



Suffer a Witch

- Description:** In *Suffer a Witch*, we meet Emogene “Em” Peres as she rushes to Gallows Hill for a private ceremony to acknowledge the anniversary of Bridget Bishop’s hanging in Salem Village in 1692. You see, that hanging caused Em, Bridget, and the other men and women hanged in Salem Village, to become immortal witches. Set in modern Boston, *Suffer a Witch* follows the modern life of the Salem Twenty, as they are once again confronted with the evil that led to their hanging. The story is told in a serial fiction format beginning June 10, 2014.
- Author:** Claudia Hall Christian
- Format:** Serial fiction — published as it’s written, two chapters a month.
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Reviews for Claudia Hall Christian's books

Anonymous feedback for *Suffer a Witch*

"Loved the story so much that I purchased the paperback."

"Claudia's always-engaging storytelling woven around real-world events and a slice of American history makes this a must read... for all of Claudia's fans AND everyone interested in the era of the Salem Witch Trials."

"I'm not one to re-read a book generally, however with *Suffer a Witch*, I found myself re-reading chapters again and again. Not because they were hard to follow, but because the action hinged on the easy to miss small details. I loved reading it as a serialized fiction and I'll love again reading the full volume."

"Great book! Suffer a Witch offers a new twist on an old tale, that will leave you wanting more."

The Fey

"Be warned! If you start reading this book, you will feel compelled to finish it. May lead to late nights. Then you'll want the next in the series. Eventually you will reach the end of the published works. Just go back and start at the beginning. Enjoy this book!"

D.D. Treadway, South Carolina (Amazon)

"Claudia's characters are vivid and real and her story is a first rate thrill-ride. It's engaging, fast-paced, fun, and suspenseful. Lucky for us, Alex's story doesn't end here. This is just the first book in the series." *Patricia R. Kansas City (Amazon)*

"Claudia Hall Christian seems to have a particularly personal relationship with her characters, all of whom are believable, intelligent and determined to tell their stories." *S. Parker, San Francisco (Amazon)*

"I've been smitten with reading this book since I started. I love the fact that while the book has a strong military component it's balanced with the routine of daily life and personal relationships. Ms. Christian-Hall does a fabulous job at providing details to each character, to a point that you feel that you know them too." *(Barnes and Noble)*

Denver Cereal

"Excellent book. From the first page you get taken away right into the character's lives." *(Good Reads)*

"I don't know how she does it so well, but Claudia Hall Christian can create a great bond between the reader and her characters." *C. Sund, Ohio (Amazon)*

"I have to say that I am completely addicted to this series! I LOVED this book and have been reading the online daily updates to the 'serial fiction' website, www.thedenvercereal.com, since the day after I finished the book. It's an intriguing story with characters I really feel like I know them. Each day, it's like waiting to hear from a best friend who has something incredible going on in their life. You NEED the latest update. I highly recommend it!" *P. Cooper, New York*



Claudia Hall Christian, Author
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Claudia Hall Christian is a consummate storyteller. Whether she's writing the long running *Denver Cereal* or a short blurb for her neighborhood newsletter, she tells heartwarming stories that leaves people longing for more. These skills make writing traditional serial fiction — long-form stories that are published as they are written — a natural for Claudia. Her lifelong writing goal is to write a serial fiction set in every state in the United States. So far, she's brought her brand of addictive, heartwarming fiction to Fort Worth, Texas, in the *Queen of Cool*, to Denver for the *Denver Cereal*, and now to Boston for *Suffer a Witch*. Last year, Claudia released the first of the *Jornada del Muerto* novellas set in Santa Fe.

A prolific author, Claudia also writes the Amazon bestselling the *Alex the Fey* thrillers, as well as the *Seth and Ava Mysteries*. She currently has 22 published works. In order to keep up with her storytelling capacity, she co-founded a publishing house, Cook Street Publishing, with a group of friends.

Background:

Claudia grew up in the small college town of Claremont, Calif. Her parents' severe mental health issues left Claudia without much parental oversight or guidance. She found her way to the local library where she read every children's book by the time she was in fourth grade. The library gave her a special permit to read adult books. She had read her way through their collection by the time she had graduated from high school.

She spent a few years at a liberal arts college before attending the University of California in Berkeley, California. Fascinated with the sciences, she graduated with a degree in biochemistry, while auditing advanced courses in literature. Post-college, Claudia worked at the University of San Francisco in an HIV/AIDS laboratory at the height of the AIDS epidemic in San Francisco. She worked as a laboratory assistant until a car accident left her unable to perform the work. Claudia's career took a detour into working at a market research company where she learned to write computer code.

