

Sayyida stood on her toes wincing mentally as her three-inch heels slipped on the wet top step outside the restaurant. She pulled up her tights which were starting to slip down to her feet as she raised her phone to her ears.

“Ayesha, say that again. Black T-shirt-

“Leather jacket, carefully manufactured bedroom hair and brown eyes.” The fruity voice of Sayyida’s best friend chirped. “Think Ted Mosby from How I Met Your Mother and that’s your date.”

“Ted Mosby was a mansplaining nerd fuckboy,” Sayyida remarked as she continued to survey the inside of the Italian restaurant her date had suggested they meet.

“I thought you didn’t want a relationship,” Ayesha said teasingly.

“I also don’t want him to land up at my house, holding a blue French horn and screaming he loves me at one in the morning.”

“Oh shush. Look, you said you wanted someone who’s in for a short fling and then he’ll leave you alone. This guy is a travel writer who is in town for one weekend. Perfect for all your fling needs.”

“Yeah... Found him!” Sayyida exclaimed as her eyes zeroed in on the corner table where the aforementioned leather-jacketed, bedroom-hair-having travel writer guy sipped his water.

“Good! Okay, final touches. Makeup?” Ayesha exclaimed a little too loudly.

Sayyida winced and put the phone in her still-working left ear as she checked her face quickly in her compact mirror. “All good.”

“Hair?”

“Perfectly braided for every Rapunzel fantasy.”

“LMAO. Confidence in your plan?”

“Ayesha”. Sayyida cried.

“I have to ask Say. This sudden date frenzy is really unusual for you. What’s this really about?”

Sayyida sighed and plastered on a smile as she pushed the door open “I made a deal with the devil five years ago and getting in trouble is my payment.”

Sayyida sipped the last few drops of the Smirnoff Blue as she curled up in the corner of the lift.

Luckily the lift didn't stop anywhere before the fifth floor, but Sayyida was too miserable to give any fucks to give about basic manners. The lift trudged up slowly and after what felt like ages, reached her fifth-floor apartment.

Sayyida placed a hand on the floor as she raised herself up. She picked up her heels and keys in her left hand and entered her tiny one bedroom apartment to plant her face straight into the sofa.

Another fucking date. Another spectacular misfire.

A pop-up sound chimed in the room. Sayyida looked up to see a tall smiling woman with a long ponytail dressed in dungarees standing in her room.

"Hello dealmaker number 2306, I hope you've had a lovely day. Thank you for being a loyal customer of Witches Corp. You have a message from your witch." The woman smiled at the wall as if Sayyida was standing in front of her instead of lying on the sofa.

Sayyida groaned as the enchanted robot lady started drawing a pentagram on her *newly varnished floor*. She dropped a few herbs into the pentagram and started talking in a bot-like voice.

"Power of the witches rise, course unseen across the times, come to us who calls you near, come to dealmaker 2306 and settle here."

"It's Say-" Sayyida began with asperity but closed her mouth as the pentagram-d floor opened up to a vortex of fire and water. The vortex grew out of the floor and rose higher and higher until it shaped a beautiful brown-haired woman in a white buttoned shirt and high heeled boots with crossed arms across her chest.

"You're not pregnant". The witch deadpanned.

"I know Jareth". Sayyida imitated her deadpan voice.

The woman's shoulders slumped "How? Like how? This is the fifth date of the month and not one of them wants to sleep with you?"

Sayyida shrugged helplessly "Go figure right!"

The witch ran her hands through her long, silky brown hair in frustration "In the name of Mother Nature, why are you so difficult?"

"It's not my fault!" Sayyida said hotly. "This guy was perfect on paper. Cute, successful, mostly not weird and a travel writer."

“Perfect for all your accidental baby-making needs.” Jareth summoned a crystal ball from thin air and rolled it from palm to back agitatedly.

“By the main course, he told me he was really here to get his boyfriend, *our waiter for the night* back.” Sayyida finished miserably.

