

Sorcerer 1: The Inner Circle

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Chapter 1

Bob Reynolds
(Wednesday 9/7)

Well, it was the first day of school. I was looking forward to seeing what I could learn in the Senior classes. Even in the most boring required classes, I can pick up something useful. There might be some viewpoint or some bit of information I could put together with something else.

“Hey, The Sherry!” She looked good after the summer. We need to do some catching up.

She grinned at me. “Sorcerer! Righteous Bob! High-Five!”

“Yess!” We smacked our hands together. The Sherry’s really good people — half-Spanish, shoulder-length shiny black hair, about 5’ 6”, very nice-looking with a great figure — and *smart*. We’d dated a couple times last school year, but there hadn’t been the right kind of chemistry between us.

We called her “The” Sherry because George and I believed she was truly unique. Of course, we frequently told her it was a Real Good Thing she *was* unique — the world couldn’t handle more than one of her!

Turned out George, Sherry and I had all the Honors classes together, so we hustled to our first period and snagged our usual seats in the front row.

I saw someone I didn’t recognize, which is unusual for me. I nudged Sherry. “The girl by the windows — you know her?”

She whispered back, “Trust you to notice the girls first. I don’t know her; she must be a...”

“Newbie!” we whispered together.

She looked alert and paid attention to everything. Nice-looking neck. Gloriously-long, glossy, jet-black hair in a pony tail. When she turned her head, I saw lovely white skin and freckles. Black Irish! She was yummy!

Sherry Stapley

Bob and I waylaid her outside the classroom. Always subtle, I asked, “Hello, we don’t recognize you. You’re new here?”

She replied promptly with a wide smile and a good amount of Irish accent, “Oh, yeh. New kid on the block, in the school, in Burbank and in California.”

Sticking my hand out, I told her, "Well, welcome to McCambridge High School. I'm Sherry Stapley."

She took it promptly and said, "Natalie Shanahan." We looked each other over. She was tall, had glossy jet-black hair in the standard pony tail, pleasant face, freckles and no makeup or jewelry. But oh those clothes! Long, baggy and hide-it-all. Hmm, that might need some attention.

Turning towards Bob, I told her, "And this is..."

He reached his hand out and told her, "Bob Reynolds." She readily grasped his hand, and they stood there looking at each other. Now I've known Bob for years, and he always just does a quick shake and release with someone new. Not this time; they just stood gazing at each other. What's happening here?

I smacked him with my elbow. "You can let go, Bob. She's not going to disappear right in front of you."

"Oh." He blinked his eyes and shook his head a bit. He dropped her hand, almost reluctantly, and stepped back.

Natalie pinked up and grinned a little. She said softly, "No, I'm here for the duration."

I frowned at him a moment. What's up with him? Anyway, I had a new person to handle.

I told her, "Don't worry too much about him. He's been a little slow ever since his last girl friend smacked him in the head with a ball bat. We've had the hardest time trying to teach him how to hit on girls politely."

She looked at him as if she didn't care *how* he hit on her, just so he *did*.

I continued, "Anyway, our tradition is we escort newcomers to the cafeteria for lunch so they don't get lost. So, care to join us?"

She gave us a devastatingly brilliant smile. "I'd love to."

I saw her glance over at Bob — and a set of nipples popped up hard under her shirt. Uh, oh, Bob's in trouble!

Bob

Jaysus, I've never been this much out of it with anyone, even when I've been (only once) drunk on my ass. When I took her hand and looked into her eyes, I felt as if I'd fallen into a pool of warm, sweet water. We'd merged together spiritually as if it were the most natural thing in the world to do. I couldn't move.

Natalie Shanahan

Newbie, newbie, new. Well, I'd visited Nana and Seanathair — Mom's parents — in Glendale before, but California is definitely different from Ohio. I was born and raised in Akron, the "Prophylactic Capital of the World." Yeh, that's a joke. Akron is the "Rubber Capital of the World"

where many of the major tire manufacturers live. We'd moved into our new house in Burbank in time to do the first round of school-counselor interviews to get my classes set up.

My stepfather, Don, had gotten a teacher's position at McCambridge High School in Burbank where I'd be going. I certainly hoped Mom would do better in a new place where she wouldn't be reminded all the time of what had happened to her.

Oh, God. The first day of school, as a Senior. I'd not had time to get too nervous before, but now I was. Don and I walked in; he went directly to his classroom while I moved onto my first class. Fortunately, I'd had time last week to roam the halls and find the classrooms after I'd met with the Counselor and we'd made up my schedule.

The kids here looked pretty happy for the first day of school. The school was in good condition with the standard trophy display cases and banners welcoming the students back. Students! That's me, too.

The kids at the school I'd been at in Ohio had been pretty degraded. Don mentioned he'd seen the attitude getting poorer over the last several years. This school seemed different somehow, generally a lot more happy and enthusiastic. For right now, I could only hope.

My first class went pretty well. It was the routine first-day stuff with the teacher telling us how she graded, passing out books, and all the rest of the routine stuff.

Right after class, a couple walked up to me. The girl asked if I was new here. Of course I said I was new to everything, even California. She didn't blink an eye, stuck out her hand and introduced herself.

