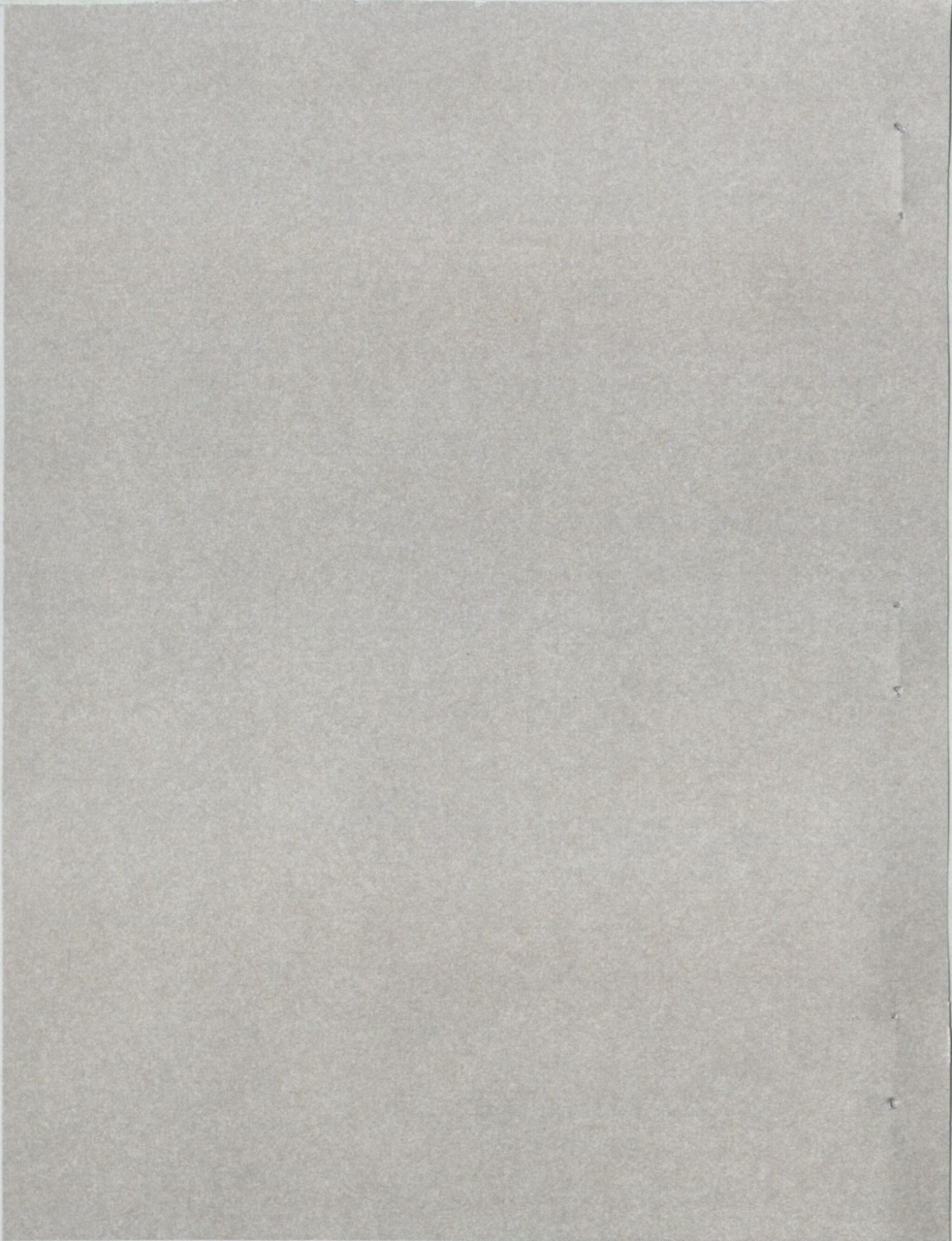


Frosted Reflections



volume 1





THE HERBALIST WITCH

A Fantasy Adventure
of
Magic & Medicine

WRITTEN BY
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Part 1



Once upon a time, in a far-off land, there was a villager named Luna. (that's me) I lived in a small village surrounded by lush green forests and rolling hills. Luna was a curious and adventurous woman who loved to explore the woods and discover new things. However, this did not go over so well with my mother, who had been overprotective of me ever since my dad left. My only escape was college. So, I buried myself in books, homework, and botany. My sister, though, took quite a different approach. She was always the more rebellious one, I took after Dad in that way. One day, she came home with bright blue hair, and Mom freaked out. I had always secretly admired her rebellion, aspiring to have lavender hair, instead of boring old brown. It would match my eyes, at least. One day, my friend Thorne asked me to hang out with her after class. I had botany club after school, so I had to turn her down. She suddenly exploded, saying all I cared about was good grades!

