Chapter Three…

It was over the course of the next few months where Melva’s hypothesis was truly tested.

Despite not actively trying to gain any weight, the spell-slinger found herself steadily increasing in size as the habits that she had learned at her Aunt Wanda’s (not to mention the sweet tooth that had been awoken within her) continued to inform her day-to-day life now that she was back in the city of Three Crowns. From sleeping late to eating heartily and the newfound ability to summon golems to do the household chores for her, Melva certainly wasn’t shrinking back into her old summer wardrobe any time soon.

“Huff… slow down!” Melva cried out to the always energetic Jeannie as the shorter witch sped ahead of her down the cobblestone street, “The bakery’s not *going* anywhere, you know!”

The tummy and legs trotting after the skinny, spritely Jeannie was none other than Melva—formerly inept at magic and formerly quite thin. But after a year and some change away at her Aunt’s tower in the Eldermoor, she had picked up more than a few habits in addition to the magical prowess that she now possessed. And as prodigious as the paunch was that bulged out from underneath her loosest top, and as round as the cheeks were that seemed to bounce with each of her heavy steps, Melva was just as skilled in spell-slinging—perhaps even moreso!

“With how slow you go, it might go out of business sometime between now and the next ten years it’s taking us to get there!” Jeannie hollered back, hands on her hips, “Come on already, pick up the pace! It’s not that far!”

“*My thighs are chafing!*”

Melva had grown rather accustomed to the sedentary lifestyle. What’s more, she had become more than used to being able to lay around her house all day and let her broom golems tend to her chores, the cooking, the cleaning… pretty much everything except for stuffing her face! With all of that time freed up to practice her magical talents, it was hard to tell which one was rising more quickly, her potential, or the amount of pudge that clung to her once svelte figure. Never mind the fact that she was still pretty convinced that the there was a correlation between the two of them.

By the time that they reached the bakery, Melva was actually out of breath from the short jaunt. One would have thought she was lugging around twice the extra heft, rather than the…

Okay, rather than the admittedly pretty sizeable gain that she had endured. Enough to more than double herself in size, for sure—but *not* enough for her to act like she had just walked a marathon when her street was still visible from the next street over.

The soft chime over the door sounded as soon as it parted from the wall, Jeannie leading the charge into the bakery while Melva walked tummy-first into the territory of tempting treats. She had been glancing around all the way from the outside looking in, her little fingers drumming politely on top of her tummy as she licked her lips in anticipation of what she might indulge herself in. In fact she had been so excited to get her snacking on that she had hardly noticed the familiar shapes and faces that were already awaiting her inside…

“Hey Melva, Hey Jeannie.” The witchboy behind the counter said with a wave of his hand, “Y’all are here early today.”

“Yeah, well, with *this one* is that really all that surprising?” Jeannie jabbed a thumb in Melva’s direction as the weighty witch threw up a powerful pout, “I’ll try to reign her in where I can.”

“*JEANNIE.*”

The man behind the counter was Luke, the son of another well-to-do witch from Three Crowns. The three of them had known each other on some level for some time, though rather than in the academic sense, more just him being around the city. Witches and Witchboys often got along together, due to the similar environments that both were raised in—although these dynamics were not without their inherent complications, since—

“Oh my *goodness!*” A sharp, shrill voice came from the other side of the bakery, “It *is* Melva! And widdle Emma Jean too! …oof, looking a *lot* widdler next to this *waddler*.”

Instantly the rapport that the three old friends had been building was swiftly swept under the rug as the distinctive omen that was Daphne of Merlinwood descended upon their conversation. Sauntering over just like she had back when they were schoolgirls, hands on her hips and one leg fighting the other in that tight, high-waisted skirt of hers. The only thing bigger than that ego of hers was that stupid hat that she insisted on wearing everywhere she went, as if having a wide brim and a nasty disposition was enough to make her the Supreme Witch of anything.

It *wasn’t.*

“Oh. Hello Daphne. What a lovely surprise to see you.”

Melva’s voice dripped with venom as the words forced themselves through her teeth. For the first time in more than a year, she felt her appetite curdle deep inside her belly as she came face to face with the most uppity witch that she had ever had the severe misfortune to endure. And of course, leave it to one of the few officiallysobriqueted spell slingers of her graduating class to snatch up the fact that Melva had put on weight to feed her ego.

“Hard *not* to see you, Melva.” Her silky black locks swayed as she shifted her weight sarcastically to one hip, “I see that that *aunt* of yours really knows how to treat her guests!”

Here, Daphne’s bright purple eyes traced down the slope of Melva’s stomach as it jutted forward, that contemplative sneer that she wore so proudly like her stupid fucking hat growing that much more self-satisfied.

