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SMASHWORDS EDITION

THE INTERCESSOR

THE BEGINNING

FOREWORD

When Abigail decides to start a new life in a new home; she does not realise how much things will change for her forever.

Although the previous owner of her house has died, she has not exactly moved on. She must teach Abigail the ways of the Intercessor, a race of women born with a unique gift; and she is next in line.

She discovers that the fairies and ominous beings, she imagined as a child, really do exist. It was now up to her to keep the balance of good and evil in the Mythical world, and soon a battle would begin that would test her to her limits. If she fails, then all those in both worlds will be in danger. Can she succeed and keep the Human race safe?

PROLOGUE

First you have to know what I look like. I am a small woman, only 4 foot 11 inches, medium build, long brown hair. There is nothing special about me to look at, just an average person. It's what I was born to do that makes me far from normal.

My life could never have been described as normal when growing up, if truth be told. It became near, when I became a writer of books, and a successful one. I had enough money to pay my bills and live comfortably.

Looking back now, most of my life had been spent in training for the position I was destined to take. I would like to tell you about myself, and the life I now lead, but I ask you first, keep an open mind. If only one of you who read this believe me, then it is one more I can hopefully call an ally. If you think this is nothing but a work of fiction; then I hope you at least enjoy the read.

Well here it goes! This is how it all began.

CHAPTER 1

When I was young, I could never sleep with the wardrobe door open. Every night I religiously checked under my bed for the illusive monster or bogeyman that might be lurking there. Even though I never saw anything, as I turned out my bedroom light, I would run and jump into the middle of my bed. I would secure the blankets under me so nothing could creep in as I slept. Just because I couldn't see them, it didn't mean they weren't there. I was sure I could feel their presence.

Once in my bed, my eyes were always squeezed tight shut. I did not want to see anything from my nightmares, become a reality. My main fear was catching sight of the trees, silhouetted by the street light onto my ceiling and walls. I had been brave once, and opened my eyes for a short while. I would never make that mistake again. I saw changing shapes as they swayed in the wind. I would have sworn, at that time, under oath, they were morphing into evil creatures. The longer I looked, the shapes took form, mocking me and daring me to watch. Luckily, I shut my eyes before they had fully formed. I thought, if I had not, they would have snatched me away to the dark malevolent place they came from. I was determined never to give them the chance. My fears stayed with me through my younger years, dreading the darkness that was inevitable each night.

Even during the day, I couldn't relax and just join in with my peers. I was thought of as weird, and spent most of my school life, on my own. Each time I tried to interact, I would catch sight of something from the corner of my eye, I would snap my head around quickly; but nothing would be there. I would turn back to see the raising of an eyebrow, or the shaking of a head, and the moment had passed. My parents told me I had an over active imagination and the reason things got worse as the day went on; was only because I was getting tired. I tried to believe them, I honestly did. I would spend most of my time in my room or the garden, making up little stories and poems which I saved in a scrap book, and kept it locked in my drawer.

CHAPTER 2

As I grew up, I decided to tell myself, the evils of the dark did not really exist, and eventually, my fears left me. My imagination however grew, and not surprisingly I became a writer. I developed a love for children's books. My books were full of fairies that lived in a perfect magical land. This was a world full of happiness, kindness and love. It was always twilight there, and the whole land was filled with lanterns, strung through the trees. They blew gently in a constant soft breeze. Flowers filled the fields; primrose, cowslip and clover, all spread out like a beautiful pastel painting. Fire flies flitted around leaving bright sparkling trails, and the world was full of peace.

My books gave me confidence, and I became more normal and outgoing. I dated and married and to top my happiness off, my books began to get rave reviews.

I became a success, and was on the best sellers list, with a movie in the pipeline. The years passed by and my life was now good, until one day, my husband walked out on me. No reasons, no excuses, just left and never came back. I fell apart. My publisher had made an advance for my next book, and although trying to be supportive, he was running out of patience.

I knew I had to move away from all the memories surrounding me. I had to make a fresh start and then maybe I could get back to my writing. Money was not a problem, as I said I was doing very well. I sat down and thought about what kind of house I would like to live in, and where I would like it to be. I wrote a wish list, if I was going to do this, then I wanted the perfect home. I contacted quite a few estate agents, sending them a copy of my wish list, and asking them to send any details they thought would interest me.

