

WHAT'S A GLOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

By pwatson1974

Continuing the adventures of Faustus the Great and co. (especially the co.), last seen in the Holiday contest story, Jack O'Lantern.

All Soul's Day, a little after eleven in the morning, breakfast time. Dell looks down at the smooth black gem embedded in her palm. She taps it, finding it as cool and hard as you'd expect a piece of obsidian to be but when she curls her hand up into a fist it bends and flexes as easily as the rest of her hand. "Sees through shadows? Maybe if that pumpkin had told me how to make it..." she stops, turning her hand over on the kitchen top, as the door swings open. Anne shuffles in, blinking tired (and emotional) eyes, her hair a tangled bird's nest of curls.

"Coffee?" she asks, blearily. Dell nods over at the coffee pot. "Empty."

Dell, rather smugly, walks over, tipping the empty pot and pouring out steaming dark coffee. "Magic." Anne takes the steaming mug, sipping it slowly, sighing in satisfaction. "Did someone overdo it last night?"

"No." She sips the coffee carefully, and winces, "Maybe a little. Why waste my one night of freedom?"

"One night?"

"Ghost for over a year and then your plaything for however long it's been, remember?"

"Oh, yeah."

"Better. Can't wake up without coffee." She looks down, "What did you do to your hand?"

Dell jerks her hand back, "I...I didn't do anything!"

"Oh, really? So it's practically glowing black because...?"

"Glowing black?" she looks down, but her hand looks tanned rather than glowing black, however that works. "What are you talking about?"

"Oh, right, you don't have the Sight. Keep forgetting you're still a norm."

"The Sight? Norm? What?"

"You know, Second Sight? Seeing the unseeable?" she looks at the blank face, "Ok, look, if you're a true magic worker, you can, sort of, see magic. It's how people like your boss make things look so easy."

"See magic?"

"Well obviously not see see, it's, oh, this is like trying to describe music to someone who's deaf. Just imagine it's like another colour system. And right now, your hand is glowing in it. So, what's the story? It wasn't like that when we got back, was it?"

"How would I know? Some of us can't 'see magic'!"

"Ow. Stop shouting at hungover people. It's not nice. So, when did it happen?"

"What happen?"

"Ok, you can explain it to your boss on your own then. I bet he'd love to know what you've done."

"He'll notice?"

"Notice? Look, kid..."

"Kid?! You're, like, 2 years older than me. If that."

"Ok, ok, Dell. Geez, touchy much. Anyway, right now, to someone with Sight, you're like a spotlight in black. Not noticing would be difficult."

"He didn't see it when you came back."

"So, it was there last night. Which means you know what it is." She looks at Dell's shocked face, "Hello, stage magician, here. Getting marks to tell all is easier than actually reading

their minds. Going to tell me?"

"It's a, it's a gift, sort of."

"Ooooooh, a secret admirer? This is getting better and better. I'm glad I woke up early now, hangover be damned. From whom is it a gift?"

"I probably shouldn't say."

"Which means you're going to have to now. Or shall I work it out? You didn't go out last night, did you? No, you're a good girl and probably couldn't once the boss locked up. So that means, ohhhhhh, let's see, some kind of spirit?" Dell's face twitches, "And on Halloween? One of the lesser spirits of the season? Hmmmm, wasn't a Jack, was it?"

"How did you know that?!"

"Guessing, mostly. You really are bad at this. I'll have to teach you to lie better. So, what is it?"

Dell reluctantly opens her palm. Anne taps on it.

"Hmmmm. Embedded stone. Interesting. Pure black, bit swirly. Let me guess, shadowstone?"

"I don't know. He didn't say what it was."

"No, I bet he didn't. Said it marked you as a friend of something, didn't he?" she looks up at Dell, "Yes, that's what I thought. You do realise Jack's are trickster spirits, don't you? And that accepting gifts from spirits is usually a recipe for chaos? They like chaos. Probably using it to watch you."

"Watch me?"

"They've got to do something for entertainment when they can't manifest, haven't they? If it was only a Jack, it probably can't use it to actually do much. Your boss is not going to be happy, though."

"You won't tell him, will..."

"Tell him? Heh. Didn't you listen earlier? You've got a neon sign in your hand saying 'trouble'. Telling him won't be necessary."

"You think he'll be mad?"

"Probably more at himself than you. Seems the type to load everything onto those nice broad shoulders. But, yeah, he'll be mad." She looks at Dell's face, "Unless, of course, you hide it from him."

"How?"

"Well, ok, you can't. But luckily you've got a fairy godmother who can."

