

Author notes:

'Two of a kind' is a crossover between *Profiler* and *Charmed*. *Profiler* is a psychological thriller series that chronicles the elite FBI Violent Crimes Task Force, dedicated to bringing the world's most elusive and psychotic offenders to justice. *Charmed* is a drama series that focuses on three charming witches, the Halliwell sisters.

This story is set in current time (summer 2001). For *Profiler* this means years after the show finished. I am assuming that the VCTF still exists and that Sam returned (take your pick on why she came back, plenty of good explanations out there in fanfic land :-)). Sam and John are not together, but they are very close friends.

For *Charmed* it means that Prue is dead and Paige restored the Power of Three. Since I barely know anything about her, she is not featured in this story at all; I only mention her once.

I call Cole 'Cole' when he is in his human form, and 'Belthazor' when he is in his demon form. This is contrary to Phoebe (who calls him Cole no matter what) or demons (who will call him Belthazor no matter what). And it is regardless of which half is in control: the human or the demon.

TWO OF A KIND
A Charmed/Profiler crossover Fanfiction by AmandaK

Atlanta, Georgia, VCTF HQ, 9.16 AM local time

John slid into his seat beside Sam as quietly as he could. He was late. Bailey had started his daily briefing fifteen minutes ago and John avoided his boss's eyes. He knew full well the reproach he would read in them.

"You okay?" Sam whispered from the corner of her mouth.

"Yeah," John whispered back, just as softly. "I overslept." It was the third time this week. The dreams were becoming a major annoyance; they kept him from doing his job properly. He pushed the memory of the dreams from his mind and tried to focus on the briefing.

"Three cases," George said. "Same MO. First one, six days ago in Boston, Massachusetts."

John gave a start at the mention of his father's hometown. He quickly concentrated on the photo that appeared on the screen before them. "That's a body?" he asked. The picture showed a dark shadow in the shape of a human body.

"What's left of it," Bailey remarked dryly. "The victim was incinerated. It was impossible to ID the body –not enough left- but we suspect it was Eileen Carson. The apartment belonged to her, she lived alone, and nobody has seen her since last Friday."

"Good enough for me," John muttered below his breath.

Bailey ignored him and signaled for George to bring up the next photo. "The second victim was found four days ago, in Los Alamos, New Mexico." The image on the screen wasn't much different from the first photo: a layer of soot in the shape of a human body. "Most likely Vicky McKay. Again, a single woman who lived alone."

"But hundreds of miles apart," John commented. "What were the chances that the two victims were related?"

"Then, last night, in Birmingham, Alabama," Bailey continued. "George called up a third photograph. Same MO, same results."

"And let me guess," John said. "Another single female." "What was it with serial killers

and single women anyway?

"Yes. A Miss Rhonda Cardwell."

Sam was tapping the corner of her mouth with the back end of her pen. "He moves around a lot. But without aim. There's no pattern in the locations. And the murders look like they're committed out of rage."

"How can you know that?" George asked.

John snorted. "He burns them to a crisp. I'd say that's a pretty extreme way to kill someone."

"No sign of how he produces the fire though," Bailey reminded them. "No residue of volatiles, like gasoline. And the only thing burned are the victims."

"It takes tremendous heat to burn a body like that," Grace interjected.

"Let's forget about the how for a moment," Sam suggested, "and concentrate on the who. That might lead to the why."

"I'm on it," George said.

"Are we going to Alabama?" John asked. "To see the crime scene?"

Bailey shook his head. "No. Alabama PD cleaned up the site before they made the connection with the other cases and decided it would be a good idea to notify us. They're sending over the files as we speak."

"Damn!" John swore. Sam rolled her eyes at his choice of words but he knew she had been thinking the same thing. She worked best on scene. So did he. "I'll hit the phonelines then," he said with a resigned sigh. "See what I can dig up about the victims from family or friends."

Bailey nodded his consent. A few moments later the meeting broke up.

"John? Can I see you in my office for a sec?" Sam hurried to catch up with John. He stopped and closed his eyes for an instant before he turned toward her with a fixed smile plastered on his face.

"Sure."

He followed her into her office and watched as she shut the door behind them before she crossed to her desk. He knew what the first words from her mouth would be. She didn't disappoint him.

"Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," he grunted. He did not feel like being psychoanalyzed. Lack of sleep had left him sour as it was, and having the locals mess with a crime scene before the VCTF could take a look added to his irritation. "That all?" He began to walk toward the door.

"John." He couldn't ignore the tone in her voice: imperative, concerned, with just a tinge of hurt at his brusque manner.

He turned back to her. "Listen, Sam, I am *fine*. I'm just not sleeping all that well lately."

"I kind of got that already," Sam said. "How come? Bad dreams?"

John shrugged. He didn't want to talk about it. "Guess so. Must be the heat. Listen, I really gotta go and do some work."

She gave a little wave with her hand. "Sure. John?" He stopped with his hand on the doorknob. "Who's Phoebe?"

"What?" He turned around and stared at her.

"Last weekend, at the cabin. You were having a nightmare. You were mumbling, well, talking, actually, in your sleep. It woke me. Most of what you said was in unintelligible but I did catch a name: Phoebe."

John shrugged again. "Sorry I woke you. I don't know anybody named Phoebe."

Sam raised her eyebrow in mock surprise. "All these women in your past and no Phoebe? John, I'm shocked."

He gave her a smile, a genuine one this time. Her attempt to lighten the mood made some of the tension drain from his muscles. "Honestly," he said. "I've no idea."

Sam let the silence hang for a few seconds but John wasn't taking the bait. He was too familiar with the trick to fall for it and break the silence with a confession. Besides, he truly didn't know who this Phoebe from his dreams could be. He didn't remember the dreams; all he knew was that they left him exhausted and frightened, with a sense of impending doom.

"I'm here if you want to talk," Sam finally said. "You know that, right?"

