Imprisoned to a Whitch

This is an idea of what seems cute to me, but I'm not sure if I'm good enough at the story

Working title: *Imprisoned to a Witch*

Genres: New Adult Paranormal Romance with witches, with coven politics and some werewolf stuff later on

Draft status: Very first rough draft of Chapter One

Hi Melissa,

Thank you so much for looking at this. I just want to give you a quick sense of what I'm trying to do, because I have an a first draft the book in my head and the book on the page are not always the same thing.

Big picture story I think I've written

This is meant to be a New Adult paranormal romance about a girl who married into a witch coven, realized too late how much of herself she was losing, escaped back to the human world, and is now dragged back against her will. I want the reader asking in this life really worth dying for, and why won't she just pick the man?

Under it all it's about: "Who am I allowed to be when everyone else has already decided for me?"

By the end, Blake has been caught between the coven and the werewolf world and forced into a no-good-options choice. Damien has to finally choose her over the council. There is a rescue, there are messy sacrifices, and they do end up together but I want it to feel like they earned their way there.

Cast you and I saw: Elena

- **Blake** – Human, stubborn, prickly, and tired of being the least powerful person in every room. She wants her own life, and her arc goes from running, to choosing to stay on her own terms.
- **Damien** – Witch, high in the coven hierarchy, one of the youngest ever on the council. In my head he's hospitable to love with Blake and part of the book is him realizing how wrong that is so he can actually choose her.
- **Brian** – Damien's cousin and Blake's closest friend in the coven. Sporadic best friend, jealous nerd, emotional support. He represents what the coven could be.
- **The Council Crows** – The institutional bad guy. They issue Blake's death sentence, keep Damien trapped, and can really who Blake is defying when she refuses to sign, even though it looks like it might save her husband.
- **Werewolf pack** – Archive later and blows the world open. They complicate Damien vs witches and show this is a larger system problem.

Story

Start

Blake has been living as a human for a year after running from the coven and her marriage. Damien finds her and drags her back. The council tosses a death sentence because she runs, and offers to lift it if she signs and agrees to stay with Damien and the coven (thanks to Damien's begging).

Middle

Blake plays nice long enough to plan another escape, using Brian and Damien's feelings where she can. Life in the coven ranks because she is a soul non-powerless, looked down on, and treated as nothing. Damien keeps saying he loves her but continues to choose the coven, which hurts. The werewolves find out about a new magic Damien has discovered and want it. They pressure him and they go after Blake. She is kidnapped again, which forces Damien to choose what he will risk for her.

The werewolf leader tries to bargain Blake for Damien's secret magic. Blake kills the alpha to self-deliver, which breaks a treaty and triggers political fallout so now the coven is potentially on the hook for a war they never planned.

The council blames Damien and Blake. If Damien distances himself, they can blame Ivanhoe if he doesn't, they own the problem. Damien finally admits he was looking into turning Blake into a witch (that's the new magic) and only took the council seat to keep it secret and in his control. He admits everything has always been about Blake.

End

Damien wants to make Blake a witch so they won't be attacked by both humans and werewolves and so she isn't just half-forced. The council is unsure, in the end, Blake chooses him and the witches this time, she agrees to the ritual. The end seat is coming, but that's a future-books problem.

What I think might be wrong

- The wounded Damien doesn't stand out on the page right away. Later on he reads more sense, but up front he's a bit blah, and worth hashed over.
- I'm afraid he just reads as controlling and awful in the early chapters, and none of the conflicted, softer stuff in my head is actually on the page yet. I don't want this to feel like a straight up abusive romance, but I do want it to be messy.
- I have a lot of worldbuilding (council roles, coven history, death warrants, werewolf politics), and I don't know if it's too much, too early, or just in the wrong places.
- I think this is New Adult paranormal romance, but I wrote it as a kind if experiment and I'm honestly unsure where it fits in the market.
- This is my first full draft, written fairly quickly. I have dialogue-heavy in first drafts because I'm learning the characters, so I know Blake probably needs more internal thought and the pacing around the middle and end is off. I'm not really sure where to start.

Basically, I'd love to know if this feels like the book I'm trying to write and what I should do to get there.

Thank you again, so, so much.

Jean

This is a draft of how in the scenes look as I go through a WIP. These notes help to my the Excellent in the editorial letter.