“Oh for the love of Mother Nature... Okay, you know what, clearly you and Ayla-

“Ayesha”

Jareth gave her an arch look “*Ayesha* have really bad taste in fuckbois who’ll knock you up and leave you be. Budge up”. She patted Sayyida’s side as she moved up on to the bed.

“I’m going to take over this operation myself now.” She tossed up her crystal ball which turned into 2 tarot cards with Three Kings and 4 Pentacles inscribed on it.

“Let’s see...I’ve got seven vacation days coming up. That should be more than enough for me to figure out the right combination of genetic mystical ancestry, moderate sexual experience and a high propensity for avoiding responsibility”. Jareth closed her palms together and muttered: “Oh Mother Supreme, grant me this holiday”. She snapped her fingers and the cards disappeared.

She turned to Sayyida and smiled “Come on Noble Lady,” Sayyida half-smiled at the English translation of her full name “Let’s put a baby in you!”

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“I’m going to kill you.” Sayyida slammed the door closed behind her and threw her coat over the sofa.

Jareth sat on the sofa, her hair now short, curly and blonde in a long high-necked cloak and black gloves. Sayyida’s eyes traveled over her corset and high tights until it traced the high-heeled ankle boots with black buckled straps.

Jareth turned to look at her with shimmering blue eyes, the color of the oasis where her family had picnicked on one of her trips back home in Al-Ain. “Pardon me?” Her husky voice asked politely, but her raised eyebrow and the flash in her eyes belied her politeness.

Sayyida swallowed back as the immortal magical being stepped towards her, her heartbeat racing whether in fear or something else she wasn’t quite sure. “Stop trying to scare me Jareth. I-I’m really pissed at you.”

Jareth paused in her advance just a few inches away from her and bent her head sideways to stare into Sayyida’s eyes with an otherworldly intensity. Silence hung between them until Jareth’s face made a moue and huffed “I am afraid to ask. What went wrong?”

“You set me up with a literal shapeshifter.” Sayyida glared.

“Yes and...?”

“His real shape is of a spider Jareth and you know how I know this? He literally turned into one during starters because he saw ‘a really juicy fly!’” Sayyida stomped into her kitchen with Jareth trailing her as she switched on the gas to make the tea.

“I knew he could turn into a spider but I thought he was a mortal first,” Jareth said with a more thoughtful tone rather than regret. She threw out her hand downwards to release her crystal ball like a yo-yo and rolled it back into her palm.

“I know we have a deal but nowhere does it say that I have to give birth to an eight-legged child”. Sayyida said as she turned off the gas and poured it into two cups. She handed one to Jareth as they turned away from the kitchen area.

Jareth sipped at her tea and hummed “So no interspecies sex?”

“No interspecies sex thanks” Sayyida snarked as she took a big gulp of her steaming tea. She winced as it burned the roof of her mouth but her roiling stomach that had to sit through a half-turned man munch on a fly during dinner definitely appreciated it.

Jareth put her hands on her curvy waist and whirled towards Sayyida “Okay! This is a...learning curve, is what I think the term is?” Sayyida nodded reassuringly. Jareth beamed and continued “So clearly we need someone who’s at least base shape is human and has sperm producing body parts. Okay, who do I know...”

Sayyida watched almost amused at the way Jareth’s eyes darted from left to right as her magical tarot cards appeared and disappeared as her long, graceful fingers moved unconsciously in the air like she was that British actor in that BBC show Ayesha made her watch.

After what seemed like fifteen minutes, Jareth’s hands fell “I have nothing.” Her voice and face looked so genuinely dejected and disappointed that Sayyida couldn’t stop a smile from creeping up on her face.

“What is so funny?” Jareth demanded.

“No it’s just-” Sayyida smothered a laugh “Like you were so- confident and eager and like now you finally get it! How tough this is actually.”

Jareth tried to glare at Sayyida but she gave up and huffed a laugh “Fine. I get it. Mortal dating is tricky, if not procreation. That I know is not.”

Sayyida had a disbelieving look on her face but refrained from commenting as she tossed her empty cup into the sink. Jareth's cup magically appeared next to her cup as she ran them through water.

"Sayyida," Jareth said softly.

"Yeah?"

