Tricked or Treated

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A little story for Halloween season. Should be about three parts.

The Costume Box
2025

Chapter 1

Tricked or Treated: Part 1 - Chapter 1

Randy sat on the subway cursing silently at his phone. His wireless earbuds were out of battery. He had foolishly forgot to charge them. Even though he had thought they had enough charge to last. Now he had to endure his commute home with nothing to distract himself with and that's how he had ended up in a conversation with the woman next to him. She had certainly caught his eye when she got on the subway. She had black lipstick on and a total goth get up complete with fishnet stockings and leather boots that went up to her knees. She had taken a seat next to him before asking if this train went to the eighth street station. Randy had said it did and he had hoped that would be the end of the conversation, she then had replied with some comment about it being a good thing since she had places to be. Stupidly or for some reason even unfathomable to him he had asked.

“Hot date?” Why had he asked that? He didn't want to talk to anyone really. He wasn't much of a people person and talking to some chick who looked like she was a Hot Topic loyalty member wasn't a scenario he would ever choose for himself.

“No date,” the girl had laughed. “Just a meeting with the coven.” Randy gave a suspicious nod. Coven? As in witches? He decided not to pursue any further. There were plenty of colorful characters in the city and he had just stumbled into talking with one of them. Seriously, this girl actually believed she was a witch, what was she a kid? She most definitely

wasn't though. She looked to be in her twenties really too old to be playing pretend. Although now that Randy got a closer look something about her did kind of spark something in him. It was strange, she wasn't his type at all. The black lipstick with her dark black hair that she had done up in twin ponytails and the septum piercing. They probably didn't have a thing in common. She was the exact opposite of Randy who was in his white shirt and black tie and slacks and his neatly combed hair. The picture of a young professional. Although he was now pushing thirty so he wasn't so young anymore.

“Coven, as in witches?” Randy then asked.

“Yeah,” the girl said unphased in the slightest. “We're doing a big ritual tonight so its kind of a big deal.”

Randy nodded. He didn't need to respond to that, it was best to disengage at this point.

“I'm Genessa by the way,” she said offering her hand. Randy took it and gave a curt shake.

“Randy,” he said with a fake pleasant smirk. In his head he was calling himself an idiot.

“Hey so you know its kind of a thing for us to have someone join us for tonight, you interested?”

Interested? No he certainly wasn't. He didn't know why but he actually said something that even mystified himself.

“Like you want me to come?”

“Sure,” Genessa said cooly. “You wouldn't have to anything

weird, just stand in a circle for a little bit."

"Maybe, could be interesting," Randy replied. It was like he wasn't even in control of the words anymore. This wasn't like him. He wasn't a people person. He avoided going out with co-workers like the plague in fact he didn't have a social life which suited him just fine.

"Cool," Genessa said with a smile. Randy felt his heard flutter a little. He wasn't sure why he followed her off the train when the stop came. Maybe his subconscious was at its limit. He probably needed something to break up the dull monotony of his life and his subconscious was now taking the first opportunity it got. Or perhaps Genessa was flipping a switch for him that he didn't know he had. Whatever it was it was could be blamed when he found himself walking into the community center.

He followed Genessa into a room. There was nothing special about it. Just a normal meeting room. There was a long bench attached at the wall that ran the leangth of the room. There was a circle of chairs where some woman were sat. Looking at the crowd of about fifteen people none of them looked particularly out there. Woman ranging from middle aged to slighty elderly were sat having a conversation. They were all dressed normally as well. Light spring jackets placed on the back of chairs and a few woman sporting some shawls. Genessa seemed to be the youngest and most flamboyant among the group. Honestly there was nothing at all strange about the room, it was ordinary and if Randy had to guess this looked more like a bookclub than a coven meeting.

“Come on I'll introduce you to the Mother witch,” she said. Randy followed as Genessa lead him into the middle of the circle. “Mother Mable I've brought the conduit,” she said. A middle aged woman with thick black rimmed glasses looked away from the older lady she had been speaking too. Her hair which looked to be a graying blonde was tied back and she wore a purple scarf around her neck along with a white sweater. She looked surprised to see Randy.

“A conduit?” she asked a little taken aback. “This is a surprise.”

“I met him on the way over and we got to talking and well here we are,” Genessa said.

“This is just wonderful,” the woman said before turning her attention towards Randy. “Has Genessa filled you in about what we are doing?”

“Uh not really,” Randy said rubbing the back of his head. The woman who had been called Mother Mable by Genessa then gave a wearied look to the younger woman.

“It's not much,” Mable said looking back at Randy. “You just have to put on some special clothes and hold some herbs.”

“Clothes?” Randy questioned. Mabel turned around and grabbed some folded clothes and gave them over to Randy who in turn lifted up one of them letting it unfurl to show it was a very baggy short sleeve shirt that almost looked like it had been cut out of a bed sheet. “I don't know this is starting to feel like the start to a horror movie,” he said as the clothes

reminded him of sacrificial robes, pure white to represent the innocence of the hapless victim. Mabel gave a laugh.

“I assure you we aren't selling your soul or whatever, we aren't those kinds of witches.” Mabel said. “This ritual is merely meant for us to realign ourselves for the coming new year a way to cast of the old and replace it with a new sense of purpose. Its really more ceremonial than anything. We're all normal people here its not like we actually think we can turn people into toads or whatever,” Mable said with a chuckle. Randy still felt rather hesitant as he looked at Genessa who gave him a sort of skeptical look.

“Don't tell me you're scared?” she asked. Randy immediately straightened up.

“I'm not,” he said for some reason feeling like he didn't want to appear cowardly in front of the young woman. He then smirked as he looked around the room. It was all starting to make a little more sense now as he looked at the woman who were assembled. They weren't so much witches as they were just some woman who were into some new age sort of stuff. More than a few of them probably had a crystal collection at home. The more he looked around the more ordinary they really seemed to be as he saw a few Starbucks cups under some chairs. Randy chuckled. What sort of dark arts practitioners overpaid for coffee? This was all harmless and maybe he was in for a good laugh so he went down the hall and put on the clothes reappearing in the billowy white shirt and pants.

The lights had been dimmed and some candles lit. The chairs had been removed and the woman were now sat on the ground. Some on pillows while others used yoga mats.

“Okay Randy you can just stand in the middle,” Mabel says with a smile. “Or we can get you a chair if you prefer.”

“How long is this going to take?” Randy then asked. He had work tomorrow he didn't want to spend his entire evening playing make believe.

“Only about twenty minutes,” Mabel said. “Are you sure you don't want a chair?”

“I'll stand,” Randy said. He certainly didn't see a problem with standing for a bit. He had sat all day at the office anyways and he did remember reading something about sitting all the time being unhealthy. Genessa gave him a bundle of some twigs wrapped with green vines explaining that he needed to hold them for the ceremony.

As Randy stood he watched with some interest as the ceremony proceeded. Mabel started by burning some sage which had a strong scent. She said some things about discarding the old to make way for the new and their was some call and response from the group. As Randy had suspected this was a far cry from the witches casting spells in the movies. It seemed more about affirmations for renewal and how the coming change of the seasons would rejuvenate nature and all. Pretty standard new age type of stuff Randy thought. At some point though he felt himself get a little lightheaded probably from all the smoke. Randy then looked

down at the twig he was holding and he noticed it was glowing. Not faintly but brightly.

“We call upon the spirits of nature to imbue us with rejuvenation...” Mabel came to a stop as she now noticed the glowing herself. “What the,” was the last thing Randy heard her say before a bright light exploded around him.

