

Not Black and White or Green and Grey

Written By

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INT. SPELL SHOP - MORNING

ACANTHA flips the sign on the door from closed to open and begins wiping down the counter erasing fingerprints and smudges from previous days. She is expecting a quiet morning. She expects another simple day doing mundane spells for her customers.

The bell above the door rings and a BUSINESS MAN walks in. He walks right up to her counter clears his throat for her attention.

ACANTHA  
(irritated)  
Can I help you?

BUSINESS MAN  
(arrogantly)  
I want a good luck potion. I have a huge pitch today and I want it to go well.

Acantha turns around and grabs a bottle on the shelf behind her and sets it on the counter between them.

ACANTHA  
This one's good for 24 hours and will make you lucky enough to ace your pitch.

BUSINESS MAN  
Ok so you want a piece of my hair right? To make it for me?

ACANTHA  
Nope, this one here's good to go, no DNA necessary.

BUSINESS MAN  
(angrily)  
Are you trying to sell me some discount bin potion? I need one for me!

ACANTHA  
(exasperated)  
Sir, a luck potion is a common request-

BUSINESS MAN  
Bah, everyone knows potions have to be made for a specific person in  
(MORE)

BUSINESS MAN (CONT'D)

mind.

ACANTHA

Have you ever brewed a potion sir?

BUSINESS MAN

(slightly offended)

No I do not indulge in witchcraft,  
ma'am.

ACANTHA

Right well as the owner here I can  
assure you that this was brewed  
properly.

BUSINESS MAN

(Scoffs)

Great...

ACANTHA

This is what I can offer you, take  
it or leave it, but it's not the  
right moon phase to make another.

The man pulls out his credit card, muttering impolite things  
about witchcraft and customer service. Acantha ignores him  
as she rings him up. The bell rings as he leaves.

Acantha turns around to rearrange her potions in the now  
quiet store when a LITTLE GIRL, about 8 and a little grungy  
in appearance, pokes her head above the counter.

LITTLE GIRL

(politely)

Excuse me, ma'am. I'd like to  
request a spell.

ACANTHA

(skeptically)

Sorry kid, we don't help you cheat  
on homework here.

LITTLE GIRL

That's not it. I would like a spell  
to find my family.

The girl drops a dirty sack on the counter it clicks as it  
hits. Acantha peers inside and sees about 20 gold coins.

ACANTHA

If you're lost, you know you can go  
to the police for free.

LITTLE GIRL  
I'm not lost. I just want to meet  
my parents.

Acantha gets a sinking feeling and frowns at the girl.

ACANTHA  
Are you an orphan?

LITTLE GIRL  
For now, yes. But I want to find my  
family.

Acantha takes a minute to think before responding.

ACANTHA  
I can create a spell to locate your  
parents.

The girl perks up.

ACANTHA  
I can't do anything other than  
locate them. If they gave you up  
for adoption they might not take-

LITTLE GIRL  
(interrupts)  
-Take me back. I know. But I want  
to find them because what if they  
will!

Acantha nodded thoughtfully thinking more about the potion  
than the girl. She crosses over to the front of her shop and  
flips the open sign of the door to closed.

ACANTHA  
This will take a few minutes, come  
with me.

INT. BACK ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The little girl sits on a stool and swings her legs back and  
forth while Acantha sets a fire under a big black cauldron.

Acantha pulls on a witches robe to avoid her nice clothing  
from getting splashed.

LITTLE GIRL  
You look like a witch now!

ACANTHA  
Clothes don't make a witch dear,  
(MORE)

ACANTHA (CONT'D)

this does.

Acantha dumped a potion dramatically into the cauldron and pink smoke rose above it.

The little girl stares up at it in awe and Acantha walks around the room, gathering what she needs.

LITTLE GIRL  
Use some eye of newt!

ACANTHA  
That's cliché.  
(sarcastically)  
Maybe I'd rather use, eye of little girl.

The girl laughs.

ACANTHA  
I do need some of your DNA though.

LITTLE GIRL  
Does that go in now? Or later?

ACANTHA  
DNA can go in a potion at any time.

The girl slides off the stool and runs to the cauldron. She yanks a couple of strands of hair out and lets them fall into the swirl of colors. She runs back to her stool.