"I am sorry. I did not mean to humiliate you in front of your fellow humans." Sayyida turned to see Jareth's head bent.

"It's okay. *I'm* okay. You were just trying to help me out and do your job." Sayyida patted Jareth's hands awkwardly, hoping to comfort her. Jareth raised her head and grasped her hands in hers and looked directly into Sayyida's eyes "Noble Lady, in the name of Mother Nature and all her spirits I promise you, we will find you a suitable procreator for our- the baby."

Sayyida's heart skipped a beat as she closed her fingers around Jareth's hand and looked into her shimmering earnest blue eyes "I-I believe you. Thank you."

Jareth smiled and Sayyida tried not to think too much about why that smile spread a warm, sunshiny glow of happiness around her heart.

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Other party-goers pushed past her to walk inside the bar as Sayyida shivered in the cold, bouncing up and down on her toes to keep her feet warm "Where are you Jareth?" She muttered as she tried to stretch her blue dress past her thighs to stop her knees from trembling, with no success.

Her ears popped painfully as Jareth appeared next to her. Sayyida's heart almost stopped at the sight of her hair. Medium, spiky in a fiery red color that made her look like Jean Grey from X-Men. She was dressed in a white aviator vest on a blue plaid T-shirt with a bowtie.

Her hair is as bright and fiery as the night I had summoned her, Sayyida thought wildly as she plastered on a pleasant and placid smile "You ready?"

"After you, my Lady." Jareth flourished a wave as the door opened to a neon-colored world flashing lights and writhing bodies moving to the music.

Sayyida and Jareth pushed past people to lay claim on two stools near the bar "Two beers please" Sayyida panted as they clambered upon the tall stools.

“Are humans always this rude?” Jareth asked as a man tried to take the stool that she was literally trying to sit upon, she waved two fingers at him and he turned away to walk right out the door of the club.

“Yeah pretty much, though you seem to have a handle on how to deal with them.” Sayyida chortled as the bartender placed two Budweisers in front of them. Jareth ignored the bottles and rotated two of her fingers. Sayyida grasped her stool in slight alarm as both their seats started turning towards the dancing crowd.

“All right, as per your suggestion, we are now in a nightclub. A place where humans are emboldened by the effect of drink and the cover of darkness and artificial lighting to ‘hook up’ wherever they can and how many ever times they can endure.” Jareth read out from her crystal ball. “Take your pick.” Jareth gestured at the crowd.

Sayyida sighed and looked over the crowd. Most of the men looked like they had just rolled out of bed, dressed in shorts and T-shirts as they moved their hands like a pendulum in some rubbish imitation of dancing. She also grimaced at some of the men who were directly leering at a supremely uninterested and unaware Jareth. She bent her head beyond a lip-locked couple and saw a man sitting in one of the booths, watching the people on the dance floor with a slightly forlorn expression.

“Him?” Jareth’s eyes followed Sayyida’s as she tapped her midair crystal ball. The ball zipped past the dancers and the waiters to float above the man’s head.

“Hmmm, reasonably good-looking, genetically human but with...siren ancestry. Will definitely do!” Jareth clapped her hands together in delight. Sayyida mustered up a pale smile in response as she pushed her towards the crowd “Go, speak to him and see if he’s willing to father a baby and never see it again.”

“Maybe I won’t say that, but okay,” Sayyida said to apparently deaf ears as her feet moved of its own volition into the crowd. She pushed her way through overly cologne-d and sweaty men and women until she reached the other end of the floor.

“Uh-hi.” Sayyida stammered out a greeting.

The man looked up. He had a cute face with brown eyes and spiky hair “Hey. Wanna sit?”

Sayyida looked behind to see Jareth nodding eagerly as if she can hear “Uh, maybe later. Do you want to dance with me?”

The man looked startled but pleased as he placed his hand in hers. Sayyida led the two of them onto the floor as the music changed to something a little less frenetic.

As they both moved to Drake, Sayyida felt rather than heard a buzzing bee near her ear. She brushed it off but the tickling sensation kept returning.

It's me Jareth. This is going good yes?

