

MUM’S BOYFRIEND BITES

By Rowan le Fay

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Elena Painter had always wished her airhead mum could have at least spelled her name correctly, as it was pronounced Eleanor. She was getting ready for school when the usual argument erupted between her mum, whose name was Tasha and her older sister Vikki – it would have been Vicky or Victoria, but Tasha couldn’t spell those names either.

The fights were always silly. Anything could trigger them off. Most of them started because Vikki didn’t want mum picking her up from school. Or because she didn’t want to do whatever activity Tasha had arranged for them. But this time it was because mum wasn’t included in Vikki’s plans to go shopping with her friends after school. Tasha always got upset when Vikki didn’t include her in anything. Although they fought like cat and dog, mum believed that she and Vikki were besties. But in Vikki’s opinion, Tasha was her nemesis.

Elena, who was ten years old, stared into her bedroom mirror, combing her long black hair exactly thirteen times on both sides, including the back as well, when this current argument started. As she listened, she cast her mind back to the year before. She thought to herself she should have let that Vampire take her mum and sister away. Why had she gone to the bother of rescuing them?! She supposed it was because she loved them really, deep down. But she wished they would both shut up! If only Mr Alder would teach her a spell of silence.

Officially, Mr Alder was Elena’s ‘educational support teacher,’ because the psychiatrists and doctors had diagnosed her as having Autism and ADHD. However, what the specialists didn’t know was that every 1 in 3 people with a form of autism are gifted with Magic. Elena was one of these exceptional people. She was a Witch, just like Mr Alder, who had first spotted her magical talent at school. He suggested to the Head Mistress and school counsellor that Elena be placed in the ‘educational support’ program.

But the educational support program, or the E.S.P, was really where Elena went for an hour after every school day and once a week during P.E lessons to learn Magic with the other Witch children. She loved going to the E.S.P and wished she could do that all day instead of mundane school which she hated. The regular teachers were horrible, and she didn’t fit in with the neurotypical students. They irritated her with their loud noises, always teasing her for being weird and because she would get in trouble a lot for daydreaming. Unfortunately, Mr Alder refused to teach the Witch children how to turn people into frogs, otherwise Elena would have done it to her regular classmates already.

During the E.S.P Magic lessons Elena could really be herself. There weren’t many other Witch children in her school, but she was friends with all the ones that were. She thought of Mr Alder not only as her favourite teacher, but her best friend too. He didn’t think she was weird. He listened, he encouraged her, and he taught all the student Witches cool potions and magic spells. Such as the homework spell, which transformed any blank paper into completed mundane homework assignments. Elena still had to do her Witch homework the regular way, but she didn’t mind doing this because she enjoyed learning Magic.

That is, of course, when she could concentrate on her Magical homework, when her mum and Vikki were not screaming at each other like banshees. It was so annoying, because Elena couldn’t focus on her spells. If the wrong ingredients were mixed or the wrong incantations spoken, then the effects could be disastrous... or just wouldn’t work. It was very stressful being a kid Witch living in a noisy flat with two idiots who you couldn’t turn into frogs.

At school, Elena must have begged Mr Alder about a million times to teach her spells of transmogrification. Mr Alder would raise his voice a little and reply with, “Absolutely not, Eleanor! I will not teach you how to turn your mum and sister into frogs!”

Elena was disappointed of course, but she couldn’t be angry with Mr Alder. At least he pronounced her name correctly, the way she liked it. He never failed to call her Eleanor – as it should be spelt! Mr Alder understood it was important to Elena, perhaps because the horrible kids at school would call him Miss or Mrs Alder because they were mean and stupid. It bothered Elena when she overheard the students tease Mr Alder for being a Transgender Man. He had never needed to explain who he was to Elena because she recognised the Witch in him and could see that he was a kind person and that was all that mattered to her. And it was so simple too, why didn’t regular people understand?! Mr Alder might have been born as a girl, but he was now a man! It isn’t complicated!

Elena knew this was why she and the other Witch children could not tell anyone else that they were Witches, not even their parents. If some people could not accept Mr Alder for being Trans, then how would they react to Witches and Magic being real? In olden times they used to burn people who they thought were Witches at the stake. But Mr Alder had taught his students that real Witches hid from these persecutions, and they must continue to hide now. It wasn’t just regular people they needed to hide from. There were other creatures, older and more dangerous who hunted Witches too.