LITTLE GIRL  
Hair works right? That's what that rude guy earlier mentioned.

ACANTHA  
(slightly impressed)  
Yeah hair works.

Acantha starts work on the potion and the girl watches her excitedly. Towards the end of the spell, Acantha pulls out a compass. She drops it expertly in the center of the swirl of potions and magically the compass soaks up all the magical liquid.

Acantha grabs the compass from inside the cauldron and takes a quick look before turning it towards the girl.

ACANTHA  
(a little smug)  
Looks like we successfully have a tracker.

The girl skips over and Acantha hands her the compass.

LITTLE GIRL

Thank you so much!

The little girl looks down at the compass and sees two blinking dots one grey one green and turns in a circle watching the directions change.

Acantha starts cleaning up her things as the girl is inspecting the compass.

LITTLE GIRL

How do you tell how far away they are?

Acantha makes her way back over to the girl and plucks the compass out of her hand. She places a finger over the grey dot and a distance line appears from the dot to the center of the compass.

ACANTHA

(frowning) This is a lot farther away than I thought.

LITTLE GIRL

Really? How far? How many days will it take to walk there?

Acantha ignores the girl in favor of considering her options. A moment later she turns back to the girl.

ACANTHA

I'll take you to them.

LITTLE GIRL

Really? Why?

ACANTHA

(begrudgingly)  
You asked me for help finding your family and we haven't found them yet.

LITTLE GIRL

But I just asked-

ACANTHA

(irritated)  
Keep talking and I'll change my mind! But this is quite a travel distance.

LITTLE GIRL  
Do you have a car?

ACANTHA  
(smirking)  
I have something better than a car.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

Acantha stretches her hand out as if to catch something and a broom, formerly leaning against the side of the building speeds over and falls into her hand.

LITTLE GIRL  
(curiously)  
How does it work?

ACANTHA  
(surprised by her intrigue)  
A broomstick is like a pet, you just have to train it.

LITTLE GIRL  
(inspects the broom)  
Do you think I could train one?

ACANTHA  
Well if you have any magic you might be able to.

The girl puts on a determined face and copies Acantha's previous gesture. The broom gives a gentle tug in Acantha's hand and, surprised, she lets it fall towards the girl who catches it.

LITTLE GIRL  
Sweet! Let me drive?

ACANTHA  
Good joke, kid.

Acantha mounts the broomstick and helps the girl get in the right position before she kicks off the ground. The girl shrieks in excitement and the two start speeding off westward.

EXT. ABANDONED CHURCH - EARLY AFTERNOON

They land the broomstick and the girl gets off first. She bounces in excitement as Acantha waves at the broom and it leans against the building.

LITTLE GIRL  
Which one is this? The grey one?

ACANTHA  
(warily)  
Yeah the grey one.

LITTLE GIRL  
Let's go look!

Acantha watches as the girl walks up the path to the church doors. Something about the setting feels off to her.

ACANTHA  
This doesn't seem right.

LITTLE GIRL  
What do you mean?

ACANTHA  
Maybe the spell's wrong. I can't  
imagine anyone living here.

LITTLE GIRL  
(offended)  
Your spells aren't wrong. You have  
the best reviews in town!

The girl turns and walks inside excitedly.

INT. ABANDONED CHURCH

When they step inside a cloud of dust swirls around their feet. Acantha spots a spiral staircase and points to it.

ACANTHA  
I'll see what's upstairs.

The girl nods and sets off to inspect the altar.

Acantha wanders up the staircase and is met by a small room filled with old books. It's just as dusty as the downstairs and has no signs of life. There's a big window letting in light and Acantha walks over to it.

Outside she sees a graveyard and the unsettling feeling is back.

Acantha heads back down the stairs and towards the back of the building.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - MOMENTS LATER

Once outside she follows the compass to a headstone. It



looks newer than the others, but has seen some wear over the years.

Acantha looks around for the girl, before staring at the headstone wondering what to say once the girl found her.

LITTLE GIRL  
She died the day I was born.

The girl approaches from behind her and Acantha turns around. The girl places a bouquet of wildflowers on the stone. Acantha doesn't say anything. The two stand in silence for a minute or so before the girl speaks again.