"Are you kidding me?! I slept over last week, and we eat lunch every day together! So excuse me If I turn down one hangout to have a chance at getting my PhD" I retorted. After that day, our friendship was never the same. But that's okay, because I had Hex. Hex was just a kitten when I found her in the woods, sick and weak. I nursed her back to health, and we became inseparable. Hex never judged me. She never doubted me either.

She was special in that way but also had a hidden talent; She was a warrior. If she wanted you dead, in the next 15 minutes you'd be lying on the ground in a pool of blood. God, I love that cat.

In fact, she was the reason I discovered the Glade. On that day, I went home and complained to Hex. She suggested I go on a walk to clear my head, and I found a little path in this part of the woods that I'd never been in. Oh yeah, Hex can talk. So anyway, I decided to follow the trail without telling anybody where I was going or how long I'd be there. Great idea, I know. It ended up leading to this little clearing that had this magical feel. There was mystery and magic, everywhere in the air. It was filled with plants, but there were clear signs that someone had just tended to these plants.

There was a mystery afoot, and I could smell it. I gathered samples from all the different kinds of plants I could see and then ran back to campus to analyze the mystery plants in the lab. I ran all sorts of tests and experiments that week. After quite a few days of tinkering, I made a shocking discovery. There was this one plant that looked very similar to ginger root, except it wasn't spicy, it just had the sweet part. I decided to make it into tea after determining that it wouldn't kill me. I had an irritated stomach that day, but as soon as I finished my cup the pain vanished completely! Plus, it was delicious. Sure beats choking down medicine, am I right? Anyway, I realized that if one of these herbs have healing properties, many others could as well. I carried on analyzing every sample I collected and even went back to gather more. I soon realized that none of the plants in the clearing, even the ones I had thought I recognized were not in any of my botany books. I researched for weeks, but I found nothing.

These must be new plants! I had made a great discovery that could change the world of medicine forever! I began experimenting with how the herbs reacted with one another and different chemicals. Every single one of these herbs had medicinal properties. It had always been my dream to make a groundbreaking discovery in the world of Botany and Medicine! But I still had a lot of questions left unanswered. So, I put flyers all around town, hoping for someone knowledgeable about plants to teach me. I waited for, what, two days? That was, realistically, really damn fast. But let me tell you, it felt like eons. Anyway, eventually someone rang the doorbell and showed me the flyer, an old lady wearing an emerald green cloak. "Hello, My name is Luna. Luna Nightshade." I said. "Ah. Pleasure to meet you, I am Vega Silvermist. All right then, enough chit-chat. Where are these mystery plants?" Wait... that wasn't on the flier... It had only said I wanted someone to teach me about botany! "How did you know that? It wasn't on the poster." I asked. "I have my ways. Now, what do you need to know?" She Inquired. "Why don't we sit down first?" I suggested. I led her to the living room, and we chatted for a while, asking questions back and forth, until she finally asked where I found the plants. I recounted the day's events to her, and she sat back in her chair with a knowing expression. "Let me show you something." She stood up abruptly, walking to the front door. "Well, aren't you coming?"

Part 2



She led me down the very same path that I had found, to the clearing that started this entire facade. I looked at her in surprise, wondering if she had been the one tending to the plants all along. “Yes,” she replied- to my thoughts!? she chuckled. “I suppose I should reveal the entire truth- you might want to sit down for this” As if at her command, a little sprout peeked out of the soil, growing rapidly into a vine, which became longer and thicker, and started to grow in strange directions, weaving itself into a chair. I sat down and Vega started talking. “I am a witch, and I can manipulate plants. I have cross-pollinated many magical plants to create healing herbs and planted them in this clearing. Only magic-wielders can see the path. Any normal human would never come across it.” I’ll spare you the details, reader, and just say, it was hard to believe. But then again, I have a talking warrior goddess cat for a best friend, so maybe I shouldn’t be so quick to judge. Vega invited me to stay the night, and I happily obliged, after she reassured me that while you’re in the clearing, outside time is paused. The vine-and-leaf sleeping bag that Vega grew for me was surprisingly comfortable, and after a delicious breakfast of passion fruit and acai berries, Vega grabbed a pair of gardening gloves that were hanging on the wall. “Are you going to help take care of these plants or not?”

I stayed in that clearing for several days, and in that time I learned a lot. But eventually, I started to get homesick and returned home. After that, I would go to the clearing almost three times a week.