I stared with a helpless groan at the dirty walls, the dirty tiles, the dirty prison.[1] The water falling from the ceiling with a steady drip, drip, reminded me my life ticked away.[2] Away from freedom. Away from humanity.[3]

The door beyond the bars opened and a crack of light lit up the cell, the cager casting long shadows against the floor, the leaving freedom meters from reach. I shielded my eyes from the glowing light which highlighted a large, dark figure. He tore shoulders like an ox, and a stern expression that didn't suit him. I knew his body as well as my own, the way it moved, the way it felt.

Damien.

His eyes has green fire, stared at me, my curves, my lips. I felt naked, exposed and regio locked in my stomach.

Even after everything he had done, he led with no apology, just about there, as if this wasn't a kidnapping. As if I wasn't trapped down here with the endless dripping water.

I flung myself at the bars. "What are you doing?"

"I don't have a choice, Blake. The witch council, they decided it." He said.

"Yes, you do. I don't + my hands across the gritty sheet. "You could have declared me dead, Damien. They never would have known."

"They found you. The council found you." He took a step closer, his spicy scent filling my flared nostrils. "We found you."[4]

"You always cared about that stupid council more than me. But it was your job to protect me." I pointed my chopped nails at him and he turned his face away.[5]

Heat and anger radiated from my eyes, as if I could burn him alive where he stood. The drip, drip of the water echoed over my hearing breath.

"I'm not meant for this world. You knew that." I said.

"When you signed our marriage certificate, Blake, you made the choice to stay. You knew you couldn't live as a human the second." He rubbed his forehead where wrinkles formed. "Not second you signed it."

"I changed my mind." At my response he let out a pulsat groan.

"There's no changing your mind." He threw his hands into the air and I wanted to reach out and him. But the cage stopped me: all I had were my words and a burning that grew in the pit of my stomach.[6]

"There's A LOT WRONG with this world. I'm not one of you." Damien sinced. He rocked back on his heels, wagging his jaw, his eyes roaming about in search for an answer that fit.

"I came in home to convince you to come to my room and do this ritual." He said.

"Do this ritual?" A sentiment beaing ripped through my stomach and teapt to my hands. I pucked with the pained rage until I slammed them against the bars, over and over. "How is locking me in a prison ritually? When shrap pain reached my hands I gaped at my them, long red marks imprinted into the skin.

The shudder of Damien's breath brought me back.

"This is pointless," he said. He reached out behind him grabbing the handle and reaching out of the room. Closing the door behind him, he plunged the cell into darkness, leaving the last moments of our marriage playing in my head like a carnival. The same arguments and the same feeling like I couldn't escape.

How could I escape if he just brought me back to the coven again?

Why did he bother dragging me back to this world of magic anyway? I was happy as a human, happy with my own people. At least I understood their darkness.

But had to try. I had to try to leave him. This time it too late.[7]

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[1]and, this has great emotional depth. The characters feel lived in, and there are many centuries that keep the reader aiming. But this scene is doing too much at once—establishing the world and establishing the central conflict—and it's not quite managing either because it's flipping back[2] the confrontation with Damien arrives before the reader has enough emotional stake in Blake, which means the important beats are an info dump, when it could be tension.

Damien is also flat here in a way that will cost the book later. He needs to feel complicated from the first moment we see him, think legend, thou shen fed in the this series? What is he wrestling with inside of himself? How can you show the reader? Blake wants freedom, but freedom is abstract. There's no concrete before life. This may be better served with a scene that comes before this, one where we see the comfortable life she's been able to build for herself. When she actually has to choose, with friends, and friendship, where we can discover more about her past relationship through thoughts, and memories, and watch her going, scared, the night just caught and brought back. Or maybe were not scared any more, and then here, she is kidnapped.

The walls were sealed tight, no windows, and the bars stuck with a padlock. There was only one way to escape this prison— play nice with my idiot husband and infiltrate back into the world of magic.[1]

At least long enough to say goodbye for good.

I didn't know how much time passed between the stone walls but I dated dirt and my hands shook with cold. It must have been an age. When the door finally opened seeing with a flood of unexpected light, I reacted myself for Damien. Instead Brian peered in, looking around the corner as if anticipating an escaped prisoner.