Hiding was never a problem for Elena. Even before she discovered that she was a Witch she was able to become not quite invisible, but unnoticeable would be a more accurate description. Sometimes, when she didn’t mean to, people could not see her when they were looking directly at her. It wasn’t because she was small or anything like that. She was simply unseen. Most of the time she didn’t mind being unnoticeable, because she could avoid people who were annoying her. Or she could sneak off to somewhere quiet where she could be with her thoughts or wander off to the nearby woods and talk to the animals she had befriended. But at other times it was frustrating when people who couldn’t see her would walk into her or get cross with her for *apparently* sneaking up on them as if she had appeared out of nowhere. She was often overlooked, excluded and forgotten, and sometimes this could be quite lonely. Elena tried not to think about this too much because when she did it upset her.

Vikki was four years older than Elena and got most of their Mum’s attention. Tasha Painter loved both of her children equally, she never ignored Elena on purpose, though there were times when Elena would be in the same room and her mum couldn’t see her. But most of the time it was because Tasha was too busy trying to reclaim her youth and be like twins with Vikki. She had

been this way since dad had abandoned them all. Tasha would try and dress like her eldest daughter, which often meant she would wear clothes that didn’t fit her, because they were made for teenagers and not thirty-four-year-old women.

Tasha’s foolishness and delusions had nearly got herself turned into a vampire and Vikki and Elena were almost killed. It happened one year ago to the day, and as usual it too started with an argument. Vikki had got an invite to a friend’s thirteenth birthday party, and *obviously* Vikki just had to buy herself a new outfit. But she didn’t have any money. Which meant she would have to ask Tasha. But she had to try and not let her mum find out about the party, or she would want to come along as well.

“You’ve had your pocket money for this week. I’m not giving you anymore.” Said Tasha.

“But muuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuum! I need to buy new clothes!” Vikki complained in that annoying voice all teenagers used.

Elena was sat on the hot pink corduroy sofa in the living room, while this conversation was going on. She was playing with her rain-stick sensory toy, which she could use magically to make rain if she wished it. But at that time, she was mesmerised by the multicoloured balls flying down clear plastic tube, making the sound of falling rain. It soothed and kept her calm. She needed to use her rain-stick whenever she could sense an argument brewing.

“Why?” Tasha raised an eyebrow, which she had - back then - recently gone to get threaded and shaped with Vikki and her best friend Kleo (Kleo’s mother couldn’t spell properly either)

Vikki was stuck now. She had hoped she could have avoided an interrogation. But Tasha had to know every single detail of her daughter’s life. “I need a new outfit for Cheyanne’s birthday party.” Vikki answered reluctantly.

Tasha’s eyes lit up, Vikki had slipped up, there was no way she could have stopped her Mum. Tasha insisted on buying Vikki a new outfit for Cheyanne’s birthday party, she would get one for herself too, despite Vikki’s protests. Elena was dragged along on the tedious shopping trip to town, made all the worse by Tasha and Vikki bickering in the car. Vikki was adamant that her mum was not going to the party, while Tasha was adamant that she was! That argument only ended when Tasha threatened to ground Vikki for her stropky attitude, which

meant they both wouldn’t be able to go to the party. But Elena had suspected that this was an empty threat, most of Tasha’s threats were. Mum wasn’t good at disciplining Vikki, her bestie, as she’d often call her, much to Vikki’s disgust.

On the day of Cheyanne’s party, which Vikki had been dreading, Tasha got a text from the babysitter who was supposed to watch over Elena that evening. The sitter had to cancel due to some excuse or another. There was no one else available to watch Elena, Tasha had tried everyone she knew. Vikki thought she could breathe a sigh of relief, thinking her mum would have to miss the party. Instead, Tasha decided to bring Elena along with them. Both Vikki and Elena could have cried. Vikki didn’t want her mum and little sister there to embarrass her. And Elena hated parties, they were too crowded, very chaotic and unbearably loud, they made her very uncomfortable.

“It’ll be alright girls. Mummy will be there. We’re going to have the best time ever.” Tasha told her daughters, who exchanged knowing, sisterly looks with each other.