Every day I checked through the post and short-listed any I wanted to view. I had to admit there were not many, I didn't know what I was looking for exactly, but nothing seemed right, there was always something missing. I was becoming discouraged. I thought maybe I was asking for too much; until one day my mail

arrived. I checked through the listings I had been sent and once again found nothing. I then opened an envelope unlike the usual ones I had become so familiar with. The first thing I saw was a covering letter from an agent I had not been using, "Graham and Johnson". The letter asked me to consider the details they had sent, as they thought the property would suit me.

I took one look at the picture in front of me, and I knew immediately, I had found my new home. I rang the number on the top of the letter and made an appointment to see the house that afternoon. For the first time in months, I was excited. I was to meet the agent at his office and he was going to drive me to the property. He explained the property was not sign posted, and was situated at the end of a track road; it would be easier for him to take me than to try to give me directions.

I arrived at the office early and Mr Graham himself came to greet me. I was eager to get straight to the property, so Eric, as he asked me to call him, took me to his car and off we went. As we drove along, we chatted easily, and I asked him how he had known I was looking for a new home and how he had obtained my address. He explained the old woman who had lived there, had died almost a year ago at the ripe old age of 104 years. The house was now out of probate and the only relatives she had were distant. He was very honest and did not hide his dislike for these people; he went as far as to say, that he knew they could not wait to get their hands on the money from the sale.

They had gone to check out their inheritance and probably picking over anything they had thought was worth money. They said they had found a letter by the kitchen door, telling them to give my details to their agent and to send the information on the house out to me. He admitted he had sent them out of desperation to get rid of an unsavoury client; I sat trying to take the information in. As he chatted on, my mind wandered. I was trying to imagine who would leave my name, and if it was a friend, then why didn't they just come and tell me about the house themselves. I stared out of the window and suddenly

snapped back to reality. I realised we had turned off the main road and were heading down what he had described correctly, as a dirt track. Large trees grew either side making the way appear dark and shady.

About five minutes' drive down the track we came to a bend. As we followed the track around the bend, the sun blasted once again, and I saw it, standing there, in front of me. I gasped at the beauty of what I could only describe as a quaint old cottage, glowing in the rays of a golden sun. The building was made of stone, with ivy scrambling up the walls. The tendrils seemed to be searching and reaching out for the next foothold. Time had weathered the old stone and it blended into the surroundings perfectly. I had a feeling the cottage was alive and waiting for something. This thought, far from scaring me, excited me. I felt as though it was welcoming me.

I turned to look at the garden. This was an incredible sight. Wild flowers filled the space, the colours spreading out like a pastel painting. I was in awe at the splendour, and asked Eric, who had been responsible for the gardens upkeep. He informed me the owner had hired an old gardener, and a proviso had been included with any sale of the house, that his employment must continue. He told me the pay was low and the gardener had assured him he was not interested in changing any part of his agreement with the previous owner, including the wage. This suited me fine, as I had not been blessed with green fingers and would have hated to see this heavenly space ruined.

I looked across to the middle of the garden, and there stood an old well. A wooden strut stood above it with a hanging bucket and lever to lower it, it was so pretty and as I stared, I thought I caught sight of something peeking over the well wall, and then it was gone. It was probably a small animal or even a trick of the light.

CHAPTER 3

I stood there soaking it all in. My eyes were trying to take in everything at once, and I could picture summer afternoons sitting at a table with my laptop. I realised Eric was talking to me and turned to listen. He was telling me how the building was structurally sound, and the surveyor had found nothing that required urgent attention. Of course if I wanted to bring my own surveyor in, then I was more than welcome. He explained, as he led me to the front door, that the house had full electricity but with the location it sometimes went off for short periods of time, and therefore had a generator as a backup. It also had running water and a few mod cons such as a telephone line. Nothing could put me off, I was home, and I just knew it.

As soon as I entered the front door, my feelings were confirmed. I felt I had stepped back in time. The cottage was not shabby or old fashioned; it was more quaint and welcoming. I made my mind up there and then and I boldly declared, 'I'll take it'. Eric's jaw dropped. After the initial shock, he insisted I take a look around the rest of the house and then he would take me back to the office. I only took a quick look, I didn't care, and I knew already, it was the house for me. Once we were back at the offices of Graham and Johnson, we immediately got down to arranging all the paperwork, informing the clients, and contacting my solicitor. Within 4 weeks, deeds were exchanged and the property was mine. I did not want to change a thing, so arranged to purchase the furniture along with the house, this pleased the relatives, as I knew they would have just scrapped the lot.

