

The Witches of Eriadne: Interlude Four J - Part 2: Angel's Law

by [The Space Witches](#)



This man certainly knows how to charm a witch.

Chapter 1

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I avoided my brother-in-law's look of disapproval as he left Medbay. Yet again, I was in trouble with my sister's husband, and I was rather relieved to see the back of him. In fact, I was in trouble with all the members of my family on one level or another. The only difference between them and Matt was that he was the one currently having fantasies about booting me out of an airlock for what I'd done.

I have to admit that he had every right to feel that way. What I'd done was stupid, even if at the time I hadn't thought anything could go wrong. Typical. What is it about me that attracts trouble and strife? Don't answer that! I know. I have this bad habit of doing things without thinking, or rather without thinking about what ALL the possible consequences could be. Naturally, things always go wrong. Just as they did this time. I bet you're wondering what the hell I'm going on about. Well, I guess I should cut a long story short.

A recent encounter with Lucas Buck at a Masquerade Ball being given by the Governor of the Ceti Gamma III colony had left me rather upset, as you can imagine. My sisters and I had decided not to tell Matt, Luke or John, as we knew it would open a can of worms that was best kept shut. Unfortunately, I hadn't been behaving normally since that encounter and Matt had been aware that something was amiss. Since I kept refusing to tell him what was wrong, and he knew I was hiding something, he'd grown more frustrated and angry with me by the day. Of course, I'd reacted to that, and we'd been fighting. So what else is new?

Anyway, the previous night we'd had another blow out and I'd got it into my head that I would give anything to be able to get off the ship for a couple of hours, just to clear my head. Only problem was we were in deep space, days away from any planet. However, being a witch, that didn't stop me from

finding a way to take off.

Some of you may remember a little adventure I had some time back, when I brought to life--accidentally, of course--some characters from my favorite 20th Century TV programs and movies. Well, after that encounter I decided to revise the spell I'd used. If I could bring characters out, I should be able to go in. At the time, I didn't think I would ever use it, but that night, I'd decided to give it a try and go horse riding. I had a data crystal showing various types of holidays, one of which included an equestrian holiday in the Cotswolds on Earth.

There was one slight obstacle. If I left the ship, the ship's computer would alert the bridge that I'd disappeared. But at that point I was so annoyed with Gideon that I didn't care if I got caught. Anyway, I thought if I wasn't bringing strangers on board the Excalibur and I wasn't going to endanger anyone, what I was going to do wasn't that bad. Sometimes I'm an idiot, what can I say?

So I prepared myself, popped in the data crystal and cast the spell to take me to the Cotswolds. Sounds simple enough, right? Wrong! What I didn't know at the time was that I'd made two big mistakes.

First, I'd popped in the wrong data crystal. Instead of the holiday program, I'd put on an episode of the TV series Charmed. For any of you who don't know Charmed, it's about three sisters who happen to be powerful witches. You can see why I'd be interested in it.

Second, just when I was zapping myself into the TV program, the Excalibur was passing through some weird spatial anomaly that affected the entire ship. But it's not my fault, they didn't announce, "Attention, Shoppers, we're having a special on Weird Spatial Anomalies in Aisle Six" overhead now did they?

These things resulted in everything going completely wacky with my attempt to get off the ship for a couple of hours. I found myself somewhere I wasn't expecting to be, and worse than that, I soon discovered that I'd somehow not only leaped into the Charmed universe, but I'd also managed to leap into the body of one of the Halliwell sisters. Phoebe Halliwell, to be precise. Must have been an episode of Quantum Leap on that crystal, too!

Immediately I realized my mistake, I tried to get myself back to my quarters on the Excalibur. It was easier said than done. Because of the spatial anomaly, to which I was completely oblivious at the time, I was stuck in a fictitious universe, inside a fictitious character's body and unable to get home.

Right, so clearly I'm back aboard the Excalibur. What happened and how did I get back, I hear you wondering? Well, you'd better sit back and read on.

I stood in the in the middle of the room and wondered if the universe was playing a practical joke on me. Again. This was after I had asked, "Why me?" upon discovering I wasn't in the Cotswolds at all, but in the fictitious universe of the supernatural 20th century TV program about sibling witches, called Charmed.

Now the mistake wouldn't have been so bad if it hadn't been for two things. First, I had just discovered that for one reason or another, I wasn't able to get home. Something was blocking the spell to take me back. And the second thing--the real kicker--I was trapped in the body of one of the Halliwell sisters. Phoebe. Don't ask me how that had happened, but it had. At that moment I didn't know if I should laugh or cry at the situation I found myself in.

All I'd wanted was to go horse riding. I sure as hell didn't see a damned horse anywhere, and somehow I doubted if Phoebe kept one under her bed. Of course, if I was desperate to go riding, I could have just waited for Phoebe's husband, Cole, to appear. As the Source of All Evil, he could probably steal a mount from one of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Those guys are trouble, but they have really cool horses, except I'm a little leery about Death's Pale Horse. White, Black and Fiery Red? Excellent. But *Pale?*

I had to drag my thoughts back and focus on the problem at a hand. I suddenly wondered, if I was occupying her body, then where was Phoebe? If we had traded places, and Phoebe was in my body on board the Excalibur, the problems that could arise could get very interesting.

"Oh hell, this could get complicated."

Visions of what Matt would do to me flew through my head, and I cursed my inability to get back. I was also a little nervous about the fact that I had zapped into the exact time in Phoebe's life when she was married to Cole Turner. Mr. Tall, gorgeous and sexy, who also happens to be the Source of All Evil. Literally. As he was very much in love with his wife, even if he was evil personified, I seriously doubted he would be pleased to find I had taken over her body.

Oh, and Cole wasn't just in love with Phoebe, but as a 'Charmed One', he wanted to father a child on her. Well, I'm not 'Charmed', in fact I'm convinced I'm jinxed, and I was in serious danger of being incinerated by Cole. Now there was a thought to make me feel all warm and cozy.

"All I wanted to do was going riding, damn it!" I hissed at the Jokester, otherwise known as the Universe.

I sighed and thanked the Goddess for small mercies; at least Cole wasn't home. I didn't want to run the risk that although I looked like Phoebe, Cole would be able to tell I wasn't his wife because of his powers. I desperately tried to figure out how I was going to get out of this one. I began to realize that I might actually have to resort to contacting Phoebe's sisters, Piper and Paige. They would probably have been about as pleased to find me in their sister's body as Cole, but at least I didn't think they would incinerate me.

Of course, Piper might try to blow me up.

"Don't even go there," I told myself.

I was in a bit of a quandary, since I didn't have a clue as to the location of the manor house where the Halliwells lived. If I didn't know the address, it would make it a little difficult to get there. I started to consider the possibility of calling for Leo, Piper's husband. As a Whitelighter, Leo has the ability to jump from place to place in an instant, doing something called 'Orbing'. I was just about to call him and get him to orb me over to the manor, when the very people I was thinking about appeared in front of me.

Of course, they scared the living hell out of me, appearing like that. I'm so glad *my* sisters don't have that 'orbing' ability. I'd probably die prematurely after having had decades scared off my life. On the other hand, I couldn't help imagining how much fun it would be to have the power to teleport in the blink of an eye. The fun I could have with that...

I grinned to myself, then quickly shook those thoughts away and focused my attention on the two

sisters, who I hoped would be able to help me out of the spot of bother I was in.

I stared at Phoebe's sisters, but the two women were obviously unaware of me standing behind them. Surprised by their sudden appearance, it took me a few minutes to notice their odd behavior.

"What the hell did you just do?" asked a clearly agitated Piper.

"I haven't a clue!" responded Paige.

Piper snorted, "Well, if you don't know how you did it, may I suggest you don't do it again? I've had enough surprises for one day!" It was weird, but for some reason Piper seemed suddenly to have acquired an English accent.

I was wondering how that had happened when Paige turned, hands on hips, and said rebelliously, "How can I not do something, if I don't know how I did it in the first place?"

Their surprise struck me as very odd. I might have thought they'd just arrived in the middle of some argument, but there was something else going on. Since I didn't know what it was, and I had concerns of my own that needed dealing with, I decided to interrupt them. "Piper, Paige?" Paige yelped and the two women swung round to face me. I raised my hand and waved at them. "Hi."

I dropped my hand as I noticed their reaction. It was as if they had never seen me before. Piper was the first to respond, albeit hesitantly, "Ah, hi. Uh..."

It suddenly occurred to me--much to my displeasure--that Piper appeared to be struggling for my name. Unless she had become an amnesiac, there could be only one explanation. Something told me all my wishing it weren't true wasn't going to help me. The only way I could confirm my suspicion was to try something.

I smiled, "Penelope, your sister! Sheesh, Piper, you're acting as if you don't know who I am."

I watched as both women broke into fake grins and they said in perfect unison, "Hi, Penelope."

My heart hit the floor and lay there for a while, fluttering pathetically. I found myself asking the universe--again--just what I had done to deserve this. [For crying out loud, give me a break, will you?] Clamping down on a moment of panic, I asked the two women straight out, "Demon, Lily, is that you?"

For a moment, both of them looked at me with what on any other occasion might have been comically stunned expressions. Then Piper stepped forward, her brow creased in a frown as she asked softly, "Angel?"

"Yes, it's me," I told the two bewildered women, then asked them what the hell they were doing there. Suddenly 'Paige' and 'Piper' lunged forward and I found myself under attack. I won't tell you what exactly was said, especially by Demon, as my sister's language can be extremely colorful and her vocabulary is awesome. I'm too much of a lady to repeat what she yelled.

Anyway, in amongst the reprimands and abuse, I was able to catch the reason for them being there. They had found me in a coma in my quarters. I might add that I wasn't exactly overjoyed to hear that, but it didn't surprise me much. The day was getting worse by the minute.

So, having discovered me in that state, and Luke having informed them that my life was in danger, my darling sisters had tried to find out what had happened to me. Somehow, Lily had found the spell I had cast.

It was then they mentioned the Excalibur had experienced technical difficulties due to passing through a spatial anomaly. Somehow, I knew that hiccup in space was the reason the spell had gone a little awry. My sisters, in an attempt to get me back and save my life, had used the same spell I had cast. And here they were, in the same trouble as me. They should have been Marines, the way they blindly jumped into hell trying to rescue me.

[Oh god...why me?]

Finally, my sisters stopped yelling at me, and I realized they were waiting for me to answer a question. "Ah, what?" I asked hesitantly. I hadn't been paying attention. Demon's diatribes have that affect on me. Since the age of sixteen, after the fifteenth or so expletive it starts to get boring and I just zone out.

Demon glared at me. "Dammit, Angel, pay attention! This is serious! Now, tell us what the hell is going on. What were you thinking? Where are we? WHO are we?"

I shifted uncomfortably as both my sisters glared at me. With self-preservation in mind, I quickly told them everything I had done, where we were, who we were and my theory about why the spell had turned out the way it had. Have you ever wished the ground would just swallow you up? Well, face to face with my sisters at that moment, I have never wished it harder. I kept thinking that maybe I'd get lucky, and San Francisco would have another earthquake to distract them. I waited for a few moments but nothing happened. Why can't anything good ever happen to me? Why can't I get a nice strong earthquake to open the ground and swallow me whole when I need one?

Before they could lash out at me again, I rushed on, "Look, I'm sorry. I know I always seem to say that, but I am! This was not supposed to happen. All I wanted was go horse riding. How was I to know that space would throw me a curve ball and land me--us--in this situation?"

"You have a knack for landing in trouble, Angel. You should be more careful when casting spells this powerful," chastised Lily, softly. I was crushed by the disappointment I saw in her eyes.

I glanced at her with a wounded expression. "Lily, I'm always careful! I didn't know this was going to happen. If I had, do you honestly think I would ever do anything to risk my life or your lives like that?" I heard my voice crack and realized I was close to tears. Dammit, all I wanted to do was go horse riding. Life had it in for me, I was convinced of it!

Demon sighed and shook her head, "Don't pout, Angel."

Now that got me pissed. Pout? Like Demon's never sulked. I realized I was zoning out again and decided to pay attention, but she'd pay for that pout comment later.

"We don't have time for you to feel sorry for yourself. We have to get back. We'll deal with what you did when we get home. I'll warn you now though, Matthew is not happy--at all. If you think we're angry, Matthew is worse."

Maybe it was my imagination, but Demon seemed a little too pleased about Matthew's anger. I wondered if it would be such a bad thing to stay here and assume Phoebe's life. I'd rather face the Source of all Evil than a pissed off Starship Captain.

