

Please Come Back

7:45 a.m. She was fast asleep, too far out of the realm of consciousness to feel the aches and bruises on her arms and legs from running and tripping along roofs and through woods all night.

The last-order-of-the-night taco bell wrappers she'd left on the floor would bother Randy, if he saw them, but he wasn't here to see the mess. He wasn't here to put a blanket over her, or bring her morning tea, or wake her up at the time she *should* be up so she didn't rush to open the tea room in an hour. So, she stayed asleep, definitely *not* dreaming of her business partner. She sat bolt upright in bed at 9:05 a.m, snoozed alarm blaring.

Shit fuck shit fuck oh my god not again.

She leapt off of the attic couch, over the pile of garbage and out the door. Hopefully, no regulars would come in from yesterday and notice she was still wearing the outfit she had on then. She flew down the stairs, slamming into things and realizing only when she was on the front porch, turning on the "open" sign, that she wasn't wearing shoes. Oh well, at least she was only 10 minutes late opening this morning. She stepped into a pair of Randy's old boots, lacing them over her fuzzy socks and smiling.

First I steal his boots, then his jackets.

She didn't have breakfast (if you could call a poptart and hot fries "breakfast") until almost noon, even though the day was surprisingly slow for December. Usually, people would flock to the "curio" half of the Pocket Watch Spice, Tea, and Curiosity Shop, hoping to trade Randy something for a christmas gift for their grandmother. Something told Abigail that the quiet had something to do with the trial- the tourists that usually came through around now were wary of coming into a store owned by a "murderer," and the local news did a wonderful job of not showing any of their Dufferton regulars and friends testifying in his favor. Even so, there were enough morning guests in the tea room to keep her on her toes all morning.

The store cleared out around lunchtime, and Abigail found herself standing in the center of the empty sales floor, staring at the cash register at 12:34 p.m. She'd been cleaning the dusty bookshelves nearby when a flash of memory took over her,

and she dropped the dust cloth. A part of her was lost, for a moment, looking through the empty air and seeing him sitting at his place on the stool behind the front glass case. A magic book in his hand, he was animatedly explaining something to her that she didn't hear. His flashing smile, braided hair which always had flowers in it, and strong arms often distracted her from what he was saying, and now even her memories could only focus on those things. Something ached deep inside her at the thought of her dear friend, locked alone in a jail cell at the top of a mountain, trapped in a magic-proof facility for a crime he didn't commit.

Though a few more customers came in to buy herbs and a set of tarot cards, the Pocket Watch stayed quiet enough for her to make a pretty decent meal around 2:46 p.m. She never was the cook, as she usually opted to make tea or drinks while Randy made something nice for them to share, but she had let him teach her how to make fettuccine alfredo. She made garlic bread to go with it, laughing in the same way her lactose intolerant friends laughed when they drank a milkshake or had some mac and cheese. While human foods couldn't hurt her, really, that didn't mean they were particularly *good* for her either. But they were better than starving, and she didn't feel like breaking into a blood bank.

She finished eating her share while the store was quiet, and put the other half away for later, sad that she had no one to share it with now.

One would think that centuries of solitude would have prepared Abigail to live without Randy, but as she restlessly began to take inventory for the third time in a week, she realized that sometimes, the hardship of the past can melt away if you meet the right person. She drowned this thought immediately by going through each row of shelves and counting.

Book by book, object by object, leaf by leaf, and cup by cup she counted each of the oddities, herbs, and tearoom accoutrements that existed within the walls of Randy's shop. Though that much work would be an inordinately humongous task for a human, her speed and enhanced memory made it a walk in the park, and she was done within two hours. Too bored and lonely to wait around any longer, she closed the shop early at 7:00 p.m. and counted the till, noticing to her chagrin that they'd fallen short of their sales goal.

Oh well, the holiday season hasn't really started yet. In a week or two, this place will be buzzing with activity. Maybe if someone else is working here with me, people will want to come in more? I wonder...

After staring into space for a while, she went into Randy's office and worked on the accounting books until 9, before putting those away and pulling out her notes on the incredibly suspicious spike in "crime" convictions that was burning through the ranks of the secret societies of Kacapa county. She scryed the other members of the Twalnaverra to see if anyone had any more news.

At midnight, she put on Randy's coat and engulfed herself in his scent in a purely platonic way. Each night since he had left, she'd walked the streets of Dufferton for a while. She staked out local bars and even lurked in the shadows near the police station, listening in equal measure to police radios and the talk buzzing around the underbelly of town. Vampires didn't need to sleep very much, so crashing and sleeping in late had turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Now that she had rested, she could stay like this, listening and hoping for a way to bring him back for as long as she wanted, never getting tired, and that is what she did.

She didn't go home until it was time to open the store again.