"I do," John said. "Thanks."

San Francisco, California, Halliwell Manor, 6.23 AM local time

Phoebe rolled over in her sleep and instinctively searched for Cole's warm body to cuddle up against. When she found the bed empty and Cole gone she woke up fully. She sat up, rubbed the sleep from her eyes and looked around. He wasn't in the room. She shrugged into her robe and pattered down the stairs.

She found Cole in the sitting room, sprawled across the sofa. He was too tall to sleep on the couch, really. His legs hung over the armrest so his feet dangled inches above the ground. A thin beam of sunlight played across his face. Through the window Phoebe noticed that the pavement was still wet from last night's thunderstorm. Where the first rays of the morning sun struck the sidewalk, thin tendrils of steam wafted up. Today would be another scorching day.

"Hey," she said softly and gave Cole a gentle shake.

Cole opened his eyes and blinked in confusion. "Hey, yourself," he said. "Where am I? What time is it?"

"It's almost six thirty," Phoebe smiled. "And you were sleeping on the couch. What's wrong?"

"Oh." Cole shifted into a sitting position and ran a hand through his hair. "I couldn't sleep. I hate thunderstorms so I went downstairs to wait it out."

"Why didn't you wake me?" she asked. "If they bother you so much."

"So we could both be tired and grumpy all day from lack of sleep?" He gave her a lopsided grin. "I don't think so."

"Well, hang in there," she said. "This heat wave can't last forever." She slipped her hands beneath his T-shirt and leaned in to kiss his lips. "Wanna go back to bed? It's much more comfy than the couch."

Cole grinned.

Atlanta, Georgia, VCTF HQ, 10.11 AM

"John?" John looked up from the file he was studying to see Bailey standing before his desk. He raised an eyebrow.

"We have another body. In San Francisco. I want you and Sam to go look at the scene." Bailey handed him a thin manila folder.

"What?" John exclaimed. "San Francisco? As in California? That's over two thousand miles away from Birmingham. Wait a minute, Bailey, when was this victim killed?"

"Last night," Bailey said. "I know, it doesn't make sense. Initial info lists the victim as a Miss Heather Yancy. She was last seen yesterday afternoon when she left work. When she didn't show up for her shift this morning one of her colleagues went by her house. He found her— what was left of her. I have the chopper waiting for you and Sam. Oh, and take Grace with you. She might notice something the local ME doesn't."

"What about you?" John asked. "Aren't you coming along?"

Bailey shook his head. "No. At the rate the bodies come in, I better stay here and coordinate."

John dropped the file and sighed. Great. He had been planning to invite Sam and Chloe to spend another weekend with him at the cabin in the mountains, where it was so much cooler. Instead, he would have to spend his time probing crime scenes in San Francisco. Oh well, maybe they could get an excursion to Alcatraz in.

On his way to Sam's office to tell her the latest he stuck his head into the door of the conference room. George was tapping away at the keyboard. "Got anything yet?"

"No link," George replied, "if that's what you're asking. The victims all have the same profile: single women, living alone. They also don't appear to have too many close friends. Which is about all the similarities I found so far. I'm still looking for connections."

"Keep at it," John told him.

A few minutes later the three team members were on their way to San Francisco

San Francisco, California, Halliwell Manor, 2.36 PM

"I'm going for a ride," Phoebe announced.

"Now?" Piper asked while she emerged from the kitchen, wiping her hands on a towel. "Phoebe, it must be a hundred degrees out there! It's far too hot for any type of physical activity."

"Ninety-seven. And I'll ride slowly," Phoebe promised. "Listen, Piper, I have to get out for a bit. Cole is driving me nuts. Maybe it'll clear my head."

"Or give you a sunstroke," Piper murmured. "What's up with Cole anyway?"

Phoebe gave a shrug. "Don't know. He's been cranky and on edge ever since it got so hot."

"Yeah, well, I can understand that," Piper said. "I'm getting sick of this heat too. Warm is nice, but this is absurd. I miss the fog."

Phoebe laughed. "I'll remind you of that the next time we need a knife to cut our way through the mist."

"At least wear a hat," Piper told her younger sister and handed her a cap.

Phoebe studied the embroidery on the front. "San Francisco Demons?" she chuckled.

Piper rolled her eyes. "Don't ask. It's Paige's. Just put it on, okay?"

"Yes, 'Mom'," Phoebe grinned and placed the cap squarely on her hair. "Tell Paige thanks. I'll be back in a bit. Don't let Cole bug you too much, all right?"

She was out of the door before Piper could reply.

San Francisco, California, Bartol Street, 2.51 PM

"No sign of forced entry," the San Francisco police inspector told Sam, John and Grace. He preceded them into the house and began to climb the stairs. "Actually, the door was bolted from the inside. And the windows were all closed."

"She knew him," Sam concluded.

"How did he get out?" John asked. "You can't bolt a door from the outside." He wandered through the bedroom and picked up a thick notebook that lay upside down on the desk. He flipped through the pages. Neat handwriting on the first page read 'Book of Shadows'. Some sort of diary, he thought. Maybe it held a clue as to whom the killer was.

Grace knelt beside the body. Or what had once been a body. Sam followed her and stood beside the examiner, staring down at the soot. Her eyes narrowed and she absently pushed her hair behind her ear. "She was asleep," she said. "Look at the way the body was positioned. She was on her side, curled up."

Grace nodded. "Looks that way. Death must have been instantaneous. And that's about all I can tell you. There's nothing left for me to work with. I might as well go back to Atlanta."

"Great," John muttered. He picked up another book and turned it over. "The Urban Pagan'. Interesting title. "So she knew the guy, let him in, fell asleep, he cremated her in her bed, then left without opening the door? What is this? The Twilight Zone?"

"Witchcraft," Sam said. Her voice came from outside the room.

John put the book back on the desk and turned around. "Excuse me?"