"You do have a spell to get back, don't you, Angel?" My heart sank at Lily's question.

"Well, Angel?" My stomach knotted nervously and I fidgeted under Demon's scrutiny. I had no idea how to tell them what I had already discovered about the return spell.

"Angel?" barked Demon and Lily in unison.

I jumped. "Well, yes, of course I have a return spell," I began nervously.

"Great, then let's get cracking. Luke said the sooner we got you back, the bet..."

"Ah, there's a slight problem with it," I said, cutting Demon off.

I tried to convince myself that Demon wouldn't kill her own sister, as she came closer and asked softly through gritted teeth. "What do you mean, 'there's a problem'?"

I cleared my throat and explained, "It should work, but I guess the spatial anomaly is affecting the spell."

For a moment neither of them said anything, then Lily asked, "Do you realize what it means if we can't get back, Angel?"

I didn't think my guilt could get any worse, but it did, and I looked at Lily sadly. "Yes, I'm all too aware."

We all fell into silence again, then Demon spoke. "OK, so we can't get back using your original spell, Angel. So, maybe we'd better come up with another plan, or a spell that *will* work. Lily, do you have any ideas?"

It didn't escape my notice that Demon was deliberately not asking me that question, but I couldn't let that stop me. I interrupted them before Lily could answer, "Actually, *I* have an idea." Both my sisters turned to look at me, again making me feel as if I'd sprouted two heads. I swear Demon practices that disapproving, skeptical look in the mirror in private, just for me. I've never seen her use it on anyone else. She probably spends fifteen minutes a day perfecting that look, and then she practices cooing for her darling Captain.

I went on, "Look, I know neither of you are very happy with me right now and you don't exactly trust me to get us back, but there might be a way."

Demon folded her arms, "What is it, Angel?" If she could have looked any more doubting I think I'd have called her Thomas. I wondered if I could jury rig a spell so she'd grow a mustache. A nice dark one.

I quickly explained, "Well, like I told you, the people we leaped into are witches, very powerful witches. Now, considering you both orbed in, it must mean that as well as taking on their identities we've also assumed their powers. Maybe we can use them to get back."

"How would that work? I mean we're powerful witches, too, Angel, but your return spell can't get us back. How exactly would the powers of these three sisters help?"

Lily had asked a good question, but I wasn't exactly sure of the answer. "I don't know, exactly. They have a very powerful book of magic. Maybe there's something in there that will help us."

"It sounds like a long shot to me," responded Demon, dubiously. She had that look on her face again. It was weird seeing that expression on Piper's features, when the glare I was getting was so unmistakably Demon's.

[Pessimism is never helpful!] I thought silently. "I know, but it's the only idea I have. Do either of you have a better one?" I responded softly, trying not to pout. The only person who can make me pout more quickly and easily than my big sister is her husband, and I really didn't want to think about Matthew right then

Lily came to my rescue. "Demon, it might be worth a try. If Angel's spell doesn't work, I doubt if anything I could come up with would work, either," she said, as she placed her hand on Demon's arm. Lily then appeared to think of something else. She fell silent for a moment, and I waited for her to continue. When she did, she looked over at me. "There's only one problem I can see. To be able to cast magic through another witch, you have to know how that witch's powers work. We don't even know what these sisters' powers are, let alone how to wield them, and cast a spell to get us back."

My little sister had a valid point. There was only one way around that problem and that was for us to get to grips with the Halliwells' powers. The problem was, even if it meant helping us, I wasn't too thrilled at the idea of letting Demon loose with Piper's rather destructive abilities. In her current mood, she might be tempted to try them out on me. [All the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't put Angel together again.] Humpty Dumpty never was one of my favorite nursery rhymes.

I told myself it wasn't *really* funny and focused on my sisters. "You're right, Lily. It looks like we'll have to take a crash course in the abilities of the Charmed Ones."

"What are these witches' powers, exactly?" Demon asked, before pausing as she gave Lily a sidelong glance. "Although I think we have a good idea what this one's ability is," finished Demon. Clearly she hadn't enjoyed the experience of suddenly being orb'd. It was probably came a little too close to flying, and we all knew about my big sister's fear of flying.

I had to smother a laugh as Lily put her hands on her hips and gave Demon an indignant snort. "Hey, don't look at me that way. I didn't exactly do it on purpose, you know!" Lily suddenly turned her attention to me, forcing me to wipe the grin off my face. This really wasn't meant to be funny.

"Just exactly what was it I did without knowing how I did it?" asked Lily.

I cleared my throat of any trace of laughter and quickly explained Paige's power. I finished by suggesting to Lily that she tried to use Paige's ability to orb objects to herself.

"How do I do that?" asked Lily.

I chewed my lip and searched the room for something she could practice on. I spotted a small glass vase and turned back to Lily, pointing over at it. "Focus on that vase, hold out your hand and say 'vase'. It should orb from there into your hand--I think."

Lily shot me a look that said 'I think you're bullshitting me, but I'll humor you and give it a try anyway'. Then she focused her attention on the vase. After a few minutes she called out loud for it. Nothing happened. [Great, play hard to get, why don't you?] The vase just sat on the table on the far

side of the room, looking stubborn. You've never seen a stubborn looking vase? Take my word for it.

I turned to Lily, who was giving me a very dark look. I smiled and tried to sound encouraging, "Focus on it, Lily. I know you can do it. Just imagine the vase disappearing and appearing in your hand."

I ignored the snort of disbelief I heard coming from Demon, and nodded at Lily to give it another try. Sighing, Lily focused once again. This time, and to my great relief, the vase began to shimmer and break up into white light before disappearing completely. Seconds later, light began to gather over Lily's hand as the vase took shape once more.

Lily was so surprised she yelped and withdrew her hand. This resulted in the vase plummeting to the ground and shattering into hundreds of little glass shards. I stared at the mess and prayed the vase wasn't valuable.

"Oh, sweet Goddess, that was incredible!" exclaimed Lily, as she eyed the shards with amazement before looking up at me. "What a cool power! I have to try that again."

All I could do was beg her not to drop and break anything else, as she proceeded to test Paige's power again. This time Lily succeeded, and moments later she stood with a big grin on her face, holding a paperweight she had orbed to her, without actually dropping it. "This is really amazing! Now, why can't I have a power like this?" she asked, as she held out the paperweight.

I grinned at her, then found Demon watching us, a look of disapproval on her face. Nothing new there then. Lily and I sobered and turned to our big sister. Sometimes, I wish Demon could lighten up a little. OK, I know we were in a fairly serious situation, but still! Well, maybe experiencing Piper's powers would put a smile on her face. Lily seemed to be enjoying having an active power to play with, maybe Demon would, too.

"OK, Demon. Your turn." I said, smiling at my sister. I was rewarded with another scowl. [If the wind changes and your face stays like that, you'll regret it!] I quickly suppressed the thought and smiled cheerfully.

"Fine, so what are this Piper's abilities anyway?" asked Demon, with a heavy sigh.

"Wait, I want to practice my orb-ing again, not just fetching things to me, but moving myself around," interrupted Lily. My little sister was getting high on her new power. We needed to sober her up and quickly, before she tried to orb every item in the apartment into her grasping little hands.

Demon and I turned to Lily, and I managed to respond before Demon did, "We'll deal with that later. Besides, you've already done it, next time you'll be more prepared."

"But, I still don't know *how* I did it," replied Lily, a little annoyed. Even with Paige's face rather than her own, my little sister could still produce an Olympic class pout. I could tell I wasn't going to be able to make Lily wait. Isn't it wonderful when you have a sister who doesn't know the meaning of the word patience? [No comments about taking one to know one, please!]

I sighed, "What were you thinking about just before you orb-ed?"

Lily frowned, "You. We were thinking about you, and wondering where you were, and how we could find you."

"Well, there you have it. That's all you have to do. You just think about the person you want to go to, or where you want to go to, and bang, you should be there." I said.

"But..." began Lily, looking very confused.

I interrupted her quickly. "Look, Lily, that's all I know. We'll get a chance to test it out in a minute. The Book of Shadows is at the Halliwell..." I paused a moment as a thought occurred to me. "Hmmm, just where did you two come from, exactly?"

"Some house," answered Demon.

I turned to her. "Aha, I'd guess that was the Halliwell Manor, which brings me back to orbng." I turned once again to Lily. "The Book of Shadows is in the attic at the Halliwells' house. Once Demon has gotten to grips with Piper's powers, we'll all need to go there. Orbng will be the best way, since I haven't a clue where the house is. Is that OK?"

Lily pursed her lips and nodded, much to my relief. I was once again free to turn to Demon. "Right, now you. Piper has the ability to freeze time and blow things up." I quickly explained further, describing exactly how I thought Piper did what she did.

When I finished, Demon made a small sound in the back of her throat. There was something about the look in her eyes that I didn't quite like. It reminded me of Matt somehow. It was a look he got when he was plotting something that meant bad news for someone, which in most cases was me. Again, I asked myself why the hell Demon had leaped into the sister with the most destructive power. I edged away as she slowly approached me, eyes slightly narrowed as she asked, "Blow things up, did you say?"

[Oh shit.] I licked my lips nervously and quickly held up a hand, "Before you get any ideas, might I add that for the Power of Three to work, there have to *be* three sisters!"

Demon muttered something, which sounded suspiciously like 'pity'. I decided to ignore it and moved on. "Let's give Piper's freezing ability a try, shall we?" Demon nodded.

I looked around the room, but unfortunately there was nothing moving, and I knew Piper's powers wouldn't work on her own sisters. Then I noticed the doors to the balcony and I moved toward them. "Let's go outside and you can try freezing some people or something."

I opened the doors and we went out onto the balcony. It was then I realized how high up we were, and I was about to warn Demon and suggest we go back inside. To my amazement, Demon followed me out, seemingly unaffected by the height. I decided not to bring it to her attention.

Demon and Lily stopped beside me as we looked over the side of the railing. "So what do I freeze?" asked Demon.

I was about to suggest she stopped the people who we could see walking way below us, when she suddenly smiled. "I've got it."

Lily and I watched as Demon looked up at a seagull hovering just above us. She lifted her hands as I had described Piper doing, and waved them in the seagull's direction. My sister seemed to have got the knack of Piper's ability rather quickly, because the bird suddenly froze in mid flap. It looked *very* odd.

I turned to Demon with a grin, "Hey, you got it first time." I was pleased to see that Demon was smiling in return.

"It was easier than I thought it would be. This is one hell of a handy power!" stated Demon, as she looked up at the frozen seagull.

"Not to mention the fun you could have with it," added Lily, a mischievous grin on her face.

We all laughed, then I said to Demon, "Now, try and unfreeze it." She nodded and turned her attention back to the bird. Repeating the movements she'd made earlier, she let the bird go. Well, when I say 'let the bird go', I don't mean she actually let it move. She just let it go, and we all stood and watched as the frozen seagull plummeted downward, heading straight for a parked convertible, where a woman sat in the passenger seat.

"Demon! When I said unfreeze it, I meant let it go, not let it drop!" I yelled, fearing the damage a bird that size falling from that height could do to someone.

Demon let out a yelp, and half hanging over the railing, she waved her hands at the seagull. Just in time, the bird's wings started to flap. Unfortunately, it was too close to the car and the passenger. It landed, with a distressed squawk, into the woman's lap.

Now, we may have been a long way up, but not that far that we couldn't hear the woman scream and see her flap her arms wildly at the bird, which in turn flapped its wings and cried out in distress, desperately trying to flee. Finally, the bird launched itself upward, its flight path somewhat erratic for a moment, before it got its bearings and flew away. The problem was its experience had obviously frightened the shit out of it. Literally. The female passenger was liberally coated with guano.

None of us said anything for a moment, then Demon looked from me to Lily and back, and said, "Oops."

All three of us burst into uncontrollable laughter. Only after several minutes were we able to get ourselves under control. Wiping tears from her eyes, Demon peered over the railing and said breathlessly, "Piper does have one hell of an ability!"

"And she's obviously not afraid of heights," I said with a grin, as Demon continued to look over edge.

Demon straightened and all the color suddenly drained from her face, as she backed away from the railing. All she could manage was a weak, "Oh."

Lily and I glanced at each other before I suggested we go back inside. Demon didn't hesitate and Lily had to quite literally jump out of the way as our big sister beat a hasty retreat. Once inside, Demon was once again at ease. She asked me again about Piper's second power. "Shall we give that one a try?" she asked, as she looked around the room.