Yes, for now, Sayyida thought.

Amazing! So to help things along, I'm going to do a little something we mostly only do to find our brooms. If I can just figure out the right amount of hand-waving, this will bring you and your man much closer.

Wait- Jareth- But the bee had already flown away.

Sayyida tried to look over people's heads to see where the bee had gone but both bee-Jareth and humanoid Jareth were nowhere to be found.

"Hey. My name is Mike."

"Sayyida." She replied as she forced herself to look at the brown-haired man as they continued dancing.

"Nice name!" But before Mike could say anything else, ear-splitting feedback interrupted the music.

"Yeouch! How do you humans- Hello everyone!" A familiar voice echoed through the club. An unenthusiastic murmur went through the crowd in reply.

"I won't take up much of your time, but I truly hope all of you and I mean all of you, find your heart's desire tonight" Sayyida pushed past two people and saw Jareth standing in the DJ's section.

Jareth spotted her and winked at her as she spoke fast into the mic-

*"My love is strong, my luck is weak,
It is an answer that I seek,
The question burns within this fire,
So I may see my heart's desire."*

Sayyida gasped as a rushing wind went past her to the entire floor. She went up on her toes to look at Jareth but the normal DJ had been restored and the music started playing again.

"You okay?" Sayyida startled as she turned to see Mike's concerned face. "If you don't want to-

“No, I’m fine. Let’s just dance.” Sayyida smiled falsely and started to move her hips again to the music. The music had changed to something slower, with a little jazzier beat.

*Waking up to a kiss and you're on your way
I'd really hoped that you would stay
But you left and went your own way*

Mike grasped her hands and pulled her close as the beat picked up. Sayyida blushed a little at Mike’s forwardness but continued dancing in sync.

*You fooled me once with your eyes now honey
You fooled me twice with your lies and I say*

Sayyida felt like she was slowly being ensconced into a bubble by the music. The world and people around her shimmered as if it was a ‘Maya’ from the stories her Indian grandmother told her. The arms around her seemed like the only thing that was real in the world right now. Sayyida grasped onto those arms like a lifeline as the music became frenetic, the drum beats getting faster and louder until it felt like it was lifting her up into the sky.

*And it's killing me inside
Consuming all my time
You've left me blind
And when I think I'm right
You strip away my pride
You cast it all aside but I say*

Sayyida’s heart lifted in elation as she tossed her head back and laughed in delight and recognition. She knew, she finally knew what she wanted. She had it in her arms. After all the agony and uncertainty, the forced smiles and the cracks in her heart that just grew deeper, she knew why.

Does she know that my destiny lies with her?

Sayyida looked up grinning and saw Jareth’s face smiling down at her. Her hair, redder than before, her eyes the exact blue as the oasis in Al-Ain, her smile as bright as a thousand luminous moons.

“So... when’s the next date? Who is it?” Jareth asked as Sayyida applied blush on her cheeks.

Sayyida jumped “Jareth! Knock please.”

“Since when do you care about how and where I pop in?” Jareth asked.

Since I realized I was in love with you and didn't want you to see me mooning over the crystal ball you left over.

“Since... Anyway, Ayesha set up a date with a good friend of hers. He's verified, normal and moderately successful as a photographer. Also apparently has some djinn ancestry, if that'll make you happy.” Sayyida smiled fondly at Jareth's excited squeal, ignoring the sadness that suddenly clenched around her heart.

She applied the last touches of her mascara and walked out of the apartment with Jareth trailing her “I'll tell you everything once I get back.”

“Have fun! Make a baby!” Jareth called as Sayyida closed the door. Once she was sure that the door was firmly closed, Sayyida rested her head on the door.

There are no words to how much I don't want to do this, she thought. After she realized that she was in love with a supernatural being who has a ticking clock to her time on Earth and lives in a world where age means nothing and humans only slightly more, Sayyida had spent sleepless nights wondering what the hell she should do.

Mike was a nice guy who kissed her on her cheek and gave her his number after she stood for ten minutes gaping at him like an idiot, trying to get a grasp on how not-Jareth he was. He was currently waiting for her at the restaurant, hoping for a genuine connection with someone who had fallen for someone laughably unavailable.