Sam had returned to the landing and stood in the opening of the door to another room. She gestured for John to come over. He walked up beside her and whistled. "Whoa..." A knee-high table stood in the middle of the room; on top of it an array of candles was placed in a circle. Within the circle rested a three-legged cauldron that looked like it was cast from heavy iron and next to the cauldron lay a double-edged knife with a black handle. Bottles and containers filled with various herbs were lined up beside the table.

"It's a Wiccan altar," Sam explained. "A pagan religion that—"

Something clicked inside John's head. A neighbor of Vicky McKay, the New Mexico victim, had mentioned something about Vicky being 'weird'. When pushed to explain, he had admitted he thought she belonged to some kind of cult. And mentioned that Vicky once had had the fire fighters over in full force because she had been burning too many candles right below the smoke alarm. It looked like Heather had been into candles too.

"Just a minute," John muttered and he pulled out his cell phone. He speed-dialed the number for the VCTF. "George? I want you to look into something for me. See if any of the victims was involved in something called wicked...wicky..." He glanced at Sam.

"Wicca," she mouthed.

"Wicca," John repeated into the phone. "It's supposed to be some sort of religion and—"

"I know what it is," George interrupted. "I'll see what I can find out for you."

"Thanks." John broke the connection and put the phone back in his pocket.

"So you think this is a ritual killing?" he asked Sam.

She hesitated. "It could be," she said slowly, "but Wicca is supposed to be a benign religion." She paused, her head cocked sideways while she studied the strange altar. "No, this killer is on a witch hunt. He might be a pious Christian or... In any case, someone who considers the victims evil. He's doing them a favor, killing them to save them. The fire is certainly consistent with that theory: fire purifies."

"Just what we need: a religious nut," John muttered. "I'll go talk to the neighbors, see if anyone saw something."

oOo

Phoebe slowly pedaled her way along the San Francisco streets, avoiding the steeper hills. The sun beat down on her and the streets were empty. People stayed indoors, where air conditioners created a bearable atmosphere. Piper had been right: it was too hot to do anything that even remotely resembled exercise. Still, as Phoebe had told her sister, she needed to get out of the house. Cole was driving her up the wall. Everybody got a bit crazy when the weather was as hot and humid as it had been for more than a week now. But the way Cole reacted, that was ridiculous. He reminded her of a caged animal. And then there were the dreams. He was having nightmares, even though he had not mentioned them. Neither had Phoebe; she knew that he would talk to her when he was ready, and not before. If she pushed, she would merely make him clam up more.

She braked sharply and on instinct took a right turn when she caught the glare of flashlights in the side street. She hopped from her bike and walked up to the yellow tape that marked off the street. Curiosity was stronger than the heat and several neighborhood residents had gathered near the tape to gape at the police squad cars and the ambulance that stood in front of a small Victorian house.

Phoebe frowned. Wasn't that the Yancy woman's house? After the mess with the Brotherhood and Cole being coerced to kill Janna, she had made it her business to know what other witches lived in the city. If she knew who they were, she might have an earlier warning the next time evil was up to its usual tricks. What had happened? The mutterings she overheard from the crowd didn't bode well. She caught the words 'murder' and 'burned' and 'dead' several times. She peered at the police officers milling about, hoping she might see Darryl. Who she saw instead, made her heart skip several beats; the stance, the set of his shoulders, the tilt of his head... there was no mistake.

"Cole!" she yelled. What the hell was he doing here?

oOo

John stepped outside and briefly conferred with one of the police officers. When he caught a motion from the corner of his eye he turned to see a petite girl with a red cap waving at him. Maybe she had seen something. He made his way over and looked down at her.

"Cole, what are you doing here?" she asked.

His eyes narrowed. "Who's Cole? I'm sorry, do I know you?"

She glared at him and for a moment he thought she was going to bite his head off, then her eyes drifted down to the FBI badge that hung from his shirt pocket. Her face flushed. It was obvious to John what had happened.

"Oh..." she breathed. "I'm sorry. I thought you were someone else."

"Apparently," he chuckled. "It's okay. My name's John Grant, I'm with the FBI. Did you see what happened here?"

She shook herself, clearly still confused that he wasn't who she thought he was. "Uh, me? No... No, I was just passing by."

The hair on the back of his neck rose. She was lying. The many years in law enforcement had given him an almost infallible instinct for untruths. Oh, she had honestly mistaken him for someone else. And he even believed her comment about 'just passing by'; the bike corroborated that. But she knew something. "Are you sure, Miss...?" He let the question hang.

"Halliwell," she muttered. "Phoebe Halliwell. And yes, I'm sure. I'm sorry, I'm late, I have to go."

It wasn't until after she had turned her bike and was pedaling away that her name sank in. Phoebe. His eyes widened and he stared after her. He gave a shake of his head and turned away to question the other spectators. Miss Halliwell would have to wait.

Halliwell Manor, 3.06 PM

Phoebe dropped her bike on the pavement of the driveway and ran up the steps to the

front door. Her face was flushed, her shirt clung to her back and somewhere during the mad ride home she had lost the cap so her hair was plastered about her face. As soon as she slammed the door open, she called out. "Cole? Cole!" Her voice echoed through the house.

"Phoebe? What's wrong?" He appeared at the top of the stairs, his hair on end as if he had just gotten out of bed.

"Have you been here all afternoon?" she demanded.

He frowned. "Yes, I was taking a nap. Why?"

"Do you have a twin brother?"

Cole's eyes widened and he barked a laugh. "A what? Phoebe, have you been out in the sun too long?"

Phoebe studied him like he was a bug beneath a magnifying glass and his eyes narrowed at her scrutiny. "Why are you giving me the third degree?" His voice had taken on an icy tone.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I... I just got a big shock. A witch was killed and while I stood watching the police, I thought I saw you."