"Who? You?"

"Bingo. And I'd only want a little thing in return..."

Dell's eyes narrow, "Which would be what?"

"Ease off on this 'punish poor Anne' kick you've been on. I sort this out and we're quits, right? No more punishment for those little tricks I played on you. Orrrr you could always take your chances with the boss."

"Ok. We're quits if you can sort this out."

"Excellent. Now, we'll need to cover it somehow. A glove is probably easiest. Where do you keep the knives around here?"

"Knives? Why?"

"Well, I'll need something to chop the hand off with, won't I? Honestly."

"What?! You're not chopping my hand off!"

"Well, no, not right now. I need to find a knife, for one thing."

"But we just need a glove, right?"

"Well, a living, magical glove, which I'm sure you just keep lying around."

"Could you magic someone into being the glove?"

"I could but the targets aren't exactly lining up and I'm not going to piss your boss off by

forcing stuff on his girls again.”

“Oh, that won’t be a problem.”

“I really don’t like the look of that smile. Who do you plan on using, then?”

“Well, technically, we’re only quits after this is done, and you said you could turn someone into a glove and you do have to do what I say, so...”

“That would be massively cruel, inhumane and borderline totally evil. There’s hope for you yet. But if you do decide to go that route, just remember that as soon as you put me on, problem’s fixed and I get to turn back and then we’re quits and you still have to explain things to your boss. A good first attempt, nonetheless.”

“So you want to cut my hand off?”

“Hell yes, I want to. And I could probably gull you into letting me, too, but it’s going to be my hand on the block. So no reason to worry.”

“This time.”

“You’re definitely learning. So, knives? Before everyone else wakes up?”

Dell points at the knife drawer.

Anne beams as she opens it, “Ooooh, so many sharp and pointy things to play with. Where do we start? Let’s go with the old-fashioned approach.” She pulls out a meat cleaver. “And the chopping board is?” Dell points again, her eyes getting slightly wider as Anne brings the board over to the table, placing her hand on it.

“Uhm, is that magical? It won’t, you know, just...”

“Oh, it’s not magical.” She begins singing to herself, a light, lilting tune with words that slip past Dell’s ears. The cleaver plunges down, biting into the chopping board with a solid thunk. Dell yelps. “Fortunately, I am.” She pulls her arm away, stroking the smooth skin at the end of her wrist while her hand pushes itself onto its fingertips, scuttling over the table.

“You won’t be able to move my hand, will you?”

“Well, I won’t now, no. Come here, Thing.” The hand scuttles over. Anne begins crooning to it, her fingers pinching the edge of its wrist with her free hand. “Could you be a dear and put the board back? Don’t want too many nasty awkward questions.”

When Dell returns, Anne is busy joining her hand back, muscles and tendons flexing visibly, bones showing on the skinless limb. On the table rests a delicate, five-fingered pouch of skin, turned inside out. “Go on, put it on. It won’t bite.”

Dell reaches for the skin, almost dropping it when she finds it still warm; her eyes never leaving the gory hand at the end of Anne’s arm. “That is soooo freaky.”

“Thanks.” Anne smiles, picking up her coffee with the mutilated hand. “Now stop stalling.”

Dell gingerly picks up the skin. “And it won’t do anything to me?”

“No, it won’t. A little trust here?”

Dell starts to turn the skin the right way out.

“Don’t do that. It’ll make the auras look really weird and take longer to adjust.”

“Ok, ok. When are you going to put your hand back together?” she tentatively pulls the hand on.

“When the aura stabilises. That way it looks like just another thing you’re doing to me for your sick and twisted amusement. There, that wasn’t so bad, was it? Now you just need a simple, little veil over it to hide the join.”

“And how do I do that?”

“Oh, it’s fairly easy. It won’t take too long to teach you.”

“Teach me?”

“Only a little veiling. Nothing too powerful.”

“Oh.”

“Now, now, don’t pout. If you do well at this, I might be persuaded take you on as my

apprentice and teach you some fun stuff.”

“You would? Hold on, what’s in it for you?”

“Why should anything be in it for me? Ok, not buying that? Can’t really blame you. Friends are very important things to have in situations like mine, don’t you think?”

“Right.”

“So, shake on it?” she holds out her skinless hand.

“Ewwww. Gross.” she says, taking the hand.

Nearby, “An’ what got you woken up?”

“I felt a great disturbance in the Force. I fear something terrible has happened.”

Jackie swats him. “Ok, no more Star Wars marathons for you. Now lemme sleep.”



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