"Ah, wait! Lily has already broken something," I said quickly. Demon gave me what looked suspiciously like a pout, so I went on, "We'll give Piper's other ability a try when we're back at the Halliwell manor. I'd rather not do any more damage here, OK?"

Demon looked as if she was about to argue, then nodded. "Fine." She paused, and I became a little unnerved as she watched me for a moment, before finally asking, "So what are Phoebe's powers?"

I let out a sigh of relief and explained Phoebe's powers of premonition and levitation. Lily was interested in Phoebe's ability to see into the future, as it was a power much like her own. It was a pity neither Lily nor Phoebe could control their premonitions, as maybe then they could have foreseen if we'd get home. Demon seemed more interested in the power of levitation.

"Come on, Angel. We've shown we can access Paige and Piper's abilities. Now it's your turn."

Maybe it was my imagination, but something about Demon's tone sounded amused. What she could find so funny about Phoebe's powers was beyond me, so I ignored her and focused on trying to levitate. Not easy, I'll tell you right now! It took several tries before it worked, and I'll be honest, I didn't even know exactly how I managed it, but I finally found myself slowly lifting off the floor.

"That's incredible!" said Lily, as she looked up at me where I hung a few feet up.

I grinned down at her, "Not bad, eh?" It was fun. I felt as light as air as I floated. I wondered if this ability could be used to simulate flying and was just about to ask my sisters if I should give it a try, when Demon's laughter interrupted me.

Both Lily and I watched her for a moment before I finally asked, "Just what the hell is so funny?"

Demon approached me. "Let me get this straight. Lily has the power to orb herself and other things from one place to another in the blink of an eye. I have the power to freeze time and blow things up?"

Still hanging in the air, with my hands on my hips, I wondered if my sister had lost her mind. "Yes. And your point would be?"

Demon sniggered and went on, "And you have the power to foresee the future and...hover."

I didn't miss the laughter in Demon's voice as she said the word 'hover'. The nerve! She actually thought it was funny. I began to lower myself to the ground as I asked slowly. "Yeah and what's so funny about that?"

Demon failed dismally at keeping a straight face as she explained, "Oh, it's just that Lily and I have these really cool powers and all you can do is sort of hang around in mid air."

"And foresee the future!" I snapped. Correct me if I'm wrong, but that isn't a power to be sniggered at.

Demon came closer to me, a look of mischief in her eyes as she asked. "Don't you feel a little short changed?"

[Yeah, you laugh, sister dear!] I smiled sweetly at my darling sister and looked her straight in the eye. "Not really, since when we get back to our world, I'll have a--how did you put it?--really cool power, telekinesis, and you'll have what? The ability to sense and influence people's emotions. Tell me, are you going to feel a little short changed?" I gave my sister a wicked grin, even though I could see she was building up to give me one hell of a tongue lashing. Well, she did ask for it!

"Hey, you two, do you think we could focus on the problem at hand?" Asked Lily, who wonders of wonders, stopped orbiting and decided to become the responsible sister, as she came to stand between us. I gave Demon a cheeky grin, while she gave me a dark scowl. We both nodded at Lily.

"You're right, Lily." I said in agreement.

"Well, we still have a couple of powers to get grips with, and quickly. We don't have much time. Angel you said the Halliwells had a powerful book of magic that might be able to help us get back?" asked Demon

I nodded, "Yes, and besides that, it's probably not a good idea to hang out here for too long."

"Why's that?" asked Demon suspiciously.

I suddenly realized that I'd backed myself into a corner. I'd been hoping I wouldn't have to mention Cole. My sisters wouldn't be too happy to find I had landed us in a situation where one of the characters involved was the Source of All Evil. I cleared my throat and was just about to make something up, when a voice came from another part of the apartment.

"Phoebe? Are you home?"

The sound of that very masculine and all too familiar voice caused me to yelp in surprise. I jumped and turned to face the direction it had come from, whispering hoarsely, "Oh hell..."

"What, who is that?" whispered Lily, as she came to stand beside me. I was vaguely aware of Demon standing on the other side of me, as I concentrated on the doorway, praying Cole didn't come into the room.

"Cole," I answered, wondering if things could get any more complicated. I had a nasty feeling the answer was 'yes'.

"Who's Cole?" Asked Lily and Demon at the same time.

"Shh! Not so loud!" I whispered.

Obviously my warning had come too late, as once again Cole called out. "Phoebe? Is that you?"

"Bugger!" I moved forward and turned to look at both of my sisters. "Cole is Phoebe's husband. Whatever you do, don't say anything that might give away the fact we aren't who we appear to be!"

"Why?" asked Lily, curiously.

I felt like screaming, but restrained myself as I answered softly, "Just don't. I'll explain later. For now, just follow my lead and don't say anything!"

I turned just in time to find Cole appearing in the doorway. A frown creased the handsome plains of his face as he looked directly at me. A thousand butterflies fluttered in my stomach as his blue eyes drifted from me to my sisters then back to me again. Then Cole moved into the room and headed straight for me, a hand outstretched, indicating that he wanted me to go to him.

It took a lot of control for me not to grab Lily's hand and tell her to orb us out of there. Instead, I made myself smile and I moved into his waiting arms.

The moment I reached Cole, a pair of soft lips zoomed in on my mouth. I didn't have a choice, I knew I had to give in as Cole began to kiss me--and boy, could the man kiss. However, just as I was enjoying the sensation of Cole's tongue invading my mouth, I became aware of a cough behind me. [Oh crap!] I

had momentarily forgotten my sisters' presence. Pulling away from Cole, I turned to face them.

Demon--big surprise--was giving me one of her classic looks of constipated disapproval. I wondered if a face-lift would be able to fix that problem. Then again, even in Piper's body, Demon was still able to get that look across, so I guessed not. At least Lily had a better sense of humor, and was watching Cole and me with a curious and amused expression.

"Phoebe, is there a problem?" asked Cole, drawing my attention back to him. I glanced up at him. He was looking over at my sisters suspiciously.

Lily, the little minx, was giving Cole a come-hither, seductive little smile. I had to bite back a scream and stop myself warning her out loud to stop that! Unfortunately, the mental link I usually had with my sisters, which would have allowed me to send to Lily and give her a good mental slapping, wasn't functioning in the Halliwell sisters' bodies. Frustrated, I gave Lily a withering glare instead, but she was too busy fluttering her eyelashes at Cole to notice [Bad, very bad!]

Paige had in the past made it blatantly obvious to Cole that she did not like or trust him. To have her suddenly making goo-goo eyes at him was guaranteed to get us caught. I couldn't have answered for Lily or Demon, but I didn't want to depart this life as 'Crispy-fried Angel'.

I stepped away from Cole and shot my sisters a warning look before turning to look up at Cole. I smiled soothingly. "No, there's no problem." [Well apart from the fact that I'm currently inhabiting your wife's body.] I hoped The Source wasn't able to read minds.

Cole's expression was dubious as he glanced at 'Piper' and 'Paige'. "You sure about that? I get the feeling I interrupted something."

"No, not at all! Piper and Paige just dropped in for a sisterly chat." I responded quickly--too quickly. A frown creasing Cole's brow told me I wasn't doing a very good job at pretending all was well. [You have to do better than that!] Well, no one ever said I'd win an Oscar for my acting ability. "They just wanted to tell me something. They told me and now they're leaving."

Before Cole could respond I turned and began to usher my sisters, who I could see were about to argue, out of the room. A hand clasped gently over my upper arm and I was forced to stop and turn. "If there's some kind of problem, maybe I can help?" asked Cole.

I gulped back a squeak of distress and shook my head, "No problem. Let me just see Piper and Paige on their way and then we can..." I paused and moved closer to him. Reaching a hand up, I pulled his head down toward me so I could murmur in his ear. I whispered something I prayed Phoebe would say. I told him to go run a nice bath, and that I would join him once my sisters had left. From the soft intake of breath, I guessed he liked that idea. Hell, I liked that idea. And yes, I was aware that I wouldn't actually be able to participate in that bath--sadly.

I clamped down on my disappointment and told myself the most important thing was to get Demon and Lily out of there. I had turned away from Cole, just in time to catch my red-headed sister giving Phoebe's husband a coquettish little grin. OK, so I should have been more forgiving; Lily wasn't aware that Paige hated Cole and hadn't pretended otherwise. How could she know that flirting with Cole would raise the Source's suspicions and endanger our lives? She couldn't - but still - I told myself I wasn't being possessive about Cole. After all, how could I be possessive about a man who by all rights wasn't even mine? [No comments about dogs and bones, thank you very much.]

Forcing myself to focus my attention, I turned back to Cole, and told him softly to go ahead. He hesitated a moment and eyed 'Paige' with an unreadable expression, [Oh shit.] I was sure we'd been busted as Cole frowned. But then he leaned forward, gave me a brief kiss and said softly, "Don't be long." With one last unreadable look at Lily, he turned and left.

I watched Cole disappear into what I assumed was the bedroom. When the door shut behind him I turned on Lily, "What the hell are you doing?" I asked in a hoarse whisper.

"What do you mean?" asked Lily, puzzled.

Resisting the urge to shake my little sister, I waved a hand in the direction Cole had disappeared. "You--flirting with Phoebe's husband."

Lily looked at me innocently as she responded, "I was not flirting with him."

"You were too, and trust me, that's *not* a good idea," I warned.

Folding her arms, Lily approached me and asked softly, "And why is that? Have you tagged him for yourself?"

The cheeky minx was challenging me! Before I could retaliate, Demon stepped forward, "I'd like to know the answer to that question myself. You wouldn't be thinking of delaying our return home, so that you can have some fun with Cole, would you?"

Just what did my sisters think of me? Would I ever do something like that? [Yes,] answered my inner self, so I threatened her with death if she didn't shut up. She went blissfully silent, allowing me to answer abruptly. "No!"

A wicked smile crept across Demon's face as she looked at Lily. "Do you get the feeling the lady doth protest too much?"

"Oh, for crying out loud, will you two give me a break? In the show, Paige does not like Cole, and the feeling is mutual. Lily flirting with him is not a good idea, at all!" [God, why couldn't my sisters have watched more TV? I wouldn't have to explain these things to them, if they did!] Of course, for all I knew it was possible that Lily had watched Charmed, but she had little to no memory of her past on Earth before the Vorlons had taken us. Demon had no excuses and sometime I planned on telling her that.

The smile disappeared from Demon's face, "Why do I get the feeling that there is more to them not liking each other? You almost seem afraid of what Cole might do if he found out that we...you, aren't who you appear to be."

I carefully considered my response, as I really didn't want to reveal the truth about Cole unless I absolutely had to. "Cole loves Phoebe very much. I don't want him upset or worried, OK? Now, come on, you guys need to go. Get to the manor and start searching the Book of Shadows for a way home." I began to usher them toward the elevator doors.

"Hold on, what about you? You know more about the sisters and this Book of Shadows than we do. You have to come with us," said Lily as she watched me punch the button to open the elevator doors. Don't ask me why I put my sisters in the elevator when Lily could have just as easily orbed from within the apartment.

"I can't just leave. I'll make something up to get away. Then I'll join you at the Manor," I answered as the doors opened and as gently as possible, I pushed my sisters inside. "Lily, just focus on the Manor and orb yourself and Demon there."

Before I could push the button to close the elevator, Demon grabbed my hand. There was a severe, no nonsense expression on her face, warning me that her temper was close to boiling. "Wait just a damn minute. You're hiding something. If we're in some danger from Cole, we have a right to know," demanded my sister, letting my hand go.

It was clear that Demon wasn't going to leave until I gave her some kind of explanation. [Damn!] "We're not in any danger, as long as Cole doesn't find out what's happened. While he'd probably be more than pleased to find Paige and Piper replaced, he wouldn't be happy about Phoebe being gone. And he'd probably kill me for that." I answered, with a nervous laugh.

Demon's eyes narrowed in that Matthew-like way that meant I was in serious trouble. "Why?"

"Ah," I hesitated, then realized I had just better spit it out and get it over with. "Cole is the Source of All Evil, that's why."

"What?" Echoed Demon and Lily. Demon turned to Lily and asked, "Please tell me my sister didn't just say Cole is the Source of All Evil?" Before Lily could respond, Demon turned on me again, "Source of All Evil? That better be some kind of joke."