With a lopsided smile he walked into the cell. I frowned, as feel somebody who would listen to me.

"Blake. Long time." He peered me.

"And I thought we were forever." I felt the sting of fresh tears pressing at my eyelids.

Isn't that what we all think when love begins?[2]

"I guess. I've never been in love." He smiled and crouched down to my level. Reaching his hands through the bars, he took hold of mine. "Your life isn't over. Blake. It's just different than you thought it would be."

"It sure feels like it's over."

"What could you possibly have been doing in the human world that was better than hurting both friends and me?"[3]

I laughed.[4]

"There's a laugh." He jumped to his hands and pointed a finger at me with a wink. I rubbed my hands against the ground, feeling the cold stone and realizing my body felt better already. I heard a jangle of mettle; in his other hand he held a set of keys. "Now," he said, placing a serious expression on his face as he made. "I'm going to play nice he been given permission to let you out, so you can shower. You sort of stink."

"Thanks," I rolled my eyes.

"Come on. You'll feel better once you eat and bathe. Let's talk about this."

"Fine." I groaned the pose and hop from my pens where several witches had literally dragged me from my apartment[5]

He placed the keys in the lock and the bars swung open. I took a deep breath, my lungs filling with the smell of mildew and castle walls. then I stepped outside the cage.

"See, you can do this. One step at a time," Brian said.[6]

[Brian is a character that shines of the page. I'm curious about him. He's layered and seems like he's going to wring a lot of fun in the story. This will also make the reader ask, why do we care about Damien when we have Brian? With this in mind, it's important we provide ropes to make Damien feel more alive in the previous scene. We could use ropes to get there quickly. Does he think he is a monster, but really he's good? Is he burdened with power? Did he betray her, and she doesn't know the reason? This scene also struggles with more dialogue than movement. Can we include memories, thoughts, filial internal and external goals (does Blake have and how would she think about them? The scene also ends without cost. Which means there's no tension. Blake, what are her emotions? How will this affect where she perceives her story will go?]

I thought over time that our room would have changed, that others would have slept there, that maybe even Damien himself would have removed every trace of me. But that as shrine to what was, everything remained exactly as I'd left it. Even shirts I wore still strewn on the carpet, the bed un-made, and the mirror hung askew of my desk, still lay there. Like the year hadn't passed, like I hadn't ever escaped my marriage.

Even though escaping my marriage proved to be the only option I had.[1]

Being human in a witch's coven had no perks. They looked down on you for not possessing magick, while refusing to let you leave. After a while, I couldn't take being a lesser person, a person that didn't matter in the eyes of the world.

A person who didn't truly matter in the eyes of Damien[2]

I was expendable, and that was something I always swore I wouldn't be.[3]

Brian pushed me into the room, placing his hand on the small of my back.

"It's a mess. I can help you clean," he said. I looked at the disarray of my life and shook my head.

"I don't know if I'm staying yet[4]."

I wandered the room, my hand finding my childhood music box on the mantelpiece above the fireplace. As I touched it, the box jingled the last three notes of my little sunshine before shuddering to an end, punctuating the silence. Next to the gaslit pink design, lay a letter with a dark, red seal. The seal showed two crossed swords, and I pulse around the edges, a language I couldn't speak and had no idea what it meant. What I did know was where this letter came from. The council, the leaders of this witch coven, and receiving any sort of summon or letter from the council was never good thing.

A slight frown crossed Brian's brow as I lifted the envelope.

I ripped it open, shook the contents, and pulled out one sheet of paper. I recognized the layout of the letter almost immediately.

Pain seared through my chest like someone had set it on fire. I clutched the paper until the words creased between my fingers, stiff gasing for breath.

Brian leaped to my side, holding me up as my legs buckled. He snatched the paper from my hands and read it. his eyes flicking back and forth, up and down.

"A warrant to remove your death sentence," he whispered.

If I signed—if I agreed to stay with my husband, and stay with the coven—they would spare my life!

I knew this would come for me the second I ran; one does not simply walk away from a coven without consequence. But to see it in black and white, as simple as cutting a letter, as if a witch ordering a human's demise was as easy as writing a thank you note. It stung, deep in my stomach leaving a warped numbness in its wake[5].

"I have a plan." Brian's voice shook.

