

Bewitched by my Best Friend

Sneak Peak!
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A Paranormal Romance Novel

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Chapter 1

The wind whipped dry leaves around Sawyer's legs. Dark gray clouds raced across the sky, transforming the previously sunny morning into a stormy afternoon. His skin prickled beneath his sweater, the hair on the back of his neck rising to attention. He swiveled his head to scan the woods, but the trail behind him was empty.

He sped up, not wanting to lose track of Callie. He had been searching for her for two years. And now that he had found her, he was not about to let her go.

Her blonde hair glinted in the fading sun like a beacon guiding him. He followed her down the worn trail. She hadn't glanced back since they left town, but she must know he was there. She'd seen him at the store, had looked right at him and then turned away like he was a stranger. He wasn't making any attempt to keep quiet as they traipsed through the underbrush. She was ignoring him. A stab of annoyance shot through him, but he shook it away. He didn't want his first words to her to be those of anger.

A cottage appeared in a small clearing between the towering pines. This couldn't be where she had been hiding, could it? How could he have let her get so far from him? Especially when they had just gotten so close. A memory of her lips brushing against

his sent a new shiver up his spine, one that had nothing to do with the sudden chill in the air.

Callie opened the old wooden gate in the fence surrounding the overgrown garden. Sawyer hurried to close the gap between them before she could slam it closed behind her. He shot a hand out, slapping it hard into the gate. The sound echoed through the quiet woods. Callie spun to face him.

Finally.

Something inside him loosened at the sight of her clear blue eyes, even though they were narrowed in anger.

“What are you doing here?” Her words were nothing more than a frustrated exhale, and the wind tore through the bare branches above their heads as though the whole forest was pissed at him.

Well, screw that. He was pissed too. “Me? What are you doing here, Callie? I’ve been looking for you.” He reached out to grab her hand, but she turned away and marched toward the cottage. Her long blonde braid swung angrily across her back.

Where did she get off being angry? She was the one who vanished after graduation, after that one fucking kiss. The one he couldn’t get out of his head, the one that even two years later made every other kiss pale in comparison. And he’d tried to forget it. He really had, but it was like she’d cursed him or something.

And now he found her again. At the very least he wanted some answers.

He followed her to the door; the cheerful yellow paint was chipped and peeling. Weeds spilled from the ancient window

boxes, and a layer of grime covered the glass in the windows. What the hell had she been doing out here all this time?

“Callie, please.” His fingers brushed against hers and she froze. The wind stilled. He waited. One breath, then two. He curled his fingers around hers and watched her shoulders slide down her back.

Her face when she turned was overtaken with an emotion he’d never seen there before. The face of his best friend, the one he knew better than any other, looked at him with worry. Or fear? God, what could she possibly have to fear from him?

“You can’t be here.” Pain crinkled her features, and helplessness stabbed him in the gut.

“Why not? Just tell me what’s going on.” Panic rose in his throat. Was she in danger? This whole time he thought he had been rejected, dumped, tossed aside. But maybe he had it all wrong. Maybe Callie was in some sort of trouble. And he had done nothing to help her.

Callie glanced around, scanning the small garden, further confirming Sawyer’s suspicions that something was very wrong. He squeezed her fingers tighter and she whipped her head back around to face him, her blue eyes wide.

“You just can’t be here, okay?” She yanked her hand away. “I don’t know how you found me, but...” Her words drifted off.

“But what?” Sawyer stepped closer. He couldn’t help it. He needed to be near her; he hadn’t even realized how much until he saw her again.

Her eyes flicked up to his, glistening with tears. Oh fuck, why was she crying? He reached out and swept the tears from her

cheeks with his thumb. The fact that she let him caused hope to surge in his gut. Until she spoke and crushed it under her foot.

“I didn’t want to be found.”

“I don’t understand. I thought we...I mean I...” The words were trapped somewhere behind his fear and his pride. The truth about how he felt about her was too big to admit. “We were friends,” he said instead. “And then you disappeared.”

More tears escaped and rolled down her face. He wanted to kiss them away but settled for using his hands to wipe them as they fell.

“I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have left like that. I just...it was safer this way.”

He opened his mouth to ask how it was safer, and safer from what, and what the hell was going on, but all those questions died a sudden death when he looked over Callie’s shoulder toward the back of the cottage.

Chapter 2

Oh, this was bad.

