

## Fictional Narrative #2

The town was only just starting to wake up. Cafe owners had arranged their tables and chairs and were busy putting up awnings to protect customers from the sun which would be hot later in the day. Shopkeepers were placing their wares outside on the pavements. One shop offered *Koggelhopfs*, a specialist bread of the region, in various flavors, the smell of baking made Mel feel hungry. This was the time of day that she loved best. Morning sunlight on her shoulders, not many tourists about and a new town to explore: heaven!

Mel stopped in front of a shop. Etched into the door was a five pointed star set within a circle. An image of a witch had been placed by the door. It conformed to the popular view of witches, ugly face, and long crooked nose. Walking into the shop from the bright sunlit street was like entering a catacomb and Mel paused, letting her eyes adjust while her sense of smell was assailed by the scent of many herbs that hung from the ceiling. Just inside the shop was a woman dressed in black, lips painted a violent red. As Mel passed her she looked up quickly and rang a small bell on the counter. An older looking woman with a pale, severe face and grey hair tied tightly into a bun, entered the shop from a door marked private.

“Bonjour Madame,” she said to Mel. “Y at-il queque chose de special que je peux faire pour vous aujourd’hui?”

“Oui Madame, I'm writing an article for my magazine on modern day witchcraft. Is there anyone here who speaks English? I would really appreciate it if they could spare me a few minutes,” Mel said.

“I can speak English if that is what Madame prefers. If Madame would like to follow me upstairs, I will be happy to tell her about the people who are adept in the craft today.” She paused. “Maybe Madame would like to amuse herself first by taking our little test.”

She led Mel over to a small wooden table which had colorful earthenware pots set out with colored sand in them. “If Madame would like to read the words on this,” she said, handing Mel a card, “at the same time making this gesture with her right hand over any of the pots.” The woman demonstrated the gesture she wished Mel to copy.

Feeling more than a little foolish Mel muttered the words and attempted to replicate the required movement with her hand.

“Once more please Madame, this time with more conviction. I assure you; you will come to no harm.”

Mel had another attempt, this time staring at a pot which had pale gold grains in it. The grains immediately changed color to a dull grey giving off a pungent smell. Mel stared at her handiwork wondering how the trick had been executed. “How did that happen?” Mel asked, wishing she hadn't entered the shop.

“It is magic of course,” the woman smiled, “shall we go upstairs now?”

Mel didn't believe there was such a thing as magic, and the article she was planning to write would be an exposé of how gullible women could be taken advantage of. They went back through the door marked *private* and up the stairs beyond.

The woman opened a door to a room and ushered Mel inside. Sunlight shining through the curtains gave the room a reddish tinge. The warmth of the room was enhanced by the wooden ceiling from which hung great bunches of aromatic herbs. "Which magazine do you work for?" asked the woman as she began pouring the tea into two cups.

"I'm a freelance journalist," said Mel, "I sell my work to a variety of magazines."

Passing Mel a cup she said, "My name is Gabrielle, please sit down and ask me any question you like. I will try to give you as complete a picture as I can."

"I'm pleased to meet you Gabrielle, my name is Mel. I suppose my first question is, are you a witch?" Mel said sipping at the sweet tea which tasted of honey and herbs.

"Some people would call me and my friends witches." said Gabrielle, "some of us follow the old religion and do not consider ourselves to be witches. Wise women, witches, sorcerers, we have been called many things." Gabrielle refilled Mel's cup. "In the past we were highly respected," she paused, looking deep into Mel's eyes, "But unfortunately, people today think we are followers of the devil."

As she listened Mel began to feel a little drowsy.

"What is in this tea?" she said, "its very nice." Gabrielle didn't answer immediately, instead took a chain from around her neck from which a symbol that looked like a small cross was hanging. The top half of the cross was shaped like a teardrop.

"The tea will help you relax," she said placing the chain around Mel's neck.

As soon as the charm touched Mel's skin, she felt warmth spreading through her body and became aware of a great web of women both near and far.

"Welcome sister, we have been waiting. Your coming has been foretold. You are thrice welcome."

Mel would have panicked if she had not had the drink. She sat still, taking in all the sensations. At first she thought she was having an hallucination, but this situation was more real than anything she had ever experienced.

Stalling for time to come to terms with what was happening, Mel asked, "What do you want from me?"

"We wish to teach you all we can about magic and to prepare you for your road ahead." The voice sounded clearly in Mel's mind.

"From today, you are one of us, you are ours."