

Voodoos and VooDON'Ts



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Chapter 1

“Surprise! Happy Birthday!”

Dani removed her hands from covering Tess’s eyes, awaited in excited anticipation for her friend’s reaction. Tess’s eyes regained their focus, revealing a beat up, brick laden, row house, bookended by pristine looking row houses on either side. She tilted her head and said, “What am I looking at?”

Dani darted around in front of Tess, “It’s a Voodoo shop!”

“You say that like it’s supposed to mean something.”

“There’s a woman here that performs Voodoo. Like a fortune teller, but instead of predicting your future- “

“She does Voodoo, yeah, I got that.” Tess paused for a beat. “So *why* are we here?”

“You have been complaining for like the past 6 months about that trainer at the gym being a bitch to you. I thought we could get back at her by putting a Voodoo curse on her, or at least let off some steam trying to.”

“Oh. Okay.” Tess was finally catching up to her friend’s logic. It also dawned on her right then how much she had been complaining to Dani about that bitch trainer Mayson, and that this might be a message from Dani for Tess to cut it out. Then again, Dani has never been one to be passive aggressive, and she’s probably just trying to help a friend in distress. Tess could see Dani was patiently waiting for her approval, “Alright, let’s do some Voodoo.”

“Hooray!” Dani rapidly clapped her hands in giddy glee, and they made their way up the steps together. Dani got to the door first and tried to open it, but the knob wouldn’t turn.

“Maybe they’re closed” Tess said.

“Shouldn’t be. I made an appointment.”

Dani knocked lightly on the door. Nothing. She knocked again. Still nothing. As she reached out again to knock, Tess’s muscular arm swept in and banged on the door. Footsteps could be heard from inside coming towards the entrance, and then the sounds of multiple locks unlocking in succession. Finally, the door swung open to reveal a young black woman in a very expensive business suit, “Can I help you?” she said in a tone that conveyed she had no intention of helping anyone.

“We have an appointment to see Mistress Ayida,” Dani said. “Are you her?”

"No, you are looking for my grandmother."

"Oh, is she in? We are supposed to have a voodoo session for my friend's birthday." She gestured to Tess.

"No, she passed in her sleep a week ago."

"Oh my god! I'm so sorry, miss...?"

"Rachel. It's okay. She was very old, and had a good life."

Tess could see Dani's face process the moment, and before Tess could stop her, Dani opened her mouth again, and said, "We paid in advance."

Tess winced. Rachel smirked at her reaction, "Come in." She stepped aside to let the two come in. Walking inside, the two found moving boxes stacked everywhere. "Have a seat," Rachel motioned to a table in the middle of the room, with boxes stacked on it as well. Rachel started to remove the boxes, and Tess motioned if she could help, which Rachel gave a thankful nod to. After the table was cleared, Dani and Tess sat down, and Rachel followed suit. "So, what were you looking to do?" Rachel asked, leaving the other two taken aback and confused.

"Oh, uh, are you able to perform the voodoo?" Dani asked.

"My mom couldn't afford daycare, so my grandmother looked after me every day after school got out; I grew up around all of this. She noticed I was picking up on some things, so she started teaching me the ways, so I wouldn't accidentally do something horrible to myself or my classmates on accident."

"Oh wow, well, my friend here is dealing with a difficult trainer at the gym; her name is Mayson. She keeps saying insulting things and belittling her."

"Like what?"

"Like Tess is so tiny and weak and could never even think to reach her size."

Rachel glanced at Tess. Tess's T-shirt did nothing to hide her broad shoulders and the sculpted, toned muscle of her arms. "Is she much bigger than you?" she asked Tess.

"Yes," Dani answered. Tess shot her an annoyed look.

"What did you bring of Mayson's?"

"I was supposed to bring something?", Dani asked, caught off guard.

"Most voodoo incantations require an item of the subject, or a piece of them, like hair or fingernail clippings."

"Oh, I don't have any of that. Is there anything you can do that doesn't require anything like that?"

"There is a transformation potion, but that would require her to drink it."

"What is this potion?" Tess chimed in.

"Basically, you write something on a piece of paper, like 'permanent limp' or contextual like 'bark every time a bell rings'. It's how I cured my cat allergy."

"Wait, you performed voodoo on yourself?" Tess said in disbelief.

"Sure. It's a misnomer that voodoo is exclusively used for evil curses. When used responsibly, it can heal ailments and better ones' self. That's how my grandma lived to a hundred and nine."

The gears in Tess's brain started turning, "I know what I want."

"Which is?"

"I want to be buff."

"You seem pretty strong already."

It was true, Tess had been training to compete in bodybuilding, which is why Mayson, who also competed, got on her nerves. Mayson, (or 'Mayse', as she insists on being called), took every opportunity at the gym to make Tess feel small. Tess would love to show up one day, bigger than Mayse, and cram it down her throat. "I am, but I would like to be stronger."

Rachel pulled out a little slip of paper and pencil, "Write down on here what you would like to happen, but keep in mind, whatever you do can't be undone, so be specific. For instance, I'm technically still allergic to cats, except when I'm around cats. So, if I'm somewhere where there was a cat, and cat dander is around..."

"Allergies?"

"Exactly. So, to 'be buff' is relative. How much more buff, and how it happens should be the focus. Got it?"

"I think so." Tess held the pencil in her hand and focused intensely on the slip of paper.

Rachel turned her attention to Dani, "And what would you like?"

