

Out of Sight, Out of Mind?

When: The next day

Where: portal room

“Right!” Susan said. “This time we are going in *powers mode*, both *unseen* and *invisible*, for good measure. We’re going to follow the people who seem to know what they are doing, and minimally screw up their lives! Wait I said that wrong. Screw up their lives, as minimally as possible. That’s what I meant.”

“I know,” Sparkle replied. “We talked about this yesterday.”

With no real XP gained from such a short “adventure” on the last world, Susan was eager to get moving again. Experience had proven that whoever they ran into first was either their best shot at meeting The Darkness or led them to that person, so just to try it, Susan had decided this time to be the ninja she had actually trained to be. Hopefully that would keep the destiny of whatever she met somewhat intact, and let them strike from surprise when the world really needed it.

Sparkle secretly wondered if it was just a way to put emotional distance between herself and the people of that reality, but she did not mention this out loud.

Sparkle had picked up *Unseen* from their book, allowing them to see each other but remain hidden from those without supernatural power.

Silverstreak had told her being invisible and such wasn’t needed, the place they were getting set down was a bunker of sorts. While it was used, the occupants wouldn’t be back for at least a day, letting her look around and get to know the world a little.

“And the last world shouldn’t have seen us propelled three months ahead in time and to a totally random location on the globe!” she had countered.

“It’s a fair point.”

He had also given her a little gift to give the two, something to make their lives easier.

“A flash drive?” Susan had asked, holding it up and looking at it. “Not something just disguised as that?”

“A flash drive. There’s some files on it. They’ll understand,” he assured her.

“Very well.”

True to their promise to be extra vigilant during the transfer, Susan and Sparkle stepped into the darkened bunker and took a look around. They were in a sort of main hall, with lots of doors branching out from the walls and a staircase that Susan bet lead outside. There was a lot of ancient looking stuff around, like an old phonograph player, and what Susan was convinced was an old mainframe computer.

Still, she wasted no time switching back and doing a quick *question* to see if Luna was around. As expected, she was not. With a sigh she put her book back into the trunk and made it vanish into her hand again. She pulled the flash drive from a pocket and held it up. “What are they going to do with this?” she asked. “I don’t see any USB ports on that puppy. Or a display, for that matter.”

“Don’t you feel it?” she replied. “This stuff is old. It’s been here a long time. Almost has a life of its own...”

“A what?” Susan reached out with her senses, not feeling anything like life, but there was magic around. “Hey, this thing has magic on it.”

“Yeah, I feel it. I think this place was forgotten and found again.”

“Whatever you say. Let’s have a look around and we’ll think about our next move.”

“Sure. What are you going to do with that though? I mean if you don’t want to get involved here...”

“Yes, that’s a bit of a pickle,” she agreed. She scrounged around and came up with a pencil and a sheet of paper, upon which she wrote “From your guardian angel,” and signed it with a pair of angel wings surrounding her initials. She left it on the table in the center of the room.

“Can they even read it?”

“Shoot, you’re right. Let me see here...” She went over to the pile of books and opened a few at random. “Looks like English to me. Guess we got lucky.”

“And finding a USB drive and note in their bunker won’t freak them out, I’m sure.”

“Best I can do. Come on.”

The place was pretty large, and held more than one room full of books, various weapons and other oddities, and several rooms that looked like they were built to hold people against their will. One with a large symbol painted on the floor, sparse with only a metal table and chair inside. Several dorm style rooms radiated off a main hallway, though only two looked lived in. *Why so many rooms for so few people? Maybe Sparkle was right, and someone’s squatting here?* There was a garage with several old cars, or for all Susan knew modern cars, and a large door she easily opened to let some more light in. *Nah, they would have sold the cars, these would probably be worth a fair amount, the condition they’re in. New or old, someone is taking care of them considering no dust on the hoods.*

The pair then went outside and took a look around, and found that it really was a bunker, and out in the middle of nowhere too. Susan took to the air and saw a lone road leading off into the distance, but didn’t feel like going too far until she saw whoever owned this place. She could get back easily enough, of course, but she didn’t want to miss them coming back.

“See anything?”

“Nothing for miles. This place really was forgotten.”

“Told you. So now what?”

“Read over some of the books, I guess? See what sort of books they are, for a start. That might give us an idea of what this place is.”

