

Witches Protection Program
Michael Phillip Cash

“Follow me, kid.” She led him down a gray hallway with mulberry-colored carpet, more plush than anything he’d ever seen in a governmental office. The place had to be a city block wide, with corridors branching off to other conduits. Here and there, a doorway opened. Wes saw that many were filled with groups of people sitting at polished conference tables. Some rooms were dark, with shades drawn, the light of a presentation on screens peeking through the slats of the blinds. Staff walked through the hallways, nodding to each other. Some were in pairs. All had a badge hanging on a chain or attached to a pocket. He squinted, but he couldn’t make out the impression on the shield. Forget about attempting to read it. He shrugged; while it looked official, it was unfamiliar. For a person who grew up with an entire family in law enforcement, he found it odd that he’d never seen it before.

“What is this place?” he asked.

“This is where the magic happens,” she told him cryptically.

She opened the door, whispering, “Prepare to be amazed.” Then, with a giant pop of her gum, she disappeared.

“Where...” Wes turned, looking for the woman, but couldn’t see her anywhere. “Where is...”

“Oh, she’s gone. Come in already,” a male voice ordered impatiently.

Wes spun to the speaker, his eyes settling on a small man seated at a glass desk. He was in a neat gray suit but wore a black turtleneck, which made him look like some odd, eccentric leftover from the beatnik generation. He was older than Wes’s father, Wes guessed somewhere north of sixty, with the thickening middle of a sedentary life, a tanned complexion, and silver hair. His chubby face sported a neatly trimmed goatee. Wes wondered where his beret might be. The man studied Wes with interested black eyes that glowed with merriment.

“What kind of department is this?”

“Mr. Wesley Paul Rockville. Son of Harris and Melinda, brother to Lauren and Andrew. Tough act to follow. Runt of the litter?”

Wes bristled, wondering where this pint-size dude got off calling him a runt. At six foot three, he was hardly considered small. “I fail to see what this has got to do with my reassignment,” he said icily.

The older man ignored him. “The young gun who had his free will sucked right out of him.”

“No one took my free will!” Wes shouted, his face hot.

“I think Miss Genevieve Fox did a pretty nice number on you.”

“What are you talking about?”

Alastair cocked his head, a smile playing on his lips.

“I don’t think this is funny, um...Alastair. I’m getting out of here.” Wes had had enough. He was pissed and hungry.

“Sit down, Agent Rockville. It’s time you learned about your new assignment.”