Sawyer yanked her closer and wrapped his arms around her. And for a split second, she let herself soften into him. She let herself breathe in his familiar scent and revel in him being here. These arms, how she'd missed them!

But then she remembered. She remembered what Sawyer was seeing right now, and all the reasons why he shouldn't be here. Why he couldn't be here, even if she wanted him to be.

She unraveled herself from his embrace. "Sawyer, listen. It's okay."

"Okay?" His voice came out in a choked whisper. His hands still held tight to her arms. "There's a fucking dragon behind you."

Callie lifted her shoulders in a shrug and smiled reassuringly. "I know."

"You know?" Sawyer's brown eyes were wide. A pink blush had covered his scattering of freckles, and Callie lost her train of thought connecting the dots with her gaze. Sawyer shook her. "What do you mean, you know?"

She pushed a few escaped curls behind her ear. The dragon, or Iggy as she liked to call him, had snuck around the side of the house and was waiting patiently behind her now. He was big,

easily bigger than a horse, wider and taller too. Gray-green scales covered his body and head, but the wings tucked in at his sides resembled those of a bat. He was an impressive and terrifying sight to say the least. His hot breath tickled her neck. Sawyer's fingers dug into the flesh of her arms. She pried his hands off and turned to give the dragon a pat on his scaly snout.

"His name is Iggy. And he's harmless. Well, mostly."

Sawyer stood beside her, breathing in uneven gasps. But he hadn't run in terror, and for that she gave him credit.

"He's harmless?" Sawyer reached out a hand, and Iggy pushed his head up into it, his dragon lips curving into a toothy grin. Sawyer let out a huff of a laugh. He scratched between the beast's ears and Iggy gave a throaty purr.

Oh for goodness' sake. Of course the damn dragon would love him. He was an extension of Callie herself, after all, and lord knew she would purr under Sawyer's touch. But this was exactly why Sawyer couldn't be here.

Callie had always had unusual abilities, but conjuring a dragon? That was new. And she still didn't know how to control it. After what had happened the one and only time Sawyer had kissed her, she couldn't do anything to put him in danger. Not until she figured all this out.

After two years in her grandmother's cottage, reading every one of the old woman's books, Callie thought she was close to getting a handle on her powers. They were clearly controlled by her emotions, but the dragon had been a big setback. And now Sawyer was here, and her insides were a riot of sensations all clamoring to get out.

He turned to her and grinned. “This is fucking crazy.”

She let out a small laugh, afraid to unleash anything bigger even though just the sight of him smiling was enough to turn her stomach upside down. “I know.”

“So, you’ve just been in the woods hanging out with dragons for the past two years?”

Oh, that lopsided smile and the dimple in his left cheek. She had to look away before she conjured a sparkly pegasus or something.

“Well, the dragon’s new.” She ran a toe through the dirt. God, what must he be thinking? Living in this old shack, like some kind of fairy tale witch just waiting for a pair of tasty children to walk by. She was twenty years old and somehow she had already become a reclusive lunatic. Embarrassment flared in her chest, a hot ache, and Iggy snorted smoke.

Sawyer’s hand was back on her arm, soft and reassuring this time. “You could have told me. When it comes to you, I would have believed anything. I already knew you were magic.” He tugged her closer until there was barely an inch between them.

It started to snow.

Big fat flakes swirled down from the sky, landing in Sawyer’s hair and sticking to his long eyelashes.

“Snow in October.” He looked up, laughing as the snow picked up speed. “Crazy.”

Callie sighed, trying to breathe out the tumult of feelings inside her, but the snow swirled around them, refusing to let up.

“Yeah, crazy. Let’s go inside.”

Chapter 3

Callie poured steaming water into two chipped mugs, and the smell of hot chocolate filled the small space. Sawyer sat at the table, nervously drumming his fingers on the worn surface. She hadn't looked at him since they came inside. Iggy, on the other hand, watched him from the window, his amber eyes gleaming in the midst of all the white. Did the dragon just wink at him? Sawyer shivered.

The cabin was tiny, but despite the run-down appearance of the outside, it was neat and cozy inside. Sawyer glanced around, savoring the evidence that Callie had existed for the last two years. Books littered nearly every available surface, including a small stack on the table in front of him. An overstuffed couch in front of the fireplace and the kitchen table with two chairs were the only pieces of furniture in the room, but a fire crackled warmly, and colorful knit blankets were tossed over the couch. The room smelled like woodsmoke and dried flowers and Callie.