"Oh, that's just great!" Cole threw up his hands. "I thought we left that behind us. I told you I was here all afternoon. If you don't believe that—"

"No, no," Phoebe quickly interrupted. It occurred to her how her sharp questions would have appeared to Cole. "I didn't mean it to sound the way it did. It wasn't you—"

"Of course it wasn't," Cole muttered.

"—but he looked so awfully much like you, he could be your twin brother. Mirror image. He said he worked with the FBI but..."

"You think he might be a warlock?" Cole asked.

"Yeah. What else could he be? I'll go see if I can find something in the Book of Shadows."

oOo

Phoebe disappeared up into the attic. As soon as she was gone from his sight, Cole

plopped down on the top step, hid his face in his hands and groaned. A shapeshifter warlock taking on his form. Just what he needed. As if he didn't have enough problems, with his demonic half vying for control every breathing moment.

He started thinking about which warlock it could be but he had no clue. And why would he take Cole's form? To sow doubt and distrust between him and Phoebe? He'd be damned if he let that happen. He had lost her twice; he didn't think he could stand to lose her a third time. Especially since this time he was innocent.

"Are you sure?" a voice growled deep in the back of his mind. He recognized Belthazor. "Shut up," he muttered and firmly clamped down on the demon's murmur. He didn't want to go there.

He was saved from further self-contemplation when the doorbell rung. "I'll get it!" he called up to Phoebe and walked down the stairs.

oOo

"I'm telling you, this Halliwell woman knows something," John told Sam after he pressed the doorbell.

"Hey, you don't have to convince me," Sam said with a laugh, holding up her hands. "You may not have my 'talent' but you do have good instincts. When you say she lied, she lied."

"Besides," John continued as if Sam hadn't spoken, "she said her name was Phoebe. Don't you think that's a weird coincidence?"

"Why? Because you've been dreaming about a Phoebe? Are you getting superstitious on me? John, there's plenty of women named Phoebe. And you never told me your dreams, so—"

The door opening interrupted her and they both turned expectantly. Neither was prepared for what they saw.

Sam was the first to find her voice again. "Oh. My. God." Her eyes flickered from one man to the other. They were staring at each other, speechless, with their eyes bugging and their jaws dropped. They had the same broad shoulders. The same piercing blue eyes. The same dark hair that would curl if it was allowed to grow long. If Sam hadn't known better, she would have thought it was John and, well, John.

She had read about this sort of thing. The National Enquirer once ran a story about two

unrelated women that looked like they were twin sisters. Sam had skimmed the story while in line at a supermarket. She had put the story down as the magazine's usual sort of scam. Lookalikes she could understand, but this? She would have to change her mind about that story though, she thought.

"Cole, I can't find anything..." A young woman that Sam presumed was John's Miss Halliwell, came hopping down the stairs. Her voice and pace faltered when she noticed the tableau near the front door. Her face grew pale beneath her tan and for a moment Sam was worried she would faint. She wasn't so certain about John's instincts anymore. The likeness between the two men would be enough to throw anyone. And it didn't take Sam long to realize that Phoebe and Cole were lovers.

She thought that someone should break the spell and she put on a friendly smile "Hi. I'm Dr. Samantha Waters and this is agent John Grant. We're with the FBI. We were wondering if we could ask you a few questions?"

Phoebe kept staring at John for a minute more before she turned her gaze on Sam. Sam felt as if she were being weighed and measured. Phoebe gestured with her hand. "You better come in," she said. "Oh, and this is Cole Turner. My boyfriend. Who I thought I saw earlier." She gave them a nervous little smile. "Cole?"

John's double gave a start. He moved aside and after Sam gave John a gentle nudge they both stepped across the threshold. Phoebe preceded them to a parlor room and motioned for them to sit down. She took a seat opposite the two agents. Cole leaned against the doorjamb and crossed his arms. Sam sensed wary caution from the girl, hidden resentment from the man. There was something odd about him; maybe it was in his eyes, she thought, peeking at the bright blue irises that she knew so well, yet didn't. It was eerie and she quickly looked back at Phoebe.

"I... We..." John stammered hoarsely. Sam had to hide a grin behind her hand. It wasn't often that one saw John Grant speechless. For a second she wished she had a video camera, then pushed that inane thought from her mind. She took pity on John who kept sneaking glances in the direction of his duplicate. "Miss Halliwell, we would like to ask you a few questions," she repeated. "A woman, Heather Yancy, was murdered last night, nearby on Bartol Street. Agent Grant talked to you briefly at the scene. Did you know the victim?"

Phoebe hesitated. "No," she said, "not really. I mean, I know who she was but we never talked."

oOo

Phoebe's first thought had been that the warlock had followed her home. However, the shock on the agent's face when he saw Cole was so sincere that Phoebe didn't doubt it was genuine. Besides, now that she had the chance to compare the two men, she noticed the tiny differences. The cut of their hair, the tiny crows' feet near their eyes. And of course their clothing. They were both sharp dressers. But if a warlock had taken on Cole's shape, he would look the precise same, up to the wrinkles in the shirt. The FBI agent didn't.

"Phoebe, you don't have to answer them," Cole told her.

She glanced up to find him glaring at the male FBI agent. Perhaps he was not as convinced of the man's innocence as she was. "It's okay," she said in a voice that she hoped sounded calmer than she felt.

"At least let me call a lawyer," he insisted. A muscle in his jaw twitched as he clenched his teeth.

Phoebe gave another shake of her head and looked back at Sam and John.

"So you didn't know her?" Sam continued. "You have no idea who might have wanted to hurt her?"

Phoebe began to shake no. She could hardly tell these FBI people about demons and warlocks, could she?

oOo

John listened to the exchange while he tried to regain his composure. "Did you know the victim was a witch?" he suddenly spoke up. Three heads swiveled in his direction. John never took his gaze off of Phoebe's face and he didn't miss the slight widening of her eyes at the word 'witch'. Bingo! he thought. "You did, didn't you?"