I flinched at how loudly Demon had spoken and hoped Cole couldn't hear from the bathroom. "It won't be a problem as long as Cole doesn't find out. Look, you guys really need to get going. Don't worry. I've got everything under control. You just get back to the house and get started on a new return spell. That's more important than anything." I was growing desperate to get rid of them. It wouldn't take Cole long to become suspicious and come looking.

Thankfully, at my mention of how important it was to get home, Demon backed off, however unhappy she was. "Fine, we'll go. But I warn you, Angel, any more surprises like this and there's an airlock back home with your name on it!"

"I'll try not spring any more on you. Now, please go!"

"Wait, what about you? How will you get to the Manor?" Asked Lily, as I hit the elevator close button.

"I'll call for Leo. He'll be able to orb me to the Manor," I answered, without thinking.

"Who's Leo?" Asked Demon, as the doors began to slowly close.

"Ah. Your husband." I replied, just as the doors closed on Demon's startled expression. I let out a sigh of relief and hoped that the surprise news about Leo wasn't the kind of revelation that would warrant my sister wanting to shove me out of an airlock.

"Husband?"

I let out a yelp and spun around to find Demon and Lily standing behind me. Lily looked pleased as she'd obviously nailed the orbing ability. I wasn't, especially in the face of a pissed off Demon. I

wondered if Demon got any angrier, would she be able to breathe fire? The way her nostrils were flaring it looked entirely possible. It was an image that didn't bear thinking about. I was, after all, trying to avoid being incinerated.

Before I could beg mercy of my sister, I heard Cole's voice calling for me. I held up a hand quickly. "I'll explain everything when I get to the manor, I promise. But for now, you really have to go. Please!"

All I can say is bless Lily, because she must have heard the desperation in my voice. Taking Demon's hand she said softly, "Come on, Demon." Demon's objections, which included a few colorful words, were cut short as Lily orbbed, and I was finally left alone.

They had just disappeared when I heard Cole behind me. The view awaiting me when I turned around left me speechless, and I wondered absently how the cat had managed to steal my tongue without me noticing. Cole stood before me, wearing nothing but a cream colored towel loosely tied around his narrow hips, leaving his firm, muscled torso for my viewing pleasure. My eyes wandered over his body in appreciation for some time before I finally managed to drag my eyes up to his face.

Cole gave me a seductive smile that sent a small shiver of desire through me. All kinds of warning bells went off in my head. Once again, I was convinced the Universe had it in for me. I'm a woman, OK? I have needs--and weaknesses. Throwing this kind of sexual temptation in my path wasn't fair. [I can resist anything but temptation itself.] But I had to resist, I had more important things to do, like getting back to my sisters and getting home. I swallowed what I hoped was nerves and not hormone-induced drool, and searched desperately for a way I could extricate myself from this situation.

I stared mutely at Phoebe's husband, and realized I had got myself into a tricky situation. Here was Cole, large as life and twice as sexy, waiting for me to join him in the tub for some saucy, soapy fun. [Just how stupid am I?] If I tried to get out of it, it would raise questions. If I went and had that bath--well, it would be tempting but wrong. Wrong because Cole would think it was his wife in the tub with him. Wrong again, because I would know it was really me, in spirit if not in body.

Now, I'm not shy when it comes to kinky, but that was bordering on just plain weird--and stupid. Yet again I hadn't thought about the consequences of my actions. So what else is new? [Might as well tattoo 'stupid' on your forehead and be done with it!] My inner voice sounded suspiciously like Matthew.

"Phoebe?"

Cole's voice snapped my rambling thoughts back to the present and I found him standing a few inches away from me. I hadn't even noticed him moving from the bedroom door toward me. It must be an evil person thing, that ability to move in the blink of an eye. With him that close, my eyes were now level with Cole's chest and it took an enormous effort not to lean forward and gently nibble on his inviting nipples. Somehow, I managed to tear my eyes away and looked at Cole's face. He was giving me a soft, seductive little smile, which sent a shiver of desire through me.

[Slut,] chastised my inner voice. Hey, I couldn't help it. He was gorgeous, OK?

"What's the matter, cat got your tongue?" asked Cole teasingly, breaking into my continued silence.

I managed to find my voice. "Yes, she got into the elevator with it. How about we go and find it?" I made a move toward the elevator. I'll be honest; at that point running seemed like a really good idea. I wanted to call for Leo and have him orb me over to the manor and my sisters, where we'd find a way

home, hopefully before Cole found out where I had got to and what had happened. I mentally added being a big yellow bird to my list of being stupid and a slut. [Rather a live chicken, than a barbecued Angel.]

Unfortunately, before I could open my mouth, a hand grabbed hold of mine, and my flight was halted as I was forced to swing back toward Cole. My gasp of surprise was cut off as he let go of my hand and his arms came around me, pulling me tightly against his chest. This time it wasn't the cat that got my tongue, it was Cole, as his lips descended on mine.

When I finally managed to break away from his kiss, I was light-headed and my lips felt bruised and swollen. There was only one other man who could kiss me so thoroughly that it left me weak at the knees. The fact that there were similarities between Cole and Lucas didn't escape my notice. A pair of hands cupping either side of my face drew my wandering thoughts away from my first demonic lover, Lucas Buck.

It was only then that I realized we were in the bathroom. [What the hell?] Just how mind blowing was that kiss? I didn't even remember us moving into the steam filled room. I gazed down at the bathtub, where steam rose gently from the copious pillows of fluffy white foam floating on the surface of the hot water. I had to wonder if Cole had shimmered us there during the kiss, because I surely didn't remember moving at all. I was just about to ask him but remembered just in time not to. At this point Phoebe wouldn't know about him being the Source. Therefore she wouldn't know that he had recovered his demonic ability to shimmer. Not knowing what to say, I looked at Cole and smiled.

"You really do seem at a loss for words today, sweetheart. You sure nothing is wrong?" Asked Cole softly.

I looked up into his blue eyes, and realized I'd been cruel in comparing him with Lucas. Cole was looking down at me with such love and tenderness, proving to me that while he may be evil, he truly loved Phoebe. I tried not to feel envious of her. What was the difference between Cole and Lucas that made one capable of love and the other not?

I was again heading toward dangerous ground thinking about Lucas, so I forced myself to focus. Reaching up a hand, I gently traced the lines of Cole's jaw and smiled. "No, nothing is wrong." Pulling his head down, I kissed him, letting my tongue gently trace along his lips before slipping inside the warmth of his mouth.

It was Cole who broke the kiss this time, but he continued to hold me against his chest for a moment, where I could feel the heat of his skin burning through my clothes. "You're a little overdressed for a bath," he said, before he gently pushed me back and raised his hands to the buttons on my blouse and began to undo them. Remembering that I really shouldn't allow this to happen, my hands flew up and settled over his, stilling his actions.

"What, you want to take a bath with your clothes on?" asked Cole with a quizzical grin.

It's amazing how a train of thoughts and a conclusion from them can take place in seconds, and I reached a decision in about five nanoseconds flat. I won't go into the sequence of thoughts, as I'm sure you can already guess what they were. I know I can be inventive, and I've often gotten myself out of a situation I shouldn't be in, when I really set my mind to it, but at that moment, I realized it was more trouble than it was worth, so I decided to not even try. [Yes, I know, I'm weak. I'll get therapy when I get back home.]

I gave Cole a seductive little smile and shook my head, "No...but," I paused to remove his hands from the buttons, before I continued, "undoing each and every one of these buttons would take far too long, and like you said, we don't want the water to get cold." With Cole looking on, I quickly ripped open the blouse. The sound of scattered buttons hitting several surfaces caused Cole to raise an eyebrow in amusement.

[Good job none of the flying buttons hit him in the eye!] I quickly smothered the smile that thought brought and began to remove the blouse.

The look of amusement turned to desire as Cole took in the sight of my naked chest. OK, I hadn't lost it so completely that I wasn't aware he was really looking at Phoebe's breasts. The only advantage I had was that I would feel and remember everything. Pushing that thought aside, I quickly removed the rest of Phoebe's clothes. I let Cole devour the naked vision before him for a few seconds before I slid up against him and rubbed against his chest. The sensation of my breasts rubbing against the hairs on his chest caused my nipples to harden.

As I pressed up against Cole, I began to kiss his chest working my way toward one of his already erect nipples. As I circled it with my tongue I felt Cole's intake of breath and smiled before moving on to do the same to the other. When I felt his arms move around my waist, I looked up to find him staring at me with eyes filled with desire. I smiled at his apparent loss of words.

"What's the matter, cat got your tongue?" I asked mischievously.

Cole snorted in amusement and pulled me tighter against him. "Minx!" he said, accusingly.

"Oh dear, so the minx got your tongue did she? The cat will be most upset; I know she had plans for your tongue." I said with feigned seriousness, causing Cole to roar with laughter.

"Clearly the cat returned yours! Tell me, if the cat had plans for my tongue, what plans do you have for me?" He asked, his voice sexy as sin.

I paused as if in deep thought, then looked down the length of Cole's body, my eyes resting on the towel still wrapped around his waist. I lowered my hands from where they were pressed against his chest and hooked them into the top of the towel. "I think you're dirty and need a bath."

"Oh really?" he questioned.

I nodded seriously, "But now *you* are the one who's overdressed." With deft hands I quickly whipped the towel off him and let it drop to the floor. My pulse rate quickened at the site of his totally naked form. [Phoebe honey, you are one lucky lady!]

"Like what you see?"

"It'll do," I shot back teasingly. Before Cole could respond, I gently pushed him toward the bath. "Come on, buster. The water's getting cold."

[And we can't have that, as cold water has a rather distressing effect on some important things.]

I know you're all probably hoping for details of just what happened in that bath, but a lady never

kisses and tells. I know that's a contradiction to me calling myself a slut, but I do have to make some attempt at decency. [Whoever snorts in disbelief at that can kiss my...you know what!] All I'll tell you is that Cole Turner used his hands and fingers to do things to a girl that left her a whimpering mess. And by the time we climbed out of the bath there was more water on the floor than there was in the tub.

Now you all remember how this all started, don't you? My desire to go horse riding? Well, I can tell you, not only was Cole hung like a stallion, but he had the stamina of a long distance racehorse and I indulged in the ride of my life. [Yehaaa, ride 'em, Cowgirl!]

Once we had collapsed in the aftermath of making love in a confined space, and the little water that was left had turned cold, we got out. Cole helped dry me off before he scooped me up into his arms and carried me through to the bedroom.

That's where I pick up the story, and where things get...interesting.

Demon

"I'm going to kill her. Don't try to stop me. I don't care about the consequences. This time I'm going to get Angel back to the ship, find a handy airlock, and out she goes! The joy of being the Captain's wife is that he'll be judge and jury, and I damned well know Matthew will agree it's justifiable homicide! Hell, he'll probably open the airlock door for me to push her in! But I won't let him push the button to eject her into space. Oh no! That's one little pleasure I'm going to keep all to myself!" I was ranting and grinding my teeth at the same time--it's tricky, but what can I say? Angel has given me years of practice--as Lily and I solidified at our destination.

Orbing is odd. Having your molecules disassembled in one place, then reassembled somewhere else, is weird. Thinking back on TV programs from my youth, I suddenly found myself in sympathy with Dr. Leonard McCoy. I suppose I should just be glad that in the future universe in which I found myself, no one had been stupid enough to invent a transporter.

Lily laughed and rested her hand on my arm. "You know you don't mean that, and anyway, it isn't entirely Angel's fault, you know. She couldn't have known about the spatial anomaly."

I sighed deeply, knowing that Lily was right, but still angry with Angel. No one else *ever* got me as worked up as she did. No one else could push my buttons and make me lose my temper so fast. This is me, OK? Deborah Gideon, Ice Queen extraordinaire. No one flusters the Ice Queen--well, apart from the occasional Earthforce Captain and Technomage. They can both push my buttons, but in totally different ways. No one else ruffles my feathers. Except for my younger sister, who can have my plumage standing on end in seconds!

"This is Angel we're talking about, Lily. Something *always* goes wrong! She should have learned that by now!" I knew I was being unreasonable, but Angel has that effect on me. That and the fact that I was scared nearly half out of my mind. It had been stupid of Lily and me to jump blindly after Angel, but we'd been so worried about what had happened to our sister that we hadn't really stopped to think.

I knew that if--WHEN--we got back to the Excalibur, Matthew would be really, *really* mad with me, as he'd told me not to do anything rash. Being the stubborn idiot I can sometimes be, as soon as he tried

to order me around, I'd got defiant, yelled at him, and gone out and done exactly the opposite of what he'd asked. Which was stupid, as Matthew had been right. Now Lily and I were in the same fix as Angel, and we were no closer to solving the problem than Angel had been on her own.