The incessant high pitched whine died down in Randy's ears as the sounds of the room came back. Something was definitely off as Mabel was no longer speaking instead there were some gasps and other sounds of shock. Randy opened his eyes as his eyes adjusted to the light. The overhead fluorescent lights were now on. The first face he saw was Mable's and she looked just a tinge pale. As he looked around at the other woman he could see some of them staring at him with wide eyes and some were covering their mouths. He then saw Gennessa her brow furrowed as if she were trying to figure out what she was looking at.

“Randy is that you?” Mable then asked. Randy looked at her confused for a moment.

“Who else would it be?” he asked. As the words left his mouth he knew immediately that something was wrong. His voice sounded different and felt different in his throat. As he started to get his bearings he began to discover that a lot of things were different. The room looked different not that anything had changed, it was still the same room but the dimensions were off, the woman too all looked different as he noted that he was looking up to see them. Randy slowly

looked down. He was still clasping the twig but the hands were small and the twig looked bigger. Randy then noted the shirt he was wearing was now down past his knees. Randy let out a confused gurgle as she stepped back tripping over the white pants that were pooled around his ankles.

“What's going on?” he mewled in his little chipmunk voice. The room descended into chaos as everyone began to talk at once. No one could fathom what had just happened. Randy sat with his head spinning hoping that someone would offer some sort of answer. How could this be? Looking at himself he could tell he was smaller and given what he could see he was younger. Finally Mabel held up her hands silencing the group. She was able to calm everyone down enough before saying that it was probably best if everyone went home for the night and she would contact them soon. As people began filing out she approached Randy and knelt in front of him.

“I'm sorry,” she said. “I don't understand how this happened.”

“So you can't reverse this, just cast another spell?” Randy yelped.

“Like I told you,” Mabel said. “We aren't those kinds of witches, they don't exist.” Randy sat as a pit formed in his stomach, this could not be happening.

“So how are we going to take care of this problem?” Genessa asked looking down at Randy.

“I'll figure that out,” Mabel said.

“Maybe I should, I mean I am the one that invited him,”

Genessa said.

“I am the head of the coven its my responsibility,” Mable replied. Randy felt the pit flop over in his stomach. A dark thought then played across his mind. Were they going to kill him, get rid of him, to protect the secret of their coven, isn't that something witches did? Had they been lying to him? Had this been the plan all along, maybe they had sucked the lifeforce out him to keep themselves young. He had watched a movie like that once.

“I-I just want to go home, please,” Randy pleaded.

“Of course sweetie that's exactly what we are going to do,” Mable said smiling at him. For some reason it seemed to calm Randy down, as if he knew he could trust her words.

Soon enough he was in the back of a cab with Mable on the way to his apartment. They didn't say much to one another. The driver had raised an eyebrow seeing Randy's state of dress being clad in only the shirt which now looked like a nightshirt and no shoes, it was a cool fall night. Mabel had come up with the excuse that he had insisted on wearing his pajamas while giving an apologetic smile to Randy as she said it.

Getting to Randy's apartment Mabel walked with him through the building up to his apartment before handing him his wallet and phone.

“Want me to come in?” she asked.

“No, that's fine,” Randy said finding it hard to even reach his

door. Mable stepped in unlocking the door and opening it.

“You're sure you'll be fine?”

“I can take care of myself,” Randy said. He then closed the door. He walked into his darkened apartment feeling a little strange at how different it suddenly seemed and how much darker it also looked. Randy went to his room and crawled into his bed. He was far too tired to do anything let alone even think about his new situation. He fell asleep soon after.

Randy awoke some time later. As he sat up in his bed he looked at his hands. They were still small. He groaned upon finding that last night hadn't just been an all too real feeling dream. He pulled back his cover to discover another alarming problem. He had wet the bed. Randy's face screwed up as he looked at the wet spot he was sitting in.

He got out of the bed and took off the wet shirt letting it fall to the floor. He went to his bathroom and got in the shower. He felt disgusting and the only thing he wanted was to wash off the filth. Reaching the handle to the shower involved him getting to his tippy toes to turn the valve. He managed though and soon enough the water was running. The next problem was that all his soap and shampoo sat on a high ledge that he had no chance of reaching. He just settled for the water in the end. After his shower he went back to his room to try and find some clothes. As he dug through his drawers he knew nothing was going to fit him. He would just have to settle for one of his old t-shirts that came down to his knees. Randy got on the shirt and then looked at himself in the mirror. What he

saw shocked him.

His face was small and round, his eyes looking like wide saucers. His dark slicked blonde hair was now lighter and looked soft to the touch as it feathered out. His slim toned body was gone as he ran his hands down to his hips outlining a small and slender body underneath the incredibly baggy shirt.

“My god,” Randy grumbled as he turned away from the mirror. He had no idea what he was going to do about this. He wasn't sure how old he looked. Four maybe five? At least he wasn't a baby. He wandered out into his living room grabbing his phone off the coffee table. He found himself plopping on the ground with his legs crossed as he unlocked his phone. There were already some messages from work. Randy typed out a quick message saying he was taking a sick day, there was after all no way he was going in today. Randy then found his stomach growling. He went to his fridge. He grimaced seeing everything was too high to reach. Not wanting to be defeated he pulled a chair over to the fridge and climbed onto it. He grabbed some eggs and then moved his chair over to the stove. It had been awhile since he had cooked at home, opting just to eat out most of the time. He put a pan on the stove and clicked on the burner. The problem came when he tried to crack an egg.

His little hands proved difficult to work with. He ended up more or less crushing the egg in his hand. As he looked at the pan with the shell and slimy yolk he let out a sigh deciding cereal would be better. After some more maneuvering Randy

had the milk and cereal and bowl out. He moved everything to the floor so he wouldn't have to try and get a full bowl off of the high counter. Setting the bowl on the ground he began to pour the cereal in which went well. The milk however was a disaster. It was a full gallon and Randy had trouble lifting it to pour. In the end he ended up spilling milk all over. With a growl he let the milk jug drop onto the floor.

“Forget this,” Randy shouted stomping away. Just then there was a knock at the door. He froze, there was no way he could open the door like this. There was another knock before he heard a voice.

“Its Mabel, Randy are you in there?”

Randy let out a sigh of relief thankful that the one person he needed to see was there. He shouted for her to come in. He hadn't been able to lock the door anyways. The door opened as Mabel walked in.

“I was up all night worrying about you so I wanted to come check in bright and early. I didn't wake you did I?” she asked walking in closing the door quickly.

“I was up,” Randy said. “So do you have good news, like can you reverse this?”

Mabel gave him an apologetic look.

“Like I told you, I had no idea this was going to happen, I didn't think it was possible.” she said.

“So I'm stuck like this!” Randy exclaimed throwing up his

arms.

“I just..don't...know,” Mable said taking her glasses off to rub the bridge of her nose. Randy grumbled something unintelligible as he walked to his couch climbing up to take a seat. “Are you feeling okay, though? I mean you aren't in pain are you?” Mable then asked following him a little closer inside.

“I feel just fine,” Randy said. At that moment he did take a minute to really think on it. He found some of the aches and pains that seemed to always be their were gone. “Maybe better than normal.”

“I see well that's good. Have you thought about what you are going to do?” the woman then asked as she noticed the absolute mess on the kitchen floor.

“I don't know,” Randy said. “I can't go to work much less walk around outside like this.”

“You're certainly going to need some help,” Mable said picking up the jug of milk and setting it on the counter. “Maybe you can go and stay with some family for the time being. I could help you explain whats going on.”

“I don't have family,” Randy said shaking his head.

“I know you probably don't want them finding out,” Mabel said coming and standing and in front of Randy on the couch. “But you really can't stay here like this. I mean sooner or later your going to have to get food at the store or pay rent.”