LITTLE GIRL  
I think she would be happy that we visited her.

ACANTHA  
(agreeably)  
It doesn't look like she gets many visitors anymore.

The girl turns towards Acantha again.

LITTLE GIRL  
Let's go find my dad.

ACANTHA  
(hesitantly)  
You're ready to go?

LITTLE GIRL  
Yeah, it's sad she died, but my dad's still out there. They had different colors on the compass.

Acantha gestures for her broomstick without another word.

EXT. FOREST'S EDGE - AFTERNOON

They land at the edge of a forest.

ACANTHA  
Ok this is pretty weird.

LITTLE GIRL  
The forest?

ACANTHA  
Not the forest... Look.

Acantha shows the compass to the girl. The green dot blinks oddly the closer Acantha steps towards the forest.

LITTLE GIRL  
Maybe there's a magical  
interference?

ACANTHA  
I guess it could be? But it's not a  
very strong one.

LITTLE GIRL  
It could be a deterrent.

Acantha blinks in surprise and steps just past the first trees in the forest. The green light stabilizes.

ACANTHA  
(shocked)  
How did you know that?

The girl steps into the forest next to her.

LITTLE GIRL  
Because it felt like the forest was  
pushing me away.

EXT. MAGICAL FOREST - AFTERNOON

The two peer into the depths of the forest. The sun was blocked out and the trees bent sinisterly towards them.

LITTLE GIRL  
(warily)  
People enchant forests for  
protection right?

ACANTHA  
(nervously)  
Sure yeah, protection.

They move deeper into the forest silently until they come across a fallen tree. Acantha gets over it easily and moves to double check the compass. The little girl tries to jump over it, but only manages to get her arms over it. She hauls herself up and slides off the tree. She accidentally lands on a particularly crunchy branch and Acantha whips around ready to fight.

ACANTHA  
(condescendingly)  
If you aren't more careful I'm  
going to end up cursing you.

LITTLE GIRL  
 (grumpily)  
 It's not my fault you're so on  
 edge.

Acantha waves away the comment and they continue on their way. The trees look more sinister the farther they go. A run down house begins to appear through the trees in front of them.

LITTLE GIRL  
 Look!

Acantha nods and the girl moves to walk so she's mostly hidden by Acantha upon approach.

The two step out of the last line of trees.

The house in front of them is being consumed by plant life and Acantha takes a moment to take in the collapsing roof, before she's startled by the MAN walking towards them.

Automatically she stands turns so she's blocking the girl from him. The girl though pushes past her and runs right for him and hugs him around the legs. The man steps out of her grasp.

MAN  
 (erratically)  
 Who told you where I was?

ACANTHA  
 We aren't looking for trouble, sir.

MAN  
 I'm not talking to you!  
 (to the girl, angrily)  
 I got rid of you! You can't come  
 back here.

LITTLE GIRL  
 (takes a step back)  
 You're my dad right?

MAN  
 (stepping closer)  
 I'm no ones dad! You stole my wife  
 away from me you little demon!

ACANTHA  
 (angrily)  
 It's not a child's fault for the  
 (MORE)

ACANTHA (CONT'D)

death of their mother!

MAN

(stepping past the girl)  
My wife dies and then this girl  
starts making things float! She  
sacrificed my wife for power!

ACANTHA

(yells back)  
She was born with power! If your  
wife lived she would have still had  
power! She inherited them from you!

MAN

(erratically)  
I don't have powers!

ACANTHA

(exasperated)  
Then who enchanted your forest!

MAN

(too calm)  
I want you out of here.

ACANTHA

Consider us gone.

Acantha keeps one eye on the man as she picks up the child  
and steps back into the forest.

The forest looms over them and Acantha starts running.

ACANTHA

Hang on!

The girl clings to Acantha as she sees a tree branch hit the  
ground right where they were standing.

Acantha ducks down to avoid a branch swinging towards them  
and then jumps just as a root bends up to try and trip them.  
She leaps over the fallen log and can start to see the edge  
of the forest again. She dodges a few more tree branches and  
dives out of the forest. She keeps running as she catches  
her broomstick in her hand and speeds back the way they  
came.

EXT. ABANDONED CHURCH - SUNSET

The old church comes into view and Acantha touches down the  
broomstick right out front. The girl immediately moves to  
get off and steps quickly away from Acantha.