Dani was caught off guard, "Who, me? Oh, I couldn't"

"Come on, worst case it doesn't work," Tess egged her on, "What do you have to lose?"

There was something Dani would like to lose. It was the reason she had been at the gym all those times where she witnessed Mayson dunk on Tess. "I would like to lose 20 lbs.," she blurted out.

"Of...?" Rachel guided her with her questions.

"Fat. I would like to lose 20 lbs. of fat."

"When?"

"The next time I work out at the gym. When I finish, I'll lose 20 lbs. of fat."

"Sounds good. You should write that."

As Dani began to write furiously, Tess handed her slip over to Rachel. "I would like to gain five lbs. of muscle the next time I work out."

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely. I could go for more, but I don't want to get my hopes up too much, in case this turns out to be bullshit." Tess immediately realized she insulted her host. "Sorry."

"It's okay. Many are skeptical." Dani handed her slip over to Rachel. "Give me one moment to prepare your potions." She got up and walked over to a cabinet filled with unknown tinctures, and began brewing two identical concoctions. She then held one of the slips of paper in one hand, and lit it on fire with a lighter held in the other, and dropped the flaming wish into a small glass to burn until it was nothing but ash. She did the same to the other slip in a different glass, and then poured the concoctions into each glass. She then picked up the glasses, careful to note which is which, and then placed them on the table, one in front of either woman. "Drink," she said.

Dani and Tess's eyes met, as the playful glee of the moment left, and the dawning thought of 'what if this *actually* works?' collectively came over them, giving them pause.

"Fuck it," Tess declared defiantly, and downed the liquid, immediately regretting not asking for a glass of water as a chaser.

Dani followed suit, "Here goes..." and drank hers as well.

Before they had a chance for a new thought to form in their brains, Rachel began to shoo them out, "I hope you got your money's worth, but I need to get this all packed up and moved out by the end of the week, because I have a *real* job to get back to."

And like that, Dani and Tess were on the front steps. The door slamming behind them shook them out of their daze. A lightbulb went on over their heads, “We need to go to the gym!”

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Exiting the gym locker room, Dani and Tess’s hearts were aflutter in anticipation. Was this going to work? Would it be a complete bust? Would whatever they drank give them terrible food poisoning? They would know in about an hour. Scanning the room, the usual set of regulars could be seen about the gym. Mayse was giving the business to some poor girl on the battle ropes. Keith, the resident gym crush, was sitting at the seated press machine, scanning the room while stealing glances at his phone. He was trying to weed out any girls at the gym that he matched with that he could tell were using filters, and which were genuine hotties.

“Hi Dani! Hi Tess!” Speak of the devil, Alix waved to the two as they walked by. Alix was your classic bubbly blonde, barely twenty, and disarmingly cheerful towards everyone. She just walked up and started talking to Dani one day, and never stopped.

“Hi Alix,” Dani waved back as they passed Alix. Dani was envious of Alix, specifically of her body. Even when she was Alix’s age, Dani was never close to being in that kind of shape. Dani almost wrote on her slip she wanted to have a body like Alix’s, but chickened out.

“You’re staring again,” Tess said out of the side of her mouth, while nudging her friend with her elbow.

“Can you blame me for having life goals? What I wouldn’t give to have an ass like that; to have tits like those.”

“You can *buy* tits like those.”

“Bullshit. Those are real. You just forgot what it was like to have young, perky tits. Or tits in general.” She poked one of Tess’s hard pecs.

“Cheap shot, but twenty bucks says you’re wrong.”

“You’re on.”

They went their separate ways, Tess to the rack of free weights, and Dani to a treadmill, conveniently located behind the elliptical Alix was stationed at. For the next hour, Tess pressed dumbbells to her heart’s content, while Dani ran towards her preverbal carrot on the end of a stick that was Alix. When all was said and done, the two met back up and headed to the locker

room, checking each other out along the way. Looking for any kind of change in either's physique. Once inside, they took turns on the scale, only to come to the same conclusion; nothing had changed. They both weighed the same as when they started. Tess looked a little bigger from her pump, but it was already fading fast, just like their upbeat manner. They got changed, and proceeded to the parking lot together in silence. When they finally reached Dani's car, Tess broke the silence, "For what it's worth, this was a fun birthday."

"Really?"

"Yeah. I hadn't got my hopes up like that in a long time. It was nice."

"Even when they got dashed to bits?"

"Nobody bats a thousand," Tess grinned, "Bring it in." Tess waved Dani in for a hug, and they held each other in friendly embrace. It was a nice moment, Dani being held in Tess's muscular arms, until it was abruptly cut short by the sound of something falling to the ground.

"What was that?" Tess asked, still holding her friend.

"My pants fell down," Dani said sheepishly.

"Don't you own a belt?"

"I do. It's on its last notch."

"Maybe tighten it next time," Tess ribbed.

"I can't. It barely fi-"

In unison they pushed apart from each other, and looked down at Dani's pants on the ground. Dani bent down and pulled them back up to her waist and let go, watching them fall back to the ground with no resistance. Her waist has shrunk. Looking at her reflection in the car's side mirror, her face was less rounded. She turned back to Tess, who was feeling herself up while flexing. Dani could see that Tess's shirt fit tighter on her than when they left the gym.

"Do you feel...?" Dani asked.

"Yes," Tess answered before Dani could finish the question.

They knew what they had to do. Dani pulled up her pants once again, cinched up her belt for the first time in years, and they piled into her car, praying Rachel hadn't finished packing yet.