



Present Day-Los Angeles.

Dr. Throne's nostrils flare from the stench of damp earth, old herbs, and rot as he badges himself into his laboratory office. The odor is a stark contrast to the clean office smell he's familiar with, so he covers his face to combat the scent when he sees it.

That thing.

That grotesque creature.

The **WITCH**.

"Late," her voice snaps in a sandpaper rasp, twinged with ancient regal tone. "Three days passed, Doctor." The hideous green-skinned woman rocks in his high-backed leather chair.

If he could jump out of his skin, he would. "Jesus F-..." An audible gulp drops from him. "You're not suppo..." Fear steals his words for a moment. "H-h-how did you g-get in here?"

"Witchcraft," she answers. "Considerable amounts to make this visit because you haven't delivered the goods promised."

Breathing heavily, he manages his first intelligible sentences, "Organ harvesting isn't shopping at Walmart, milady. Please understand, I can't order them from DoorDash. And, please, take no offense, but the organs you demand are becoming more specific. It's not every day a baby dies or a 22-year-old woman with type A blood passes away in this hospital. Sometimes there's no permission for organ donation anyway, so I can't touch them. There's paperwork, permission, laws. I've broken some already."

He'd advised her of these possibilities when they struck their pact a year ago. She's agitated, though. Reminding her might trigger her to do something horrendous to him.

If his legs weren't pinned in place from fright, he'd flee.

"Walmart. DoorDash," the words sound like filth in her mouth. She rises and moves toward him. Her dark aura swallows the light in the room, and despite the doctor being taller than the monster approaching him, he feels the smallest he's ever felt.

"Spare me your mentions of this plastic age, doctor. You mew about permissions and paperwork like the laws of men have ever held sway over my starving soul." She extends a long, green finger and hooks a sharpened black nail under his chin.

"This curse I live with doesn't wait for a doctor's signature. It gnaws and rots. Even now as I speak, I can feel the marrow in my bones betraying me." She grabs his chin with greater force and yanks his head down so his gaze meets the black pools in her sockets, eyes the color of her soul.

"Please," he begs, tears gathered in wrinkled orbs.

The Witch scoffs and releases him. She paces around his office like a caged tigress, pulling medical journals off the shelves and tossing them across the room.

"I've held my end of the pact. I gave you the girl, did I not? Elena. Is that not her name? The 24-year-old? The supermodel. The actress. The one with the golden hair without a strand out of place? The one with the sun-kissed skin that has never felt a blemish? The one who looks at you with big blue eyes full of love that costs you five drops of my potion every fortnight?"

She stops between the doctor and the door. "If my body decays, so will my magic. If I turn to dust, the bewitching spell on your little bird snaps like a twig. Imagine it, doctor. Imagine Elena waking up in your arms, seeing your homely wrinkled face, your liver spots, your thatched hair, your hideousness... and realizing she's spent a year being pawed at by a man she finds utterly repulsive. Imagine the scream she'll let out."

Dr. Throne's eyes nearly rocket out of his skull.

Elena's the type of godsend the doctor would've never been good enough to court even in his prime, when he was handsome. She's too beautiful, unfathomably so. Her social status is too ascendant. Only a miracle would've netted the 74-year-old such a woman.

The love potions on Elena have given him the impossible and the greatest year he's ever had in his life.

That's in jeopardy now.

Heartbeats pound in his ears. He braces against the wall, needing it to keep him upright.

The Witch notices his dismay, and a jagged smile shapes her repugnant green face.

"Now. Tell me once more about the difficulty of your harvest for me."

His legs begin to work, and he slumps into his ergonomic chair, dabbing the torrential sweat off his forehead.

"I didn't say I had... nothing," he fumbles with his keycard and rolls his chair toward a stainless steel laboratory refrigerator. He makes quick work of opening it and retrieves a small, translucent box containing a heart floating in preservation fluid.

The Witch moves across the room in a green blur and snatches the box out of his trembling hands. She studies it frenetically. The organ isn't a piece of anatomy to her; it's a battery.

"Type A," he whispers, casting his eyes to the floor. "Car wreck. Eighteen-year-old female. Brain dead... but the heart was still beating when I took it. As fresh as it gets without me becoming a murderer. You requested a twenty-two-year-old but..."

"SILENCE!" She screeches. He obliges. She can see the shimmer of residual vitality clinging to the muscle fibers, but it's fading.

The Witch shoves items off his desk and produces paraphernalia to perform an emergency ritual. Fear keeps Dr. Thorne seated as he watches her gesture and speak incantations from a dead language.

She peels back a sleeve of her robe, revealing a patch of skin on her bicep. It's not green. It's brittle gray. The Curse of Vanity is eating her alive from the inside out.

"This." She holds the heart aloft while swirling black wisps emanating from a stone bowl rise and embrace it. "Is a snack. It'll sate the rot for a week, mayhaps two."

The Witch bites into it like it's a burger. Dr. Throne empties his guts, puke spilling onto the floor. She takes another bite. Then another. And it's gone. All that's left are blood trails racing down her pointy chin.