“I really don't have family,” Randy said. “I'm a foster kid, I stayed with a family for awhile but we really weren't close.” Mabel looked surprised for a moment as she looked embarrassed for a moment before taking a seat on the couch next to him with a sigh.

“I see,” she said as a silence descended between them.

“You don't have to stay,” Randy then said with some morose resignation. “I believe you when you say you have no idea whats going on.”

“You do?” Mabel said surprised that he wasn't accusing her of doing this on purpose.

“That stick and stuff you had me hold was plastic and still had the price sticker on it.” Randy said. “I figured real witches don't shop at the dollar store for their magical implements.”

“Oh yes well,” Mabel said not able to hold back a chuckle. “Still as the head of the coven I can't help but feel a little responsible so for the time being how about you just come stay with me for awhile just until we can figure out what to do?”

Randy looked at the woman smiling at him. Her face seemed inviting and part of him felt relieved to hear her offer. He had been rather worried about staying in the apartment by himself.

“I guess,” Randy said. He didn't really have a choice, and maybe Mabel would be able to figure out something. His best bet seemed to be sticking close by her.

“Okay then, lets go,” she said getting up. As they walked outside Randy shivered. It was fall and he was under dressed. “Careful on the stairs. “ Mabel said grabbing his hand. Randy paused a moment looking at her hand clasping his as he took another step he felt himself squeeze it just a little tighter.

Chapter 2

Tricked or Treated: Part 2 - Chapter 2

Randy walked hand in hand with Mabel into the community center room for the weekly coven meeting. It had become routine for him in the two weeks he had been staying with Mabel. It was certain that things had changed in a big way both for him and Mabel. The only thing that hadn't changed was his appearance. He still looked like a four year old. Walking into the room they were greeted by some of the woman.

“What a festive outfit,” one the older woman exclaimed leaning down to Randy complimenting his outfit that was being revealed as Mabel helped Randy remove his coat. Randy nodded. It was a nice outfit, he had picked it out himself It was a gray shirt that had sleeves that made it look like he was wearing a white and orange striped long sleeved shirt underneath although it was all one piece, complete with a snugly pair of blue sweatpants. On the shirt was a jack o' lantern with a cute bat and ghost coming out the top.

“He decided to get in the swing of the season,” Mabel said.

“That is just too cute,” the woman cooed, annoying Randy slightly. “Do you have a costume for Halloween yet?” Randy shook his head, he hadn't decided yet or if he was even going to go. Mabel had brought up the idea when they had passed by a pop-up costume store.

“We're still thinking,” Mabel said as she lead him over to the

bench at the side of the room. Randy took a seat as Mabel set down a backpack and pulled out a tablet with a big rubbery case around it handing it to Randy.

“Alright darling, play on your tablet while the meeting starts,” Mabel instructed before leaving him. Randy opened up the program on the tablet that had coloring pages he could do with his fingers. The tablet had belonged to Mabel's nephew when she had used to watch him, although he had long outgrown the need for someone looking after him so now it belonged to Randy. Mabel was not a fan of games so it didn't have much but she didn't object to the coloring book and it was fun enough for Randy when he needed something to occupy him. He began to color in a picture of a dragon coloring it green, upon finishing it he decided to sign his name so he could move one. He began drawing out an R before stopping. That wasn't his name anymore. That had been another change.

Since Randy had begun to stay with Mabel things had changed slowly over the two weeks. Neither one of them had discussed much of it. They felt one another out and had come to certain understandings.

Mabel had been the first to sense something strange. At first she had treated Randy normally more like a house guest than anything else. She would cook meals for him and help him with laundry and the like, yet she also noticed that Randy could be a bit of a brat that was completely unbecoming of someone his age. Like turning up his nose at her offering of mushroom and beef stroganoff one night despite him earlier

saying he liked it when she had suggested the dish. Still she knew he was going through a lot so she had whipped up a plate of buttered noodles which he had liked a great deal. She also noted that she actually had to remind him to clean up after himself. She was no clean freak and her house could be described as cluttered but she still kept a certain level of order to her abode. One would think that Randy would have more manners staying in another's house. He would leave clothes on the ground near the couch where he slept after having gotten dressed in some clothes, which Mabel had graciously gotten for him from a garage sale she had passed by so he had something to wear other than the over sized shirts he had brought from his apartment. He would even leave wet pull-ups on the ground which he now wore when it became apparent he was a bed wetter! She had taken to actually having to coach him in the morning when he would get dressed, so dirty clothes got to the laundry room and training pants were in the garbage. He also seemed to forget to take showers.

Mabel had commented one such day that he was smelling a bit. Randy had appeared rather flustered and embarrassed by the comment and had said he would take a shower straight away. The water had started and things seemed fine until Mabel heard a large clatter and then the sound of Randy screaming. She had rushed into the bathroom straight away expecting him to be hurt. Instead she found him standing in the shower crying as he had gotten some soap in his eyes upon reaching for some shampoo and instead bringing down the bottles on himself. Seeing how helpless he looked Mabel

had not hesitated to help him clean the soap out of his eyes and then had switched the shower off and filled up the bathtub and had given him a bath herself. Randy had not objected and had even seemed grateful for the help.

There were other things such as when they had been walking through a store one day. Randy had been in a rather sour mood upon finding himself dressed in a shirt that had some cartoon characters on it. Yet his mood had shifted when he laid eyes upon a black cat stuffie. He had immediately run up to it snatching it off the shelf.

“Look,” he had exclaimed holding it out to Mabel. “It looks like Caliban,” Randy said referring to Mabel's black cat by the same name.

“It does doesn't it,” Mabel said a little taken aback. She watched Randy look into the eyes of the stuffed animal. “Do you want it?” she then asked with some curiosity to see what he would say. Randy looked at the stuffie with some indecisiveness.

“Its very soft,” he said shyly as he squeezed the cat between his hands. “It really looks like him.”

“Get it then,” Mabel had said as she walked off. She didn't think much of it. Maybe Randy had just found the resemblance funny. Mabel certainly wasn't going to say no. She still had as an adult her stuffed bear sitting on her bed at home, there was nothing wrong with an adult having a stuffed animal. What surprised her was that Randy seemed to carry the thing around the house all the time. She had even caught

him talking to it a few times, he had named it Cauldron.

It had become clear to her that Randy was not going to go back to his normal life. She had thought he would stick around for a bit before they figured out some way for him to move on. She had even looked into getting him back to normal using her connections as a librarian to get her hands on some old books yet nothing came up. She had then tried the internet, posting on some witchcraft message boards. Her story was met with skepticism and some users telling her they were there to discuss actual witchcraft practices and she should take her creative writing exercises elsewhere. Mabel knew they were going to have to come up with a more long term plan.

She had called up one of her friends from the coven and discussed it with her since she worked in the child welfare department and then had made some macaroni and cheese that night for dinner since Randy seemed to like it. Sitting at the table she then had broached the subject.

“What would you say to staying here for longer?

“What do you mean?” Randy asked.

“I'm asking if you would just like to, I don't know live here with me? We would just do what we've been doing. Then you wouldn't have to worry about a job or anything. I'd take care of everything.”

Randy stopped eating as he set his fork down.

“That sounds like you want to adopt me or something,”

Randy said staring at his plate.

“I guess it would be something like that,” Mabel said. “I did talk to a friend of mine who could make things official so that I would be your legal guardian. I think it would be necessary. Everyone would think you're a kid so you would need someone that could help you with things like doctors appointments and stuff.” Randy shuffled around some of the noodles on his plate.

“That makes sense I guess.” Randy murmured.

“I know its probably not what you want,” Mabel sympathized rubbing Randy's shoulder for a moment.

“Its not that,” Randy said giving her a worried look. “but would that mean you would be like my Mom?”