Sayyida rubbed her sweaty palms together as she rummaged through her pockets for a tissue. Her fingers felt something cold yet vibrating as she removed Jareth's crystal ball. She ran it up and down her palm as shimmering images of Jareth and Mike appeared in and out as she played with it.

Who said she had to play by the rules here? Sayyida thought mutinously as she placed the ball in her pocket and whistled her way down the stairs.

Sayyida smiled at Mike as he dad-joked with the waiter who played along as he interspersed the jokes with their dinner order.

The evening had gone way too well. Mike had been very sweet and charming even with corny dad jokes. But he was a gentleman and he really deserved better than someone who was in love with someone else entirely.

Sorry, Mike, Sayyida said mentally as she grasped the crystal ball in her pocket. Sayyida whispered the first spell that floated into her immediate memory-

*Make them see, what is not there
Flames that leap to make them scared.*

“Oh my God, fire!” A woman’s tinny voice cried. More screams were heard as people started to run out of the restaurant.

“Oh good God,” Mike exclaimed. Sayyida hid her smile and pasted a scared expression as they both rushed towards the entrance.

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“A fire?” Jareth exclaimed as they stood before the restaurant two hours later. There was obviously no fire, but the restaurant had shut down for the night. Sayyida had bid a gentle goodbye to Mike who had looked disappointed but after one more spell, had ended up going home with a cute blonde also at the restaurant.

“Yeah, but they didn’t find any evidence of one when they searched the place top to bottom,” Sayyida said casually as the crystal ball heated up a little in her pocket.

*Down girl,* she scolded mentally.

“An illusory fire?” Jareth said thoughtfully. “Hmmm, that is not good. I’m guessing Mother Supreme must really want me back.”

Sayyida’s heart thudded loudly “I thought you had leave up to day after tomorrow.”

“Yeah, I did too. But an illusory fire can only be cast with magical items. This requires more investigation.” Jareth walked away. Five seconds later, Jareth came back “Where is the esteemed procreator?”

“He found an old girlfriend from school and struck up a conversation. Apparently, she was the one that got away.” Sayyida shrugged as if disappointed.

“Oh no, even I can’t compete with that level of serendipity.” Jareth said with dismay. But as soon as that expression appeared, it disappeared as Jareth beamed at Sayyida. “So noble Lady, I believe you are mine for the evening.”

“I guess so,” Sayyida said, her heart thudding for other reasons now.

“Capital!” Jareth hooked her arm around hers and they walked towards the pier “Did you know the Lucretia Pier was named after an ancestor of mine?....

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Sayyida walked back into the same restaurant two days later when Mike gave her a call, saying he wanted to apologize for leaving her there all of a sudden. She was surprised but as Jareth was away on business she decided to drop in and see how he and Sarah were doing.

Mike was running late so she sat down on the reserved table the waiter had led her to, presumably he had booked earlier. Sayyida fiddled with her phone as she heard the chiming of bells. She looked up, expecting to see Mike entering the restaurant, but the door hadn't opened. Sayyida frowned and turned herself to see a tall dark-skinned woman with blonde streaks in her dark hair sitting across the table.

"Hi Sayyida." The woman's oddly familiar voice chimed.

"Um, hi. I'm actually waiting for-

"Michael, yes. He's currently in the Bahamas with his high school sweetheart. They eloped yesterday. Very fast for the man who spent three hours just two days before wondering whether to get mayonnaise or mustard or both on his hot dog" She said pleasantly.

"Oh." Sayyida looked down as she rummaged through her pocket. "I'm guessing you must be wanting this back."

She rolled the crystal ball across the table. The woman stopped it in its tracks with her finger. Her red-painted fingernail tapped it as she continued to survey Sayyida.

"This is not your magic to use, noble Lady."

Sayyida flushed with embarrassment "I'm sorry, it's just-

"You're in love with its owner." The lady finished "I know. I hoped that that would be the case when I gave you the spell to summon the operator."

Sayyida gasped "You were the woman at the club that night!"

