



Haley's quiet cottage lay off the beaten cobblestone path, interrupted only by the soft, smooth, and consistent stream nearby - and hidden from view with the help of several large oaks that encompassed her premises. The gentle breeze rustled the leaves just outside her window as she crouched down to stoke her fire. But tonight, the soothing ambiance of the forest had fallen on deaf ears.

Frustration, anger, and regret filled Haley's heart as she prepared herself for bed. As she meticulously lathered her body in oils - convinced that they would assist in retaining her youthful complexion - her mind raced from yet another day that had been cut short against her will.

It was Brian's seed. Though nearly twice as potent as her last tenant, to her detriment, she had discovered the effects lasted only a fraction as long as the last! "Completely unacceptable..." Haley mumbled under her breath - convinced that the fault of the new potion rested on Brian. "I wasn't even able to make it to our second session to retrieve more of the... ingredient... before I had to hide!" She tried to suppress her frustration as she blushed. She turned towards what little remained of the potion on her window sill and gritted her teeth. "How embarrassing..."

With a long sigh of discontent, she sauntered over to a large set of mirrors by the wall.







"Look at yourself, Haley. Absolutely disgusting." She fought back tears as she scanned her thin frame. "I look like a skeleton." Her hands stroked the length of her black hair and came to rest on her perky A-cups. "Why couldn't I have been born like the other girls? Busty, tall... and naturally beautiful..." She turned to her side and inspected her rear. "And unencumbered by the maintenance I endure to only FAKE what they have..." She stopped herself from sniffing and turned towards the window.

"There's just enough left for a day. Maybe two... if I'm lucky." She spoke to herself as she plucked the potion from its resting place. Once more, she sighed and placed a hand on the mirror. Defeated. "When will this nightmare ever end?" The tears came pouring out as her neck fell limp in front of her. With eyes wide open, she watched as tears dropped from her face, one by one. Quickly, then slowly, they plummeted to the floor - each making tiny splashes that darkened the cold stone below. "G-Grandpa..." She called out, sniffing. "If only you were still here. You'd know what to do!"

Haley poured what remained of the concoction into a smaller vial before slipping herself into bed.







Haley fought to fall asleep. She attempted to use the calming sounds of the neighboring stream but to no avail. With a gust of wind shaking the glass window, Brian's shocked expression was seared into the back of her mind again - staring at her shrunken figure as the smoke from her magic dissipated all around her. He looked... disappointed. Her brow furrowed. The embarrassment had reached an all-time high. No one - not even Azmerelda - knew how Haley truly appeared. Being a witch - a magic wielder - came with a certain air of prestige. Pride. And for the first time, Haley had lost that.

Haley shook her head, convincing herself. "I can't show my face to you again, Brian. Not after... what happened." She rolled to her side as her cheeks blushed a deep red. "...It was nice knowing you, truly, but I must move on." Haley brushed a strand of hair out of her mouth as she shifted into a more comfy position. It suddenly felt easier for her to sleep.

She tucked herself deep into her covers with renewed conviction. "I'll make you proud, Grandpa. Your lineage will not end with me."





Starlight Gaze Lounge

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Haley marched to the top floor of the Starlight Gaze Lounge and entered Azmerelda's private office without warning.

"I want a new tenant. Now!" Haley firmly demanded.

Azmerelda was caught off guard. Her mind was still caught up in her notes as she peered up at the energized witch. "Wha-- Haley?? Just what are you doing in here?"

"I said." Haley took a deep breath and caused her top to stretch tighter across her very impressive chest. "I want a new tenant. It is your job to provide me with one. And I want a new one - right now!"

"Uhh, Haley-- it's just-- this is all so abrupt." Azmerelda gently placed her notebook down and removed her glasses. "What's wrong with your current one?"

Haley blinked several times in disbelief - as if insulted. With her platform heels, she strolled up to her boss' desk and leaned in. "He's... there's... I just-- look! There's been some bad chemistry, alright?! The details don't matter. What DOES matter is that I'm without a tenant and I need one NOW!"

Azmerelda paused longer than Haley felt comfortable waiting. The businesswoman tapped her glasses against her lip in thought. "Well, I'm sorry Haley but I simply cannot afford to rotate anymore employees for you at this time. We're understaffed as things are." She reclined back in her while wearing a serious expression that glared back at Haley. "You'll just have to live with Brian as your tenant."







"Then YOU'LL have to live without a gatekeeper! Those precious customers of yours are going to have to WALK if they want to do business here. I need a new tenant RIGHT NOW GOD DAMN IT!!" There was fire behind Haley's words, and desperation had her barking all the way up the chain of command.

Azmerelda's expression turned dark and serious as her eyes narrowed on the witch. Her business had just been threatened. "I would choose your next words VERY carefully, Haley..." Despite her words being void of context, Haley knew to never test a demon's temper.

Haley's enlarged assets jiggled and shook as she crossed her arms and straightened up. "Hmphh!" She pouted and turned her head away - allowing the awkwardness of her silence to brew.

Azmerelda sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose. "Look... I'll see what I can do, okay? No promises."

"But how long?!" Haley interjected - still desperate. "If you can deal with Brian for just a few days, I--" "A few days?!" Azmerelda's voice erupted into a deep demonic roar. "ENOUGH!!"

"Psh, fine. Whatever." Haley responded, unphased by her boss' rage. She spun around and began to make her exit. "Just make it snappy, you hear? Or you can say bye-bye to those portals."

As Haley gently closed the door to the office, she could make out Azmerelda's meltdown taking place on the other side. In the midst of the demonic howling, pencils and papers could be heard crashing onto the floor. "GOD DAMN YOU, HALEY!!!" A low guttural roar erupted from the room. Haley couldn't help but smirk at the turmoil she had inflicted to her boss. "Serves her right." As she took the elevator back down to the ground floor.