I took her hand. She was a really cute Hispanic-looking young lady, with a lot of self-confidence. She was neatly dressed without overdoing anything; I wished I could wear clothes like that, but oh, well. She introduced the guy — Bob Reynolds.

He stepped forward and put out his hand. As I put out my hand to his, I saw he was a couple inches taller than me. It's always nice to look up a bit. He had the Black Irish look like me.

I took his hand, looked at his blue-green eyes and got totally lost. I just couldn't move. It felt as if every warm-and-fuzzy feeling I'd ever had filled me up. I have no idea how long we just stood there holding hands, looking at each other and joining our souls together.

Sherry finally smacked him one with her elbow and said something. Bob shook his head as if he'd been dazed, and we dropped back. I knew I was blushing but hoped I wasn't acting too dumb. We said something and stepped back.

Sherry looked at him, kind of puzzled. Uh, oh. Did she think I was trying to make a move on her boyfriend?

Anyway, it was all a blur for a few minutes, and I found myself agreeing to have lunch with them. I glanced at Bob and... Oh. My. God. My nipples tightened up, and it really hadn't been sexual at all.

It turned out Bob was in all my Honors classes in the morning, and either Sherry or someone named George was in all my classes. It looked as if I had escorts throughout the day.

Sherry

Bob and I picked up Natalie after the last morning class and walked to the cafeteria. We normally brown-bagged it (no offense to the cafeteria food, it was actually pretty decent), and I noticed Natalie did too.

We got to our normal foursome table. I got Natalie seated across from me and motioned Bob to sit beside her. Being the good boy he was, he took the hint and sat down in his "proper place." Well, if there was going to be something going on between them, I was certainly willing to help it out.

I'd known Bob for years. We'd dated a couple times with a bit of kissy-face, but we agreed we'd do great as friends. There probably wouldn't be any romantic relationship between us; in fact, I was a bit scared of him because of his strength.

Natalie looked a little puzzled when Bob sat down beside her instead of beside me. Oh! She thought Bob and I were together! I was about to

correct that impression when George came up with his lunch and plumped down on the seat beside me.

George was looking really good. We'd gone out a couple times a week at least over the summer, and here he was now. We three high-fived and got all excited about being together again. George and I eyeballed each other pretty good, too. I noticed Bob watching it; he doesn't miss much.

Bob took the lead in introducing Natalie to George as the "new resident of our illustrious school" and said, "And you'd better make a good impression on her, George."

George put on his mock hurt-puppy look and joked, "Yes, boss. Don't beat me again, boss. I'll be good, boss." He grinned at Natalie and said, "Welcome to the best high school in California!"

Bob mentioned they called me, "The Sherry," and why. Natalie grinned up a storm.

While they were shaking hands, Bob waved his hand between George and me while telling Natalie, "These two are 'doing a line together' like a couple of courting peacocks."

George and I did our leech acts and leered at each other. I said, "Hmm, together, eh? I guess we'll have to try it out."

George laughed and said, "Oh, yeh!" We leered at each other and slid our shoulders and hips together on the seat. We leaned our heads together and sighed, "Mmmm," while laughing at Natalie.

Bob just shook his head in mock disbelief and told Natalie, "You've got to keep an eye on these two. They tend to ignore the PDA rules."

Natalie

Sherry really puzzled me when she sat across from me at the lunch table and had Bob sit beside me. What had I missed? I'd been sure the two of them were together.

Then George showed up. He and Sherry "fell in love" right there. Well, I guess it handled the question of whether or not Bob and Sherry were together.

While we ate our brown bags, we chatted about the school, teachers, what events were going on, who was going with whom and all the rest of the high-school stuff. I kept glancing over at Bob. He felt really nice besides being Black Irish like my family; he had just the right amount of Irish accent.

One thing I noticed right away was all the gossip was nice. There wasn't a hint of anything bad about anyone. Now, back at my Ohio school, all the gossip would have been about how so-and-so dumped such-and-such, which girls were whores, who was sleeping with who and all those nasty

tidbits. Not with these people. Such a relief! In Ohio I had usually eaten lunch alone because of the nasty gossip everywhere, but here... I was determined to stay with these guys if they'd let me.

Every once in a while, Bob and Sherry would rattle off at each other for a bit in Spanish; it sounded like they were discussing her family. I didn't know much Spanish, but Spanish with an Irish accent?

After we were all pretty much done eating, Bob rapped the table lightly and said, "Okay, folks, the Inquisition is in session." George and Sherry immediately stopped laughing and joking and looked serious. I felt three pairs of eyes looking at me intently.

Bob said, "Natalie, we're going to put you to The Question."

Oh shit, what's going on? The Inquisition and The Question I knew about from history. Were we going to get into some kind of religious stuff? I got a sinking sensation in my stomach but tried to put on a good front.

With a totally solemn face, Bob said, "Natalie, we need to know what to do with you. For one thing, we've noticed this morning you're in all our Honors classes. Are you a nerd and a brain, a socialite, or somewhere in between?"

Huh? This sure wasn't a question about religion! I just looked at all of them for a bit. I wasn't sure what they expected as an answer but realized they weren't looking for any "correct" answer. They just looked