Mabel took in a little breath. She hadn't considered that part in the slightest, she had only been looking at it as a practical necessity.

“No, I don't expect you to call me Mom or anything like that. If anyone asked I could just say I'm your Aunt or something, Aunty Mabel,” she smiled.

“Sure okay,” Randy said stabbing into a noodle as he continued eating. He knew Mabel was telling the truth. He would need someone in his life that at least on paper was his legal guardian, if he didn't have that he would be put back in foster care as no one would ever believe the truth.

They didn't speak on it much more after that. That was until

Mabel sat at the table one night filling out paperwork. She asked him some questions like his birth date which she amended showing that he was now only four years old and asking if he had any health issues she needed to know about. After getting through she came to the part where she had to fill in his name.

“I suppose it would be best to have you take my last name,” she mused.

“What is it?” Randy asked.

“Dubois,” Mabel said. Randy nodded his head. “Is your full name Randall?” Randy found himself scrunching up his face.

“Can you change that too?” he asked.

“You want a new name?” she asked looking at him with a confused look.

“I've never liked that name,” Randy said. “I found out that a doctor named me at the hospital and it never sat right with me that someone I didn't even know had named me.”

“So what would you like it to be?” Mabel then asked.

“I don't know,” Randy grimaced. “Maybe you should just pick one, I mean if you're adopting me or whatever.”

“Oh gosh,” Mabel said with a sigh. “I wouldn't even know where to start. After my husband died I kind of gave up on having kids of my own so I really never thought about it.” Both of them were silent as they pondered the quandary. “Give me a little time, I'll come up with a list.”

“Sounds good,” Randy said getting up from the table as he went to the living room leaving Mabel at the table with a notepad and pencil. She smirked a little hearing the tv playing some cartoons. After some time she walked into the living room taking a seat on the couch as she turned off the tv.

“Okay nameless child I have my list. I thought a lot about it and I think if I did have a child I would want them to have a name based on something in nature.”

Randy looked a little unsure as he got up from the carpet and walked up to her.

“I get three vetoes,” he exclaimed.

“Sounds fair,” Mabel chuckled. “How about Fern?”

“No way,” Randy said as he pantomimed gagging.

“Not a fan eh, I was also thinking Coriander, we could go Cori for short,” Mabel said raising an eyebrow. Randy scrunched up his face shaking his head slowly. Cori wasn't bad but he could almost imagine the times when he would have to say his legal name and having to say Coriander. That would no doubt get him looks. Mabel merely smiled, she knew he wouldn't go for that one.

“Remember you have one more veto,” Mabel reminded. “What do you think of Cedar?” Randy crossed his arms a little twisting up his mouth. He had to be careful here. It wasn't the worlds worst name, certainly better than Fern, but if he refused this one there was no telling what other names Mabel had in store.

“Not that one,” Randy said as he braced himself for the next one.

“I guess I should tell you my number one choice then,” Mabel said.

“Hey!” Randy then exclaimed. “You tricked me.”

“Hmmm?” Mabel hummed putting on a fake confused look.

“You made it so I couldn't refuse.” Randy said stomping his foot. It never occurred to him that Mabel had no intention of saddling him with a name he did not like. Their agreement of three vetoes was ironclad in his mind.

“Maybe I did, maybe I didn't however I think you should hear what it is first before you get upset. I think you'll like this one.”

“What is it?” Randy asked narrowing his eyes.

“Forrest,” Mabel said showing him the notepad where she had written it down. Randy stared at the paper It took him a bit before he was finally able to read it.

“I...I guess that's okay,” Randy said with a small nod.

“Wonderful," Mabel said. “As for your middle name I was thinking Micheal.”

“That sounds...normal,” Randy said with a raised eyebrow.

“It was my husbands name,” Mabel said. “I thought it would be a good way to include him in this little family of ours, are you okay with that?”

“If you like it then so do I,” Randy said. “Your the one taking on the burden.”

“Oh honey, this isn't a burden,” Mabel said taking his hands into hers. “You can be Forrest and I'll be Aunty Mabel and we'll all be happy.”

Forrest smiled and nodded. And so it was. The next day Forrest gave Mabel an envelope and his phone and wallet. Mabel opened the envelope to find a cashier's check for twenty five thousand dollars. She asked what this all was. Forrest explained that he had closed out his bank account and that was all the money he had. He didn't need any of the stuff anymore so it was hers to do with what she wanted. Mabel had tried to refuse saying she couldn't possibly accept.

“That's Randy's stuff,” the boy said. “I'm Forrest now.” Mabel frowned a little. She really wasn't sure what was going through his head. Yet she could see that this was something that he felt was necessary. If it helped him work through whatever was happening to him then she couldn't refuse.

“Well then I guess we should go to the store,” she had said.

“For what?” Forrest asked.

“If you're going to give me all this money then I'm going to use it on you. Since you'll be living here you are going to need clothes and you simply can't continue to sleep on the couch so you can take the spare bedroom upstairs so we'll have to get a bed as well.

“You don't have to do all that for me,” Forrest had begun to

whine feeling fussed over.

“Uh uh,” Mabel then said putting a hand up. “You gave this money to me so I get to decide how its used. Understand?”

“Yes Aunty,” Forrest said. That had been that. Soon enough Forrest had his own room and bed and lots of clothes and even some toys. He had been hesitant to play with them still feeling somewhat like an adult. Yet as soon as he fiddled with one of them, that had been all it took for him now to have some toys strewn about his room that he would play with when Aunty Mabel told him he couldn't watch tv anymore for the day.

Back in the present Forrest did find his mind wandering a little as he dashed some more red on the picture of the fire truck. He stopped as if he had just caught himself doing something wrong. Sometimes he felt like that, it was as if it was a moment of clarity where he found himself asking why he was doing this? He was an adult wasn't he? So why did he act the way he did sometimes, and why did it feel like it was right? He was letting this woman who was what, ten years older than him act like she had to do things for him. He was letting her feed him, make him take naps, give him baths, help him get dressed and decide when he could and couldn't watch tv and when he had to go to bed. Maybe he could have just said it was because he had no other place to go, but that wasn't really true. He would never admit it.

“Forrest,” a voice called. He looked up from his tablet to see Aunty Mabel standing over him. “We're going to start doing

our meditations now, remember what we talked about?”

“Its not even late,” Forrest whined a little.

“Its eight o' clock darling,” Mabel said petting his head a little. Forrest puckered his lips before standing up with a sigh. That was his bedtime alright, and he had agreed to this, it was the reason why Mabel didn't leave him home with a babysitter. Being taken care of by Aunty Mabel was one thing but for someone else to do it was a bridge to far for Forrest to stomach at the moment. He wondered what would happen once she returned to work, but for now he was at least safe from the indignity.

Mabel had a large canvas bag next to her that she was beginning to unpack. There were two blankets one which she laid across the bench. She then got a small pillow which she set at the head. Next she pulled out some clothes. She then helped him pull off his shirt and pants leaving him standing in just his hot wheels underwear.

“Take your undies off,” Mabel said softly. Forrest grabbed at the sides taking a cursory glance around the room. All the other women were far off and none of them seemed to be paying attention to what he was doing. He tugged his undies off and quickly stepped into the white disposable training pants with the watercolor bear on the front that Mabel held out for him. She pulled them up quickly and then took a moment to fix the waistband. Mabel then brought over the pajamas

“These are so cute,” she said looking at them for a moment

“We were so lucky that they had their Halloween clothes out weren't we?”