Acantha opens her mouth to say something, but turns away unsure of what to say in the moment. The girl purposely avoids facing her.

LITTLE GIRL

You can leave now.

ACANTHA

What?

LITTLE GIRL

(upset)

You did what I asked you to. You found my family. So leave already!

The girl then walks further down the uneven sidewalk. She turns off into an unkept patch of grass. The sun is going down and a soft breeze blows through tall grasses and her hair flows with them. She looks notably smaller than usual.

Acantha looks between her broom, and the girl. Wondering momentarily whether she should just take the easy way out. She drops the broom and follows the same path.

Acantha notices the girl is crying. Time seems to freeze for a moment as the next breeze blows through. Acantha slowly unfreezes and sinks down to sit a few inches away from her. She tries to catch the girl's eye, but she doesn't look over at her.

Acantha hesitantly scoots closer. She raises an arm up and carefully places her hand on the girl's shoulder. When the girl makes no move to pull away, Acantha brings her into a side hug. They both stare off into the distance and watch as the colors of the sky change to night. It's quiet. There's just the gentle breeze and the creaking of the church behind them to fill said silence.

ACANTHA

I haven't completed my task yet.

LITTLE GIRL

You have.

ACANTHA

I haven't. Family isn't a black and white concept.

LITTLE GIRL

(bitter)

You're right. It's grey and green.

ACANTHA

(sighing)  
Sometimes a family is a mom and a  
dad and a little girl, but  
sometimes a family is an apprentice  
and her mentor.

LITTLE GIRL

What are you talking about?

ACANTHA

My parents were afraid of my  
magical abilities so they gave me  
away. My real family was my mentor.

LITTLE GIRL

(softly)  
Oh.

Acantha pulls away from the girl and turns to face her.

ACANTHA

I want you to be my apprentice.

LITTLE GIRL

What do you mean? I'm not a witch.

ACANTHA

(scoffs)  
Of course you aren't! You haven't  
been trained yet! But you have  
promise.

LITTLE GIRL

(hesitantly)  
Really?

ACANTHA

Of course! You demonstrated plenty  
of times today that you're in tune  
with magic.

LITTLE GIRL

(skeptically)  
Are you sure you aren't just doing  
this because you feel bad for me.

ACANTHA

(rolls eyes)  
Of course I feel bad, do you know  
how much catching up you have to  
do?! You're supposed to start

(MORE)

ACANTHA (CONT'D)

training at age 5!

LITTLE GIRL

(giggles)

I'm a fast learner!

ACANTHA

So you'll do it?

LITTLE GIRL

Yeah, I think I will. Do I get a cool name too?

ACANTHA

Of course! What kind of witch doesn't get a cool name?

LITTLE GIRL

(excited)

Do you have any ideas?

ACANTHA

(offended)

Of course I do!

INT. SPELL SHOP - A MONTH LATER

The open sign is in the window and it's another quiet morning. Acantha is sweeping the floor by the window, before looking up and scowling.

ACANTHA

Aoife! Get off the counter!

The little girl, AOIFE, is sitting on the counter and peeks up innocently over the large tome she was reading.

AOIFE (LITTLE GIRL)

I'm just doing my reading like you asked. You know I read better up high!

ACANTHA

If that's the case, then I have a better solution.

AOIFE

(suspiciously)

What kind of solution?

Acantha holds out her hand and her broom zooms towards her.

AOIFE  
(excitedly)  
Oooh! Are we going on a ride?

ACANTHA  
Hold your hand up above your head.

Aoife holds her hand high above her head with her palm open.

AOIFE  
Like this?

Another broom zooms excitedly into her hand and her eyes light up in excitement.

ACANTHA  
You've been doing well enough I  
thought it was high time you got a  
broom of your own!

AOIFE  
You got me a broom!

ACANTHA  
(seriously)  
It's not fully trained yet, so it's  
your responsibility to-

AOIFE  
(very excitedly)  
You got me a broom!

ACANTHA  
I- yes, I got you a broom.

AOIFE  
Let's go flying!

Aoife runs out of the store and Acantha hurries after her. She haphazardly flips the open sign to closed on the way out.