Moving in went so smoothly. My belongings were stored and personal touches were made by pictures and ornaments that I could not part with. I immediately loved the peace and just wanted to relax and soak up the atmosphere, but first, I decided I should deal with the mundane things, like obtaining the internet, power providers being switched to my name, and new address cards being sent out.

Once all that was out the way, my curiosity got the better of me and I decided to explore. The kitchen was more than fully stocked, and a big range stove dominated one side. The previous owner must have loved cooking. I was not even sure how to use most of the utensils. Herbs grew on the window sills and I guessed the gardener must have been tending to these also. Of course this meant he must have a key, and I decided to let him keep it. If the previous owner had trusted him, then so would I. An enormous table stood in the middle of the kitchen, it was well used, but this only added to its charm. This room had most definitely been the heart of the home, I could feel it, and thought of cold winter nights, and me sitting warm in front of the range, with a nice cup of tea. I shook my head and smiled and I moved on to the living room.

The large overstuffed sofa stood in front of the fireplace and I sat down on it. I seemed to sink into comfort, the sofa easing its way round me in a big caring hug. I had to be careful not to sit there to work, or nothing would get done. I would more than likely fall asleep. Small tables were dotted round the room, in perfect position for ease and efficiency. A glass cabinet hung on either side of the fireplace. I had placed my lovely ornaments here for display. It was not until I was admiring how my ornaments fit in so well; that I realised there was not a speck of dust on anything. The house had been empty for so long, but looked like it had been lived in yesterday. I wondered if the family had hired a cleaner to keep the place looking fresh for prospective buyers. I discounted that immediately and thought Eric's' agency had probably arranged it. I would have to send a note thanking them.

I climbed the wide staircase onto a large landing and headed to the main bedroom, one of four, and stood at the door. The wallpaper was pink floral and must have been there for years, but did not look worn. I walked over to the bed and tested it. I had never before felt such comfort. It comprised of a mattress on top of giant coiled springs, it must have been over a hundred years old. A huge patchwork quilt lay on top of crisp clean sheets and I smiled at the

thoughtfulness of Eric and his staff. I must have been a dream come true to the firm, for them to go above and beyond the duties of Estate Agents. A big rocking chair stood to the side of the bed, complete with a cushion which matched the wallpaper. A beautiful white distressed dressing table resided under the window, it held a trio of ornate mirrors on top of it, and a chair in front, once again upholstered in matching fabric; I felt like a princess. Two enormous wardrobes matched the dressing table and yet there were still lots of room to move around. I felt so at peace in this room and looked forward to sleeping in it that night. I walked to the other bedroom. It was a pretty, guest room, about the same size as the main bedroom. It had been decorated in a bright yellow and held two single beds. The furniture in this room was dark wood and complimented the yellow perfectly. I walked along the landing to the bathroom. A large roll top bath stood at one end of the room and it was fully tiled. It held no shower, and I thought I could wait to put one in; it would be a nice change for now, to lie and enjoy a relaxing bubble bath. I moved on to the smaller two rooms. Both were decorated beautifully, and each had a single bed. There was nothing spectacular about these rooms and one seemed to have been used for storage, even so, there was nothing I wanted to change. The décor and furniture suited me perfectly. All in all, I was so happy with my purchase.

I went back downstairs, made a sandwich and a cold juice and spent the rest of the afternoon sitting in the garden, laptop ready, trying to write. I felt I could do that here, but for today I just wanted to soak in the view.

It was soon time for bed, I got changed and sat at the dressing table brushing my hair and I looked out of my window into the garden below. I saw a very large grey dog pacing along the edge of the forest. I watched it for some time as it patrolled the edge of the garden. It stopped and turned to look at me. I didn't feel worried or scared; I felt calm for some reason. I had the impression the dog was protecting me; I smiled, said goodnight, and turned to my bed.

My first few days in my new home flew over. My internet had been installed and I had begun writing, in earnest again. I loved my long luxurious bubble baths and decided against a shower, I could never go back to the hurried cleansing ritual I had been used to in the city. I would sit at the dressing table each night and look out into the garden to find my protector, always on patrol, and say goodnight to him. I had even bought dog food to put out for him, but it was never touched. I had already settled in to my new life so well. It was on the fifth night, however, that my whole world changed.