Callie stood in the attached kitchenette stirring the mugs. Her golden braid hung down her back, tiny curls escaping down the length of it. She wore a soft gray flannel that hung over her hands and torn jeans. Sawyer soaked in every detail, bracing himself for the moment she would throw him out.

The wind rattled the old windows. Hopefully, she would at least let him wait out the storm.

“So, how did you find me?” She turned with the mugs, a small smile on her lips. That was promising, right?

“It was a fluke, actually.” He took the offered mug and curled his fingers around its warmth. Callie sat across from him, pushing the books aside. “I was headed home for a visit and I ran out of gas.” He and Callie had grown up not far from here. Just a few towns over from the little market he’d stopped at. If he filled up ahead of time, he never would have caught a glimpse of her.

Callie nodded. “And you saw me.”

“I thought maybe I was hallucinating at first.”

Her smile grew behind her mug, but her eyes were wary. He hated that look. Where had that distrust come from?

“Callie, what’s going on?”

She shook her head, her mouth opening, then closing again.

“I think I at least deserve an explanation. I kissed you and you disappeared. That’s kind of rough on a guy’s ego.” He let out a short laugh.

Callie reached across the table and grabbed his hand. “I’m sorry.” She winced. “I thought I was protecting you. I was trying to, anyway.”

“Protecting me?”

From what? Falling in love with her? Too late for that. That happened long before he had kissed her.

She glanced out the window at Iggy. His breath fogged up the glass, and the snow still fell in gusty drifts. Callie sighed and

turned back to face him, her mouth set in a determined line. “Do you remember the kiss?”

His answer was immediate. “Every second of it.”

A delicious blush crept up Callie’s throat to her cheeks. “But do you remember what happened after?”

Sawyer let his eyes fall shut, remembering that day. It was the summer after graduation. They were down by the lake, and the air was heavy with the humidity of an impending storm. Anticipation was thick and hot around him. If he didn’t kiss her today, if he didn’t tell her today, surely he would burst just like the dark clouds overhead.

Callie was lying beside him, sprawled out in the long grass, her cheeks pink from the heat. Little blonde curls stuck to her dewy face. They had been silent for most of the afternoon, their long friendship rendering speech unnecessary. Except there were things he needed to say.

She rolled toward him, her blue eyes bright, her perfect lips tipped up in a smile, and the dam broke. He propped himself up on his elbow, looking down at her. She raised an eyebrow in question, and he had only one answer.

When their lips met, a soft “oh” escaped her, and it was the sweetest sound he had ever heard. She ran her fingers through his hair and pulled him closer, her mouth opening to meet his, and everything else melted away. His entire world narrowed to this moment, this girl, this kiss.

And then the sky opened up.

The rain soaked through their clothes, but she didn’t take her mouth from his. Not until lightning streaked the sky and struck a nearby tree. Electricity sizzled through the air and they broke

apart. He still remembered the terror in her eyes as she stared at him.

That was the last time he saw her. Right before she ran.

He blinked and refocused on the Callie across from him.

“Yeah, I remember.” His voice was shaky. The memory was so strong he could smell the singed tree and the rain-soaked grass. “The lightning scared you and you ran.”

“It wasn’t the lightning I was scared of.”

“I never meant to scare you, Cal. I thought you wanted me to kiss you. It seemed like you did—”

She put up her hand to stop him, shaking her head. “I did want you to, very much.” She swallowed hard, collecting her thoughts. “I was scared of myself. Of what I could do.” Her gaze wandered to the window again, the dragon and the snow. “I was afraid of hurting you.”

Sawyer stared at his best friend, letting the pieces fall together. “Are you saying it’s all you? The lightning, the dragon.” He waved a hand toward the window. “This storm. Are you somehow causing all this?”

She gave a small shrug. “Yeah. It’s me. Well, my emotions. I guess.” She sipped her cocoa as he let that information sink in.

He couldn’t help the grin that stole across his face.

“What?” The surprise in her voice broke his heart. Did she really think any of this would scare him away?

“I guess my kiss was pretty electric, huh?”

She gaped at him, but the laughter that followed tore him in two. He would do anything to hear it again, to make sure she always looked at him like she was right now.

“I guess it was.”

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