Computer programming did not hold Claudia's interest for long. She began graduate school in clinical psychology at the Marina del Rey campus of Antioch University while working at the wilderness outfitters, Adventure-16. Claudia graduated with an Masters of Arts in clinical psychology.

Claudia was a psychotherapist in California and Colorado for more than 15 years. Her specialty was working with severe trauma survivors and mental health challenged addicts.

Hobbies:

Claudia keeps honeybees and gardens at her home in Denver, Colorado. She is an active person who has run half-marathons and hiked one hundred and fifty miles of the Colorado Trail. She is married to her best friend and lives in Denver.

Find Claudia at:

- URLs: SufferaWitch.com ; About: ClaudiaHallChristian.com ; Read: StoriesbyClaudia.com ; Weblog: On-a-Limb.com
- Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/Claudia.H.Christian>
- Twitter: [@ClaudiaC](https://twitter.com/@ClaudiaC)
- LinkedIn: linkedin.com/in/claudiahallchristian



Claudia Hall Christian's Other Works

FICTION:

Alex the Fey thriller series

- *The Fey* (2008)
- *Learning to Stand* (2009)
- *Who I Am* (2010)
- *In the Grey* (2011)
- *Lean on Me* (2012)
- *Finding North* (2013)

The *Alex the Fey* thrillers are tense, dangerous adventures filled with heart-pounding relationships. The thrillers enjoy a cult-link following online with the first book, *The Fey*, on Amazon's best-seller's list. The story follows Lieutenant Colonel Alexandra Hargreaves as she uncovers the forces that killed her team and threaten the world around her. Books are available in electronic and print format.

Denver Cereal serial fiction

- *The Denver Cereal* (2009)
- *Cimarron* (2011)
- *Gold Hill* (2013)
- *Firestone* (August, 2014)
- *Celia's Puppies* (2009)
- *Black Forest* (2011)
- *Silt* (2013)
- *Cascade* (2010)
- *Fairplay* (2012)
- *Larkspur* (Feb., 2014)

Denver Cereal is a long-running serial fiction that's read by an international audience of more than 10,000 people every week. The story follows the sweet and crunchy lives of a group of friends and their partners as they negotiate urban life in Denver. The 10 books are available in electronic and print format.

The Queen of Cool serial fiction

- *The Queen of Cool* (April, 2011 — April, 2012)

The Queen of Cool was a serial fiction set in Fort Worth, Texas, that ran from April, 2011 through April 2012. The story follows Lorraine "Lo" Downs as she attempts to live after her life has been turned upside down with the death of her husband and her home foreclosed upon. The series features a dash of mystery, a smattering of political intrigue, and deep, engaging relationships in an entertaining, fun and addicting story. *The Queen of Cool* is available in paperback and electronic format.

Seth and Ava Mysteries

- *Tax Assassin* (2012)
- *Carving Knife* (2013)

The Seth and Ava Mysteries are short, complicated mysteries that revolve around intriguing situations in Colorado. The *Tax Assassin* delves in the land disputes in the Piñon Valley, and the *Carving Knife* takes on cattle mutilation. Seth O'Malley is prodigy piano player and ex-police detective known as Magic O'Malley. His wife, Ava, is a forensic scientist at the Denver Crime Lab. Together, they love, laugh, and solve mysteries.

NON-FICTION:

Weblog: [On a Limb with Claudia](#) (2004 — present)

Internet radio: *The Open Grove — Independent forum for holistic health and well-being* (2001 — 2006)
Audio interviews in a radio style program; email newsletter subscription to 10,000 people.

Twitter: #Bookmarket Twitter Chat : (2010-2012)

Column: *Claudia's Corner* in Walkin' Distance (circulation 5,000) (1996 — 2001)

On my porch for SCPNA newsletter (May, 2015 — present)



First chapter of *Suffer a Witch*

Chapter One

“Shit.”

Emogene “Em” Peres pulled her 1968 Land Cruiser FJ55 into the Walgreen’s parking lot in Danvers, Massachusetts, just as the drugstore’s giant outdoor digital clock said “10:15 a.m.” She winced at the time. June 10th had rolled around again, and she needed to be on Gallows Hill at 10:18 a.m.

She parked in a space behind the drugstore next to the embankment. Hopping out of the truck, she jogged between the large granite boulders up the six-foot embankment. Once there, she continued to the flat spot on the northwest corner of the hill. From her vantage point, she could see the drugstore’s digital clock.