“I had heard that you’d learned a spell or two while you were away… obviously you didn’t pick up any glamor charms while you were away on your little remedial vacation. How *ever* did the College of Three Crowns let you get hooded?”

“Hey! I’ve picked up a lot of things!” Melva furrowed her brow as her chubby knuckles whitened

“And by that I’m assuming that you mean *pounds?”* A cocky little raise of her eyebrow, “And that you’re being *modest?*”

“Oooogh…”

Melva had learned many things while she was away at her Aunt Wanda’s tower. But one of the disciplines of magic that she had not studied was how exactly to *control* her emotions and the magical outbursts that might ensue. As the dust motes began to swirl around her belly-heavy shape and a slight breeze began to form in the small bakery shop around them, Luke was forced to step in.

“H-Hey now ladies, come on—” the young witchboy plead as he got between the two of them, hand on both of their torsos as he tried to separate them, “Let’s not do anything rash! Certainly not where the product is…”

But it was too late! Melva was unable to hold back the flood of emotions and anger that Daphne made her feel, and the ebony-haired sorceress was pushed back with a strong *push* of magical energy!

…not *far* mind you. Or especially *hard.* But there was a noticeable and audible impact against her torso. One that even the loathe-to-admit defeat Daphne would be hard-pressed to deny.

“You… You didn’t even cast a spell!” she furrowed her black brow in anger and curiosity, “How in the world did a Can’t Spell like you figure out—”

The gears turning behind those pretty purple eyes of hers ground just a little too hard for her liking. The frustration that she felt and that little slip that sounded *almost* impressed with Melva’s abilities and potential said far more than she ever could have. At least while she was stuck in her Mean Girl demeanor and refusing to acknowledge her progress.

“*Ugh.* Witchboy, I’ll be taking my profiteroles *to go* thank you very much.”

Daphne slammed some Gold on the counter of the bakery, grabbed the offered treats in the sad paper bag that Luke handed her, and slammed the door behind her. It was far more obvious in *that* display that Melva’s progress had really gotten to her. To the point where all Luke could do was let out a low whistle.

“Dang. I don’t think I’ve ever seen her get that mad before.”

“That was *so* cool.” Jeannie said, stars practically in her eyes, “You might really be onto something, Vemmy!”

“I… guess I *am* more powerful now that I’ve put on weight…”

Melva had long suspected it. At least, she had convinced herself that it was true enough that she didn’t need to diet. But seeing this form of validation—knowing that she had impressed *Daphne of Merlinwood* of all people, the haughtiest high witch in all of Three Crowns into a stunned silence—it resonated deeply within her. Looking down at her hands… and then at her belly as it domed out beneath that dress of hers… Melva was overcome with the satisfaction of *knowing* what she had to do next…

“Luke, I want the biggest cake that you have in stock.” She turned quickly to face the witchboy who had finagled himself behind the counter, “And a plate of cookies!”

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Daphne of Merlinwood had always had been something of a comfort eater—not to the extend that it had ever impacted her appearance (even during her final exams at Three Crowns; as far as everyone else was concerned, she was just that good!) but the profiteroles that she had ordered from that podunk little pastry shop had barely lasted the way back to her mansion.

“That… that… *loser!”* Daphne spewed and sputtered crumbs angrily as she fumed over what had happened at the bakery just an hour before, “How could Can’t Spell Melva make such marked improvement?! That woman couldn’t have casted a light in a dark dungeon, let alone *push* me with sheer magical energy… *I* can’t even do that without an incantation!”

Crossing her arms over her chest, Daphne’s ivory skin burned a bright pink as she stewed and festered over it, using one hand to shove half of the last profiterole into her piehole as she pouted over it some more.

“That stupid, fat, *stupid* little… I could… mrpfm…”

Somewhere in replaying it in her mind and munching on the little teacake that she had *intended* to enjoy before being so rudely interrupted and incensed, Daphne’s highly trained academic mind formed a link between what had happened and what she was doing.

Melva had gotten fat, sure. But she had also gotten… more powerful? As in, maybe her *weight…*

“That’s fucking stupid. Nobody’s *that* fucking stupid…”

But still, the results were hard to deny. Skinny Melva was a little Can’t Spell who managed to get through their Hooding with nothing but technical resources over the pitiful amounts of power that she possessed. But now that she was fat, Melva could harness the magical energies inside of her effortlessly!

Perhaps there was something to that idea? Maybe she should go with it…

“I don’t exactly have anything to *lose,* do I?” Daphne cocked an eyebrow curiously as she eyed the last bit of teacake, “After all, I’m one of the best Glamor Charmsters in the land…”

As she took off her charmed obsidian necklace and let herself go, spreading contentedly into enchanted clothing designed to stretch, Daphne was almost excited at the prospect of getting to let loose for once.

“It’s not like anyone would ever notice a few *more* extra pounds, would they?”