“Sounds good.”

So the pair closed up the door and went back inside, to where a pile of books sat by the main table.

“Wait, I hear something,” cautioned Sparkle. “*Unseen.*”

“And I *feel* something,” Susan agreed, drawing her guns.

They quietly made their way over to the groaning figure who hadn’t been there an hour ago, and looked down at it. It was a man, covered in sweat and wearing what had possibly at one time been a nice suit. Sadly, the blood and tears that now decorated it seemed to spoil any value it might have had. He wasn’t dead, yet anyway, but was groaning and thrashing a bit as if having a fit of some kind.

“How did he even get in here?” Susan asked, looking up at staircase that led outside. “There was no car, and in his condition he couldn’t have walked.”

“I don’t know,” admitted Sparkle.

“Who are you?” croaked the man.

“Oh, wonderful!” Susan rolled her eyes and threw up the guns dramatically. “He can see us apparently.”

“So much for staying out of sight.”

“Yeah, lasted all of twenty minutes? I don’t believe this.”

Susan looked down at the man. “I’m Susan, Susan Felton. I suppose you want me to heal you?”

“..”

“..”

“..”

“Dude?” She prodded his prone form with a foot. “You alive?”

“I think he just passed out,” Sparkle guessed. “I can feel his life energy still.”

“Thank goodness. For both, I mean, not just him passing out and saving us uncomfortable questions.”

“But what are we going to do about him? I know you won’t just let him lay there and bleed to death.”

“No, we have to do something. I’m not hitting him with the knife, that’s for sure. He’ll just wake up again.”

"I suppose I could use *regeneration*, leave it on for a couple of *turns*. That will heal him enough that he won't die here in front of us."

"Seems fine. But then we're going back into *powers mode*. He obviously has powers, but if he sees through magical *unseen*, I'm guessing he won't see through *powers unseen* because he would have one or the other. A supernatural nature or a powers nature."

"That sounds about right. His spirit energy though, do you feel that?"

"Yeah. Feels really weird. Anyway, better get to it and then we'll switch again, before he wakes up. But before that..." Susan made several other sense checks, from the all-important *dimension sense* to *magic sense*. He wasn't magical, and he felt like he belonged here.

So they put the healing plan into action, and the wounds on his face at least healed up. Susan didn't check the others for fear of waking him again, and once enough time had passed her and Sparkle went back into *powers mode* and sat down to watch the guy. She kept the guns out, and it wasn't long before his eyes fluttered open again. He groaned and pushed himself up to a sitting position, looking around.

And now we see.

"Hello?" he called out. "Dean? Sam? Anyone?"

Booya! Looked right past me. Thank you, dual natured me.

The man struggled to his feet and then staggered to a chair, sitting down heavily at the table. He was sitting right next to Susan, who put her guns away with a chuckle.

"He's still in pretty bad shape somehow," remarked Sparkle.

"Yeah. But at least this proves my theory. Let's see what this guy does and decide if we need to do more. Look at his eyes."

Sparkle padded over. "They are beyond bloodshot. And he's looking around almost at random. What happened to him?"

"I wish I could tell you."

For hours the pair watched the man. Well, Susan did. Sparkle wandered about and poked her nose into the far corners of the bunker. For his part, the man seemed to have what Susan would call a very low *RESolve*. He muttered to himself, wandered about, seemed to have fits of near unbridled rage, and then would settle down and rock himself. Finally he went to sleep in a chair and Susan wondered if she shouldn't do some sort of *mind* technique to figure out what was going on in his head.

But I haven't lost any RESolve, and to break my promise to myself after only this long means it wasn't worth very much. I'll just wait for now.

The next day brought at least a little more excitement to the place, as two men walked in and dropped the bags they were carrying to rush over to see how the man was.

"Cass, are you okay?" asked the one. He was of medium build, brown hair, wore a black watch and a button up shirt that wasn't buttoned all the way.

"Of course he's not, look at him," said the other. This one was taller, had longer hair, and both had the beginnings of a beard like they hadn't shaved in a few days.

"Sam. Dean," managed the man. "Have to restrain me. There's no telling when I might go crazy again."

Ah, that's who they are. But which is which?

"Rowena's spell? You're still fighting it, right?"

"I don't know that I can keep it up."

"You wouldn't attack us though, right?" asked the first one.

