

The Book



Art by unbelievable2
Story by Franscats

Prologue

Blair Sandburg drummed his fingers on his jean-clad thighs as he sat outside Professor Edgewood's office. Every minute, he would glance at the secretary and then at the clock, waiting. The secretary, noticing the glances, smiled. "He should be with you any minute," she said and Blair nodded, his eyes going to the closed door.

Another ten minutes and Blair stood, stretching and walking over to the small table, and grabbed the latest issue of Archaeology magazine. The secretary glanced at him and gave a strained smile. "Dr. Edgewood is usually very punctual," she said, uncomfortably. "A surprise visitor turned up. It was an old friend."

Blair nodded his understanding, smiling to make the secretary feel better. He hated waiting when he had an appointment. It was one of the things he hated about doctor's appointments, that and the needles. In the back of his mind he considered doing a study on appointment waiting times in specific professions. It would be interesting to see doctors'

waiting times versus plumbers' waiting times versus cable service providers' waiting times, etc. Of course, cost of said services would be a factor.

He was about to take his seat to start reading the magazine when the door opened and Dr. Edgewood walked out, a small man beside him. They shook hands and then the visitor left and Dr. Edgewood turned to Blair with a smile. "I'm sorry to keep you waiting, Blair. I didn't expect to see Dr. Parker. He just flew in from Massachusetts."

"It's okay, Professor," Blair put the magazine down and turned to the doctor, putting out his hand.

Dr. Edgewood shook his hand, energetically and then indicated his office. "Come on in and let's talk."

Blair gave the secretary another smile and followed the professor into the office. Taking a seat across from Edgewood, Blair's eyes roamed over the desk, noticing what he guessed was an old book wrapped in cloth.

Dr. Edgewood, seeing Blair's glance, opened the cloth, exposing the cover of the book. It was obviously a handmade binding, the leather pitted and worn with age, the pages old and yellowed. Its title read, *Les Secrets Merveilleux du Petit Albert* and Blair glanced over at Dr. Edgewood. "It's a grimoire," Edgewood admitted. "Supposedly, it was translated from the French version and brought to Salem in the 1700s. Dr. Parker found it in an attic and brought it here. I doubt it's actually that old, the pages don't look two hundred years old, but certainly it isn't new."

"There were a lot of so-called grimoires published in Europe in the 18th century. It was all the craze," Blair answered. "I wouldn't be surprised if someone copied portions of one of the grimoires and put it out as a Salem Witch Relic." As Blair said this, he shook his head with a smile.

Dr. Edgewood glanced at the book. "Dr. Parker said he couldn't sell the book. It had to been handed off to someone else. Superstitious nonsense, of course. I told him I really didn't want it. I'll be leaving on an extended trip to Africa this weekend and grimoires are not my field of study."

"They do offer insight into the thinking of the time." Blair eyed the book with interest.

Edgewood nodded and, looking away from the book, focused his attention on Blair. "I've spoken with the head of the archaeology department. He's agreed that you would be an excellent instructor and could cover Dr. Landis' Intro to Archaeology class for the rest of the semester. He's seen your notes and syllabus, and feels despite the fact that you are an anthropology major you would be an excellent stand-in. I'm sure that the students will be pleased with your substitution."

"I'm glad they liked the lesson plans I submitted," Blair answered. "I could use the extra cash. My car has been giving me some trouble and needs an overhaul." Actually, said car was at the mechanic's shop.

"Very well, you'll take over the class starting next Monday." Edgewood started to stand and then looked down at the book. Picking it up, he handed it to Blair. "Consider this part of the

payment. As an anthropology student, I'm sure you can get some interesting articles out of the work."

"Are you sure?" Blair asked as he reached out and took the tome, noting it felt warm to the touch. "I mean, it's probably valuable."

"Value is in the eye of the beholder, Blair. I'm sure you will get far more out of it than I ever could."

Chapter One – Potions

After leaving Dr. Edgewood's office, Blair returned to his basement office and placed the grimoire on his desk. He knew he should be reviewing and extending the syllabus for the archaeology class he'd be taking over, but his attention kept going back to the book. "The syllabus has been approved," he told himself, justifying his actions as he carefully opened the book, looking over the various suggestions and warnings.