10:17 a.m.

She’d made it with a minute to spare. She pulled a vial of rose water, a sage bundle, and a white candle from the back pocket of her denim jeans. She managed to coax a stream of smoke from the sage bundle and splashed the rose water around. Closing her eyes, she muttered a combination of the Buddhist Metta prayer, a Puritan prayer from her youth, and some new-age nonsense. She had just finished when she heard footsteps coming in her direction. She opened her eyes.

“Bridget!” Emogene said. “You can’t be here.”

Even at this distance, she could see that Bridget had been crying. As if it were still 1692, Bridget was wearing a floor-length black cotton dress with a red paragon bodice. Her long, dark hair was arranged in the prim Puritan style. She even wore a handkerchief hat.

“Em!” Bridget rushed to Em’s side.

Bridget threaded her arm through Em’s elbow.

“You can’t be here,” Em repeated.

The women watched the digital clock flick over to 10:18 a.m. The wind picked up, and a breeze blew through the small hill. Bridget sighed.

“I read online that people have seen the ghost of Bridget Bishop here,” Bridget said. Her eyes welled with tears. “Right here. Her specter is supposed to be here at the exact time she was hanged.”

“And here you are,” Em said with a wry smile.

“That’s not what they mean, and you know it,” Bridget said and scowled. “I thought . . . I thought . . .”

Bridget began to cry.

“You thought you’d come here and see the evil ghost that had tortured those poor, innocent girls.” Em’s voice was hard with ancient grief and rage.



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“I always felt badly for Mercy Lewis because her boyfriend died in the war.” Bridget bit her lip and nodded. “She lost her whole future. I mean, what else was she going to do?”

“She could have chosen not to accuse hundreds of innocent people of witchcraft,” Em said. “Including you and me.”

Bridget sighed at Em’s logic. Em gave Bridget a compassionate smile, which caused Bridget’s eyes to seep tears.

“They were just stupid little girls, Em,” Bridget said. “They didn’t mean . . .”

“I know you believe that,” Em said. She put her arm around Bridget’s shoulders — for her own comfort as much as Bridget’s.

“I *have* to,” Bridget said. “Look . . .”

Bridget dug around in her small tote bag until she found her cell phone. She poked at the phone for a moment until she found a video. She held it up for Em to see and pressed “Play.”

The video opened with a couple of teenagers talking about the Salem Witch Trials. They went through their research and their logical conclusion that Gallows Hill Park wasn’t where the accused witches of Salem Village were hanged. Instead, they climbed the hill where Em and Bridget were standing.

“Shit, Bridget!” Em said. “Now everyone’s going to . . .”

“Hush!” Bridget said. “You have to see this.”

Em looked around the hill. Seeing no one, she returned to watching the video. The teenagers stood on the hill behind the Walgreen’s and spoke of the ghost of Bridget Bishop. They claimed that Bridget Bishop’s ghost was breaking lights and scaring cats in the area. The ghost of Bridget Bishop was angry.

“I don’t know why they say that,” Bridget said. “I’m not angry.”

“You *do* hate cats,” Em said.

“I’d never scare them,” Bridget said. She glanced at Em. “Sweet things. You know they are guards for witches.”

“I’ve heard that once or twice,” Em said.

“From me,” Bridget said.

“From you,” Em said.

“You sure they’re not seeing a ghost that looks like me?” Bridget said. “I mean, those girls *said* they were tortured by something that looked like me, and . . .”

“The girls were liars, Bridg,” Em said. “The entire thing was bullshit.”

“Don’t swear, Em,” Bridget said. “It makes you seem like a lesbian.”

“There are worse things in the world than seeming like a lesbian,” Em said.

“Like being a lying, stupid girl?”

“Yes,” Em nodded.

Bridget smiled. Em sighed.



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"I'm a witch, not a lesbian, Bridget." Em's voice was impatient. "So are you. We were made witches on this very hill by the people who . . ."

Bridget sighed, and Em stopped talking. They had had this conversation at least once a year for more than three hundred years.

"Witches don't have to swear." Em parroted Bridget's usual point to appease her. "Even though we're cursed with immortality and magical powers, we don't have to be coarse."

"Exactly," Bridget said.

She turned on the video, and they watched the young men and women. The ghost hunters were going to have a ceremony around noon to try to soothe Bridget's soul.