CHAPTER 4

I had fallen asleep quickly that night, as I had since I had moved here. I felt myself stirring from the fogginess of the dream world, to the sound of creaking, and the feeling of movement nearby. I turned sleepily, and jumped at the sight of a small, white haired, robust, old woman sitting in the rocking chair beside my bed, and rocking to and fro. Then she spoke.

'Well it's about time deary, we really have a lot to do you know.' 'Who on earth are you?' I stammered. 'How did you get in here?' This was my first conversation of many with the previous owner Miss Hattie Gracefield.

'I'll make you a cup of tea Abigail, come down when you're ready.' She got up and left the room. I sat on the bed and rubbed my eyes. I was dreaming; I had to be. I was just about to lie down again when I heard the clinking sound of a spoon in a cup, wide awake now; I jumped out of bed and grabbed my dressing gown. As I went to leave the room, I made a last minute decision to grab the candlestick off the dressing table, then, armed with my weapon, I made my way downstairs.

As I cautiously edged my way into the kitchen, I saw Hattie sitting at the table with two cups in front of her; a milk jug and sugar bowl was set out as well.

'Well come and sit down! We have lots to do. I just pray you are a quick learner. For goodness sake, put that candlestick down, it would be useless on me anyway!' My mind refused to work, and my body took on a life of its own, as I walked over to the table and sat down.

'Right dear,' Hattie said, as she poured the tea, and as I began to drink it, she said; 'Finish your tea then listen carefully, I have a lot to explain to you before you begin your lessons, and time is running short, I can feel it in my bones.' My mind woke up, I took in what she was saying but never uttered a word, and I stared at her rosy face, drank my tea, and listened.

CHAPTER 5

Hattie continued, 'I have lived here for a very long time Abigail, as did Effie, the lady before me. It took longer than I had expected to find you. I would like to take my time to train you properly, but time is against us dear. They are rising again and we have to hurry.'

You are from a special kind of breed, and only our kind can live here. We have a very important job to do, but we do it quietly, it wouldn't do to have people know what really goes on in this world.

You are now my replacement as 'The intercessor of the Netherworld'. I know dear, such a pompous title and such a mouthful, so let's just say you are peace-keeper. There are good and bad all around us and every now and then one side wants to rule and when that happens; we are the ones who have to fight to keep the balance. The world, as we know it, would collapse if evil ruled and wiped out the good, but it would be just as bad the other way. We need both to survive. Now something is going to happen to upset that balance, we don't know what yet, but we can feel it coming. We have to get ready for it now, so you are going to have to learn quickly.'

As she talked, I was transfixed by her, but at last my senses returned to the room and I noticed we were not alone. I hesitantly turned my head and was met with such an array of strange creatures. Some bigger than others, some flying around in little circles, many of them were so beautiful and others I could only describe as ugly. I thought my mind had gone, I just sat staring. Had I snapped? Was this what they meant by a breakdown? I shook my head and closed my eyes, then opened them again; they were still there, and I seemed to be the centre of their attention. Then Hattie spoke again.

'I see you have noticed our friends Abigail, they will be invaluable to you, let me introduce them all.' With that, one by one the little people, or whatever they were, stepped, or flew, forward to be introduced.

The first in line was a small man of about 3 foot in height. He had a brown face and was covered in sparse brown hair. He stood in front of me, nodded his head and smiled. With all my research for my books, I knew immediately, he was a brownie.

'Meet Clax, Claxton Metterhorn the 4th, to be precise, but he prefers Clax. I couldn't have managed without his help around the house all these years, and he is my oldest friend.' Clax smiled again, and looked so pleased and proud. Once I had said hello, he moved to go to the back of the room.

'Next is Drinad, he is from the Porhines people.' A rather small old man came forward, even smaller than Clax, his face all wrinkled with age, but a lovely twinkle in his eye. As he moved to the back of the room Hattie whispered in my ear, 'good natured little man but don't ride a horse near him at night, he can't resist leading you to your doom. It's not his fault; it is just the way he is, but that's his only fault.'

The introductions went on. Gwent was from the Plant Rhys Dwfen tribe; he was very small but perfectly formed, and extremely handsome. Orchid was from the Sprites, she was a beautiful creature, tiny and slim. Oswald was a Sylph; he was a very tall and extremely thin man. Selena was from the Turehu, a beautiful fairy with long golden hair, larger than most of the other Fairies, and so the introductions went on, Fairies, Gnomes, Elves; Eventually I had met them all.