The book was divided into chapters. Chapter one began with a bunch of potions to cure various ills. Subsequent chapters dealt with a variety of spells. Looking over the different incantations, Blair couldn't help but laugh as he read some of the spells. One potion gave directions for keeping animals from attacking crops. It required that the magic user take ten crayfish and put them in a barrel with water and leave them in the sun for ten days and then sprinkle the water over the crops. It would keep the "beasts" away. To Blair's mind, it would keep everything else away, as well.

He was well into chapter one, going back and forth between a French/English dictionary since some of the words were not translated, when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," he called, and two young women walked in.

"Hi Blair," one said with a bright smile.

"Hi Terry," he answered and turned to look at the second girl who was holding her cheek, her face scrunched up in pain. "Hi Debra," he smiled and the girl lifted a hand to wave and then went back to holding her cheek.

"Debra has a toothache," Terry informed him. "And she can't get to her dentist until tomorrow."

"Ouch," Blair answered. "Is there another dentist you can go to?"

Debra shook her head and Terry shrugged. "She took some aspirin, but I don't think they're doing much good."

Blair nodded and glanced at the book. "You know I'm reading this book and it has a remedy for a toothache. According to this book you can take an ounce of well crushed myrrh (though I would guess you could substitute myrrh oil. You can get that at the health food store), two spoonfuls of honey and some sage and you rub your teeth morning & evening." He glanced up. "Hey you never know."

Terry and Debra looked at each other and back at Blair. "Do you have the notes from Dr. Howard's class?" Terry asked and Blair nodded, handing them a copy.

“You can keep that set. I made a copy for you.”

“Thanks, Blair,” the ladies turned to go and Blair called after them that he hoped Debra would feel better.

Blair went back to reading the book, going through spells.

Chapter Two – Luck Charms

At three o'clock, Blair had finished reading chapter two - a bunch of spells for creating talismans for various purposes. Most of them were amusing and required some very odd ingredients. As he read through the book, one talisman caught his attention. It was used for bringing luck to the wearer and involved the creation of a table with symbols related to certain planetary signs.

Chuckling, he said “What the hell,” and created the table, slipping the paper in his pocket. Closing the book and carefully wrapping it, he placed it in his backpack and headed over to the bus stop to go to his mechanic.

The bus was just pulling up as he got there and, thinking “cool,” he hopped on. An hour later, he stood at the garage door of Bob's Car Repair. “Hey, Bob,” he called from the doorway, noting the sign that said no unauthorized personnel beyond this point.

The mechanic lifted his head from the engine of the Volvo. “Hi Blair,” he smiled. Reaching down, he grabbed the towel that hung from a loop on his overalls and, wiping his hands, walked over.

“How's the car?” Blair asked, thinking over the amount of money in his “so-called” savings account.

“Well, I have to tell you, you got real lucky, Blair. The fan belt was shot and I didn't have a replacement. You won't believe this, but someone came in about forty-five minutes ago with a fan belt that fits your car. He said he found it out in a junkyard. I gave him ten bucks for it. So, you're only paying ten bucks for the parts.”

“Really?” Blair's eyes widened in surprise.

“Yeah, so your car should be ready in a few minutes.”

“That's fantastic!” Blair answered with a huge smile. “Maybe, I can actually buy some real food this week. My roommate is great, but his idea of food is stuff that comes out of a frozen package. Me, I like organic fruits and vegetables.”

Bob chuckled at Blair's description of Jim. Blair knew Bob had known Jim for years, and the pair respected each other. In fact, Bob once told Blair Jim could tell a problem was happening with his Ford F150 before there were signs of trouble. It was like he had a psychic link with the truck and could hear the problem before it happened. Bob had even suggested that Jim should have been a mechanic, not a cop. But Bob had seen the Twinkies and Ring Dings in the backseat of Jim's truck on more than one occasion and had commented on them.

“Why don't you wait in the office. I'll be a few minutes finishing and we can settle up.”

Blair nodded and went into the office and took a seat. As he waited, his cell phone rang. "Hello," he greeted, cheerfully.

"Blair, it's Debra."

"Hi, how's the toothache?"

"That's why I'm calling. I got so desperate that I tried that recipe. And it helped, so I wanted to call and thank you."

