

Merle Majikal

"Merle Magikal, magically eradicating the planet of magic. How else is an out-of-work wizard meant to make a living these days?"

"Majikal by name and magical by nature!"

The rather eccentric fellow in top hat and long moleskin overcoat handed the Vicar an ornately printed business card and smiled charmingly. "But let's be clear, Vicar, there is no place in well ordered society for magic of any kind."

"Well, yes, I suppose not," replied the Vicar, examining the card. "*Merle Majikal of the Faerie and Magic Elimination Service?*"

"That's right, as it says in the tag line: *Merle Magikal, magically eradicating the planet of magic.*"

"Splendid, Mr Majikal, but I'm not exactly sure what I can do for you?" said the Vicar, trying too hard not to look at Merle's eye patch.

"Ex-wife, bit of a disagreement over dividing up the cat."

"Sorry?"

"Ex-wife," repeated Merle, pointing to his eye patch.

"Oh, I see," replied the Vicar, immediately regretting his unintended pun. "What I mean is, I hadn't really noticed. So, she's quite a violent temper then?"

Merle winked with his good eye and lightly tapped the side of his nose. "Take my advice, Vicar, never marry a witch. It's not all love potions and sexy black underwear, believe me."

"I'll try and bear that in mind, Mr Majikal. So how can I help?"

Merle smiled and surveyed the small, overgrown graveyard of St Crispin's Church in which they stood. "It's more how I can help you."

"Really?"

"I read with interest in the local newsletter, Vicar, the recent problem you've been having with disturbed graves and bodies turning up inappropriately?"

The vicar frowned and nodded. "Yes, quite a problem indeed. In fact, no one's dared to come back to Sunday Service since a rotting corpse fell from the bell tower and almost killed Mrs Wainwright in the middle of the Lord's Prayer."

"And I take it no one's resolved the issue?"

"No, the police were unable to trace any culprits. We even had a Catholic exorcist flown in from the Vatican, all to no avail."

Merle stroked his pointed beard and said quite seriously, "That's because I think you have a more faerie-related problem here, Vicar. To be more specific I fear you actually have an acute Graveyard Boggart infestation."

"A what?" gasped the Vicar, looking at the nearest gravestone as if a host of grotesque creatures were about to come swarming out at any moment.

"A Graveyard Boggart," repeated Merle. "Very troublesome Goblin-like creatures. A nasty nip if you get too close. Normally they just like to kick over headstones during the night or daub tombs with offensive comments. However, there have been extreme cases where they have exhumed graves and deposited cadavers in the most unbecoming of places."

"That'll explain the one I found in the confessional then," said the Vicar. "For the first two hours I just thought it was a parishioner who didn't want to talk. So what can I do to get rid of it?"

"Leave it to me, Vicar. I've had well over five hundred years experience of dealing with these pesky little critters."

"Five hundred years?"

"That's right," confirmed Merle. "It's best not to employ an inexperienced wizard in these matters. They may come cheaper, but the younger ones have never seen a rare silver haired unicorn or confronted a Blackridged Dragon outside of a text book. Would you trust one to de-magicalize an ancient Boggart?"

"No, I suppose not. So how much would this cost Mr Majikal?"

"Well I understand you own a 15th century golden goblet. Give me that and I'll rid you of the Boggart within the hour."

"The Goblet? I couldn't possibly give..."

"I'll also throw in a two hundred year extended guarantee that the problem won't return. How much do you value your congregation Vicar? Things carry on like they are and you won't even have a church left soon!"

The vicar sighed and nodded reluctantly. "Okay, but I don't want it getting out that I employed an ancient Wizard to get rid of a fairytale character. I'd be banished by the Bishop for believing such fantastical nonsense!"

Merle Majikal returned from his bright yellow camper van with a strange cylindrical contraption strapped to his back, from which ran an ordinary garden hose. In his other hand he held a long metal chain at the end of which was a black, three legged ferret.

"An adapted water purifier," Merle explained of the contraption. "Excellent for purifying the liquid obtained from frogs livers, unicorn semen and orc blood. T'is the best known anti-Boggart remedy in the industry."

"And why a three legged ferret?"

"Ferrets hate Boggarts. The number of legs has no bearing though. Mine lost a leg in an incident with a Norwegian Troll on the outskirts of Birmingham last winter. Now, please, stand back Vicar..."

Merle Majikal stepped forward and began spraying the strange liquid around the headstones and tombs of the graveyard. Almost immediately, a mound of fresh earth appeared beside a grave and from it, coughing and spluttering, appeared a small, hairy creature with a wizened head.

"*Catchus Boggartus!*" enchanted Merle, allowing the ferret the run of the long chain.

Instantly the Boggart took off, scrambling up and over gravestones to escape. Unfortunately, it was no match, even for the speed of a three-legged ferret, which quickly caught up and sunk its teeth deep into the Boggart's brown leather lederhosen.

Quick as a flash, Merle hauled the ferret back on the chain, placed the screeching Boggart in a sack and tied it tight.

"There you go Vicar, job done."

Merle Majikal drove his camper away from the church, whistling happily as he eyed the precious golden goblet beside him.

Underneath the passenger seat the sack shook. "Damn you Merle, let me out this instant!" came a muffled voice. "This isn't funny anymore!"

Merle laughed, removed his eye patch and untied the sack.

"For enchantment's sake!" snapped Mrs Majikal, now back in witch form and tenderly rubbing her backside. "Let that ferret bite me so hard next time and you really will be missing an eye!"