“Just great,” Forrest said not wanting to be standing in just his training pants any longer. Mabel helped him put on the green pants and Forrest got his shirt on which was orange and had a jack o' lanterns face printed on the front. Once he was dressed Forrest got onto the bench laying atop the fluffy blanket. Aunty Mabel handed him Cauldron his stuffed black cat which Forrest hugged to his chest. Mabel brought another blanket over him.

“Now close those eyes and go to sleep, have sweet dreams my little pumpkin,” she said giving him a kiss to his forehead.

The lights were then dimmed as the women began. It was just mediation so they were quiet as a soft soundscape played out from a boombox. Forrest closed his eyes and was soon asleep.

He awoke a little later, not sure how long he had been out for. He opened his eyes blearily for a moment to see they were still at the community center. The lights were back on and the woman were sat in chairs in a circle. Forrest grimaced closing his eyes again. This was the longest part of the meeting by far. The part where they were done and were now sitting around chatting. He pulled his blanket tighter. He wished they would hurry up. He was feeling cold since the air vent was blowing directly on him. He wanted to go home and get in his nice cozy bed. He stirred again feeling the hard bench under the blanket. Forrest finally sat up. He looked out across to the group. He saw Aunty Mabel smiling as she talked. He felt a

longing. He got up from the bench. He wanted to be warm. With Cauldron in his arms he plodded across the floor his bare feet making light slaps against the wood grain. He was now standing next to Mabel. Another woman was telling some story that Forrest gave no notice to. Mabel turned her head and looked down at him with a questioning look. Forrest didn't say anything except to hold his arms up in the air. Mabel smiled a little as she picked him up and putting him in her lap. He wrapped his his arms around her neck as she began to gently rub his back and her other hand began to lightly move through the hair on the back of his head. He could feel Mabel's voice vibrate in her chest as she talked, it was soothing. He heard some coo's from the other woman. He could also feel his shirt riding up in the back and his training pants were sticking up over the waistband. He didn't care what they thought. He moved his arm a little and began to suck his thumb as he snuggled in closer. He was comfortable and warm, that was all that mattered as he fell back asleep.

Chapter 3

Tricked or Treated: Part 3 - Chapter 3

Mabel came walking out into the front room setting a pull-up on the couch in preparation for Forrest's nap. She took a look across the room where Forrest stood in the corner sandwiched between two shelves of plants with his nose in the corner. He was wearing only a shirt and she shook her head looking at the reddened butt cheeks. She didn't like punishing him like this, yet sometimes the time out step wasn't going to work especially when he got himself so worked up that it seemed to be the only option left. Forrest turned his head giving her a scowl.

“Don't you dare scowl at me young man,” Mabel tutted as Forrest quickly turned his head back. The doorbell then rang as Mabel went and answered it welcoming Genessa into the house. “Thank you for babysitting,” Mabel said leading Genessa inside. “Unfortunately you've caught us at a bad time.”

“What did he do this time?” Genessa asked with a sigh.

“Oh he threw a fit over that,” Mabel said pointing at a kitty costume that was hanging on the closet door. “Anyways I gotta get going and he needs to go down for his nap.”

“I can handle that,” Genessa said. Mabel called Forrest over who approached the two woman keeping his head down.

“Now listen, you are going to behave for Genessa, I want a

good report," Mabel said kneeling down to Forrest.

"I will," Forrest whispered. Mabel gave him a kiss to his cheek. She then told Genessa she would be back in time to put Forrest to bed and that there was a casserole for dinner in the fridge. Just as she was rushing out the door she said he also needed to take a bath. Once Mabel was gone Genessa took a seat on the couch.

"Think we should get this pull-up on?" Genessa asked holding up the papery garment. Forrest found his face going a little red as he realized he was naked from the waist down.

"Y-yes," Forrest yelped. He put his hands on Genessa's shoulders as she held it out for him to step in.

"There we go, the big boy is all ready for his nap," she said tugging at the waistband a little once it was around his waist. Forrest grunted as he got under the covers. His face still bright red. He preferred Genessa to be his babysitter, she was better than the old ladies who sometimes did it. They were boring and preferred for him to do quiet activities so they could sit and watch tv. Genessa at least played with him sometimes. The only problem with her is that she teased him all the time. Innocent stuff to say the least, yet it always made Forrest feel a little strange.

"So want to tell me what got you turned into a tomato?" Genessa asked using the term that Mabel used to describe what happened when Forrest got a spanking. It had become like that after the first time Forrest had been punished in such a way. Mabel had refused him a second cookie saying it

would spoil his dinner. Forrest had erupted jumping up and down and screeching at the top of his lungs taking Mabel by surprise. He had ended his tirade by calling Mabel a stupid old witch.

“A witch I am?” she had said. “Then I think I'm just going to cast a spell on that little behind and turn it into a tomato.” Forrest had not figured out what that meant until he was over her lap getting his behind swatted. After that Mabel had declared that tomatoes belonged in the garden and that is how the time out corner had become the spot in-between her shelves of houseplants.

Forrest refused to answer Genessa's question instead flopping back onto his pillow.

“Let me guess?” Genessa smirked. “You were throwing one of your famous tantrums and said some naughty words perhaps? If I recall it was over that,” Genessa said pointing at the kittie onesie hanging up. Forrest looked at the accursed object that had started the whole thing. It was black with a hood with two ears. A small ribbon with a bell around the neck with a white belly and paws that could be pulled over the hands and a tail on the back. “She wants you to wear it during the Halloween parade right, be the coven's mascot for our float.”

“I don't want to be a stupid cat,” Forrest grumbled. Genessa looked offended as she picked up Caliban who was laying across the top of the couch.

“Did you hear that Caliban? Forrest thinks cats are stupid.”

She said as if she were talking to the cat.

“I don't mean him,” Forrest yelped as he sat up. Genessa chuckled a little as she released the cat which took its spot back on the top of the couch.

“Anyways you're supposed to be napping so lay down and go to sleep,” she said crossing her arms. Forrest did as he was told laying down and closing his eyes. After he heard Genessa leave he opened one of his eyes to see Caliban peering down at him.

“I think you're cool,” Forrest whispered. Caliban stood up and gave a stretch before he moved down the arm of the couch and coming to a spot next to Forrest before nuzzling his arm. Forrest let him under the blanket as Caliban went under before poking his head out and laying down. Forrest put an arm around him and fell asleep to the sounds of purring.

As Forrest awoke he used his hand to wipe his eyes and that's when he knew something was wrong sitting up with a start he saw his hand was no longer a hand but a big furry paw. He looked to see he was encased in black fur. He let out a startled yell. Genessa came strolling into the front room not seemingly surprised.

“Well look whose up,” she said cheerily.

“What's happening?” Forrest yelped.

“The spell has started,” Genessa smiled.

“Spell?” Forrest asked.

“Mabel seemed really excited by the idea of you wearing that kitty costume, but then you went and threw a big fit about it. So I decided that she doesn't deserve all that grief especially after everything she's done for you. I think she would be better off with just another cat. That way she won't have to deal with any bratty little boys anymore.”

“You're lying,” Forrest accused.

“Am I?” Genessa asked looking at him with a deadly serious look. Forrest gulped. She wasn't joking. Was this for real? What if this whole time it had been Genessa, what if she really was a witch that could cast spells.

“Please don't change me into a cat,” Forrest whimpered.

“The transformation will be complete soon,” Genessa said shrugging. “It won't be so bad to be a little kitty. Caliban can teach you everything you need to know.”

“I don't want to be a cat,” Forrest wailed as he started to cry.

“Oh geez,” Genessa said as her face fell. “Forrest, its just a joke,” Genessa said as she sat down on the couch next to him pulling him close to her. “Its just the costume,” Genessa said pointing. Forrest looked to the closet where the cat suit was now gone leaving just a hanger. It suddenly dawned on Forrest and he felt very foolish. How could he have been fooled like that?