"Are you going to that?" Em asked. "I bet you'd make it fun for them. Plus, you're dressed for the part."

"Oh." Bridget looked surprised. She shook her head. "No."

Em nodded. The women stood together on the tiny piece of grass and granite where their lives had been irrevocably changed. Bridget sighed.

"God, I hate it here," Bridget said.

"It's a pain in the neck," Em said. "That's for sure."

Despite herself, Bridget laughed.

"You going to say a prayer for me?" Bridget asked.

"Already did," Em said. "Do you need more than one?"

"Well . . ." Bridget gave Em a wheedling look. "You're so good at prayers."

Ignoring Bridget's comment, Em said, "Would you like to light your own rest-in-peace candle?"

"Let's do it together," Bridget said.

The women knelt down. Em pushed a small, thin, white candle into the ground on the location where Bridget had been hanged on this day so many years ago. Em snapped her fingers, and flame formed in the palm of her hand. Bridget did the same. The women blew, and the flame jumped from their hands to light the wick of the candle. Bridget sniffed.

"I wish . . ." Bridget started.

"Me, too," Em said.

Em stood up and helped Bridget to her feet. She scowled at Bridget's feet. Bridget was wearing shoes that looked suspiciously like those she'd been hanged in.

"You're wearing your hanging outfit?" Em asked.

"What else would I wear?" Bridget asked. "It is my hanging day."

Em scowled at Bridget, and the woman smiled at her. They started walking toward the parking lot.

"I did not die in this dress, if that's what you're thinking," Bridget said. "It's a copy. I told the seamstress that I'm such a *big* fan of Bridget Bishop."

"That you are," Em laughed.



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Bridget laughed. Em pointed to a white stretch limousine pulling around the Walgreen's.

"Sarah sent her driver for us," Em said.

"Goody Good has done well for herself," Bridget said.

"Don't call her that," Em said. "She hates it."

"I know." Bridget gave Em a smug look, and Em laughed.

"Are you going to stay here to wait for your young fans or go to brunch with everyone?"

"Are you going?" Bridget asked.

"Uh . . ." Em had planned to avoid this yearly ritual. She glanced at her Land Cruiser.

"Please?" Bridget asked.

Bridget shot Em another pleading look. Em shook her head at Bridget's innate capacity to manipulate anyone. Bridget gave her another pulse of a pleading smile.

"Sure," Em said finally.

The limousine stopped in front of them, and Sarah Good's driver stepped out to open the door for them. He closed the door with a bow.

"Ms. Good asked me to tell you that she will have you back here in time to get to the shop," the driver said.

"Thank you, Percy," Em said.

"Help yourself to the champagne," Percy the driver said.

Em gestured to the bottle of champagne. Bridget nodded.

"You're working today?" Bridget asked.

Em opened the bottle and poured two glasses.

"It's not my hanging day," Em said. She gave a glass to Bridget. Holding up her glass, she said, "To hanging."

"To becoming a witch," Bridget said.

Their glasses touched with a soft clink, and they each took a drink.

"Happy hanging day, Bridget," Em said. "I wish it hadn't happened, either. But it did. We have to make the best of it."

Nodding, Bridget smiled and emptied her glass.

"More?" Em asked.

Bridget gave Em a pleading smile, and Em laughed.

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"You're a *witch*!"



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A man's voice laced with vitriol echoed off the storefront. Several people walking on the sidewalk stopped to stare at him. Em glanced to her left to see a homeless man wearing ragged, dirty clothing, long, greasy, grey hair, and a filthy beard leaning against a pillar of the building next door to the Mystic Divine, Em's metaphysical shop.

"Repent!" the man screamed and pointed at her. His finger turned to point toward the heavens. "Repent or *feel* the wrath! The *hangman* is not far away!"

Em scowled at the man. He lifted a shoulder in a shrug.

"Old habits die hard," the man said with a grin. "Plus, the acoustics are great here."

Shaking her head at him, Em shifted her paper coffee cup to her left hand and dug around in her purse for her keys. The man walked toward her.

"Ye be a *witch*!" The man's voice came like a thunderbolt from a pulpit.

Em yelped with surprise. The plastic lid of her coffee cup dislodged, and her coffee spilled on the ground.

"George!" Em said. "You made me spill my coffee."

"Sorry, Em," Reverend George Burroughs said.

"You should be," Em said. "God, you smell awful!"

George gave her a gap-toothed smile.

"That is *not* a compliment," Em said.

George laughed. He leaned in to hug her, and she waved him away.

"Get inside," Em said.