"That won't be necessary." I straightened and walked to my dresser, placing the paper in the draw and slamming it shut.

"Blake, this is a no brainer."

"Leave me."

Brian hesitated, his blonde hair falling floppy over his face.

"You know, you're the one who left us a year ago. We had no idea if you were even alive." His voice came so quiet. I could barely hear him over the sound of my own rage.

"Brian, you're a good friend to me. Your family. But my life means more to me than magick. Then any power in the world. Do you understand that?"

His eyes flickered to the side, confusion casting over his eyebrows.

"I don't understand Blake. I don't understand why you can't just let go and of us. It's not like we don't want you around. You know, you're all Damien has talked about, when he does talk to me that is, which these days is so rare." He grunted. "I last both of you in this marriage."

"I think we lost ourselves too. Which is why I can't stay Brian. I can't lose any more of me."

The usual spark in Brian's eyes distinguished, and he lowered his stare to the ground. He pressed his thick lips together. "I wish you would co-operate Blake. I don't have you."

"No, you can't."

"Please be careful. The council are powerful they will find you, and if they do, they won't give you a second chance."

"I have to try something. Brian. I'm human, this isn't my world. Just give me one night to think, please don't try control me like Damien."

He winced. "I'll be clear by." He teetered on his feets nodding as if agreeing with a voice in his head then trudged away, leaving me alone with my death sentence.

[For this scene, I would consider pacing and the dilemma that need to hit for the reader to be as devastated about this letter as Blake is. By building a stronger social place, a stronger internal goal (what trauma or experience has led Blake into being such the needs to be in the human world?), and a viable "exit" that shows where we are in time and space, we can make this story pacing feel urgent.]

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[1] the first line (pacing) shows intrigue; however, it feels delayed for the reader. Helpless and Blake could work if the reader should the character's personality, otherwise it's an unknown

Maybe experiment with scenes and other descriptions (other than dirt) that play with the theme of time. Blake's life is being ticked away, and she's being dragged back to her "cage". Use it as motif or where Blake life's story could (and has) could give the reader a better sense of Blake.

Blake's internal struggle for the reader is a great way to hold tension, and give the scene depth.

[2] Love has also the changing feels, but it is doing a lot of sandbucketing but the reader hasn't been in Blake's head long enough for this to have the impact it should. Blake, we don't know Damien, Blake, they are just about these details with an emotional tether.

[3] The idea of protection might be a better way to open the conversation. It feels like Damien is trying to keep Blake safe, but he's also trying to keep the coven safe. Blake's life is an emotion the readers can feel, relate to. What other teams and the council of my own rage, Blake's life is being ticked away, and I'm being dragged back to my cage.

It's everything he does and says?

[4] Blake's life is being ticked away (Mind, What does aspect can be show the information be need) is more. Do we need this much information this early?

[5] This is a great micro goal for our FMC and gives the reader a reason to keep going, good job.

[6] The reader is a much stronger opening line for the last scene, and the reader should be in Blake's head, feeling her pain, and her desperation to escape.

[7] This could be a great point to slow down the pacing of the story and give the reader more time to feel the emotions of Blake's situation. Blake's life is being ticked away in the reader, too so make it this is a moderate pace, or medium fast pace.

Others could be a great time for Blake to tell the reader a story. Maybe a small one story about her life, or a memory of her life before the coven. Blake's life is being ticked away, and the reader, as well, so it is these rules. What are the limitations?

Blake's life is being ticked away, and the reader, as well, so it is these rules. What are the limitations? Between the time of Blake.

[1] Blake's life is being ticked away, and the reader, as well, so it is these rules.

[2] Should the social "rank" Blood she goes in to seeks? The best for the reader is that as early fitting the same question. What is better? An opening scene explaining she would help as Damien's lesser, or Blake's life is being ticked away, and the reader, as well, so it is these rules. Blake's life is being ticked away, and the reader, as well, so it is these rules.

[3] Blake's life is being ticked away, and the reader, as well, so it is these rules. Know that this is a bit hamfist when fantasy with true heart centre the contrast of Blake's life is being ticked away, and the reader, as well, so it is these rules.

[4] This is great at internal thoughts that only Brian, and he together will recognized. The Blake's life is being ticked away, and the reader, as well, so it is these rules.

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