

Ah Mom!

by Joni Latham

Tiffany stormed through the front door, tossing her schoolbooks on the floor by the umbrella stand.

"Mom!" she yelled as she ran towards the kitchen. "Mom!"

A small fair woman pushed through the swinging door, wiping her hands on the apron tied around her waist. "Tiffany, what have I told you about yelling in the house," she admonished. "And take that ridiculous hat off."

The young girl clasped her hands behind her back as she glanced down at the floor and traced a circle with her foot. "Ah Gee, Mom. I'm sorry, but it's just not fair."

Mother turned back towards the kitchen. "What's not fair, dear?" she asked as the door swung back and forth behind her.

Tiffany removed the black hat with its little point from her head and threw it towards the dining room table. She stared at herself in the mirror, which hung on the wall behind the dining room table. She smoothed her long blonde hair and straightened the collar on her blouse. She looked as nice as she always did. The only thing that might tip someone off to the fact that she was upset was that her normally blue eyes were flashing jade green. After one more quick glance at the mirror, she followed her mother into the kitchen.

"Mom, it's not fair. I hate Halloween. They're doing it again," the young girl complained, stomping her foot on the kitchen tile.

The older woman poured a yellow liquid from a small beaker into a larger one then set it over the flame to heat. She looked at her daughter, the love for her child apparent in her soft brown eyes. "Now, dear. You know the other kids don't mean any harm. People who are different and special are always teased."

Tiffany plopped down on a stool by her mother's work area. "I know, but it gets worse during Halloween. It's always a contest of who can pull the biggest prank on me. Why can't we be like everyone else in this town?"

"What did they do this time?" Mother asked, pulling the edges of a kerchief down around what used to be a crown of rich auburn hair but was now streaked with gray.

Tiffany shook her head and rested her head in her hands. "They dressed me up like a witch. Didn't you see the pointy hat I had on when I came in? You asked me to take it off."

"Sorry, I didn't notice. Just knew that you had something on your head." After a moment's silence, she continued, "Tiffany, we are what we are. We can't change that. If you would just ignore them and not give them a reaction, they would get tired and stop. You always put up such a fuss that of course, they are going to tease you over and over again."

"I can't help it," she complained. "I get so tired of not being accepted." She paused for a moment then added, "Oh, by the way, your formula just turned pink."

"Thanks, dear," Mother replied as she removed the beaker and transferred the liquid into a small bottle. She set the bottle to the side then washed out the beakers and put them in the drain board to dry. Turning to her daughter, she asked, "Do all of them tease you?"

Tiffany hesitated before answering. "Well no, not all of them. Ian usually steps in and tells them to leave me alone, then he'll help me clean up or take off whatever they've done to me."

Her mother smiled gently. "See, there is a silver lining. You've always liked Ian, and it appears that he likes you too."

"A fat lot of good that does. His parents were a count and countess in one of the Eastern European countries before they were forced to flee for their lives. They would never let him mess up the lineage by dating the local freak."

"I'm sorry to hear that, dear. He's such a nice boy with such nice manners. One can sort of overlook his peculiar nocturnal life style and feeding habits." A sound of escaping gas drew Mother's attention to the beaker. She reached over and forced a cork into the opening then held it out towards her daughter. "The cold cure is ready. Would you run it across the street to Mrs. Kilkenny?"

"Sure, Mom," Tiffany answered, taking the beaker from her mother and setting on the counter in front of her. "I don't suppose we could leave town and take up assumed identities?"

Mother gave a little laugh. "No, we can't leave. I'm the only one in this part of the country who can mix these cures, and besides, it'll be the same anywhere we go around here. Maybe things will change in a few years. We can't be the only ones of our kind left."

"I hope you're right," Tiffany sighed. "It sure would be nice not to be the oddball in the group."

A spark appeared in Mother's eye. "You've never fought back, have you?"

Tiffany shook her head. "No, you always told me to turn the other cheek."

"Well, I may have been wrong. Ignoring them and turning the other cheek obviously hasn't worked, so maybe we need to fight fire with fire. What would you think of pulling a few pranks yourself? They would never be expecting you to be sneaky, would they? And, they are forbidden to do anything that would hurt us since we are the only ones of our kind here."

"Mom! I love it!" Tiffany jumped up and stretched across the counter to wrap her arms around her mother's neck. She grabbed the beaker and ran towards the door. Stopping in the frame of the kitchen door, she called, "I'm going to run this over to Mrs. Kilkenny and when I come back, I'm going to start planning something for next year. Will you help me?"

"Of course. Between the two of us we ought to be able to come up with something to make their hair stand up on end. I'm not a Scientist for nothing."

The kitchen door swung back and forth as Tiffany dashed through the house. Once out the front door, she walked slowly across the street, thinking about what she and her mother would plan. Last year the vampires picked on her, this year it was the witches. She supposed that it was the werewolves' turn next year. They were not really that bad though, because they could be appeased with some kibble and bits. The picture of a big doggie dish full of kibble, and the shaggy humanoids fighting for position around it was just too funny, and she found herself laughing hysterically before she even reached the other side of the street. Maybe she would soon have the upper hand and the other kids would be the ones running home complaining about how that nasty human was picking on them.

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