"Yes," Phoebe said. "But lots of people say they are witches. What does that have to do with anything?"

"Did you know that three other women in this country were brutally murdered, just like Miss Yancy, in the past week? Three women who also considered themselves witches?" George had called him back and confirmed John's suspicions about the Wiccan angle when they drove up to the Halliwell house.

"No... I didn't..." Phoebe's voice was so soft it could barely be heard.

"And you still know nothing?" John pressed. She shook her head once more.

"Okay, that's enough," Cole interrupted. "I think you should leave now. And unless you have something more substantial, and a warrant, I don't want you coming back and harassing us any further."

John looked in Cole's direction. Though his voice was firm, the man looked pale. No, he amended, being very familiar with the expressions on that particular face, he looked sick to his stomach. John also realized Cole was right. They didn't have anything except his suspicion that Phoebe Halliwell knew more than she let on. Make that Cole Turner and Phoebe, he thought as he got up.

"We're sorry," Sam said.

John wasn't sorry at all. If he had to pester a woman and her lover a bit to find a ruthless killer, it wouldn't keep him up at night. Unlike his dreams.

Sam handed Phoebe a card. "If you remember anything, we'll be staying at the Basque Motor Inn for the night. And this is our number in Atlanta. Please call. Anything you can think of might be useful."

Atlanta, Georgia, VCTF HQ, 6.27 PM

"Bailey?"

Malone raised his eyes from the file in his hands. George was standing in the door opening to his office. "You better come see this." Bailey didn't like the look on George's face and he quickly followed him to the Command Center.

"This is the security tape for the Carson woman's building," George said, tapping a few keys. "I downloaded the digitized version from the Boston PD. Look." Another click and a scratchy black and white image appeared on the large screen on the wall. It showed the door to an apartment building. The image displayed some static; the security camera must be one of the cheaper models. But it was effective enough for its purpose.

George forwarded the film until the clock in the bottom right corner read 2:14:36 AM. For a fraction of a second, a shadow appeared on the screen.

"Freeze that," Bailey commanded. George rewound the tape a few seconds and played it frame by frame until the shadow appeared again. Bailey hissed between his teeth. "That's ___"

"John," George finished. "I know."

"Why would John be in Boston on a Saturday night?" Bailey asked. It was a rhetorical question; John wouldn't go anywhere near Boston if he could help it.

"He wasn't," George said. "He spent the weekend up at the cabin. With Sam."

Bailey hummed. "So somebody tampered with the tape."

"Looks that way," George said. "You think it's O'Doyle?"

"It's possible." Bailey straightened and rubbed his face. "Okay, George, get them to send us the original tape. And see who had access to that file."

"Do we tell John?"

Bailey thought it over for a minute. "Yes, he should know. I'll tell him. You work on that tape."

Halliwell Manor, 3.34 PM

"Are you okay?" Cole asked to break the heavy silence that had come over the Manor after the two FBI agents left.

"Yes. No," Phoebe admitted with a sigh. "Are you?" She looked up at him and the sadness in her eyes wrung his heart. "Cole, we have to do something. Someone is killing witches. We have to stop them."

"We will," he said while pulling her into his arms. *I* will, he revised without speaking.

He knew exactly what to do. Tonight, when everyone in the Manor was asleep. Before more people got hurt. Before the FBI would be back to expose him. It had been a tremendous shock for Cole to meet agent Grant. Not a warlock but a mortal. Strangely, he felt a weird kind of... connection... with the man. He had recognized the pain in the agent's eyes. The pain of a rotten childhood, of a beloved parent lost. And when Grant had looked up and met Cole's eyes, a cold shiver had traveled down the demon's spine. It had felt as if the agent could peer into the deepest recesses of his soul. Could see into that dark corner, where Cole had tried to keep the knowledge of what had happened hidden. He could no longer deny it. He had failed. Somehow, during the thunderstorms, Belthazor had wrested from his control and gone to hunt witches. It was what Cole had feared, why he tried to stay awake during the storms. He had let Phoebe down. Not once, but at least four times. Enough was enough.

oOo

"They do know something," John said as soon as the door had swung shut behind them and he and Sam started down the steps.

"I think you're right," Sam agreed. "But I don't think either of them killed those girls. At least..." Her voice trailed off and John looked at her sharply.

"At least?" he repeated.

Sam gave a shrug. "Don't know," she said. "Maybe it'll—"

The shrill ring of John's cell phone interrupted her. He dug it from his pocket and pressed the accept-button. "Grant."

Bailey didn't bother with preliminaries. "John, George just played me the security tape for the Carson building. You're on it."

"I'm what?" John exclaimed. "Bailey, I wasn't—"

"I know," Bailey broke in. "Someone's trying to frame you. George is already looking into it; I'll let you know if we find out anything more. In the meantime you be careful."

"Always. Bailey?" John hesitated. Should he mention Cole Turner? He imagined how the story would sound to someone who hadn't seen it with his own eyes; Bailey would think he'd gone insane. "Thanks for letting me know." He switched off the phone and slowly turned to look at Sam.

"What?"

"That was Bailey. George spotted me on the security tape for Eileen Carson's apartment. They think someone tampered with the tape but I'm not so sure. Not anymore." He raised his chin and stared at the manor.

Sam followed his gaze. "You think it's Turner?"

"It sure as hell isn't *me* on that tape." John gave a humorless laugh.

"Want to go up and ask where he was last weekend?"

John thought it over before replying. "No. Let them simmer on it for the night. Besides,

you heard the guy; he'd probably throw us down the steps if we went back now."

Halliwell Manor, 3.07 AM local time

Cole lay staring at the ceiling, unblinking. Beside him, Phoebe slept peacefully, her breathing slow and deep. Another thunderstorm was brewing. He could sense it rolling in over the horizon like a dark, ominous cloud. The smell of ozone was heavy in the still air. Deep inside him, the demon quivered with anticipation.