As Elena had expected, the party was terrible with all the people running about screaming, whooping or trying miserably to sing. The flashing disco lights in the darkened hall rented out for the party, the loud thumping music, balloons popping, it was too much stimulation! She wanted to go home and play with her rain-stick! She wanted to disappear and slip out of the hall, however she couldn’t as Tasha had plonked Elena at a table with Cheyanne’s ancient great-grandmother who kept talking to her. But Elena couldn’t hear the old lady over the loud music, and the old lady was deaf so she couldn’t hear the complaints Elena was making. But the old woman would not take her eyes off Elena so even if she could concentrate on her magic, she couldn’t escape the waking nightmare.

Vikki also had a dreadful time at the birthday party, because Tasha did everything a mother could do to humiliate her daughter. Although that was not her intention, she merely wanted to have fun with her daughter. But mum danced like a drunk penguin. Then she started to sing badly at the top of her voice, getting all the lyrics wrong. She told embarrassing stories about Vikki to all her friends and pointed out which boys her daughter fancied. And if that wasn’t bad enough, Tasha photobombed all the selfies that Vikki was taking with her friends.

That had been the last straw for Vikki. She stormed up to her mother and began an ugly argument. She finished it off by screaming the terrible words that

no parent wants to hear. “I wish I had a different mum! You’re so embarrassing! I hate you!” Vikki would regret what she had said later, but at that moment, she felt justified in saying it. She stomped off to one side of the hall, while Tasha ran out in tears.

Elena had been at the table with the extremely old lady. She witnessed the entire screaming match along with everyone else in the hall. She wanted to go after her Mum to see if she was alright, but Cheyanne’s great-grandmother would not let her leave. “No-no my dear. Your mummy needs a few minutes to herself. You stay with me my dear.” The old lady fussed.

Elena thought of a quick excuse to say, “I just need to go to the toilet.” She hopped off her chair and headed towards the toilets, with the old great-grandmother muttering “Loo dear, young ladies should say loo instead of toilet.” Feeling annoyed at being corrected by an ancient relic, she made her way through the crowd of people on the way to the *‘TOILET!’*

But once she arrived at the toilets, she quickly diverted while the old lady was looking elsewhere, and made her way, unseen, towards the exit to go after her mum. She looked back at Vikki who was with Cheyanne and their group of friends, laughing and joking, Elena could have kicked her older sister in the shins for making their mum cry like she did. It wasn’t right. Mum may have been annoying, but how could Vikki say those horrible things to hurt her so. Elena had to go and cheer her mum up.

When Elena stepped outside though, she saw that her mum wasn’t crying. Instead, she was chatting to a tall man dressed all in black, pale as the moon with dark rings around his eyes that made him look like a panda, but a very skinny panda as the man looked like he needed feeding. Elena didn’t know if he was a guest at the party, or a parent to one of Cheyanne’s friends, or if he worked in the hall or if he had fallen out of the sky. She didn’t care, all that mattered was that her mum was smiling. The tall man had a kind of model-like quality about him. He was what Vikki and mum would call a ‘Hottie!’ Elena knew this because she could see her mum was already besotted with the man.

Seeing that her mum did not need cheering up after all, Elena went to her mum’s car, unlocked it with a snap of her fingers, sat in the back seat and played with her rain-stick. As she waited for the party to end so she could go home, she thought, at least her mum was happy again. And with Vikki now able to enjoy herself at the party, hopefully there wouldn’t be another argument during the

ride home. Little did Elena know then that the man in black who had been talking to her mum was going to be a big problem.

He claimed his name was Ben U.R.R Watcher. He wouldn’t reveal what the U.R.R stood for in his middle name, when Elena asked him, the first time he came round the flat for a visit three days after Cheyanne’s party. At first Mum introduced Ben as just a friend. By the next week they were dating, and after three weeks they were an official couple.

Vikki was of course loving the situation, because Mum was out nearly every night with Ben. Occasionally she would be made to babysit Elena, but it was worth it to Vikki to not have her mum always trying to take over her life, acting like she was her bestie all the time.