She turns her gaze toward the window, looking at the glow of a local sports arena in the distance. "I've found a richer vein to tap into, Doctor. A place

where the young and the strong gather to spill blood and sweat for the adoration of the mindless. Their glory smells like incense, tastes so very scrumptious. Their essence, combined with your harvests, will serve me greatly."

Dr. Throne quakes in his chair, pale with nausea. "Y-yes, milady."

"No more tardiness. Work extra shifts at other hospitals. Do what you must, or Elena's heart gets devoured next."

Red smoke engulfs her, and she's gone.



Regret blooms within Dr. Thorne. He curses that hiking trip he took a year ago. The trail he got lost on. The accident that led him to the Witch.

[CAMERA-ON]

Inside the Witch's shack, frightened XWF production crew hit record near the scrying orb she commands, while one of her monkey minions dutifully observes.



"Ahhhh, Amber and Game-Girl. Imagine my delight when I received news of teaming up with the legendary Centurion. In a Tornado Tag, no less. I know my tornadoes, so I was overjoyed. The essence I would gain from our victory would double the yield and help build toward the reversal of my curse. But, imagine my dejection when I realized one opponent is you, Amber.

What essence could I gain?"

She counts off the eliminating factors.

"~ There's no blood in your plastic stream.

~ Your cookie-cutter influencer personality is as manufactured as your bosoms.

~ You have a million-dollar body but a ten-cent face; it's why the best you can court is someone whose good-sense vanished a thousand chairshots ago.

~ You join promotions, lose a few matches, then hitch onto factions going places like Bling Empire and T.F.O. Now you've powerslammed your split-tail onto House Hardcore, led by an old pervert who wants only women in his stable. Dickie counts as one.

~ You saturate social media with your countdown of a record-breaking reign in a promotion whose roster is thinner than Scoops's hair follicles.

~ You joined XWF, fast-tracked a title match, lost, got another instant title shot, lost, needed numerical WarGames advantages to win a title, lost it 0.02 seconds later to the only remaining opposing team member while still having your full team.

What you think you are:



What you truly are:



... You're Temu Vhodka Black.

Your essence is lacking....

But Game-Girl?

Yours is abundant.

You're like an exotic fruit I want to peel.

In you, I don't see a woman; I see an anomaly. A ghost of 8-bit static masquerading as a hero. You regale about reboots and lives as though existence is a child's diversion, yet to my ancient eyes, you're the most fascinating creature I've encountered in this plastic century.

You....cannot stay dead.

While I've spent eons watching my flesh turn to rot and fighting it, you've died and returned in the blink of an eye, over and over again, fresh and

smiling as the day you were coded. You possess the one thing I crave more than gold and blood... You possess the Essence of the Reset!

Game-Girl's visage appears in the scrying orb, featuring her from a bygone match. The Witch's breath hitches. She flicks out her wart-infested tongue and licks it across the orb; she can TASTE the essence of Game-Girl already.

"I do not care for your 'sweet robot arm', that dead iron. I do not care for the depression clinging to your reboots, that stale scent of a girl who's forgotten which version of herself is real. I do not care that you're a copy of a copy, Paige.

Noooooooooooo... I only CARE for the 'save state' hidden within your marrow.

When Centurion and I tear into you and Amber Trashley like Kansas tornadoes, there'll be no '99 lives' or 'Konami Codes' to shield you. I will seek you out, you wonderful, unique creature... and I will not merely defeat you; I will **delete** you. I shall press my green heel into your chest wound and siphon the very logic of your world until the 'perpetual return' belongs to me.

I shall take your high score and buy back some of my stolen youth.

I'm tired of eating scraps to ebb the tide of decay, little sprite.

It's time I had a.... **Power-up.** "

She belts a witch cackle that bursts the ears, and her winged monkeys joyfully chitter. She keeps cackling, more evil by the second.

The startled production crew doesn't get paid enough for this, so they pack up and bail, nearly bowling over an arriving Centurion. The legend does a double-take and steps onto the porch.

"Uh, Witch? Do I call you Witch or...?"

A jagged smile greets him, and she waves him in. **"Certainly. Come."**

He enters her hut vigilantly and scouts the corners, finding winged monkeys milling around.

"Odd that you wanted to meet here. Could've gotten acquainted elsewhere."

"I wanted to make a good impression upon a man of such esteem." She gestures to a row of shelved potions. "These are offerings to you from me, for a pact."

Cent eyes her suspiciously. **"Hmmm. Pact. Go on."** He inspects the bottles, seeing eyeballs, tongues, and fingernails floating inside.

"My oracle has shown me what we could be if you so choose. Tag-Title reigns. Glories. Things you've had already, but to see management's shameful bookings of you lately, they don't see gold in you. They've tossed you to the wolves by teaming us against House Hardcore, have they not?"

"Fair," he begrudgingly admits.

"Lovely!" Her green hands rub together. "Tis simple then. Get back at them. Bind to my pact, we'll become an official team, call ourselves Witchcents (witch sense, get it?)... in return, you may take one potion from the shelf."

The absurdity isn't lost on Centurion, but he takes one off the shelf. **"What do they do?"**

"Thought you'd never ask," a Cheshire cat grin forms.

TBC-In-Centurion-RP