"Hey, I'm glad for you. It won't replace seeing your dentist though, right?" he cautioned.

"No, but it will give me some relief until tomorrow. Thanks again."

"Glad I could be of help. I'll see you in class." Blair ended the call and looked at his phone, his hand reaching into his pocket where the luck charm paper was. "It has to be a coincidence," he muttered.

Chapter Three – Perfumes and Incense

Blair was home before Jim and, even though it was Jim's night to cook, started a stir-fry dinner. So, when the detective (and secret man of Blair's dreams) walked in, dinner was just about ready.

"Hey, Jim," Blair called, putting two plates on the table. "I got in early and figured I'd cook."

"I'm glad, otherwise we were eating pizza," Jim answered, rubbing his temples.

"What's wrong?" Blair's tone and body shifted as his eyes raked over Jim.

"Headache," Jim answered, his voice tight. "Megan decided to try out a new cologne. After she tried it, Rhonda tried it and after Rhonda tried it, Rafe went to sniff it and knocked it over and the smell..." Jim paused and shook his head. "Smell spiked and I've had a headache ever since."

"You should have called me," Blair answered, exasperated. "You know I can help with these things. I'm the guide for a reason, man. Tribal sentinels had guides and that was without urban pollutants. Damn, I thought you'd be safe without me today since you were going to be in your office all day." Shaking his head, Blair glanced over at Jim, his features softening. "Okay, we know how to fix this. Go sit on the sofa; dinner can wait."

Jim opened his mouth to argue, but then winced and nodded. Moving into the living room, he sat down. In front of him was the grimoire. "What have you got there?"

"It's an old book of spells that a professor gave me," Blair answered, glancing at the book and then a small bowl on the table. Before starting dinner, he had been trying to make one of the incense recipes in the book. The recipe included saffron, aloe, cloves, rosemary (it had called for laurel but Blair didn't have any of that), and a few drops of orange juice (the recipe called for rose water but that was as close as Blair could get).

Picking up the bowl, he handed it to Jim. "I want you to close your eyes and breathe in the scents in this bowl. Keep your senses in the normal range. Just relax."

Holding the bowl, Jim did as directed. "Breathe in and out, slowly." Blair watched Jim. "Forget about everything else," he added in a near whisper as he timed Jim's breathing. "Now, let the scents replace the perfume smell and let the tension go." He watched Jim and could see the moment Jim relaxed, his breathing easing. "Continue to relax, breathing in the scents in the bowl and when you feel the headache fade, open your eyes."

Five minutes later, Jim opened his eyes and blinked, a tentative smile puling at the corners of his mouth. "Thanks Chief, that worked." Blair returned the smile as Jim put the bowl on the table. "You know the stuff in that bowl really helped."

"Did it?" Blair answered.

"Yeah, the green smell felt relaxing."

"That would be the rosemary," Blair eyed the book, thoughtfully. *A toothache fixed, a luck charm that worked, an incense recipe that relaxed his sentinel. Could this stuff be real? he silently questioned. Nah, it has to be a coincidence,* he thought, dismissing the notion.

"I got the recipe out of this book," he continued, as Jim stood and looked at the table.

"You're not turning into a witch, are you?"

"You know over the ages the perception of witches has changed. Today's Wiccan practitioner is nothing like the medieval idea-

"Do I smell stir fried beef with peppers?" Jim cut in.

"Yeah, and green rice," Blair added, with a laugh, pulling two beers from the fridge and putting them on the table. Jim was hungry; the lecture on the history of magic and magic users could wait. "Have a seat and I'll tell you about my day."

"That's sounds like a good idea," Jim agreed.

Chapter Four – Love Spells

"...So, maybe it's a coincidence but it looks as if three of the spells worked," Blair said, concluding his discussion of the day as they finished their meal.

"What other kinds of spells are in the book?"

"Oh, you know the usual kind of thing you find in a book of magic: invisibility spells, spells to help with fishing and hunting, spells to improve wine and spirits, love spells."

"Love spells, Romeo? Your love life is enough of a disaster without any spells. You'll end up with an obsessed criminal."

"Very funny. I could point out your love life's nothing to write home about either."

"Look Sandburg, you can't make things happen with incantations."

"What if I did? I mean three things in a row."