However, Elena had by that point been growing suspicious of Ben and his relationship with her mum. He’d started to come round visiting Tasha in the flat a lot more, but only after he’d been invited in and only after sunset. Elena had never seen him in the daytime. He always wore black. He got skittish, like a frightened puppy if he saw a mirror. And he said that the smell of garlic made him feel sick. Elena briefly wondered if he had autism like her, because some of these little quirks Ben had seemed like traits of autism & ADHD. But she dismissed this theory. She couldn’t explain why, but she just didn’t trust Ben. He would look at her, at Vikki and their mum like they were all dinner.

She’d noticed a change in her mum’s appearance and personality since she’d started dating Ben. Tasha was wearing all black lately instead of the usual pink and bold colours she copied from Vikki’s wardrobe. She was able to fit into the clothes that her daughter wore as she had lost loads of weight and was becoming paler. She was tired a lot during the daytime. It seemed like all the colour and life was being drained out of her. She was drying up like a grape, becoming a raisin. Whatever was happening to her, it wasn’t natural. And Elena knew that it had something to do with Ben.

The only person she could share her concerns with was Mr Alder. After she had explained everything that was happening with her mother along with Ben’s peculiar behaviour, Mr Alder concluded that Ben U.R.R Watcher might possibly be a Vampire. If that was the case, then Elena and her family would be in grave danger.

Mr Alder told Elena that she needed to get evidence to prove if Ben U.R.R. Watcher was a Vampire. If he was then he could be properly dealt with by senior Witches, professionally trained at battling Vampires. For her own safety, Mr Alder gave Elena a sunstone crystal charged with by the power from the first light of dawn. He told her it would protect her from Vampires, but he made her promise that she wouldn’t confront Ben on her own, if he was indeed a deadly Vampire.

While Elena *did* promise Mr Alder, that she would absolutely not, under any circumstances, never-ever, try to fight a Vampire, her teacher hadn’t accounted for the event of Ben holding her mother and sister hostage in her flat. Mr Alder had instructed Elena to see if Ben had a reflection in a mirror, or to throw a handful of salt or sugar in front of him and see if he had to count every single grain, as all Vampires had a counting habit. But Mr Alder, had not told her what to do if she found her mum and sister unconscious and tied up in the living room, while Ben waited for her to come home. He must have been hiding in the flat all day, waiting for the sun to set.

“Greetings Eleanor.” Ben grinned, exposing his sharp fangs, as Elena entered the living room. At least he pronounced her name correctly. The monster had manners. But Elena was too concerned about her mum and sister’s safety to notice at that time. She was afraid, her emotions were overwhelming her. The stress and frustration made her angry.

“Let my mum and sister go! Now!” Elena growled as loud as she could raise her voice.

Ben threw his head back and laughed a deep booming laugh. “Gladly. But only on the condition that you come with me.”

“Why?!” She snarled at him like a dragon. She was too young to be taught how to conjure fire, it was too dangerous, especially in the furious state she was in. But if she could, she would have spat flames at the vampire. She couldn’t focus. Her head felt like a noisy pinball machine, bouncing, clacking, whistling, and flashing chaotically, making her agitated.

“Because I need a young Witch who I can turn into a weapon against my human and magical enemies.” Said Ben, steepling his fingers together, which annoyed Elena because she couldn’t do that. There were lots of nifty things like steepling of the fingers that Elena wished she could do but couldn’t. But on the

flip side Elena could do lots of things that others couldn’t, she could pop all her finger joints, she could cross her eyes and wiggle her ears. She could also do magic. And despite what her mundane school grades stated, she was exceptionally bright and clever.

In her bones Elena knew she could defeat Ben and wipe the stupid grin off his stupid face. She had the sunstone in her pocket, but before she could use it, she needed to get him away from her mum and Vikki. And if she could keep Ben talking, then she’d have time to calm her mind so she could focus her magic.

“How did you know I’m a Witch?” Elena said, playing for time.

“I can smell your magic. You are very powerful. And with my training you will be unstoppable. My enemies won’t stand a chance against you.” Said Ben.

“Who are your enemies?” Elena asked.

“I have acquired many enemies over the centuries. You will learn all about them over the course of your training. Unless you refuse to come with me. Just know that if you do, I will kill your idiot mother and brat sister before I kill you.” Ben said, and Elena knew that he meant it. She tried to remain calm in the face of fear.