Cautiously so he wouldn't disturb Phoebe, Cole rolled over and sat up. Time to go. It was no use to postpone the inevitable any longer. He dressed quietly and pulled a white envelope from his pocket: the letter to Phoebe that he had composed earlier. He couldn't leave her without an explanation. He leaned forward, brushed a strand of blond hair from her face and kissed her temple. "I love you, Phoebe," he whispered, his voice so soft it was like a summer breeze. He squeezed his eyes shut a moment to ban the tears that threatened, then placed the envelope on the pillow beside her head. She would find it in the morning, when it was too late to stop him. Cole stared down at her still form a moment longer before he brushed at his eyes and shimmered.

He reappeared inside Prue's room. Nothing had been moved here since the day she died. Her clothes still hung in the closet, neither sister willing to borrow them any longer. Her robe hung beside the bed and her hairbrush lay on the dresser, ready, as if she would step through the door any moment. Cole knew better.

He hated himself for what he was about to do, for giving Phoebe another reason to mourn. But he also knew he didn't have a choice; he was going to cause her pain one way or the other. At least this way, nobody else would get hurt.

Cole rummaged around in the bottom drawer of Prue's dresser. He took great care not to dislodge the contents any more than he had to but he still felt guilty for touching the dead woman's things. He breathed a sigh when he found what he was looking for: a small vial that contained a purple fluid. It was the last bottle of the vanquishing potion. Prue had shown it to him after they returned from breaking the curse that held Bo and his townspeople and Phoebe had welcomed him into her family. "Just to keep you in line," Prue had said. He hadn't been sure it would still be among her things; the potion had come in handy to vanquish the Brotherhood demons. And now it would be used to rid the earth of one more evil.

He stuffed the vial deep into his pant pocket and shimmered from the manor.

Basque Inn, 3.24 AM

Sam woke from shouts coming from the other room. She turned on the light, put on her robe and cautiously peeked through the door that joined her room to John's. He was tossing around on the bed, tangled hopelessly in the sheets, obviously in the grip of a nightmare.

Most of his words Sam couldn't make out. "I'm sorry, Phoebe," that she caught and her eyes widened. She walked into his room and sat down on the edge of the bed. "John? Wake up, John." She tried to grab hold of his shoulder and shake him awake but he was thrashing so much she had to be careful not to be mowed off the bed by a flailing arm. "John!" she said more forcefully. "Wake up! It's only a dream."

He kept muttering and Sam looked around, wondering if she should toss a glass of water over him to rescue him from his dreams. Then he screamed and flew up in the bed, dislocating Sam in the process. She picked herself up from the floor. John sat in the middle of the bed, panting, his eyes wide and frightened, still not quite awake.

"John?" she asked. "Are you with me?"

He turned his head in her direction and slowly his eyes focused on her face. "Sam? Am I still alive?"

Sam blinked at the odd question. Must have been one hell of a nightmare, she thought, while she went over to him and pulled him into her embrace. He was shaking and she rubbed his back like she did Chloe's after the girl woke from a bad dream. "Yes, John, you're still alive."

He sobbed in her arms, the words coming in jerky sentences.

"I was there, Sam. I was him... I felt his pain, his anger, his determination... I saw the murders! He didn't want to kill. And then she... he..."

"Shh," Sam hushed. "Shh, it's okay. It's okay."

Halliwell Manor, 3.52 AM

John ran up the stairs, taking two steps at a time. Overhead, invisible in the darkness of the night, the thunderclouds gathered their strength. He could feel them pressing down on him and the sensation that they were running out of time rose with the pressure. He pounded on the door. "Miss Halliwell!"

"John, keep it down. You're going to wake up the whole neighborhood," Sam told him.

She reached past his arm and pressed the doorbell instead. She repeated it several times; John's urgency was infectious.

"I don't care," John said, and knocked again. "If we don't find him soon—"

"Something bad is going to happen," Sam finished. "You told me that a dozen times at least in the last six minutes. I wish you could tell me *what* will happen."

"I don't... really know," John admitted. He gave her a sheepish grin. "I just—"

The door opened and John swallowed the rest of his words. "Miss Halliwell, I—" The woman in the door opening wasn't Phoebe.

"We're looking for Phoebe Halliwell," Sam said. "Or Cole Turner."

"You're looking for Cole," the young woman repeated in a dubious tone while she stared up at John.

John sighed. "Yes. I know what you're thinking, but I'm not him. It's a long story." He didn't know if it was a long story or not. Come to think of it, he had no idea what the story was. But now wasn't the time to dwell on how he could have a body double.

"Ah, right." Understanding dawned in her eyes. "You're the FBI agent. And what would you want in the middle of the night?"

oOo

The doorbell had woken Phoebe also. She found the bed beside her empty and realized that Cole was gone, again. She was about to go and see who was at the door when she found the plain white envelope. Her stomach clenched and her fingers shook as she opened it. With a sinking feeling she pulled out the single sheet of paper and began to read Cole's note.

Dear Phoebe,

By the time you read this, I will be gone. And so will Belthazor. I am sorry it has come to this, but I have no other choice. I will not let him hurt anyone ever again. I cannot lie to you, nor can I stand to know I betrayed your faith in me a third time. I thought I was stronger. I thought I could suppress the demon in me, like I once suppressed the human. I was wrong, he is too powerful. You were right, Phoebe, deep down I will always be evil. I know who killed those poor witches, and I think that in your heart of hearts you know too. I can only hope and pray for your understanding and forgiveness. Phoebe, you

taught me how to fight the good fight. I will fight my final battle for the sake of good. I love you. I always will.

The note was signed 'Cole'.