I'm not supposed to make mistakes like that, I should have known better. I'm the big sister, the responsible one, the one who gets things right. I'm not the impulsive, reckless one. That's Angel's job. I really hate feeling stupid and helpless, and it tends to bring out the worst in me. Unfortunately, Angel often presents all too tempting a target for my temper.

Trying to calm myself, I looked around the hallway where Lily had landed us and sighed. This was a nice house. The sort of house that one day I hoped to live in with Matthew and Marcus, but unless we could get ourselves out of the mess Angel had got us into--OK, I'm trying to be honest. The mess we had got *ourselves* into--the prospect of me ever seeing my husband and son again seemed remote.

Hurriedly suppressing a rush of pain and fear, I turned to Lily and gave her my best smile. I didn't want my little sister to worry about our situation, so I knew I had to appear confident. "Angel said this book of magic is in the attic, didn't she? I guess that means we go up."

I started toward the stairs and Lily followed, laughing softly. I turned to look at my red-headed sister, [Odd that she should be a red-head in both universes,] and raised an eyebrow in query.

Lily laughed again and waved for me to continue climbing the stairs, saying, "It's a pity I don't know what the attic looks like, or I could just orb us up there. No climbing at all. You know, I don't think I've climbed any stairs since we left Eriadne."

I was about to agree, when I remembered the ladders I'd climbed into the bullet car tubes, when Matthew and I were building our motor-bike, and afterwards when we rode it. The memories associated with that bike brought a rush of warmth to my belly, and a blush of heat to my face. I could only hope that Lily would think the blush came from the unaccustomed exertion of climbing. One thing was certain, the memories of the things Matthew and I had done on that bike made me more determined than ever to find a way home! I didn't care if he yelled at me for weeks, I just wanted to hear his voice again.

I swallowed my fears and laughed in response to Lily's comment, saying, "If you could orb yourself around everywhere, you'd get fat and lazy, and your men would go looking for someone younger and fitter."

The snort of derision that emerged from Lily's lips was hardly ladylike, but then my little sister has never claimed to be a lady.

After looking in several rooms on the way up--it was a *very* nice house, and made me decide that whenever Matthew and I got back to Earth, I definitely wanted to live in an older property. Maybe even as old as 19th century if we could find it--we finally found the attic.

Angel

I lay in Cole's arms feeling wonderfully sated and content. I knew I shouldn't really ignore my ever-present conscience when it kept telling me that my situation was serious, and I shouldn't be enjoying myself so much. I told myself I would enjoy a few minutes more lying in the warmth of Cole's

arms, and then I would make some excuse as to why I had to leave.

Somewhat distracted by my thoughts, I was absently aware of Cole gently nudging me to turn me on my side, while he lay behind me. I enjoyed the feel of him spooned against my back, and a small shiver of pleasure ran through me as he kissed me on the nape of the neck, before settling down. With regret, I continued thinking of ways to leave him without raising the Source's suspicions.

I thought I had just come up with the perfect solution when I was startled by Cole grabbing my shoulder and forcing me onto my back. In an instant he was astride me, pinning me against the bed. Anything I was about to say died in my throat, as I felt the sharp point of a dagger against my throat. Startled, I looked up at Cole. His eyes were no longer a gentle blue, but black, and his expression was deadly. It didn't take a genius to realize I was face to face with none other than the Source of All Evil, and as far as I could tell, he was seriously pissed off with me. [Shit!]

My heart leaped from my chest into my throat, and it took an enormous effort to swallow it back where it belonged, so I could say something. Licking very dry lips, I smiled at Cole nervously and continued to pretend I was Phoebe, even though I knew I had been found out.

[Damn it, shit and fuck it!] My language had started to sound as bad as Demon's was sometimes.

"Cole, honey, I'm up for something kinky just as much as the next girl, but could you ease up a little on the dagger? You don't really want to draw blood, do you?" I asked, trying to sound light and teasing.

"Shut up!" ordered Cole, pushing the dagger harder against my throat.

I was in serious trouble, and since I didn't have access to my telekinetic ability in this world, I was unable to throw Cole off. I won't lie; I was scared. I knew what the Source was capable of, especially toward people who were a threat to him. Putting on my best Phoebe-like behavior, I reached out a shaky hand and touched his face. "Cole, you're scaring me, what's got in to you?"

The dagger dug further into my neck. The burning sensation I felt meant that this time Cole had broken the tender skin. That pissed me off and I glared up at him. "That hurt, dammit!"

Cole pressed the dagger ever so slightly harder against my throat, and he leaned in closer, until his face was a mere inch from mine. "If you don't shut up, I *will* kill you. Do you understand?" he asked so softly, it made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up. The look in his eyes told me he was deadly serious. I knew if I fought, I'd lose.

I was just about to nod when I remembered the knife at my throat, so I whispered, "Yes."

He smiled and watched me for what seemed like forever, causing my nerves to fray even more. Finally, he spoke, "Who the hell are you, and what have you done with my wife?"

Cole pressed the dagger into the shallow cut he had already made, silencing me as he pre-empted my denial. "Don't deny it," he paused as his eyes raked over me before returning to my face. "You may look like her, but you don't *feel* like her and you sure as hell don't make love like her."

"Is that a good thing or a bad thing?" I must have a death wish. [Actually, I laugh in the face of danger. Then I hide under the covers and wait for it to go away.] In my head I mentally kicked myself and closed my eyes, bracing myself for the final slice of the dagger. When it didn't come, I opened one eye ever so slightly and peeked up at Cole.

"Open your eyes." I wasn't stupid enough to disobey his order. I opened my eyes. "Who are you?" he asked again.

"If you let up on the dagger, I'll tell you." I said, shifting underneath him in an attempt to move my neck away from the sharp blade.

Cole lifted an eyebrow but didn't move the dagger. I sighed in exasperation. "Oh for pity's sake, Cole, I'm not going to try and escape. Trust me. I have no desire to end up as an Angel kebab on your skewer." I looked at him pointedly. Finally, he relented and lowered the hand that held the dagger to my throat.

Letting out a breath of relief, I lifted a hand to my throat and rubbed the small abrasion. "Thank you," I said a little shakily. The next instant Cole grabbed both my wrists, causing me to yelp. Wrenching my hand away from where it was soothing my throat, he drew my wrists up and pinned them above my head.

Before I could recover, a pair of lips descended on mine. My breath was taken away as Cole's tongue plundered my mouth brutally. When he finally stopped, my head was reeling. [I was definitely not expecting *that* kiss.] Furthermore, I was mortified to find that Cole's assault on my mouth had turned me on. [Oh yeah, I definitely need therapy when I get home.]

"You're a good kisser, but not as good as Phoebe," remarked Cole insultingly.

Now I take pride in being a good kisser and it was just plain rude of Cole to insult me like that. "I will have you know that I have never had any complaints, in fact I've always been complimented on my kisses," I shot back. One of these days my tongue is going to get me in serious trouble, and not just from kissing! Cole's expression darkened and I could have sworn I even saw fire, literally, in his eyes. I quickly rushed on, "Sorry!"

Cole watched me for a moment then asked in that soft, deadly tone. "I'll ask you this one last time, and if you don't tell me the truth, I will kill you. Who are you?"

I knew I was out of options. There was only one thing I could do. I had to tell him the truth. "OK, I'll tell you. Just don't get too eager to carve me up, OK?" Cole nodded, and released the hold he had on my wrists, but remained astride me, keeping me pinned beneath him. Taking a deep breath I launched into my tale.

"That's everything," I said, coming to the end of my explanation. I had told him my name, who my sisters were and everything about the spell. The only thing I didn't reveal was that I knew he was the Source. I was too chicken for that. When I saw Cole's face grow angry, I rushed on. "Look, I never intended for this to happen. Believe me, if you just let me go and get back to my sisters at the manor, we'll find a spell to get us back home, and to get Phoebe and her sisters back in their bodies!"

Cole said nothing as he moved from me and stood. I watched as he walked over to a cupboard, admiring his muscular frame and especially his firm buttocks. [It was a nice view, OK?] Cole removed a black robe and put it on. [Rats!] After awhile his silence began to unnerve me.

"Ah look, if you're thinking about making me into a shish kebab, you should know that if you do, you

definitely won't get Phoebe back," I warned quickly. When Cole's head snapped in my direction and I saw the expression on his face, I went on in a rush, "That's not a threat--just a fact."

When he said nothing I decided to make a move toward my clothes, but he stopped me. "Stay right where you are!"

I fell back on to the bed. Cole nodded and moved to the center of the room, and I watched as he closed his eyes. I couldn't have been sure but it appeared as if he were meditating on something. I decided it was probably best not to interrupt him, even though I was becoming impatient. I really needed to get back to my sisters.

Finally Cole opened his eyes and looked at me. "You know who I am, don't you?"

My heart sank at the question. Still afraid, I lied, "You're Cole, of course."

"No!" yelled Cole, causing me to jump.

"All right, yes, I know who you really are--you're the Source." I no longer saw any point in lying to him, he was obviously aware that I knew. How, I don't know, but he did. "But I don't mind. In fact, I don't even care. Look, I would really love to stay and chat, but I have to get to my sisters. I have to get home, and I'm sure you're just as anxious to get Phoebe back." I again made a move to get off the bed.

Cole moved so quickly I had little time to react. He was once again upon me, trapping me beneath him. "I may want Phoebe back, but this situation offers me a solution to a problem. With your sisters in Paige and Piper's bodies, the Power of Three will be broken."

My eyes widened as I realized what he meant. I tried to sit up, but he pushed me back down. I glared at him. "Oh no you don't! If I go back, my sisters go back!" Sheer panic was beginning to well up inside me and I struggled against him, actually managing to hit him in the face. Cole captured my wrists, stilling my struggles.

"Relax. I have no intention of keeping your sisters here. I just wanted to test how truthful you were about wanting to go home. They also know I'm the Source, don't they?" I nodded and Cole continued, "I won't let Phoebe find out who I am--not until I'm ready to claim her as my Queen," admitted Cole, releasing my wrists.

I sighed in relief. "Thank goodness!" I paused. There was something I needed to know before I asked Cole to let me go. "Just one thing, you said I don't feel like Phoebe? Just when did you realize that?"

"Not long after I arrived home," admitted Cole, with a smug grin.

It took a few seconds for his words to sink in. "What did you just say?"

"You heard me. I knew virtually from the moment I arrived home that you weren't my wife, and that Piper and Paige weren't who they appeared to be. Paige hates me; she certainly wouldn't flirt with me," said Cole, pointedly.

[Damn, he had noticed Lily making goo-goo eyes at him!] I knew it wasn't fair to think of the bad things I would love to do to my sister, but I couldn't help it. Damn her flirting! [Hey, don't blame your sister. You were the one who got us into this mess,] piped up my inner voice. Don't you just hate it when your conscience is right? My inner thoughts were interrupted as another realization hit me.

"Hold on, if you knew right from the beginning, then why did you... You... The bath..." I floundered a bit and I had to clear my throat before I asked with annoyance, "If you knew I wasn't your wife, then why the hell did you keep up the pretense and make love to me?"

"I wanted to see just how far you'd go," A slow smile began to spread across Cole's lips. "And if I am to be honest, it was... fun and I don't regret it."

I don't know why, but I was upset with Cole. "You bastard! How could you?"

"How could I? You were the one pretending to be my wife, trying to deceive me," accused Cole.

"Only because I feared what you might do if you knew the truth. You should have told me you knew. It would have saved us a whole lot of time. I could have gone with my sisters and probably already found a way home!" I shot back angrily.

"Come on, Angel. You can't tell me you didn't enjoy being with me. I know you did," said Cole, seductively as he lifted a hand to stroke my face. I could feel his other hand moving down between us to slide between my legs.

"Maybe I did, but I have to go now," I said, trying to get out from beneath him. I could feel Cole's touch having an effect on me, and I wasn't about to let myself get distracted. It really was time to go. The longer I kept my sisters waiting, the angrier Demon would get, and truth be told, I was more afraid of my sister than I was of the Source. That aside, I wanted to get home before it was too late.

"I'm sure it won't do any harm if you stay just a little longer," said Cole, as if able to read my thoughts.

"No, I can't."

"Yes, you can." My protests were silenced as he kissed me. I tried to fight enjoying the soft feel of his lips on mine, and the taste of him as his tongue slipped past my lips and sought out my tongue, teasing it into responding to his. I was just about to succumb, when he broke the kiss.