“So I'm not changing into a cat?” he asked with a shuddering breath.

“Of course not,” Genessa said pulling the hood down and petting his hair which calmed him down a fair bit. “Mabel would be very upset with me if I did that, she definitely prefers her little boy to a kittie.”

Forrest pulled away crossing his arms with a frumpy look. This is the one thing he didn't like about Genessa, she played around too much, and it was usually at his expense.

“That wasn't funny,” he grumbled.

“It was just a little trick, tis the season,” Genessa said with a chuckle. “You're a heavy sleeper. I'm surprised I was able to get that thing on you without you waking up.” Forrest didn't respond. “You know though I was telling the truth about Mabel though. She was very excited by the idea of you wearing this for the parade. Maybe you should reconsider? It would make her very happy. It'd be a nice thing for you to do for her.”

“I don't want to be a kittie for Halloween,” Forrest said.

“It would just be for the parade I imagine, did your Aunty say that it was your Halloween costume?” Forrest thought for a moment. He couldn't remember much of the conversation, he had gotten angry pretty fast, but he didn't remember her saying that.

“I guess not,” he said sheepishly.

“Flew off the handle again didn't ya?” Genessa said with a knowing smirk. Forrest nodded. Sometimes he couldn't help it. He just got like that sometimes, he really needed to work

on that.

“You really think it would make her happy?” Forrest then asked fiddling with the little bell at his neck.

“Oh definitely,” Genessa nodded. Forrest sat for a moment thinking on it. He really did want to make Aunty Mabel happy.

“I guess I could, if its just for the parade,” Forrest said.

“That's awesome,” Genessa said clapping her hands. “You'll have to get into character though, so follow along with Caliban and he'll show you how to be a cat.”

Forrest looked at the black cat who was currently sitting in the window. He sat so that he was sitting like Caliban. Almost as if the cat could sense Forrest was watching his every move he stood up and stretched which Forrest mimicked. Caliban then leapt down and walked towards the kitchen. Forrest followed along on all fours. It was kind of fun walking under the tables and slipping through the chair legs. Caliban then scratched at his scratching post which Forrest did as well. Genessa then threw a yarn ball out which was one of Caliban's favorite toys. Forrest had a lot of fun chasing the yarn ball with Caliban and batting it with his paws. Genessa even took a video and sent it off to Mabel whom she thought would find it cute.

After some time Forrest was lying on the ground next to Caliban as they bathed in a sunbeam. Forrest thought being a cat wasn't too bad. Still he was happier being a boy. Suddenly

he sat up. He felt the need to go. He ran and found Genessa in the living room watching some tv.

“I gotta go potty,” he said squeezing his legs together.

“Hold on one minute,” Genessa said quickly undoing the zipper on the back of the costume. Forrest jumped out once he was free and took off for the bathroom. He made it in time. Walking back out into the living room, Genessa looked at him with an expectant look.

“Did you make it, squirt?” she asked. Forrest nodded his head. Genessa looked at him a little suspiciously as she walked up to him and pulled the front of his pull-up out. “Would you look at that, completely dry, you didn't even wet it during your nap.” she said letting the waistband snap back. Forrest felt his cheeks flush red. He was feeling really embarrassed now standing in just his pull-up in front of her. “You get a sticker for that, right?”

“I do,” Forrest said smiling as if he had just remembered it himself. Genessa asked where his chart was and Forrest lead her to the upstairs bathroom where his potty training chart was hung on the wall. She gave him a sticker and let him put it on himself.

“You got a lot of stickers. I think you're going to be potty trained soon.” Genessa said looking at all the stickers on Forrest's chart.

“Aunty Mabel says if I go the whole week dry during nap time, I don't hafta wear pull-ups anymore during the day.”

“You need to be potty trained for when you start going to kindergarten next year,” Genessa then mentioned. Forrest nodded his head as he continued admiring his chart. He and Aunty Mabel had already discussed him starting school. “Only one more day, and then you can kiss those pull-ups good bye,” she said wrapping her arms around his tummy from behind as she rocked him from side to side on his feet. Forrest giggled a little. “Oh goodness,” Genessa then said releasing him as she got up and turned on the faucet of the bathtub. “Get that pull-up off. You worked up quite a sweat playing kitty. Lets go stinky, its bathtime for you.”

Forrest did as he was told and was soon in the bathtub that was filled with sudsy bubble as Genessa lathered shampoo into his hair.

“So after your bath lets put on some pajama's” Genessa said as she washed the shampoo out of his hair by dumping water on top.

“It's too early for bed,” Forrest said shocked.

“You're not going to bed,” Genessa chuckled. “But you can't put dirty clothes on after getting all clean.”

“Oh,” Forrest said feeling foolish that he hadn't thought of that. After his bath he lead the way to his room. Genessa pulled out some clothes for him handing him a pair of underwear with a bright orange waistband and triangular fox faces repeating all over. She then helped him into a yellow pair of footed sleepers with black stripes and a felt lion face displayed on the left side.

Afterwards Genessa let Forrest watch some cartoons while she put dinner in the oven. A little while later Forrest was called to dinner. He took a seat at the table as Genessa brought over the food.

“Tater tot casserole!” Forrest exclaimed seeing the piping hot dish.

“Someone's excited.” Genessa said spooning some onto his plate. “Is this your favorite?”

“I like mac and cheese better,” Forrest said picking up his fork. “But everything Aunty Mabel makes is good. She's a good cook.” As Forrest dug in he noticed Genessa looking at him with a peculiar look. “What?” he finally said.

“Oh nothing,” Genessa said as she began to eat herself. “I just wonder why you call her Aunty Mabel.”

“That's her name,” Forrest said taking another bite.

“I suppose, but she's not really your Aunt.” Genessa then said.

“I know that,” Forrest said feeling a little uneasy. He wasn't sure why Genessa was bringing this up.

“She told me to call her Aunty Mabel.”

“Did she.” Genessa said.

“Is that weird?” Forrest then asked.

“No I guess,” Genessa said. “I just thought since she adopted you and everything that would make her your Mommy.”

“S-she's not my Mom,” Forrest said as his cheeks flushed a little at the thought of calling Mabel mommy.

“She takes care of you like a Mom,” Genessa said.

“That's well umm,” Forrest stuttered becoming tongue tied. Genessa smiled a little putting a hand on Forrest's arm.

“Hey, you guys obviously have this figured out. Its not really my business, so just forget I said anything, kay.” she said giving Forrest a smile. They went back to eating.

“Do you think she would want to be my Mom?” Forrest finally asked.

“I think you already know the answer to that,” Genessa said with a smirk.

After dinner Forrest retreated to his room. The conversation from dinner was weighing on him. He grabbed some toys and began playing to distract himself. However Forrest could not get the idea out of his head. Genessa was right, Mabel had adopted him so that would make her his Mom. Was that all it took though, just some paper declaring something. Probably not, but Forrest could not deny all the things Mabel did for him. He would not be able to get by without her. It wasn't just things like cooking for him, or getting him clothes either. She did a lot more. She really did do everything a parent did for their child. The thing was the more Forrest thought about her the more he felt like he missed her. He wished she was there right now. He always felt better when she was nearby. Forrest went downstairs finding Genessa on the couch.

“When is M....I mean Aunty Mabel going to be home?” he asked.

“She should be home soon.” His babysitter said glancing at her phone. “Its getting late though. You getting sleepy. Want me to tuck you into bed?”

“I want to wait for her,” Forrest said. “Can I watch tv until she gets back?”

“I don't know,” Genessa said. “I know Mabel is a little strict with how much screen time she gives you Only an hour a day right? Guess that's the librarian in her.”