"Please, do it," he pleaded. "I can feel it trying to make me attack you even now."

"Better do it," said the other.

They got out handcuffs and chains and started making him secure, and Susan stood by looking them over. "Spell?" Sparkle asked. "Is that what I heard them say?"

"Yup. But I checked for magic, there wasn't any."

"Not any we're familiar with."

"Hey, even wizardry of words felt of magic. I got nothing from this guy."

"Well, don't look at me."

With the man secure, and given a blanket to put around himself, the two went straight to work, poring over books and some laptops. Apparently they were looking for someone, but indirectly.

So the world has a type of magic, but these two guys don't have any? And they have modern looking laptops which they could put the USB drive into. The USB drive that just sits there... On the other table, with an ashtray and a lamp, sat the flash drive. *How can you miss your perception check so badly?* Then she grinned a little grin and walked over to the lamp. Very carefully she put a hand under the shade and loosened it, just a little. A little more. A little more... It went off, and the two men looked over at it.

"That's weird," said the one she now knew as Dean. He got up to look at the lamp, and gave the chain a tug to turn it off and on again. He tapped the bulb and screwed it in, and it came back on. "Huh."

"Wait, what's that?" asked Sam, pointing to the flash drive.

Yes, I can be subtle when it suits me.

"There's a note," Dean replied, picking it up. "From your guardian angel. SF. Cass?"

"I don't know any angels with those initials," he managed. "There was Sandalphon, Metatron's brother, but that was with a ph, not an f. All one word too. Wonder what ever happened to that guy... we could use him about now."

"Angel?" asked Sparkle. "This guy is an angel? Or knows them, at least."

"Great, another 'god of love' better not be around here."

Dean handed the note to Sam and looked the drive over.

"You know, I thought I saw someone when I first arrived here," Cass said. "And I thought my wounds were a lot more serious. But she wasn't around when I woke up later."

According to you.

"Had you seen her before?"

"No. I almost got the sense she was a demon for some reason. I don't know, I was pretty out of it."

"Great, if the wards are failing that's all we need," Sam said, looking around at the ceiling.

"Why did you think she was a demon?" Dean asked.

"Eyes maybe? I can't even be sure I saw someone, honestly."

Oh, thank you very much Darkness.

She swore she heard him laugh.

"Well that's just great."

"Let's see it."

Dean handed it over and Sam now looked at it. "Seems pretty standard. But I've never seen it before. Someone was here, that's for sure. But do we trust it?"

"If they wanted to bomb the place why not do it? Why heal Cass? At least enough to get him stable."

"You think we do have a... guardian angel?"

"We could use one about now. I'm taking a look around, see if anything's missing. Unbelievable." He stalked off with his gun out, and Sam looked the drive over a moment more, then shrugged and stuck it into the side of his laptop. He waited a moment for it to mount, and started scrolling through what was on it. His eyes got bigger and he rushed over to a bookshelf and grabbed a handful of books, then rushed back. He started looking at titles and seemed to find all of them, and then opened to a random page in one of them. Double clicking the file he scrolled through and nodded, breaking into a huge grin.

He repeated this several times until Dean came back. Even going to filing cabinets and pulling out folders, and cracking open old handwritten journals that were dusty and ragged with age.

"You're not going to believe this," he said, spinning the laptop around. "This isn't just a standard flash drive."

"What is it?"

"As far as I can tell? Everything in this place, digitized. It's searchable too, there's a database in here with everything not only as it was as if someone took a picture of the pages, but did OCR on them and in most cases translated it to English."

"OCR?"

"Optical Character Recognition. They turned it into plain, searchable, text."

"We've got to back that up somehow!"

"You better get a few drives then, the storage on this is massive. More massive than I would have believed possible."

"Why? There can't be that much stuff here."

"No? Remember all those old films we found in the lower levels?"

"Yeah, boxes and crates full of them."

"They're all here too. Look." He opened a new folder and opened a document at random. Someone was talking and showing a monster of some kind, and it seemed to be subtitled. "Audio tapes, those movies, the file cabinets, all in pristine condition."

"How?"

"I don't know. I mean, we could have done it, obviously. If we had, like, a year. I've even thought about it, they make a book scanning machine that would be perfect, but I've never really had the time. And they're pretty expensive."