"What about, Phoebe?" I was impressed with myself that I was able to ask a coherent question.

Cole smiled and kissed me briefly, "What she doesn't know, won't hurt her."

I stopped Cole from kissing me again, "Hold on, I thought you loved her? You're being unfaithful to her!" I accused softly.

"Maybe I am to her heart, but not her body," responded Cole. I tried to tell myself there wasn't a difference and that it didn't really matter since none of these people were really real. I didn't quite believe myself--maybe I didn't want to.

"We shouldn't do this... I have to go."

"You'll go, soon enough," said Cole, his hand sliding between my legs and finding my hot center. A finger slid inside me, causing me to gasp.

"This is wrong," I protested. Even to my own ears, my protest sounded feeble.

Cole chuckled softly. "You don't strike me as someone who stops doing something just because others might deem it wrong. Especially not if it gives you pleasure."

I hated the fact that he seemed able to read me so well. I hated even more the fact that he was right. And I really hated what it said about me. But even though I was struggling with my own conscience, and with what was the right thing to do, the sensation of what Cole's fingers were doing to me caused my body's desires to start over-riding what my head was telling me.

"But my sisters..." I began. Cole placed his hand over my lips, silencing me.

"Your sisters can wait." His mouth once again descended over mine and my last rational thought was that Demon and Lily probably hadn't found anything yet in the Book of Shadows that would help get us home, so it probably didn't matter if I stayed a few more minutes. [You'd better be right,] said my inner voice, sounding very unhappy with me. That voice was cut off as Cole slid another finger inside me.

Demon

Oddments of furniture were piled around the room, but it didn't take more than a few seconds for us to find the object of our search. The large book rested on a reading stand in the center of the attic.

Lily's eyes glittered with excitement when she saw it, and she rushed over to open it and started leafing through the pages. After a few seconds she lifted it from the stand, and carried it over to a sofa, where she curled up with the book resting across her legs.

I smiled, thinking that it was a good job Paige was quite a bit taller than Lily. My little sister would never have been able to carry that large book if she'd been in her own body. Actually, she'd have struggled to see over the edge of the stand on which the book had rested! I also realized that the rest of the universe had ceased to exist for Lily. One thing all of us sisters have in common is an ability to lose ourselves in a book. Put a good book in our hands, and we may as well be blind, deaf and dumb.

I thought it would be best to leave Lily to study the book alone, because I've never been into the 'magic' side of our abilities, as Angel and Lily have. While she was engrossed, I decided it would be a good time to practice my newfound powers, and stand guard in case of any unwanted intruders.

But what to practice on? There was nothing to freeze in the attic, and my previous experience made me wary of trying to freeze the birds I could see flying past the windows. [It was previous experience, OK? It had nothing to do with the fact that we were several stories up, and it would have been a long way down from that window, and I therefore didn't want to get too close to it. Oh hell, OK, I really *don't* like heights!]

So if I couldn't freeze something, maybe I could blow something up instead. There were lots of potential targets lying around the attic, and I just hoped that none of them were family treasures the Halliwells would miss.

I picked up a very battered looking lampshade and carried it as far away from Lily as I could, not wanting to disturb her while I practiced. Placing it on a high stool, I stepped back a few paces, lifted my hands and glared at it. Nothing. For all I knew, I had just frozen the lampshade solid, but who

could tell the difference?

With a sigh of frustration, I focused again. [Think destruction, think big bang--no, not Matthew! I know the words 'big' and 'bang' make you think of him, but just this once try to derail that one track mind of yours. Focus!]

Pushing lascivious thoughts of my husband aside, I focused again, deciding that I really didn't like that lampshade. It was a nasty lampshade, horribly shaped and a putrid color. It was the most offensive lampshade I had ever seen in my life and I wanted that lampshade dead!

Nothing. Nada. Zip. That damned lampshade defied me by just sitting there. If it had possessed a tongue, I swear it would have stuck that tongue out at me, going, "Na na nana na," while wagging its non-existent fingers in its non-existent ears. Then it would have bent over, flashed me a universal gesture and dropped its non-existent pants to wiggle its non-existent ass in my direction. Now I was getting *really* pissed with it. Almost as pissed as I was with my sister. That thought inspired me to visualize Angel's face on the side of the shade. The resulting explosion sent me reeling back across the attic, and brought Lily off the couch so fast she looked like she'd levitated.

"Demon!" My little sister yelled at me. "Stop doing that! You half frightened me to death and you broke my concentration."

It was clear that Lily found the latter a far worse offence, so I smiled meekly and said, "Sorry. Go back to your reading. I promise I won't make so much noise next time."

Muttering under her breath, [Lily! Where did you pick up language like that? Oh, right, from me. Oops,] my sister went back to her reading.

I looked around, seeking another target for my frustration. A broken ornament lay on top of a box of oddments, so I picked it up and carried it across to place on the stool. Tiny problem. No stool. It seemed that in taking out that evil lampshade, I'd blown up the stool on which it had rested, too. Maybe next time I'd better hold back a little. Maybe visualizing Angel's face was going too far.

Placing the ornament on a table, I again stepped back, and wondered how I could focus my anger this time. Who had pissed me off recently?

With an evil smile on my face I glared at the ornament, imagining Galen's smug face in front of it. This time, only the ornament exploded. The noise wasn't too loud, and when I looked around, Lily still had her nose buried in the book. Success!

Then a strange voice asked, "Piper? Why are you blowing up ornaments?"

Angel

After we had made love again--love is such a sweet word, I'm thinking this was more of a sheet-ripping, howling at the moon, lust fest--Cole told me to get dressed and wait for him in the living room. When I had told him I intended on calling for Leo to take me to the manor, Cole told me to wait. He said he had to check on something, then he would join me. Not wanting to annoy him by arguing, I climbed out of the bed and dressed quickly, with Cole watching, and went into the other room.

I watched the bedroom door and wondered what he was up to. I looked at the clock on the mantle. I wasn't happy to see that nearly two hours had gone by since my sisters had left. [Time flies when you're having fun.] I hoped Demon and Lily had been distracted enough not to notice the length of time that had passed, but knowing Demon, I doubted it. I glanced back at the bedroom door. "Come on, Cole!" I was starting to get itchy feet and was just about to say 'to hell with waiting' and call for Leo, when the bedroom door opened and Cole came out.

[Be still my beating heart!] I think if I had been a puppy, at this point my tail would have been wagging and my tongue would have flopped out of the side of my mouth, leaving drool on the floor. Hell, for all I knew I was drooling. Dressed in a black sweater and black pants, the man looked like a dark God oozing enough sex appeal to have hundreds of woman behaving like bitches in heat. I had to ruthlessly clamp down on the desire to bark like a dog and pounce on him.

[Focus, woman. Focus!] I told myself. I cleared my throat and inquired, "If you're finished doing what it was you were doing, and it's OK with you, I'll just call Leo. I really need to get to my sisters."

Cole shook his head. "You have no need for Leo. I'll take you to the manor."

"I really don't think that's a good idea," I argued.

"I beg to differ," countered Cole softly.

I was going to continue arguing but Cole cut me off. "I want to be present to make sure you and your sisters really do leave. Not that I don't trust you, of course," he added, with an odd little smile.

Just managing to stop a snort of disbelief, I returned his smile. "Of course," I sighed and decided not to waste any more time on arguing. "Fine, you take me to the manor then."

Cole nodded and held out his hand to me. I took it, knowing that if he was going to shimmer us, I had to be in physical contact with him.

"You ready?" he asked. I nodded and he pulled me against him, his arms holding me against his chest. Memories of the past couple of hours sprang to my mind and infused my body with heat, just as the room began to fade and we shimmered out.

Demon

The masculine voice behind me made me spin around in panic. A man stood there, looking at me curiously. He was tall, well built, with brown, spiky hair, and gentle blue eyes. There was nothing distinguishing about his features, except a look of kindness. He wasn't my type, but I decided he was a nice man. And the fact that he'd appeared out of nowhere made it pretty evident who he was.

"Leo?" I tried not to sound too hesitant. Piper would have recognized her own husband, after all. I wondered if I should throw myself into his arms. Was their relationship as passionate as mine with my husband? Did they have problems keeping their hands off each other, as Matthew and I did? Cursing myself for not having watched more TV when I was younger, I smiled and said, "Just practicing. Always good to keep the old powers in tip top condition."

Leo looked puzzled and I suddenly realized how odd that must have sounded. It was *very* unlikely that

Piper Halliwell...[Halliwell? Was she still a Halliwell, if she was married to Leo? Hell! I didn't even know the last name of the woman I was pretending to be!] spoke with a strong English accent. How was I going to get around that one? I've always been terrible with accents!

Before my 'husband' could respond, he cocked his head to one side, appearing to listen to something I couldn't hear. He frowned, then shook his head, saying, "She's in trouble again. I sometimes wonder if this one is going to make it to become a Whitelighter. She's a trouble magnet."

I tried to smile as if I knew what the hell he was talking about, but decided not to risk a response. Leo stepped forward, pulled me into his arms and kissed me hard and fast. Then he stepped back, winked at me and grinned. "I'll catch you later and you can explain the silly accent."

There was a shimmer of white light, and he was gone. I stood for a moment with my mouth open, staring at the space where he had been, my hand touching the lips he had just kissed.

Now you have to understand, as far as I'm concerned there is only one man in the universe--in *any* universe--who can really kiss. Matthew Gideon can melt me into a warm puddle of putty, and shape me any way he wants me, with his kiss. This Leo person did not kiss like Matthew. But he was damned good. My lips tingled where he had touched them, and I felt a little pool of warmth in my belly.

A chortle of amusement from the couch attracted my attention. "Enjoy that, did you?"

I looked across to see my sister peering over the edge of the big book. Even though it wasn't Lily's face looking at me, it was her expression--pure mischief--plastered all over that face. She went on, "That's the advantage of having two husbands. A little variety adds a spice to life."

I snorted with derision. "Matthew gives me all the variety I ever need or can handle. Just last night he..."

Before I could give Lily exact details of how Matthew had made me howl like a dog, mewl like a cat and whinny like a mare in heat, the air between us began to shimmer. The effect wasn't like Leo's orbiting. It was harder somehow, more dangerous to look at. I can't explain it, but somehow where Leo and Lily's orbiting had felt safe, if a little weird, this shimmering looked wrong, almost evil somehow.

It didn't come as any great surprise when the figures materializing in front of us turned out to be Angel and her temporary husband, the Source of All Evil. As they both turned to look at me, I noticed two things.

The first was that Evil can be damned sexy. This Cole was dark and gorgeous. He was dressed all in black; his sweater clung to a very nicely shaped chest, and his black pants emphasized his long legs. As I said, sexy.

The second thing I recognized was the look in Angel's eyes. My sister may have inhabited another woman's body, but it makes no difference. That look is universal. It's something I see in my own eyes when I look in the mirror after Matthew and I have made love all night. It's a look of complete satisfaction and repletion.

My sister had been a naughty girl.

Angel

Cole and I arrived in the attic of the Halliwell Manor. It took me a few seconds to recover from the head rush I got from shimmering with Cole. If orbiting was anything like shimmering I could understand Demon's reaction to it. Describing it as an odd sensation doesn't even come close.

When the room had stopped spinning, I found both my sisters had found their way up to the attic where the Halliwells kept their Book of Shadows. My attention focused on Demon as she stood directly before us. At first I saw surprise on her face, then I saw her eyes narrow as she observed Cole's arms around me. The look in her eyes told me she saw something that didn't exactly meet with her approval.

[Hell!] I thought, as I quickly extricated myself from Cole's embrace and gave my sister a smile that I hope said, "I haven't been up to anything I shouldn't have been doing." The almost inaudible snort I heard told me she wasn't buying it. I made a mental note to practice looks of innocence in front of the mirror when I got home.

I avoided looking at Demon and glanced over at Lily where she sat curled on an old bedraggled sofa with the Book of Shadows on her lap. She sat staring at Cole and me, or more precisely she was staring at Cole, an admiring look on her face.

When I enquired, "Find anything useful?" I got no reaction from her. I walked up to her and tapped a finger on top of the book, causing her head to snap up in surprise. "Good book?" I asked in amusement.

"Ah, yes, fascinating," answered Lily, sounding a little flustered as she looked away from Cole and back to me.

I turned to find him giving Lily a disarmingly mischievous smile. [Gorgeous devil,] I thought, feeling the blush of attraction warming my cheeks. [Not now, girl!] I told myself forcefully.