Her heart had stopped by the time she read the signature. And it took several long seconds before she managed to draw a deep, shuddering breath. By that time she had read the note again and she jumped from the bed as if bitten. It was obvious Cole had not expected her to read it until the morning; perhaps there was still time. What he wrote, couldn't be true. He couldn't have killed the witches. Could he? And even if it were true, they would find another way to solve the problem than the final solution Cole had in mind. She could always try and strip him of his powers.

She pulled on a pair of jeans, grabbed the nearest sweater and raced out the door. She heard voices drifting up from downstairs but right now, Phoebe couldn't be bothered by whoever was at the door in the middle of the night. She had to go and save Cole. Save him from himself.

Halfway down the stairs she stopped dead in her tracks and her heart flipflopped with hope. "Cole?" The moment the question left her lips she knew the answer. The man at the door wasn't Cole. He was the other, agent Grant. Her heart sank and took her hope with it.

oOo

John lifted his head when he heard the soft question. Phoebe was standing on the stairs. She didn't look so good: her eyes were wide and frantic, and her cheeks were pale. Her hair was unkempt about her face. "Miss Halliwell? Are you all right?" he asked.

"Phoebe, what's going on?" The woman who had introduced herself as Piper Halliwell also looked up at her sister.

"It's Turner, isn't it?" John asked. There was only one thing that could create a look of such utter despair on a woman's face. He had seen it often enough. And he remembered the dream. Part of it, anyway.

Phoebe nodded. "Yes. He's going to do something..." She hesitated. "Drastic." She handed John the note. "Piper, I have to go find him."

John's eyes widened as he read the note. He didn't understand every single word of it, but he didn't need to. He recognized a suicide note when he saw one. He understood now why the dream had left him so jumpy, so certain that they needed to get to the

Halliwell house posthaste.

"Do you know where he went?"

Phoebe nodded. "I think I do, yes."

"Then let's go. Sam?" Sam and John turned and descended down the stairs, Phoebe on their heels.

"Phoebe? I'll come too," Piper said.

Phoebe turned. "No, it's okay," she said. "If I can't... stop him, no one can." Her voice threatened to break and she quickly continued down the steps.

As they reached the car, the tiny hairs on John's arms raised themselves and stood on end. He took a deep breath. "Get in," he urged. "Quick." Sam cast him an odd look but he ignored her. Instead, he jumped behind the wheel. The others followed him into the car. Just in time. Lightning streaked across the black sky and struck the oak tree near the front yard. With a thunderous creak it split in two and fell across the lawn.

"Whew," John breathed and Sam gave him another odd look. He shrugged. "You can sense lightning, just before it strikes," he said. "If you know what it feels like. I've always had a thing for thunderstorms." He threw a look over his shoulder at Phoebe. "Where to?"

"The graveyard," she said. "The mausoleum."

Turner Family Mausoleum, 4.01 AM

Cole shimmered into the mausoleum. Even before he took on his full shape, the smell hit him. The dank, musty odor of dark places that never saw the light of day. It also was cool here, much more so than outside, even at this hour of the night. In the distance he heard the rumble of the approaching storm and he shivered involuntarily.

He pulled the vial from his pocket and held it up to study it in the light of one of the lamps. Amazing how much power could be contained in such a small bottle. Sudden doubt of what he was planning hit him and he placed the vial on top of the nearest sarcophagus before looking around. This mausoleum held special meaning for him. His father was buried here: the only person who had ever shown him affection. Until Phoebe, that was. Cole's eyes were drawn to a scorched patch of marble. That's where she had forgiven him his betrayal and spared his life. And over there he had tried to win back her heart.

It was the perfect place to finish it all.

Well, better get it over with. Before he got cold feet and changed his mind. But first... With a concentrated thought, Cole willed himself into his demonic form. The demon was harder to control that way but it would be less painful. Or so he hoped. In any case, it was fitting; it was really the demon he wanted to destroy. He raised his hand high, ready to drop the vial near his feet, when he felt a shimmer.

"What do you think you're doing?" the she-demon demanded as she appeared. Dark, wavy hair hung to her waist. She looked human, except for the paleness of her skin and the red glow in her eyes.

"Put down that bottle, Belthazor. Before you drop it and wipe us both from this plane of existence.

"That," Cole/Belthazor muttered, "wouldn't be such a bad thing." However, much to his own surprise, he found himself lowering his hand and placing the vial carefully back on the sarcophagus.

"That's my boy," the woman said, her voice lined with sarcasm.

"What are you doing here?" he asked. His voice was hoarse and he didn't sound nearly as much in command as he would have liked. His arms hung limply at his side. He knew it made him look like a nine-year-old caught with his hand in the cookie jar but he couldn't help it.

"Help you reclaim your true self, my son," she said. For the first time since she appeared, her tone held a trace of fondness. "I didn't save you from your father to lose you to a witch. Or have you forgotten everything that I taught you?"

Belthazor shook his head. "No. I remember. But I don't want it anymore. I don't want to live like that."

Footsteps clattered on the steps behind him. The woman's eyes narrowed and shifted from his face to the entrance. She moved deeper into the shadows.

"Cole!" Phoebe burst into the mausoleum.

The tall black and red demon turned around at the sound of her voice. She stopped a few feet away and for an instant fear flashed behind her eyes. It saddened him but he understood; over the past year he had given her plenty of reason to fear his Belthazor

form. "Phoebe," he said. His low, guttural voice held no menace, only surprise and sorrow.

Others followed Phoebe down the stairs. Belthazor recognized them: the two FBI agents who were looking for the witches' murderer. He groaned inwardly; he was gaining quite an audience for the final act. The woman's hand –Dr. Waters, he remembered- flew up to her mouth at the sight of him. But it was Grant's reaction that surprised him. The agent didn't look afraid. He didn't even look shocked. He looked... curious.

Belthazor directed his gaze back at Phoebe. "You really shouldn't be here," he said.