George slunk into the shop. He stopped near the door and turned to hug her. Em shook her head. She gave him a key and waved her hands toward the stairs in the back of the shop. Whistling an ancient hymn, George went through the shop like a pungent parade. He took the stairs in the back and disappeared upstairs.

Em's eyes lingered on the door to her apartment a moment longer than she'd have liked. Shaking her head at herself, she started opening the small shop. She turned on Tiffany floor lamps and put away the few things left out the night before. The Mystic Divine specialized in all forms of spirituality. The most ardent evangelical Christian and the Wiccan could both find the tools and education they needed to live their spiritual life. The store was laid out in such a way that there were nooks for reading, small private rooms for spiritual readings, and two larger group rooms in the loft upstairs. Em picked up a microfiber cloth and dusted the section on Gurdieff's *The Fourth Way*. The shop made most of its income off of religious counseling and psychic readings. George was a particularly popular tarot reader.

She glanced at the door to her apartment and wondered if he was reading tonight. Longing welled up inside of her. In her mind's eye, she saw him standing under a stream of warm water in his shower. Feeling her presence, he smiled and gestured for her to join him.

"No," Em said out loud.



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She forced herself to get out her laptop and read her email. The next time she looked up, George was holding a cup of coffee in front of her nose. His long, grey hair was wet and tied back. He'd shaved. He was wearing clean clothes from his side of the closet. She took the mug from him, and he rewarded her with a soft smile. They drank coffee in hungry silence.

"What are you caught up in?" George asked.

"Some kids are into the whole Salem thing," Em said. "I was watching their videos. They've found Gallows Hill, you know — the real one, not the park."

"Oh, yeah?" George asked

"They say they've caught Bridget's ghost on camera."

"How is that possible?" George asked.

"Who knows?" Em shrugged. "Maybe we lost our souls when we were hanged."

George instinctively rubbed his neck. Em smiled at his gesture.

"How did this morning go?" George asked.

"Bridget was on the hill," Em said.

"What?" George squinted with surprise.

"She was even wearing a reproduction of the dress she was hanged in. Shoes, too."

"She can't be there!" George said.

"I told her, but you know how she is," Em said. "What's the point of . . ."

". . . being immortal if you can't do what you want," George joined Em in quoting Bridget.

"Exactly," Em said. "She told me about these kids. You know, Bridget's convinced that there was an actual specter that tormented our accusers."

"Bridget." George gave a sad shake of his head.

"You know, I never thought of it," Em said.

"Of what?" George asked.

"I never gave even one thought to the idea that there might have actually been an entity that tortured those girls," Em said. "I always thought they were . . ."

"Full of shit," George said in unison with her.

"But this morning," Em nodded, "I mean, Bridget was so sure that I wondered if she was onto something. Let's say there *was* an entity. It presented to the girls in our likeness. And . . ."

Em shook her head.

"And?" George raised his eyebrows. "Disappeared for the last three hundred and twenty-two years?"

"And nothing," Em said with a shrug. "That's as far as I got. Do you think it's possible?"

"No," George said.



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“Why?” Em asked.

“This *entity* would be responsible for giving us immortality and magical powers,” George said. “This entity would be a part of us, and . . .”

“The Devil,” Em said with him.

“Or God,” George said. “Remember, it was God who marked Cain.”

“Yes, Reverend, but Cain was only protected from being killed by others,” Em said. “As you know, we are truly immortal. Plus, I never killed my sibling.”

“Are you the child of the Devil, Em? Or marked by God?”

“No.” Em instinctively shivered. “No. I am only that from which I was made.”

“That’s because there are no devils, and we were not marked by God, Em,” George said. “The girls were psychopaths. They made everything up. You know that.”

“I do,” Em said. “Anyway, Bridget was hoping to catch a glimpse of this alternate version of herself.”

“And do what with it?” George asked.

“No idea,” Em said. “It’s Bridget. She didn’t really think it through.”

“Who are these kids?” George came around the counter to stand behind Em. She clicked to the website, and George read over her shoulder.

“High school, maybe college-aged, kids interested in investigating the whole Salem thing,” Em said. “They are *huge* fans of Bridget Bishop. They think she was incredibly brave for being hanged first.”

“Like she had a choice,” George said.

“I think any one of us would have preferred to be hanged first,” Em said. “Better than languishing in that stinking jail.”

“I honestly never thought they’d actually do it,” George said. “Right up to the end. And some days, I still can’t believe it happened.”