I learned how to make potions, cast spells, and even read ancient languages. Oh yeah, and APPARENTLY Hex knew the witch since "the beginning of time" or whatever. Anyway, one day, I was helping my mom with making dinner, when she suddenly clutched her chest and fell to the floor, sending spaghetti sauce and noodles everywhere. I immediately rushed to her side, shaking her. "Mom, are you okay? Mom, wake up!" she didn't respond. I grabbed my phone and called 911.

It happened so fast... it's all a blur in my memory, but I'll try to recount the day's events for you, reader. The ambulance arrived about five minutes after I called. Mom got loaded up, I sat with her in the ambulance, and we got to the hospital. The doctor said she'd had a heart attack, but it left her in a coma because her body was too weak to handle it. But that didn't make sense to me. My mother went to the gym twice a week and was a total health nut. Her body was anything but weak. I excused myself and stepped into the hall. I pulled out my phone and called my sister, she needed to know what was happening.

“Selene! Mom had a heart attack! But I’ve gotta go figure out the next steps. Can you come to the hospital and keep an eye on mom?”

“What?!? I’m on my way!”

Once Selene arrived, I quickly filled her in on what happened and my suspicions. I told her that I was going to go get a friend who is experienced in medicine to get a second opinion.

I hurriedly left to go find Vega. Once I arrived in the clearing, I felt a little more relaxed because I knew that time stopped while I was in the clearing. I found Hex with Vega in the clearing bent over a cauldron.

I opened my mouth to explain the situation but Vega interrupted me “Your mother had a so-called heart attack, and fell into a coma. You don’t believe this and have come to me to find a solution.”

“How did you-you know what, never mind... is that the cure right there?” Luna nodded to the cauldron.

“Yes, but we are missing an ingredient. We need a wyvern egg.”

“Isn’t that the one that’s guarded by a highly dangerous chimera that no one has been able to get past?!?”

“Yup.”

“A CHIMERA! You know those have a 101% fatality rate, right? They are extremely dangerous. They breathe fire for goodness sake!”

“Eck. I’ve fought one or two in my lifetime. What’s so scary about it?”

"You are an immortal witch who can't feel pain. I'm just a little mortal who can very much feel the fire!"

"Simple, you bring a few potions. You spike the Chimera's prey. It falls asleep, you sneak past it into the temple and bam! wyvern egg acquired."

For the sake of this story, I'm going to skip to the part where we are at the temple, facing a chimera, holding a deer carcass spiked with a heavy sleep potion.

"So what's your plan to get the chimera to eat the deer and not us?"
I said to Vega.

"Plop down the deer and run really, really fast."

The chimera turns out to be really old and has poor eyesight. So we tied a rope to the dead deer and wiggled it around slowly so the old chimera could "catch" it.

Once it was asleep, we snuck into the temple, grabbed the egg, and booked it out of there.

Back in the clearing, we put the egg in the cauldron with the unfinished potion and finally brewed the cure. I rushed back to the hospital with the potion.

The doctors are like "What the heck are you doing?? Can you not?"
So we needed to distract the doctor.

Mom woke up very confused, like: "Why am I in the hospital? What is going on?!"

Vega whispers something to Hex. Hex whispered back to Vega and they looked at each other, and then suddenly they disappeared.

I thought they just went back to the clearing but was confused by their sudden disappearance.

Shortly after, Vega returned with video footage of Thorne breaking into the house with a very suspicious-looking bottle.

Vega announced, "This is who poisoned Ms. Nightshade!"

Part 3



8 years later, I had gotten my degree in botany, found a partner, and adopted kids, named Oak and Acorn. Moss, my beautiful partner, had been 24 when we met, now 28. I love them so much, I don't know what I'd do without them.

Thorne gets released from prison next week. I'm not sure how to feel about that. On the one hand, I don't want her to come back for revenge, but on the other hand, she's been in prison for almost 8 years. I've heard that it's awful in there, and what if she realized how terrible her actions were? I don't know. At least we have a restraining order against her.

Moss must have known that I was feeling off, because they called my mom and asked if she could watch the kids. Once the kids were handed off to their grandma, Moss took me to the clearing, where Vega and Hex had settled down. They stood next to me, watching the sunset. Suddenly, they pulled out a small, black box from their bag, and got down on one knee. I gasped as Moss' voice rang in my ear. "Luna, love of my life, will you marry me?"



End



Arctic Calm

By SAGE NIGHTSHADE

March 2024

Frozen ponds shimmer
Snowflakes gracefully float down
Icicles gleam. Peace.

About the Author...



Sage Nightshade lives in Olympia with their
mom, dad,
uncle, grandma, and three cats.

When Sage isn't writing, they are usually
making art or playing video games with a cat
on their lap.

Sage's favorite animal is a dragon, but if
forced
to choose a real animal, probably cows and
cats.

This zine was created using Canva &
ProCreate.