I turned away quickly when I realized Demon had noticed my reaction. [Damned observant witch], "Have you found anything we can use?" I asked Lily, trying to distract Demon's attention from me and my attraction to Cole.

Before Lily could answer, Demon's cool voice interrupted. "Why is he here?"

I turned to find that while Demon had obviously asked me that question, she was looking pointedly at Cole, an extremely annoyed expression on her face. Furthermore, I wasn't happy to discover that Cole was staring back at her with a dangerous glint in his eyes. He obviously wasn't enjoying being on the receiving end of my sister's icy disapproval.

The image of two bulls about to charge each other filled my mind and I jumped forward to stand between them. "He knows," I told Demon quickly in explanation.

"What?" The question came at me in stereo, and I found Lily had abandoned the Book of Shadows and was now standing beside Demon. The glare I got from Demon at that moment warned me that I had just sprung a surprise on them that could easily result in her booting my ass out of an airlock.

Holding up a hand in self-defense, I quickly explained that Cole had known we weren't the Halliwell sister's from the start and that I hadn't had a choice about explaining everything to him. I was careful not to mention that he'd held a knife to my throat to get the information out of me, or about the bath

before that, and the lovemaking.

I had a feeling that Demon suspected as much already, but I didn't think it necessary to confirm her suspicions. While standing between her and Cole, I had caught a glimpse of the wreckage behind Demon. The remains of what looked like a lampshade, a stool and some kind of ornament lay scattered on the floor. My darling sister had obviously gotten to grips with Piper's destructive power.

"OK, so he knows, but that still doesn't answer my question," said Demon, interrupting my thoughts. I looked away from the debris and focused back on my sister.

"I came to make sure you leave, and to be certain I get my wife back," answered Cole evenly, not breaking eye contact with Demon.

"We have no intention of staying. Not only do we have very good reasons for leaving, but I sure as hell don't want to stick around a man who is the Source of All Evil. You remind me of someone who left a distinctly bad taste in my mouth. The sooner we get away from your presence, the happier I'll be," shot Demon.

The look in Cole's eyes told me that my sister had just got herself into hot water and was heading straight for rapids without a paddle. Ignoring the hammering of my heart as I realized Cole reminded Demon of Lucas, I quickly grabbed Cole's hand. "Don't mind my sister. She's really pissed off, but more at me than at you," I explained, shooting Demon a pleading look not to contradict me.

Thank the Goddess for Lily, because she laid a hand on Demon's arm and quietly whispered something. Whatever it was, it stopped Demon retorting.

It didn't stop Cole. He squeezed my hand, then let it go as he walked up to my sister. If Demon had been in her own form, she would have nearly met Cole's eyes, but in Piper's body, Cole at 6'3" towered over her. He leaned in close to Demon and said in an even tone, "You're lucky I love Phoebe as much as I do, or I might just be willing to kill you and 'Paige', and take Angel for my Queen. It would not only finally destroy the Power of Three, but it would also teach you to mind your tongue around me."

Demon raised her hands threateningly, "Give it your best shot, Buster. I've cut bigger men than you down to size," she said, craning her neck to glare up at Cole.

"For godsake, Demon! Shut up, before you get yourself killed," I barked at Demon.

My heart hammering painfully in my chest, I grabbed Cole's arm and pulled him away from my sister. "He's kidding, of course." I said with a nervous laugh. At least, I hoped he was kidding. The loud snort I heard from Demon told me she didn't believe me.

"Tell her you're kidding, Cole," I said, desperately. I had to put water on the fire before it got out of control.

Cole glanced at me for a moment, an unreadable expression on his face, and then he turned to Demon and said with a smile, "I'm kidding, of course." The smile didn't quite reach his eyes and the sarcasm in his voice wasn't very subtle. Nor was the pissed off expression on Demon's face.

[OK, definitely time to get going!] There was no way heaven or hell could hold back these two for much longer. "Now that's settled, we really need to get started on finding that spell," I said pointedly.

"I couldn't agree more," said Demon, giving Cole one last dark look before she turned and walked away from him, to stand beside the empty stand upon which the Book of Shadows usually stood.

"Did you come across anything in the Book of Shadows that could help get us home?" I asked of Lily, while keeping one eye on Demon and one eye on Cole, who had moved to stand against a wall. It wasn't easy looking in two different directions at once, I can tell you!

"I'm afraid not," admitted Lily, as she walked back to the sofa, where she sat down and picked up the Grimoire, "but then I hadn't even got half way through the book when you and Cole arrived."

"Well then, we'd better finish looking," I said, joining her on the sofa.

As Lily and I went through the book of magic, I kept an eye on Cole and Demon. While Demon watched Cole mutinously, he just looked at her in mild amusement, which I could tell only aggravated Demon further. It seemed there was one person in existence, albeit in a different universe to our own, who wasn't scared of my sister. I couldn't help but smile at that thought as I returned my attention to the book. The sooner we found what we were looking for the better. I doubted that either of them would hold back for much longer.

An hour later, Lily and I sat back in defeat. There wasn't one damned spell in that book that could have been of any use to us.

"Now what do we do?" asked Lily unhappily. I felt guilt wash over me. I knew she was afraid of never seeing John, Luke and her children again. I could see the same concern in Demon's eyes, even though it was hidden beneath anger.

I was about to shrug when a thought hit me, "Maybe my spell will work now? It's possible the Excalibur has passed through the spatial anomaly that was blocking it."

Demon approached us and said evenly "It's worth a try, since nothing else is going our way."

Lily and I stood and joined Demon. I quickly explained the spell to them and once I was sure they knew the order of words, I asked them if they were ready. Before either of them could confirm, Cole's voice interrupted us.

"Aren't you even going to say goodbye before you leave?" asked Cole, as he slowly moved toward where we stood.

"Goodbye," said Demon coldly.

"Demon, don't be rude," I chastised. I felt bad for having forgotten Cole. How the hell I could forget him standing there, I have no idea.

I looked at him and smiled with regret. Even though I knew I couldn't stay, and that there could never be more between us, I was a little sad to leave. He may have been evil, but he was evil with a heart, and I couldn't help but like him. "I guess this is goodbye. Thanks for--well you know," I said, suddenly feeling tongue-tied.

"Don't I even get a goodbye kiss?" asked Cole, with a seductive and inviting smile.

"Listen Romeo, you're married and we've got to go," said Demon, turning on Cole.

My sister had clearly reached the end of her tether. Before Cole could react, I said quickly, "Sorry, I'll have to pass on that. Goodbye, Cole." For a moment, I wished desperately that I could kiss him and tell him about the things I knew were going to happen. To warn him about what would happen with his and Phoebe's relationship in the future. But I didn't have time. All I could do was to give him a tender smile before turning back to my sisters.

"Let's give this a try."

Holding hands tightly, we began to say the words of the return spell. Nothing happened and my heart sank to my feet. I knew if it hadn't worked the first time, there was no point trying it again. I let go of my sister's hands and said with regret, "I'm sorry. I guess the spatial anomaly is still in effect.

"You don't say? You know, Angel, the thought of you going out of an airlock is starting to appeal more and more," warned Demon. "However, if you don't figure a way to get us home and soon, it looks like I'll have to forego the airlock and settle for just vaporizing you here and now!" finished Demon threateningly.

I was at a loss for words in the light of my sister's anger. I knew when we got back I'd have a lot of work to do to make up for this mistake. I was just about to say sorry again when Demon cut me off. "If you're about to say sorry again, I swear to God, Angel, I'll smack you."

"Before you blow a fuse, may I make a suggestion?" asked Cole, suddenly.

Demon's head snapped around, "I don't think you can suggest anything that I want to hear," she responded curtly. My sister was being unreasonable, but I couldn't really blame her, considering the circumstances.

I held my breath, half expecting a fireball to appear in Cole's hands, but it didn't. Instead he asked softly, "Not even if I can help you get home?"

Even though Cole's words had cooled Demon's temper and forced her to rein in her high horse, it was obvious she was still steaming. I held my breath as I watched her open her mouth to speak.

"OK, so just how can *you* help?" asked Demon coolly.

Cole gave my sister an odd little smile before answering, "I'm the Source of All Evil."

I don't think my sister considered that answer enough and I watched anxiously as she started climbing back on to that high horse again. [Oh Goddess, here we go again!]

"Oh, and that's supposed to make me feel better?" asked Demon, putting her hands on her hips and fixing Cole with a stare.

That was the final straw. My sister was really starting to irk me. Yes, she had a right to be angry and annoyed, but her sniping was getting out of hand. Cole was offering us a way home and she was still sassing him.

"Come on, Demon. You're being unreasonable. If Cole is offering us a way home, we should hear him out. Angel's spell doesn't work. The Halliwells have nothing to get us back. We're out of options, so let's hear him out," said Lily before I could say anything.

Lily's words did the trick and I could see Demon's expression change and soften as she realized Lily was right and she was being unreasonable. My sister can be pig-headed sometimes, [OK, most of the time,] but she can also be reasoned with-- thankfully, though sometimes a two by four is involved.

Demon sighed softly, took in a breath and said calmly to Cole, "I'm listening. What can you do to help us?"

"I'd like to know the answer to that question myself. And why didn't you say anything earlier?" I asked, curiously.

Cole focused his gaze on me and said, "You never asked." The smile he gave me with that response was so charming that I couldn't be annoyed with him.

"Well, we're asking now. How can you help us?" I asked softly.

"You're going to have to create a new spell," began Cole simply.

"Hold on a second! That's your help? You're telling us to create a new spell?" asked Demon incredulously, cutting Cole off before he could finish. "We couldn't have figured that one out on our own?"

"Demon!" barked Lily and I together in warning. [And everyone says I'm the troublesome one in the family.] I swear she was behaving like that just to get back at me. I think if Demon had said one more thing to anger Cole, I would have been well within my rights to kick *her* ass out of an airlock. I relished that tempting thought as Demon shot Lily and me a rebellious glare, but she remained silent.

"Can we get on with this and let Cole explain?" I asked of my sister. Demon nodded, but I could see she was struggling to hold her tongue. "Thank you," I said gratefully and turned to Cole.

"Please go on. I get the feeling there's more to this."

Cole nodded and quickly explained, before he had any more interruptions. He told us that we'd not only have to write a new spell, but that we'd have to do it in the way the Halliwells did it. And that was the tricky part. It was one thing just incanting another witch's spell, it was another to write one as they would. One of two things could happen. It wouldn't work or it would work but not in the way expected. One spell had already gone wrong today and I was going to be paying for that one for years to come. I wasn't keen on things getting even more fucked up.

"I'm not so sure that's a good idea. It's not as simple as one might think trying to create spells in the style of other witches. Something could go wrong," said Lily, softly voicing my fears.

"I'm aware of that. That's why you need my help. I've got something in mind that will help ensure the spell works," explained Cole.

"What?" asked Demon.

"The crystals of Amekth," answered Cole.

"Crystals of Amekth? I'm not familiar with those," I said.

"Me neither," agreed Lily.

"That makes three of us," muttered Demon under her breath. I shot her a look before turning my attention back to Cole.

"I doubt you would know of them. Let's just say they're used more by people on my side of magic rather than your side," was Cole's slightly cryptic response.

"You mean they're usually used for evil." It was more a statement on Demon's part than a question or accusation.

I wasn't too sure about using the tools of evil, but if it was the only way to help us get home, I wasn't about to look a gift crystal in the mouth. "What are they usually used for?" I asked, needing to understand how these crystals could help.

Cole smiled and moved towards me, distracting me for a moment with his alluring male scent. I dragged my one tracked mind back on course as Cole explained, "They can bend the fabric of time and space. I'll guide their power to help the return spell."

"Why do you have to guide them?" inquired Lily, her interest well and truly piqued. Hell, so was mine. When it comes to magic and the tools of magic, Lily and I are like kids in a candy store.

"The crystals are tools of the Underworld. If a good witch were to try and use them, the crystals would kill her, no matter how strong a witch she was. They're protected against good magic," explained Cole.

"Just like the Book of Shadows is protected against being used by demons and warlocks?" I asked, remembering several episodes where evil beings had tried to steal or use the Book of Shadows, including Cole, and they had failed because the book was safeguarded against evil.

Cole nodded. "Exactly. So I'll deal with the crystals while you three concentrate on the spell. Together, we should get you home and Phoebe and her sisters back," finished Cole with a smile. I could tell he was eager to get his wife back and I tried not to feel rejected or to pout.