“That’s why you’re special, George Burroughs,” Em said. “You’re an optimist. Even after you were betrayed by your fellow man and hanged for your efforts, you still believe they are good at heart.”

“Guilty as charged,” George said.

Em leaned back into him. He wasn’t a large man by modern standards, but he was sturdy and strong. He put his arms around her waist and held her in his warm, loving arms.

“You think this is serious,” George said.

“With technology and the never-ending interest in our trials, it’s only a matter of time,” Em said with a nod. “Someone’s going to figure out that we’re still here. I showed you that article in the *Huffington Post*.”

“The one wondering where our skeletons are?” George asked. “In use, ma’am — thank you very much.”

“They’re going to go looking, and . . .”

Em swallowed hard. She shifted away from him, and he let go of her.

“And?”



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“It will start all over again,” Em said in a low voice.

“Maybe that’s a good thing,” George said. “People should know what they’re capable of creating with their hatred and fear.”

“Mmm,” Em said.

“Mmm?” George said.

“Even in 2014, Americans believe in evil people like they are a separate species,” Em said. “It’s not that different from 1692.”

“We could appeal to their reason,” George said.

“What reason is that?” Em asked.

“I know. I know,” George said. “I hear the foolishness in my own words and your voice in my head.”

“What do I say?” Em asked.

“How did that work out last time?” George asked. “You tried to reason with people who’d been your parishioners; the very same parishioners who had just a few years earlier professed their *love* for you!”

George shrugged.

“They thought I owed them money,” George said.

“You didn’t,” Em said. “They took your shirt and breeches off your dead body to repay their imagined debt.”

“And left me mostly unburied,” George said. “Yes, that much I do remember.”

George smiled.

“Where’s it get you, Em?” George asked.

“Where’s what get me?”

“All this cynicism,” George said.

“A visit from you,” Em said.

George laughed, and she smiled.

“You staying?” Em asked.

“I don’t know,” George said. “You want me to stay?”

Em turned around to look at him. Her eyes reviewed George Burroughs’ worn face. He’d never been a handsome man. The last hundred years or so, his body and mind had taken on a sense of permanence brought by being immortal. He was incredibly alluring.

“Was everyone at the party today?” George asked.

“Everyone but you,” Em said.

“How was it?” George asked.

Em shrugged.

“I’m the only stable one,” Em said. “I see everyone all the time. Whenever anyone’s in town, they stop by. They were happy to catch up with each other, but me . . . I see them all the time.”



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“How’s Giles?” George asked.

“Good. Happy,” Em said. “He bought that big horse farm upstate and has a new wife — young, pretty. He’s happy for Viagra.”

“He’s a witch,” George laughed. “What would he need Viagra for?”

“Don’t tell the wife,” Em said. “They don’t have kids, but he’s not worried about it. I mean, it’s not 1690. He’s talking about adopting from overseas.”

Em shrugged. George kissed the back of her head and moved out from behind her.

“Do you ever wish you were them?” Em asked.

“Them?” George asked.

“John Proctor, Rebecca Nurse, George Jacobs,” Em said.

“Those hanged who were reburied?” George asked.

“The human beings who didn’t transform, whose souls are at rest, probably because they were reburied by people who loved them,” Em said.

“Their families’ love saved them from this.”

“Not really,” George said.

“Why?”

“I’d miss this,” George said. “I’d miss you.”

“And the other witches?” Em smiled. “It’s a barn full of frisky mares, Mr. Burroughs.”

“Just you,” George said.

“You’re swearing off the others?” Em laughed at the idea.

“I’m saying I’d miss you,” George said. “This.”

“You are a charmer,” Em laughed.

“Wanna make some magic?” George asked.

“I need to open the shop,” Em said.

George clapped his fingertips together. The “Be back later” sign appeared on the door, and an unseen mist appeared around the shop to discourage people from coming to the door. Em smiled. George held out his hand. With a blink of her eye, they were lying on her bed in a cloud of white sheets and comforters. Her bedroom was expansive, with large, double-hung windows that looked out onto the Boston Common. The floors were made of wide wood planks, and the walls were painted a faint yellow.

“I love this room,” George said. His clothing disappeared with his words. He glanced at Em, and she was naked. “And the woman inside it.”

Em smiled.

“See, this,” George nodded for emphasis. “This is what we are alive for.”

“Mid-day screwing?” Em asked.

“Love,” George said.

“And magic,” Em said.



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“Let’s make some loving magic,” George said.

Let's make some loving magic, George said.