"Yes, poor 23-year-old Sayyida. Crushed under her parent's expectations, her own uncertainty and her self-hatred and no small amount of internalized homophobia. Calls up a witch to help her fulfill her ambitions in exchange for her first-born child." She said with no trace of mockery in her voice.

"The next day I get a call from Tate Modern to apprentice at the museum." Sayyida continued with a half-smile.

“Your parents threw a bloody tantrum, but she was with you every step of the way as you rose to be the assistant curator of the British Museum.” The mysterious woman stated as she poofed the crystal ball out of the earthly plane. She leaned over “But even after years of a successful career, Sayyida Al-Hurra still could not love or desire anyone enough to conceive a child, despite her own efforts, because her heart was given to someone else many years ago.”

Tell me what it is you wish, dealmaker

Sayyida tore her eyes away from the beautiful vortex of shimmering blue eyes and short red hair in a long high-necked black cloak, who smiled an entreatingly beautiful smile at her, coaxing out her greatest shame and desires.

I wish that I get the apprenticeship at the Tate Modern. I wish to have the courage to tell my parents that I am no longer the scapegoat for their disappointments or the conduit for all their dreams.

Your wish is granted. The vortex said as she came closer to her and kissed her gently on her lips.

Sayyida touches her lips as if the memory of that kiss was still imprinted on them. “I-I

The woman stopped her “No Sayyida. You and Jareth have spent too long doing everything for each other, except ask what the other really wants.”

“Witches and humans are oh-so-different in so many ways. But there is one thing both have always believed about love. There are some relationships that the Mother and the Universe chooses for us, but the ones that are born from the blood that runs faster through your veins when you see them, the heart that pounds when they smile at you, the relationship formed because you created the covenant that bound you both together, that one matters so much more.”

Sayyida got up and pushed her chair back. She opened her mouth to say something but the woman stopped her and handed the crystal ball back to her.

“Go. She’s waiting.”

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Sayyida slammed the door to her apartment open. It was empty. Jareth wasn’t back yet.

She carelessly threw her heels behind her and rolled the crystal ball on her hand. She closed her eyes and said out loud, her voice clear and sonorous.

*Jareth, the Witch hear my plea  
Wherever you may be  
Return the heart I gave you to keep.*

The ball leaped out of her hand as it created the familiar vortex in her room. Sayyida watched with bated breath as it turned into the familiar shape of Jareth.

“Sayyida what?-

“I started the illusory fire. You left your crystal ball and I cast the spell so that the date could end.” Sayyida blurted before she could lose her courage.

Jareth’s eyes narrowed in anger “Are you seriously kidding me? You know they were right- you are just another idiotic human who wants to get out of the deal-

“No! I want a baby someday and it will be yours. But not with a stranger or with a shapeshifter friend of yours. I want love.” Sayyida said in a rush.

Jareth rolled her eyes bitterly “Of course she does! That’s what they all want. Well, I’m sorry my lady, I can’t help you with that!”

“Why?”

“Maybe because I will not be the sad pining woman in those sap movies you watch who sits back and watches the love of her existence walk away as she smiles and pretends to be happy!” Jareth cried and clapped a hand over her mouth.

Sayyida’s face widened in a tremulous smile as her eyes filled with tears “Me too Jareth. Which is why it’s your lucky day babe.”

“Huh?” Jareth’s voice stammered as Sayyida came close to her and stepped up on her tippy toes.

“I love you too witch.” Sayyida pressed her lips to Jareth’s. Jareth kissed her back, with joyful abandon as their minds and hearts spoke as one. Sparkles appeared below their feet and raised them in midair.

When they finally broke away, Jareth pressed her forehead against Sayyida’s. “My Noble Lady. What is it that you wish?”

“To live happily ever after. And possibly down the line, go to one of those sperm donor banks and raise a half-witch with you.”

“Those sound like suitable terms. Who’s taking care of the baby though?”

“Hey you bought it, you do it.”

Jareth’s laugh echoed through the empty apartment as the sparkles swirled up around the embracing couple and whisked them away to a land of love and magic.