"Sounds like a plan and one I'd like to get started," said Demon, no longer sounding argumentative but more like the calm, take-charge sister I knew her to be.

"I agree. You three get started on writing a spell. Use the Book of Shadows as a guide for how the Charmed Ones style of spell goes and I'll go get the crystals," said Cole, moving away from us. "I won't be long."

With that he was gone, leaving my sisters and me to stare at the empty space he had occupied for a moment, before Demon broke the silence, "Right, let's get to work. We've been here long enough and just like Lily, I want to get home. By now, Matthew must be going crazy wondering what's taking so long. Not to mention Luke and John."

I didn't miss the accusatory look my sister gave me, which reminded me once again that I was the

cause of that concern. [Like I could ever forget.] I was also aware that the longer we took to get home, the angrier Matthew would no doubt be. While I wasn't exactly anxious to face my brother-in-law, I didn't want to give him too much time to perfect some kind of punishment for me. And believe me, I know my brother-in-law. He can be *very* creative. I had visions of spending weeks in the bullet car tubes with only my toothbrush and a bowl of soapy water for company.

Rushing forward, I grabbed the Book of Shadows and within seconds we were working away at getting a spell together to take us home.

"It's done," I said looking down at the piece of paper upon which the words of the new spell had been written.

*Switch our bodies, keep our minds
Witches want our homes to find
Three Halliwells are needed here
Excalibur's trio must reappear*

I had copied the spell on three separate pieces of paper. I handed one each to my sisters. I gave them some time to go through the spell, and then I turned to Lily. "Have we got everything else we'll need?" I asked, looking down at the table around which we stood. It was covered with a variety of items Lily had gathered together for a potion, all of which lay around a large cauldron. [Bubble bubble, toil and trouble!] I know it seems a cliché, witches having a cauldron and standing around it brewing up something, but it's a basic tool of the trade.

"Yes, I've got everything," confirmed Lily.

"Excellent, then we should soon be on our way home," I said, remaining positive.

"I hope you're right," said Demon softly. Was it my imagination or was there a silent 'or else' at the end of her sentence?

"With this spell and help from Cole, we *will* get home." I responded confidently.

"And why do you believe this so confidently?" asked Demon.

"Because Cole said so," I replied evenly.

"You trust him, don't you?" asked Demon, sounding a little annoyed.

"Ah, maybe this isn't the best time to get into this," interrupted Lily softly. Clearly she was trying to prevent any further arguments between my sister and me.

"We have time to kill until Cole gets back," said Demon, glancing at Lily before she turned to look at me. "Don't you?" she repeated.

I saw no point in lying. "Yes."

"For godsake, Angel! Someone isn't called the Source of All Evil without reason. Why do you trust this man? Because he's handsome, sexy and good in the sack? Haven't you learned anything from having

been with Lucas? Evil men like him aren't to be trusted!" stated Demon, crossly.

With hindsight, I know she was mostly right and she was only speaking out of concern, but at that moment I snapped.

"Don't you dare compare Cole with Lucas. Cole is *nothing* like him. Cole maybe evil, but unlike Lucas, he has a heart and he loves Phoebe. He'll do anything it takes to get her back. And if you'd watched Charmed with me, you'd know that! So, yes, in this instance, I do trust him." I paused to take in a shaky breath before continuing, "I know I fucked up, but just give me a goddamned break and don't accuse me of trusting him just because we slept together. I'm not that easy!" I finished angrily, aware that I was actually starting to cry.

Silence filled the room so thickly it could have been sliced with a knife. Demon and I stared at each other before she finally moved toward me. "I'm sorry, Angel. That was unfair," she sighed and took my hand before going on, "I'm just worried, OK? I trust you, and if you trust Cole to do the right thing, then I'm willing to have faith in that." Demon put her arms around me and hugged me.

"I'm sorry, too, Demon. I promise when we get back, whatever punishment you think fitting for this, I won't fight it," I whispered.

Demon pulled back and lifted a hand to wipe away my tears. "We'll talk about that when we get home. Maybe the fright you got from this will be punishment enough, and it will teach you to take more care with your magic," she said with a gentle smile.

My sister could sometimes come across as an Ice Queen, but she could also be the most caring, considerate person I knew. I returned her smile, "Do you think Matthew will feel the same way?" I asked hopefully.

Demon snorted and laughed, "You should be so lucky." Her expression turned serious for a moment. "He was very angry with you when we left, Angel. I won't lie to you. But," My sister paused to give me an encouraging smile. "I'll try and hold him back, OK? Just promise me that this kind of thing won't happen again."

I nodded, "I promise. I won't make this kind of mistake again."

"Good," smiled Demon.

"I couldn't agree more," piped up Lily with a grin.

"Couldn't agree more about what?"

All three of us yelped at the sound of Cole's voice. He'd shimmered in without us noticing. I turned and shot him an accusing look. "Dammit Cole, warn us before just appearing like that."

"I'll sound a trumpet call next time, if that helps?" asked Cole with a grin.

"Hopefully there won't be a next time." Demon's cool voice cut in.

Cole's grin vanished as he looked at my sister. "Still as friendly as ever, I see."

"Whoa, Nelly! Don't you two start again!" I warned. If there was only one reason for us to return

home, it would be to keep my sister and Cole apart. Being around them was like hanging around the rim of an active volcano-- it could blow at any second. Matthew was pissed off enough with me. He'd kill me if anything happened to his wife while she was trying to rescue me from my mistake.

I pointed at two large, ruby colored crystals that Cole held in his hands, "Are those the Crystals of Amekth?" [Really observant of you Angel, like they'd be something else.] Hey, I was desperate to distract Cole away from my sister, OK?

The anger in Cole's eyes flickered out as he looked at me and nodded.

"They're beautiful," I said reaching out to touch one of them.

"Don't touch them!" Cole's outburst startled me and I quickly withdrew my hand. "They'll hurt you, if you touch them," he explained gently.

"Wouldn't want that now, would we?" I laughed nervously.

Cole smiled, then moved to the middle of the room and placed the crystals opposite each other on the edge of a circle that Lily had created on the floor for the spell. Cole straightened. "Have you got the spell done?"

I nodded and held up the piece of paper, "I hope this will do?" I asked, as I handed Cole the spell. He took the paper from me and scanned through the words.

"That should do it. With help from the crystals, we'll get you where you want to go," said Cole, handing the paper back to me.

"We just need to prepare everything else before we do the spell," added Lily, as she moved to the table and began to mix a protective potion that would keep us safe in our transition back to our existence. I hadn't thought it necessary, but Lily and Demon had both argued it was best to be on the cautious side.

"Anything I can do to help?" Asked Demon.

Lily nodded, "Yes, please." Demon moved over to the table and Lily softly instructed our older sister what to do.

That left Cole and me standing doing nothing. I knew my sisters would be occupied, so I moved over to where he was still standing by the circle. "So, I guess you're really looking forward to getting Phoebe back?" I asked softly.

The smile on Cole's face spoke volumes about his feelings for his wife, and once again I couldn't help but feel jealous of what Phoebe had. "I can't wait to get her back," admitted Cole.

"I'm sorry about all this. It was never my intention for this to happen," I said, remembering I hadn't apologized to him, and he deserved it.

Cole moved toward me, "I know. No real harm was done. In fact, I rather had fun," he admitted, taking my hand and pulling me closer to him.

My heart fluttered and I craned my head back to smile at him, a slight blush on my cheeks "I enjoyed

it, too."

My sisters were momentarily forgotten as I reached up to stroke Cole's cheek and said softly, "I know you only want Phoebe back, but I know you have enough power to allow you to have gotten her back and killed us in the process. Thank you for not doing that."

My hand was captured in Cole's before I could lower it and he raised it to his lips to kiss it. "I wouldn't have killed you, Angel." I trembled at the look in Cole's eyes, then my pulse quickened as I watched him lower his head. My lips caught fire as Cole claimed my mouth in a lingering kiss. His arms came around me, holding me tightly against him. All reason and thought fled as his tongue entwined with mine.

The sound of someone clearing their voice loudly was the only reason I was able to tear my lips from Cole's. I looked up to find Demon and Lily watching us, and heard Cole mutter, "Of course, your sister's another matter..." as he glared back at Demon.

"We're finished," said Demon, looking at where Cole was still holding me in his arms.

I extricated myself from his embrace and cleared my throat. "Wonderful." Somehow, it didn't feel that wonderful. But I forcefully told myself I couldn't stay, that I didn't belong here. And I really did want to go home.

Demon eyed me for a moment, but said nothing. Then she and Lily, who held three small vials filled with a dark green liquid, moved to the circle in the middle of the room. I reluctantly moved from Cole to join them.

Lily handed me one of the vials, another to Demon and kept the third for herself as we positioned ourselves inside the circle. All three of us were careful not to get too close to the Crystals of Amekth.

Lily distracted me from them by explaining what we had to do with the vials. "When we start incanting the spell, drop the vial. The potion will be released and envelop us, wrapping us in a protective cloak that should prevent anything unexpected from hurting us as we travel back."

Demon and I nodded that we understood what was required. There was nothing left now but to start the spell. Cole came closer to the circle. "You ready?"

We nodded.

"Then let's begin," said Cole.

"Wait!" I called out.

"What now?" asked Demon in annoyance.

I ignored her and focused on Cole. "Thank you for helping us. And..." I faltered for a moment, again wishing I could warn him about his future. But I didn't. Instead, I went on in a whisper. "Goodbye, Cole."

The Source of All Evil smiled at me and dipped his head. "Goodbye, Angel."

"Goodbye, and thank you," said Lily as well.

"Bye--and thanks," said Demon. It may have been a grudging thank you, but I was happy my sister had thanked Cole for his help.

There was nothing left to say, so we began the spell to take us home. My sisters and I began to speak the words of the spell, dropping the vials as we did so. Instantly, vapor was released and a soft cloud began to wrap around us. As I concentrated on the words of the spell, I was vaguely aware of Cole, standing outside of the circle, his arms lifted out from his sides as he spoke words in a tongue I didn't recognize.

The two crystals on either side of us began to glow a dark red and I could feel their energy pulse and vibrate. A red light began to grow around us. Inside the circle it grew warmer and my skin began to tingle. It became harder to form words as my body and mind seemed to be drifting apart from each other. The room and Cole began to disappear outside the red glow that surrounded us. Then, as we finished repeating the spell for the third time, the red glow from the crystals reach a blinding crescendo. I shut my eyes against the intensity, moments before I lost consciousness.

And that's the story. Our return was successful, as you must have realized already. As soon as we returned to our bodies we awoke from the comas caused by our body swap with the Halliwells. Due to having been out of my body for the longest, Luke had some concerns about my brain pattern being a little out of sync, so he insisted I needed to remain overnight in Medbay, but after checking me, he said I should be fine.

Of course, as soon as Luke said I was going to be OK, Matthew attacked and read me the riot act. Demon was true to her word and tried to restrain him. While it stopped him from dragging me from Medbay and throwing me out an airlock right there and then, it didn't stop him from telling me that I wouldn't escape some kind of punishment for what I had done.

When I asked what, he just smiled. A smile that had me wishing I could hide under the covers. He told me I'd find out as soon as Luke released me from Medbay the next morning. If Luke hadn't been upset with me as well, I might have asked him to let me hide out indefinitely. Unfortunately, I was in the dog house with all the men our family. My sisters' anger had cooled a little, but not completely. At least I knew that eventually they'd all forgive me and things would return to normal.

I just have to be more cautious. It's no fun getting into trouble. Well... Thoughts of the few hours I spent with Cole came to mind. Sometimes mistakes do have unexpected rewards. But I do have to be more careful about my spells, and check into all factors before casting one.

I sighed and lay back against the pillow. Beyond the room I was in I could vaguely make out the sounds of activity going on in Medbay. Thankfully, because Matthew was Captain and Luke Chief of Medicine, what had happened to my sisters and me was covered up, and who and what we were was still kept secret from the other members of the crew. I don't think anyone would have forgiven me if I had blown what we truly were wide open.

I've come to realize that there's something about me that attracts trouble. [Call me the Trouble Magnet]. If something's going to go wrong, it will. It's like Murphy's Law was written with me in mind. In fact, I think that should be changed. It shouldn't be called Murphy's Law at all, but Angel's Law. Don't you agree?

The Witches of Eriadne: Interlude Four J

{[Part 1: Gambling Man](#)} {[Part 2: Angel's Law](#)}