“She lets me watch more on the weekends,” Forrest countered. Genessa asked him if he was fibbing. Forrest shook his head vehemently. Genessa patted the couch cushion next to her as Forrest climbed up onto the couch. She turned on Sesame Street for him. “She can't get too mad if I let you watch something educational now can she.”

Forrest watched the show. He did like it after all. After about an hour he did find himself beginning to nod off as he had his head in Genessa's lap. However when he heard the front door open he shot up running out of the room.

“Aunty Mabel,” he shouted as he ran towards the woman who had just gotten into the house. He jumped up into her arms nearly knocking her over in the process.

“Goodness Forrest,” Mable said as he held him. “You nearly knocked me over.”

“I missed you,” he said nuzzling into her shoulder.

“I missed you too,” she said softly hugging him a little tighter. “Did you behave yourself while I was gone?”

“Yep,” Genessa answered as she walked into the room. “He was a perfect angel. Took his bath and ate dinner without any complaints.”

“Good boy,” Mabel said as she bounced him up and down a little. “Sorry I'm a little late, got caught up at work.” she then said to Genessa.

“Its not a problem.” Genessa said getting on her coat. “I never mind spending time with Forrest here,” she said pinching his cheek a little. Forrest gave her a little grimace. They said their goodbyes to Genessa before Mabel finally set Forrest down.

“Okay, young man, its past your bedtime I think, So lets go use the potty one last time.” After Forrest went potty and Mabel had gotten him in a pull-up and dressed back in his jammies she carried him to his room and got him tucked in. “I checked out a book I think you'll like, want to read it?”

“Yes please,” Forrest said bouncing up and down a little in his bed. Mabel always picked out the best books. As she laid on the bed next to him she showed him the book which seemed to be about a little tugboat. He listened on with interest. He felt so much better now that she was back. Her soft voice as she read was lulling him to sleep quickly. Mabel finished reading the book as she closed it.

“Did you like it?” Mabel asked softly. Forrest gave a sleepy

nod as Mabel brought the cover over his chest. “Aunty Mabel always gets the best books, doesn't she?” Mabel said sounding rather pleased with herself. Forrest felt a twinge. There was that name again, Aunty Mabel, why did it bother him now? He felt Mabel give him a kiss to the forehead before she got up walking towards the door.

“Wait,” Forrest said sitting up.

“What for?” Mabel asked turning to look at him.

“Can you give me another hug?” Forrest then asked. Mabel shook her head a little as she walked back to him she leaned down and gave him a hug.

“Good night mmmm...” he said not able to get the last word out.

“Good night to you too,” Mabel said not seeming to pick up on his frustrations as they released. Forrest let out a huff through his nose.

“Hug me again,” he said. He wanted to try again, he knew he could do it.

“Forrest,” Mabel said sounding a bit bothered. “We're not playing silly games right now, its bedtime.”

“One more,” Forrest demanded. Mabel rolled her eyes yet smiled at the same time.

“I can't say no to hugging you, but just one more,” Mabel said holding up a finger. Forrest nodded. As she hugged him he wrapped his arms tightly around her neck.

“Good night, I love you Mommy,” he said before giving her a quick peck on the cheek. As soon as he said it he flopped back onto his pillow closing his eyes tightly. Mabel didn't say anything. The silence was killing him. After a moment he felt the covers pulled back up over him. He felt her lean down close to his face.

“Mommy loves you too my sweet pumpkin,” she whispered before giving him another kiss to the forehead.

The day of the Halloween parade had arrived. Forrest held Mabel's hand as they walked up to the rest of the witches in the staging area of the parade. Mabel and the rest of the women were all dressed up like actual witches some of them even had fake plastic noses and warts on their cheeks. Forrest was of course dressed in his kitty costume. He was more than a little grumpy however. Not because of his costume but the other thing Mabel had made him wear. She had put him in a pull-up. It was so not right. He didn't wear pull-ups anymore during the day. Mabel had said that there were not going to be any bathroom breaks during the parade and she didn't want him to have any accidents. An argument Forrest did not agree with. He didn't have accidents. He only wore pull-ups at bedtime. What was also annoying yet slightly less than the pull-ups were how all the other witches couldn't seem to help themselves in cooing at Forrest in his cat costume.

“Oh he is so precious.”

“What a cute kitty.”

“Would the kitty like some milk?”

Forrest did his best to not snarl or scowl. Mabel had told him he needed to be more polite, so he was trying his best. He didn't want to disappoint her.

“Mommy can I get on my bike yet?” Forrest finally asked. Mabel had gotten him a bike and she said he could ride it during the parade as long as he stuck near the group.

“Not yet, when the parade starts,” Mabel said giving him a pat to the head. Forrest huffed and went and stood by the float.

“Oh you look great,” Forrest looked over to see Genessa had shown up. “But you're not perfect yet,” she said kneeling down to straighten his bow causing the little bell to jingle. She then pulled some brushes out of her bag. She put a brush on his cheeks and then finally his nose.

“What did you do?” Forrest mewled a little.

“Want to see,” Genessa asked as she held up a small compact mirror. Forrest could now see she had painted some whiskers on his cheeks and had painted his nose pink.

“I didn't even think of face paint,” the voice of Mabel exclaimed having come up to the pair.

“I just thought it would be a nice touch.” Genessa smiled. Forrest grimaced. He wanted to be a cool cat like Caliban, instead he was being made into the cutest little kitty. Forrest stood sullenly as the rest of the group got ready. He couldn't help but feel like everyone was going to make fun of him. Still Mommy had seemed quite happy when he had agreed to

all of this, and making her happy made him happy too. So he decided to just suck it up.

Soon enough he was on his bike. It was brand new and he wasn't quite used to riding it yet so the training wheels were a welcome addition. Mabel gave him a couple more reminders to stay with the group and not to go ahead which Forrest replied with some annoyed declarations that he knew already. Mabel then slipped a plastic pumpkin around one of the handles that was filled with candy.

“Make sure to throw it into the crowd,” she said. “And no saving any for yourself.”

“Can't I at least have a sucker?” Forrest asked sticking out his lower lip. A new trick he had learned.

“You'll get your candy after,” Mabel said immune to his begging.

Once the parade got going Forrest found that even with the gloves he could grip the handlebars and grab the candy. He could see some older kids looking at him with stony glares. That is until he threw out the first bunch of candy. For the rest of the parade there seemed to be a group of kids following along yelling out to him.

“Here kitty kitty.”

“Throw the candy here!”

Forrest would wait for a group to gather before launching the candy in the crowd and then watch satisfied as the group

broke apart scrambling to pick pieces up off the ground. Once the parade came to an end Forrest actually found himself feeling rather sad. Despite all his misgivings he had ended up having a lot of fun. Sitting on his bike he looked at the plastic bucket noticing he had thrown out every single piece of candy. He huffed a little, mad at himself. He had been planning to at least save some for himself. However he didn't have much time to dwell on things as he felt two hand lift him up by the armpits as he was turned around to see that Mabel now had him on her hip.

“You did such a good job kitten,” she said as she gave him a flurry of kisses.

“Mommy,” Forrest whined pushing Mabel's face away from him. “Don't call me kitten.”

“Sorry,” Mabel chuckled as she set him down. “I'm just so darn proud of you. I really liked how you threw out all that candy and stuck with the group the whole time.”

“Well it wasn't hard,” Forrest said sounding somewhat put off as if Mabel was being condescending towards him, yet there was a small smile on the corner of his lips.

“You did something nice for me, so now its time to do something fun for you,” Mable said grabbing the plastic bucket from the bike and taking Forrest's hand.

“What are we doing?” Forrest asked as he walked with Mabel.