"I think I should," she replied. She squared her shoulders. The fear was gone from her eyes and stubborn determination replaced it. Despite the situation, Belthazor felt his heart swell with pride for her strength and courage. "When you're about to do something stupid, I'd *better* be there to stop you, hadn't I?"

He shook his head sadly. "I have no other choice," he said. "Please go. I don't want you to witness this." Overhead, thunder clapped and it took a few seconds for the loud rumble to fade enough that they could speak and be heard again.

"Cole, you—" Phoebe began as he reached for the potion again.

"Damn witch!" Behind Belthazor, the demoness hissed in anger and walked out of the shadows.

"Who's that?" Phoebe asked.

"His mother," John said before Belthazor could reply. The demon's head whipped up to stare at the agent. Phoebe's eyes widened and Sam's mouth dropped open in shock. "I'm right, am I not?" The question was directed at Belthazor.

His eyes narrowed suspiciously. "How did you know?"

"Oh, that was easy," John said with a cocky grin. He began to walk back and forth, flapping his hands to stress his words. "It explains everything. The dreams I've been having. The parts I did remember didn't make much sense, before. Now they do. My father, your mother. They're the same. I don't know what your story is, or hers," he nodded at the woman whose red eyes flashed with rage, "but she is still trying to shape you, to mold you into the person that *she* wants you to be. Just like my father always wanted me to grow up like him."

"Oh, shut up!" the she-demon hissed. Another burst of thunder caused the mausoleum to

shake to its foundations. "Don't listen to the human, Belthazor! This is our time! Don't deny who you are. Feel the current. Feel how easy it is to call upon that power. Let it fill you!" To demonstrate what she meant two blue balls suddenly hovered over her hands. "Admit it, my son. This is who you really are. You can not deny your heritage." As she spoke the last words, thunder rolled again and Belthazor felt the electric charge surge through his veins.

Her eyes bored into his; he couldn't tear his gaze away. He remembered. She had taught him how to call upon this feral power. How to use the electrostatic currents in the air to built the bolts. The presence of thunderstorms multiplied the temptation to reach for it a thousandfold.

"Take it!" she hissed. "It's yours."

Deep inside his mind, though not nearly as deep as when he was in his human form, the demon echoed the prompting. Before he knew what he was doing, Belthazor had snatched at the current and blue fire hovered over his hand. He stared at it as if he had no idea what to do with it. He felt its siren song in his veins, consuming him, making his blood boil and his muscles quiver with anticipation.

"Cole?" Phoebe's voice was hesitant, uncertain. "You don't want to do this. Cole, you have to resist it. Please."

"She's my mother," he whispered.

"Kill the witch!" his mother cried.

His head swiveled back and forth between the two women. Both were women whose love he had sought, whose respect he longed for. Good or evil. To choose one would mean to lose the other. What choice to make?

"I can't be who you want me to be. I'm sorry," he said and cast the fireball.

She screamed when the fire engulfed her and the blue light disappeared from her hands without doing harm. But she was strong, and Belthazor hadn't called upon his full potential. She resisted the fire long enough to form a new bolt and amid the flames she raised her hand. "Kill her!" she shrieked and in a flash so unexpected that it made him reel he remembered.

"You!" he gasped. "It was you that killed them. Not me."

"I wanted to help you," she cried. "How many times do I need to show you how it's done

before you accept your true nature? You're a weakling, Belthazor. You always were." She flung the blue fire.

"Noo!" he shouted. He shoved Phoebe out of the way and in the same motion grabbed the bottle to fling it at his mother's writhing form. The subsequent explosion was so violent that he was thrown backwards against the sarcophagus. The breath expelled from his chest and for a long moment he felt himself incapable of breathing. With a wheeze he forced air back into his lungs and he blinked as the dust settled.

Rain pattered through the gap in the roof. The last remainders of the thunderstorm that had raged outside.

"Phoebe?" he called, beginning to clear away the rubble. "Phoebe!"

She coughed and sat up, brushing the dust from her hair and face. "I'm okay. I think." He knelt beside her and she took his hands in hers. As he stared down at their clasped hands, he realized that when he had made his choice, he had automatically reverted to his human form. Phoebe looked up at him, her eyes full of love. "Cole, you're not alone anymore," she whispered. "You have me. I'm here for you. We are here for you. Me, Piper and Leo, Paige. Don't ever try to fix things by yourself again, you hear?"

oOo

"You okay?" John asked. He had pushed Sam into a dark niche and pressed his body against hers in an attempt to protect her from the fallout of the explosion. He stepped back now, a bit awkward.

"I'm fine," she replied. She ran a hand through her hair and it came away gray. "Just a bit dusty. Thanks. You okay?"

"Yeah. Come," John whispered. He grabbed Sam's hand and pulled her after him up the steps, out of the dank mausoleum. Phoebe and Cole could do with some privacy. Although, how private was a roofless mausoleum?

"Wow..." was all Sam said, very un-Samlike, when they walked into the graveyard.

"Yeah. You don't seem so surprised."

"I'm the one doing all the 'hocus pocus', remember." She laughed. "Boy, was I wrong this time! I'm surprised that *you* take this all in stride."

John gave a shrug. "Let's just say I'm a bit more open-minded these days."

In the distance the final rumblings of the thunderstorm faded over the hills to the north. Sam and John stood in silence for a moment. Then John said, "Feel that?"

Sam raised an eyebrow. "Feel what?"

"The air. It's much cooler now." The smell of ozone was gone, washed from the sky by the torrential rains. The air was clear, cool and a pleasure to breathe. The heatwave that had held the country in its grip for days was over.

Sam took a deep breath. "You know," she said slowly, thinking out loud. "It's a pity."

"What is?"

"That we can't chalk this one up to the VCTF. We found the killer. But no one will believe us."

John laughed and wrapped an arm around her shoulder. "You got that right! Well, Bailey will have to think up an acceptable excuse for the team's 'failure'."

Overhead, the clouds parted and tiny stars twinkled.

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