"Try one of those spells on me and see if it works."

Blair blinked, looking at Jim. "I think that cologne knocked more than just your sense of smell out. Are you crazy?"

"No, I mean it. Try a spell on me and see what happens. It will give you your answer."

Blair shook his head no. "Not a good idea."

Jim shrugged, rising. "I offered."

Blair watched Jim take his plate to the sink and bend over to get a dishtowel from the drawer. Gazing at all that muscle and power made Blair think about some of the love spells he had seen. "What would you do, if I did a love spell and it worked, Ellison?" he dared, not sure why he was going back to the subject, knowing it was dangerous to suggest love spells to his straight partner.

Jim turned. "You'll never find out because you're not going to do it," Jim goaded.

Blair glared at him, his eyes narrowed, and then turned back to the book, turning a few pages. He remembered one of the easier love spells had said, "to make a balm of ash, St. John's Wort & civet oil, and anoint the big toe of the left foot & the kidneys an hour before meeting with the woman."

Well, he didn't have civet oil, that was for sure, but he did have a men's cologne made with synthetic civet oil. Stomping into his room, he grabbed a small wooden mortar and pestle and then went to the fireplace in the living room, scooping up some ash. He put the ash into the wooden bowl before retrieving some St. John's Wort from the medicine cabinet.

Jim watched him, saying nothing, a raised eyebrow and smug look on his face as he sipped his beer.

"I'll see you in an hour," Blair turned and stomped back into his room.

Jim watched him leave and then glanced at the open book before turning back to the sink.

An hour later, Blair came out of his room and walked over to Jim. "How are you feeling, Jim?" he asked in a low, husky voice.

Jim looked at him and frowned. "You okay, Chief?"

"I'm fine," Blair answered, rubbing a hand up and down his own chest as he watched Jim sniff the air.

"What are you wearing?" Jim asked softly as he moved nearer.

"Do you like it?"

"It smells..." Jim paused and leaned forward to sniff Blair's neck. Then, to Blair's utter amazement, Jim's tongue came out and licked the spot he had sniffed.

"Jim!" Blair squeaked in surprise as Jim's arms encircled him and pulled him close. "This isn't you, this is a love spell."

“Hmmm,” Jim answered, nibbling and then sucking at the juncture where Blair’s shoulder met his neck.

In the back of his mind, Blair realized he was going to have a love mark there, FROM JIM! his mind screamed. Eyes widening, he looked at Jim. “You don’t want this,” Blair whispered, trying to hold back a moan. “I’ll take a shower and...and you won’t be interested anymore,” Blair said, even as he tilted his head to give Jim better access.

Knowing this wasn’t what he wanted, how he wanted Jim, Blair tried to pull back. He wanted Jim to want him voluntarily, not because of some stupid spell. Inwardly, he cursed the book. It had showed him his heart’s desire but wasn’t bringing Jim to him willingly. Jim wouldn’t want this and Blair wouldn’t want Jim any way but of his own free will.

As Blair tried to pull away again, Jim’s arms tightened, holding him in place. “It’s just some chemicals you’re responding to, man. This isn’t real,” he whispered breathlessly as his body responded to Jim.

“Chief,” Jim answered, looking at Blair’s lips, a soft smile playing across Jim’s features. “You talk too much.” With that, Jim leaned down for a kiss, a hand sliding behind Blair’s head, Jim’s tongue licking across Blair’s lips before entering Blair’s mouth.

“Jim, please,” Blair beseeched when the kiss ended. Vaguely, Blair realized he wasn’t sure what he was pleading for, whether it was for Jim to stop or to continue. He felt feverish and was sure if Jim let go of him, he would sink to the floor, unable to hold himself up.

Jim sighed and loosened his hold, letting one hand slide tenderly across Blair’s cheek. “Blair, this is no love spell, or, if it is, it’s been holding me for months. I’ve wanted you for so long but thought you were straight. It was only because of this book that I thought I could maybe find out if I had a chance with you.”

“You’re not under a love spell?” Blair asked, his eyes wide.

“Oh, I am. But it didn’t come from a book. It came from you.”

Blair smiled and leaned in, pulling Jim’s head down for another kiss, whispering against Jim’s mouth, “That’s the kind of spell I like best.”