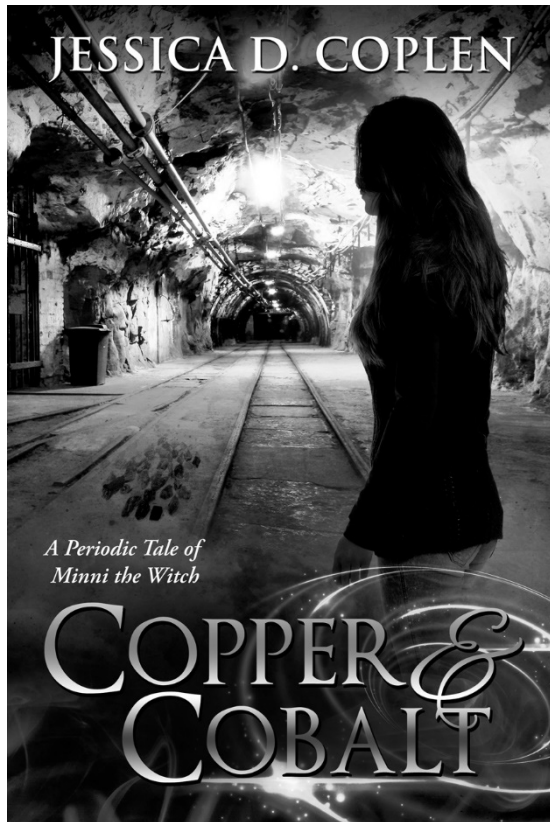


Copper & Gold

Special Sneak Peak  
Book Two

*Copper and Cobalt*



COPLEN

## *Copper and Cobalt*

I drummed my fingers on the countertop. "So, I'm thinking you can buy me lunch at that little bistro two blocks over. I know you love that monstrosity they make."

He pressed his lips together, crinkling his nose. "You think anything with sprouts is a monstrosity."

"Yeah." I gave him my best duh expression in return.

Phil chuckled and tapped at the keys. "Sounds good. Ryan can watch the store, I'll bring something back for him."

"Where is Ryan?" I asked, grabbing my phone from my pocket so I could text Stacey, my non-magical BFF, about plans for later that weekend.

"Upstairs, cataloguing some stuff," Phil answered, then looked towards the door as the little bell dinged announcing a new customer. "Welcome."

I was in the middle of my text, totally ignoring my surroundings—which is why I would make a horrible spy—when Phil rushed around the counter. At that same moment I heard the clatter of one of the display tables getting knocked over. Glancing up, I saw the powder blue clad figure of a man slump to the floor. Phil rushed to his side.

"Should I call 911?" I said as I hurried over, wondering if maybe the person only tripped and knocked down the display.

Phil leaned over the collapsed man who looked to be in his late forties, maybe early fifties. The clamminess of his skin and generally sunken appearance made it hard to tell. He looked sick, like plague-carrier sick.

"I'm gonna call 911." I clicked out of texting to get to the dialing keypad.

"Wait." Phil had one hand on the man's forehead while the other hovered over the general region where the heart should be. I'd only gotten the 9 dialed so I paused, trusting my coven leader, because I tell you, this guy looked like he was about to die at any moment.

"Ryan!" Phil shouted at the top of his lungs as he started to clear away the fallen boxes of soap the man had taken down with him.

Loud thuds preceded Ryan running out of the back room, skidding to a stop a little wide-eyed at the scene.

"I need all the Prussian Blue we have in the store," Phil ordered and Ryan only paused for a second before disappearing into the back again. "Help me move him."

Realizing he was talking to me, I pocketed my phone and grabbed the man's legs as Phil reached under his arms. Together we carried the stranger into the back where Phil had a makeshift breakroom complete with battered leather sofa.

We laid the customer down, then Phil immediately moved to the shelf where he keeps his office supplies. You know, the usual: pens, sticky-notes, highlighters, exorcism kit...

"Get his tie off," he told me as he rummaged through one of the boxes. "Help him breath."

"Uh, okay." I still had no clue what was going on but hey, sounded reasonable to me. I watch a lot of movies.

Trying not to be too rough, I tugged at the tie, getting it loose enough to just slip out of its knot and from around his neck. I also undid the first two buttons on his dress shirt. I grabbed a random hoodie that was laying on the back of a nearby chair and folded it up to make a pillow. I didn't want to really tilt his head up, just make it lay more even with his body.

I made the stranger about as comfortable as I could. Then as I started to turn back to Phil, I felt a cold grip on my wrist.

"Seren cobalt." The man stared at me with vacant, glassed over eyes.

"Seh-ren cobalt?" I muttered, wondering if I had heard right.

His eyes rolled into the back of his head as he passed out again, his grip loosening and his arm falling from the sofa to brush the floor.

Great, see, this is how horror films start.