

## Warts and All

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I'm thirty-five. Unmarried, unloved, unattached, uninvolved, un-dateable, un ... un ... un.

I'm at my wits end trying to undo the "un" in my life.

Now I'm back in my old neighborhood. See if the three sisters are still living in the old house three doors down from us. Learn the sisters are very much alive and still in the house. I remember that house from my childhood. Slowly drive by. It's still just as scary.

Of course, I never believed the rumor. The one about them being witches. I was, and still am a science nerd. My *modus operandi* was, and still is, "prove it or shut up." No warts from frogs. No flying broomsticks. No bubbling pots. No mysterious explosions, unless you count my blown up test tubes in chem lab.

Can't believe I'm reduced to this level. But, I'm desperate.

Got her picture in my shirt pocket. Tucked behind my high school plastic pencil pocket protector. My original P4. Yep, I bought it twenty years ago and still use it. Think I may have set a Guinness record for consecutive year's use of a plastic pencil pocket protector.

Each night I lovingly wipe it down. Use a cotton swab dipped in warm soapy water. Non-detergent. Then hang it from the shower rod. A bent paperclip holds the protector open so it will air dry by morning. Ready for another day.

Wonder if this compulsiveness about my P4 may be a reason I'm still wrestling with the "un" in my life. Accepting my P4 seems to me a small adjustment to make ... for someone who's supposedly going to spend her life with me.

Maybe I'll ask the sisters.

An old knotted piece of rope hangs down. It's the door chime cord. I pull it and a bell gongs inside. Sounds like the Liberty Bell. The heavy oak door pulls slowly inward. Three faces peer around the edge of the door, stacked one on top of the other. All three have identical warts on the right side of their nose. All three have four fingers and a stub on the hand wrapped around the door edge. All three have an ugly hairy mole just above their right eyebrow.

Fortunately, my science brain kicks in. Instead of laughing out loud, I study each face. Checking them as I would perfect little Petri dishes under the electron microscopes in my lab.

"I need your assistance," I say. My eyes dart from wart ... to stub ... to hairy mole.

“We know,” they respond. Perfect pitch. In unison ...soprano, alto, tenor. Soprano from the tall witch. Alto from the taller witch. Tenor from the tallest.

“I can’t get anyone to fall in love with me.”

“We know,” is their singsong response.

“I hope you can help me.”

“We can,” they sing in their song voices. “Come in.”

Still in unison, I hear, “We’ve been expecting you. Ever since you graduated from high school. You’re hopeless. You’ll stay in your ‘un-state’ unless you allow us to help you.”

“But it’s not for me. I need something to give to someone else.”

“No you don’t. It’s about you. We have something to give to you. As you say, ‘prove it or shut up about it.’ Come into to our Science Fair project room. We’ve sung long enough.”

They walk single file around the corner. Tallest, taller and tall, humming in unison. We enter an octagonal high ceiling room ... lined with shelves filled with stacked vials, canisters, beakers, jugs, old tobacco cans, Mason jars, Campbell's soup cans and Beechnut baby food jars.

Bubbling and gurgling in the middle of the room, a huge copper cauldron straddles a fire pit of red hot coals. I walk past. Glance in the pot. It resembles a vat of old-fashioned oatmeal.

They pause, "Don't panic. That's our oatmeal. We have what you need ... back here in the fridge."

A sigh of relief seeps through my lips. They laugh out loud. Not a cackle. But a melody in perfect harmony and pitch.

We line up in front of a stainless steel Subzero double-door 32 cubic foot refrigerator. Complete with ice and water dispenser on the front. I didn't realize witching produced that kind of income stream. The tallest reaches in, removes an old Mason jar from the farthest region of the top shelf.

“Made this for you 19 years ago ... one year after we noticed you kept your plastic pencil pocket protector from the 11<sup>th</sup> grade to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Knew then you were a problem ... and eventually would have to come to us for help. It’s our special passion potion for science nerds. Comes with our -Three Sisters’ Unlimited Guarantee-.”

“What do I owe you?” I ask quietly.

“Nothing. You’ve already paid with twenty years of entertainment for us. We’ve watched every date you’ve had ... from our oatmeal vat. You don’t think we eat that stuff, do you?” This time they definitely cackled.

“Thirty minutes before your next date, just drink this. Your heart will open and allow you to feel ... without investigating. Oh, and it’ll melt that damn plastic pencil pocket protector once and for all. You’ll never miss it.”

With a shy smile I leave the sisters. Mason jar tightly clutched to my chest, right over my heart. Off to my personal love-life lab.

To prove it once and for all.

**(901 Words)**