“Wait-wait-wait! Before I agree to come with you, I just want to know, what does the U.R.R stand for in your name?” Said Elena, trying keep her voice level, hiding her worry and panic.

The Vampire fixed Elena with a curious look. “You are a very strange child.” He said before throwing his head back, laughing again.

While he was distracted, Elena spotted her rain-stick sensory toy on the coffee table. She quickly stretched out her hand, commanding the rain-stick to her with magic. The laughing Vampire didn’t notice it fly across the room into Elena’s hand, which she then hid behind her back.

“Ben U.R.R Watcher is just an alias. We Vampires, those of us who are cunning, strong and clever enough to stay alive for hundreds of years, adopt so many names. Ben U.R.R Watcher is an anagram of my real name, which is, Warren Butcher.” He explained, with a slimy grin.

Elena paused to think, her brown eyes looked up into her head while she scrambled the words around in her mind to see if Ben or Warren was telling the truth. She finally concluded that he was right, the two names did have the same letters, and this greatly annoyed her for one reason, which she explained to the vampire.

“You are hundreds of years old and that was the best name you could think of?! That’s stupid! The U.R.R doesn’t even make sense! Vampires are so dumb!” She yelled, stomping her feet on the ground.

“Careful, little girl. Just because I need your magic, doesn’t mean I won’t cause you great pain.” He threatened her.

By this point Elena was fuming, she’d had all she was going to take of this Vampire now. “BITE ME!” She hissed at him before smashing the rain-stick on the ground. The plastic shattered into pieces and the tiny multi-coloured balls rolled across the floor in every direction.

All of a sudden, the Vampire, moving supernaturally fast, fell to his knees and started gathering the tiny balls, putting them into neat piles in their separate colours, counting them as he went along. Elena was stunned by this strange behaviour; she had to stop and watch Warren painstakingly separate and count the hundreds if not thousands of little plastic balls, then she came to her senses, took the sunstone out of her pocket, ran over to the vampire while he was distracted and pressed the golden yellow crystal against his forehead.

Once the sunstone made contact with Warren’s cold and dead skin, it felt hot in Elena’s hand. She held on to the crystal with all her might, pressing it further into Warren’s face, making his forehead burn and sizzle. He screamed out in pain, but he would not stop counting the multi-coloured balls. The sunstone began to glow, getting brighter and brighter, Elena could feel the magic power building inside it. She stirred her own magic into the sunstone’s energy, and wished with all her heart that Warren would disappear.

Then the sunstone burst into a light as bright as sunshine, Elena had to look away. When the light had faded, and Elena could see again she noticed two things. One, Warren and the fragments of sunstone had completely disappeared. Two, all the balls from her rain-stick were assembled in neat piles in colour order.

Mum and Vikki eventually regained consciousness, but neither one of them remembered what had happened to them, nor did they have any idea who Ben U.R.R Watcher was. They both claimed that they had never heard such a ridiculous name. Mum didn’t even remember having a boyfriend for those past few weeks. But what was really amazing was for a brief time, Mum and Vikki were being civil and weren’t constantly at each other’s throats. That lasted for about a day. Elena didn’t mind, she was just relieved that her Mum and Sister were safe.

Elena later found out from Mr Alder that Warren Butcher was one of the most blood-thirsty Vampires in history, but he said this after he had finished telling her off for fighting a Vampire on her own. But Elena thought that while Mr Alder was telling her off, he was also congratulating her. He was over the moon that she was safe and beyond proud of how talented she was. She was most likely the only nine-year-old Witch with autism who had slain a Vampire.

Elena was proud of herself too, however, there was still a strange feeling she had which told her that she hadn’t seen the last of Warren Butcher. But she knew that if he was still lurking out there, he’d think twice before coming for her or her family again.

When Elena, looked back on that memory while she got ready for school, and recalled the incident with her mum’s vampiric ex-boyfriend, she told herself that she could not be too angry while her sister and mum argued over nothing. She loved her annoying little family really. After all, they had been worth going through the effort of fighting an extremely dangerous Vampire. And she knew that one day she would learn the spell of how to turn them into frogs, just as a precaution, if they ever got too annoying that is.