it's not like your dad can do anything anyway. You'll be eighteen in a few months, won't you?"

That was yet another piece of consternation in her family-her imminent eighteenth birthday. Her father had taken to saying after an argument, *"Well, you'll be eighteen soon anyway. Then you can just move out on your own and see how far your minimum wage goes in the real world. Or maybe Harlan Osgood will take you in, seein' as how he seems to think you're his daughter."*

Any time she told him that she would be leaving, however, he would despair and beg her to stay with him. He needed her there. He was sorry that he wasn't a better father, but he was her father, and he loved her. Didn't she love him back?

Ricky stopped the car just shy of the woodshed that Faith's father did his inventing in, and Faith jumped out after thanking him for the ride. She then waited for Ricky to leave before she went to the shed to look in and see if her father was still conscious. The later she was coming home, the more he usually drank.

There was a punched-out knot in the side of the shed that Faith usually used to check on her father. It was safer than simply opening the door, she had learned. If he was in a particularly foul mood, he would throw things at her, and if he was despondent, he would start to bawl at the sight of her. He sometimes acted as though she were the ghost of her mother, come back to take him to task for not taking care of her. He particularly frightened her on those occasions with the things he would admit to her.

On this night, she found yet another familiar sight. Her father sat back in his wheelchair, his pants open, revealing his large, dark penis. He would often do this, stroke himself, thrust against his own hands as much as his paralytic legs would allow, baby oil covering his nether regions. He had forced her to do it to him once, on a night when he thought she was her mother. He had put his hands over hers and made her touch him. That was when she had knocked the knot out of the wall. After she had put him to bed, she had gone out to the shed and found the right knot in an out of the way place, and had taken a hammer and pounded until the hole appeared. She could never remove from her memory the taste that had assailed her mouth when he had shoved his fingers past her lips and forced her to lick them clean while his other hand held her head still.

As far as she could tell, he had no memory of that night, but it haunted her dreams at times, and sometimes in the most disturbing way.

She wished it had been Ricky who had forced her to touch him. She would have liked to touch Ricky like that, to run her hands along him and make him cry out her name loudly. Sometimes she would imagine that it was Ricky instead of her dad that night, and she would wake up feeling restless and upset wishing that she could relieve herself as her father did, but she didn't know the first thing about masturbation.

"Agatha!" her father yelled loudly, followed by a moan.

Faith knew that he was close to releasing his foul-tasting fluid, and she moved away from the shed hurriedly. She would make something up if he came in and wanted to know why she didn't say hi. If he didn't come in, then she would go out and get him like she usually did, then clean him up and put him to bed.

The kitchen door slammed open, and her father wheeled inside. "Where've you been all night? It's past nine o'clock!"

Faith was just about to answer when her father cut her off.

"Don't tell me. You were with Mr. Osgood. I swear, if you ever come home pregnant, I'm gonna go and blow his head off 'cause I'll know he's the one who done it."

Faith paled and shook her head. "He doesn't treat me like that, Daddy!"

"No? What about his worthless kids? Is that who drove you home? Wayne? Ricky? Which one?"

"It was Ricky. He didn't touch me at all, before you ask."

Her father swatted her butt hard. "Don't sass me, little girl! I seen the way you look at him, all dewey-eyed. You'd have him in a minute and be pregnant the next. Well you just keep your head on straight. If'n you come in here with a baby, you'll be out on your ass in no time."

Faith began to stalk down the hall. "I ain't gonna get pregnant, Daddy! I ain't gonna take up with Ricky, and I ain't gonna go runnin' off! I ain't stupid!"

"Don't go runnin' off from me, girl, I'm a-talkin' to you!"

Faith turned around and sighed. "I've got school tomorrow, Daddy, and a test in biology. I need to get some sleep. So do you, you're drunk."

"I ain't too drunk to give you what-for, missy. Now you just get your butt back in here..."

He was cut off by the sound of a knock at the front door which was unusual not just for the time of night, but most neighbors went to the kitchen doors of each other's houses. Faith went for the door, but passed by her father close enough that he could grab her around the waist and give her two good swats for sassing him.

"Who is it?" Faith asked, looking through the panes. She gasped when she recognized two of the "Gypsies" from the edge of town.

"I am Morgan, and this is my daughter Rowena. We are come about the cats you have."

"Damn no-good gypsies," her father muttered. "Send them on their way."

"But Daddy, they want the kittens. Didn't you say you wanted to get rid of them all?"

Her cat had given birth several months earlier after a brief encounter with the outdoors. She had since been spayed and three kittens had been given homes, but there were still two left.

"Don't want no gypsies gettin' 'em."

"Fine, then we're keeping them all. Three cats under this roof."

Mr. Turner said nothing, and Faith opened the door. "The kittens are in here, in our spare room. Won't you come in?"

The visitors consisted of two females, one obviously the mother of the small girl who clung to her hand. They were small and dark-haired and the older woman was a bit thick around the middle.

"Sorry we're here so late, but we only just saw the advertisement and Rowena insisted that she get a new cat."

"New one?" Faith asked. "What happened to the old one?"

"A man in a Chrysler ran her over. Lucky he missed Rowena."

Faith led them to the spare room and turned a sympathetic look to the young girl. "I'm so sorry. I don't know what I'd do if something happened to Smokey. Well, here are the kittens. This one is called patches because of all her colors, and that one's called duster because of his gray color."

Rowena reached for Patches just as Faith thought she would and smiled happily at Morgan. "This one, granny!"

Faith and her father both looked at the young-looking woman in surprise. They were sure that she was the mother, and she certainly wasn't old enough to be a grandmother!

"How much money do you require?"

Faith waved her hand. "They're free to a good home."

Morgan smiled and took Faith's hand. "Life is never free. You come by and see Patches some day. You'll see that she has worth."

"I don't doubt it, Ma'am. She's a great little kitty, but she doesn't belong to me, and I paid nothing for her. How can I charge for something that isn't even mine in the first place?"

Morgan didn't answer Faith, but left quickly with her granddaughter in tow, and Faith disappeared into her bedroom for the remainder of the night.

TBC

AN: This is from a challenge of sorts issued by deviantauthor on her live journal. She copied and pasted this passage from within www.sacred-text.com, a celtic website.