“You'll see,” she said with a wink as they walked into the Halloween fair that was set up in the park where the parade

route ended. They came to a walkway where a bunch of tents were set up on either side. There were lots of children running around some of them were in costumes while others were not. They all had plastic bags, pillowcases, or buckets.

“Here you go,” Mabel said handing Forrest his pumpkin bucket. “Just go up to one of the tents and say trick or treat.”

Forrest walked up to the first tent not completely sure what was going on, although he was starting to figure it out.

“Trick or Treat,” he said sounding a little unsure. From out of the tent came a man dressed like a chef.

“A little kitty wants a treat?” the man said in a booming voice. He then deposited some candy into Forrest's bucket.

“What do you say?” Mabel said from behind.

“T-thank you,” Forrest said looking down in his bucket. Mabel came up scratching one of Forrest's little cat ears. “Lots more tents,” Mabel said.

“Yeah,” Forrest cheered running off towards the next one. Mabel took a moment to watch him. He looked so happy at the moment. It was nice to see. At one point a man with a camera approached them asking for a photo. Forrest put on a big smile as Mabel was knelt down hugging his waist. The man looked at his camera after taking the photo remarking that it would definitely make the paper. After they made it through all the tents they sat at a table with some hot dogs Mabel had gotten from a stand. Genessa found them as they ate tossing Mabel her car keys.

“Got the bike loaded in your car.” Genessa said. Mabel thanked her. “Wow, someone got quite the haul,” Mabel said lifting up the full bucket of candy. “So whats next on the itinerary.”

“We're leaving soon,” Mable said. “I think someone's a little tuckered out.”

“Not tired,” Forrest mumbled yet his head was already against Mabel's side and his eyes were closed. Genessa said she would walk back to the car with them she was also the one who carried Forrest who was well on his way to sleep since Mabel's hands were full. Mabel got Forrest strapped into his car seat and then wiped the face paint of his face before gently closing the door as to not wake him.

“Looks like he had fun today,” Genessa laughed.

“Thank you for convincing him,” Mabel said. “You've been a big help.”

“Its my pleasure,” Genessa said. “Anyways do you need me to babysit this week, I'm free during the day on Tuesday and Thursday.”

“Actually I won't be needing to rely on you all anymore, which is good because I've felt a little guilty about it.” Mabel said. “A spot opened up in the daycare down the street from the library so he'll be going there until he starts school next fall.”

“I see,” Genessa said with a slightly sad look. “Well keep me in mind if you ever need a night off.”

“Will do,” Mable said. “He is rather fond of you after all.”

Forrest woke up realizing he was in his car seat. He shifted a little under the straps not able to get comfortable. It was to be expected. He really wasn't used to sitting in the car seat. Mabel really only drove when they went to the grocery store anyways. Most of the time they took the subway. It was at those times that Forrest found himself thinking back to that night. He still wasn't sure what had possessed him to say yes, it was so unlike him or rather the him he had used to be. Whatever it was he was glad for it. If he hadn't gone he never would have met Mommy. He couldn't imagine life without her.

He looked out the window noticing they were close to home. As he shifted again he noticed something alarming. He was wet. Forrest scrunched up his face. How could this happen? He couldn't be wet. Mommy told him that even big boys sometimes still have accidents at night. But during the day that was what little kids did. Forrest felt the tears coming to his eyes. He wiped them away quickly though.

They parked arriving home. As Mabel opened the car door to retrieve Forrest she noticed the expression on his face.

“What's the matter honey?” she asked unbuckling him and lifting him out of his seat.

“N-nuthin,” Forrest murmured. He couldn't bring himself to admit what he'd done.

“Probably just a little overtired hmmm,” Mabel said as she

walked up the steps to the front door. “Lets get you back to that nap.”

Forrest was set down in front of the couch in the front room where he liked to take his naps. Mabel pulled the hood off his head and then went to undo the zipper in the back.

“Wait Mommy,” Forrest yelped jumping back. Mabel looked at him a little surprised. “Can I sleep in my costume...please,” Forrest asked. He couldn't let her find out. She would think he was a little kid.

“Oh I'm sorry,” Mabel said pulling Forrest back towards her as she went at the zipper again. “But you've been running around in that thing all morning so its dirty and I know it gets warm too.”

Forrest just closed his eyes waiting for the inevitable discovery. Mabel pulled the costume down and then had him lift his feet so she could pull the costume out from under him.

“Go and use the potty and then come back and we'll get you some clothes.” Forrest opened his eyes. Why wasn't she saying anything about the pull-up, did she not notice? Forrest looked down, that was an impossibility. The pull-up was puffed out and sagging. He had flooded the thing.

“W-what about the pull-up?” Forrest asked as quietly as a church mouse.

“Take it off silly, and make sure it gets in the trash,” Mable said. “Now scoot, I'll have something dry for you in a minute.” Forrest scampered off but he didn't like the talk

about something dry one bit. She was probably going to make him wear another one for his nap. She would say he couldn't be trusted. Forrest came back from the bathroom. He was shivering a little since he was naked now, he was also sniffling a little but it wasn't from cold.

“Ready to get dressed?” Mabel asked. Forrest looked at her and was surprised to see her holding a pair of his undies out for him to step into, not only that they were one of his favorite pairs. Blue and white striped with a ferocious shark head emerging on the front.

“I can wear underwear?” Forrest questioned a little gobsmacked.

“What else would you wear?” Mabel asked chuckling a little.

“But I had an accident,” Forrest countered not really sure why he was arguing the point.

“That's why you were wearing a pull-up,” Mabel said with a shrug. “And we didn't even stop for a bathroom break, now are you going to put these on or what?”

“Yes,” Forrest yelped as he stepped in. Once Mabel had pulled them up to his waist his worries dissipated. He felt a good deal better now that he was back in his undies which proved he was a big boy and not a baby. A shirt was then pulled over his head before Mabel pulled back the covers she had set out on the couch.

“Now under the covers you're still in the middle of a nap,” Mabel said.

“But Mommy, I slept in the car,” he complained getting under the covers all the same.

“That was only twenty minutes,” Mabel said.

“I'm not even tired anymore,” Forrest said. Mabel shook her head just telling him he would fall back asleep soon but she would sit with him until he did. Forrest gave no complaint as he rested his head in her lap.

“You need to sleep because our day isn't done yet,” Mabel said as she began to stroke his hair.

“What are we doing?” Forrest asked before letting out a big yawn.

“Well when you wake up we're going to the store to get your Halloween costume, then we'll come back because I have some jack' o lantern cookies we can bake and decorate.”

“Do I get to eat one?” Forrest asked cheekily.

“After dinner. They're playing a bunch of classic Halloween specials on tv, so we can watch that and eat all the cookies together.”

“That...sounds...fun,” Forrest said with a sleepy sigh. Mabel smirked as she looked down at him his eyes were closed already and a few moments later she could see he was asleep.

She thought about getting up but though better on it. She was tired too after all and she could feel sleep coming to her own eyes. Yet not before she took another look at the peaceful face of the boy asleep on her lap. She really couldn't imagine

life without him. It had been rather lonely without him. Although sometimes she did feel a little guilty about everything that had happened. Even after she had formally adopted him she had still been searching for a way to reverse all this. Her search had not given her any answers. She had finally given up. After all even if she did find a way she wondered if she even could go through with it. Something told her that Forrest wouldn't want it either. He did after all seem more than content with how things were now. She liked to think that the spell was no accident. After all it had been about rejuvenating oneself. They had both found themselves with new purpose. Maybe that's what it was. They had both found something they needed without realizing what that was in the first place. Mabel let out a sigh as she put her head back and closing her eyes. There was still lots of fun to be had.

END