Throughout all this, something was bothering me, and eventually I said, 'How have you all come to be here? I know many of you come from Ireland, and Wales. I can maybe understand those of you from Scotland coming here, as we are not too far from there. Surely it is a long way to travel and I thought, from my research, that various tribes didn't mix with each other.'

A small beastly looking little man stepped forward. He had been introduced as Grenville, a troll. 'When we sense trouble stirring, small troops from the many clans are sent to help. It is in our best interests to pull together at times

like this.' He seemed to drift off, but continued talking, 'I remember a time when they even came from as far away as India to help; of course that was when Effie lived here. I'm glad we won that one; life would have been so bad if Agred had won. Now he was evil and when.....' It seemed he would have rambled on if Hattie had not stopped him.

'Yes, we all know Grenville, and one day you can tell Abigail the whole tale, but now is not the time to be telling stories. We can all feel the urgency and Abigail must be taught the basics, at least, if we are to stand a chance. I haven't got much longer in this world to help you all, so it is best we get started immediately' Hattie said. The room filled with rumblings of 'here, here' and 'poor Hattie.'

I managed to open my mouth again, 'What basics? I don't understand what you expect me to do.' The only reply I got was 'You will know Abigail, when the time comes.'

She quickly got everyone organised into groups to start my training. I had herb recognition with some, spells with others, enemy spotting with a third group and lastly potion making with Hattie. I really don't know why, but this seemed normal to me, I didn't question anything, I just went along with them and tried to do my best to learn all that was taught to me. Once I had begun, I wanted to learn all I could.

The time passed quickly, my days crammed with lessons. I loved every minute of it, except I must admit, enemy recognition, as it scared me. The creatures I was to fight against seemed formidable, and I didn't see how I could ever defeat them. The names alone made me shiver; Eachy, Ettin, Hobbididance, Black Annis; the list seemed endless. My favourite lessons, however, were spell casting and potion making. I loved spending time with Hattie and seemed to have a flair for these particular subjects.

She taught me how to recognise the various herbs and how to mix them for different effects. I never knew there were masculine and feminine herbs and within these categories they were split into air, water, fire and earth. I found that plants such as, Cumin, Cedar, and Angelica root, was masculine and from the fire category; Whereas Burdock, Bramble leaf and Catnip were feminine from the water category and so on. I was so interested, prior to this I had only thought of herbs as something to add flavour to food. Their uses were amazing; protection, healing, curses and even to aid your love life!

Before I realised, a month had almost passed. Hattie had explained she would be doing a spell soon and wanted me to watch each step. A few days before; she had taken me to Seth, the old gardener, and had chosen a twig for him to cut from the big old oak tree in the garden and she had taken it into the kitchen. She had carefully stripped it of all its leaves and bark and then soaked it in rain water and left it for a couple of days. I had to check on it to make sure it was safe, and then she made me take it out, and said it must dry for 3 days. It was now the eve of the full moon and everyone gathered in the big kitchen. A candle was placed on the table and lit. Hattie checked the twig, nodded, and then placed the thinnest end into the candle. She left it there till the end was blackened. She then took a square piece of paper and wrote on it with the burnt end of the twig. There was silence throughout, until Hattie spoke;

'Mighty oak of ages past.

Watcher of the world and all that passes, Impart unto me thy knowledge.

That which has been brought to thee on the four winds and transferred to your heart from the depths of the earth.

Let no secret thing remain hidden, but rather as the light brings thee life, let the life bring unto me knowledge.

So this I ask, so may it be.

She then blew out the candle, and rolled the paper up, sealing it with the candle wax. We followed her to the garden where Seth had dug a small hole. The paper and twig were buried and rain water poured in a circle round the little burial plot.

She turned to me and said 'Be prepared for some strange dreams tonight dear, I have also put a few bay leaves under your pillow to help you remember them. I have asked for knowledge of what is being planned so we are better armed, and tonight this knowledge will come to you in your dreams.' I was shocked, to say the least. What if I couldn't remember, or got something wrong? I voiced my worries. A giggle went round the room. 'You were born for this Abigail. Did you never wonder where all your ideas for your books came from? They were all from inherited memories, you know the old saying 'writers write what they know about' well it's mainly true. From the day we met, you have been drinking chamomile tea, this has helped awaken your memories and make your body and mind open to magic. Don't worry you have been well prepared.' This explained my lack of protest to my new life, and why I was so ready to believe all I had been told. I was still not certain it would work but they would hear no more from me.

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