"So someone broke in, scanned all our stuff and put it on an impossibly big flash drive. They see Cass on the way out, heal him, and leave this for us. And this takes them like a week?"

"I don't know. Maybe someone's been sneaking in here for months?"

"Who else knows about this place? Who would have the skills to do this?"

"Only one person I know, may she rest in peace."

"Exactly. Well don't lose it."

"I won't. I'm going to copy the books out, at least. The text won't be that big, this drive can handle it. If there's a diagram or something we're missing, well, we can at least know what book to look into."

"Yeah. You're sure you don't know- Cass!"

They turned to see the man straining against his bonds, then falling back exhausted. "Sorry," he apologized. "I think it's getting worse."

"Right. Worry about that later. We need to find that witch."

"I agree."

But he started the copy anyway.

Not long after that Sam exclaimed over something, and the two started talking about demons killing witches in a restaurant. There was a picture of the place the attack went down in, and Susan figured maybe the boys would stand a better chance of finding her if she went ahead and slowed her down a bit. Or at least figured out where she was. After insisting he was fine the two left Cass chained up and tore out of there in a black car.

"Put *unseen* on us again," Susan told Sparkle as she made a *teleportal* to the place the picture showed. "Let's go find us a witch."

They stepped through into a restaurant and Susan looked around. There were no customers, but the staff was cleaning things up. The place did look like a large animal had torn through the place, and one person was carefully going over one area with a sponge looking for (Susan presumed) bloodstains.

"Luckily the site listed a time, and I assume our number systems are the same," Susan remarked. "We'll only need to see her once. *Time Area*."

The man moving tables back into place gave a shout of fright as the scene returned to how it had been, with three woman sitting and talking. Susan took a good look and then let the spell go. One woman had been a great looking redhead, another had dark hair and was wearing all white. The third had a different shade of red hair, making Susan wonder if the color was more prevalent here. Both redheads were in black, and both had a salad while the dark haired woman had some kind of meat. *Good enough*. The others in the place looked over to see what he was going on about.

“That’s that. Let’s go,” Susan said, walking out of the place again.

“Are they still carrying on in there?” Sparkle asked as they got some distance away. She was looking back at the place.

“Ah, forgot we were *unseen*. Probably freaking out about the door opening with no one there or something. Anyway, once we’re out of sight we’ll change modes and track down the three. See who are target is.”

She did, and one woman was clearly dead, the other in what looked like a police station. The third was free and hiding a book in what looked like a bus terminal.

“Gotcha,” she said with a smile. “Rowina, I presume?”

Susan smirked at the lady that was walking away and casually cast "*Retrieval*," but nearly dropped the book that landed in her hands. It was roughly bound, and the pages were thick and uneven. And it felt all twelve kinds of wrong.

"Ugh, what is that thing?" Sparkle asked, wrinkling her nose.

Susan held it away from herself, as far as she could. "I have no idea. But it's absolutely brimming with dark energy."

"Throw it in a fire!"

"I would." She peaked into the contents and hastily shut it again. "What are those pages made of?"

"I'm not sure we want to know!"

"You got that right. Anyway, fire bad. She may need it to undo whatever she did to that angel guy. Come on, we'll lose her." Susan, still holding the book out at her side, made her way after the red haired woman through the crowds. She had to dodge and weave a bit, as she was currently *unseen*, but she didn't have a ten in martial arts for nothing.

"Put it away, why are you just carrying it?" Sparkle asked with disgust.

"You think I want this anywhere near anything else in my *sub-space pocket*? What if it touches something? I already want to wash my hand... in lava."

"So put it in your pocket dimension, that's empty right? Apart from maybe the pony cart and some other stuff you don't need right away."

"I suppose. But then I'd have to get it out again."

"Why?"

"She's gone to a lot of trouble to get rid of it, let's see that she doesn't."

The woman walked briskly back to a small apartment, if you could call it that. You entered the place through a rusted old door in the back parking lot of a rundown building, and laundry hung on a line overhead. A rusty old stairs was straight overhead, but at least the AC unit next to the wall looked new. Susan landed, switched over to *powers mode* again in case this 'witch' could see through magical *unseen*, and let herself and Sparkle inside.

Susan took her first real look at the lady, and decided she was at least a seven. She was middle aged looking but she hadn't started to lose points in LOOKs yet, and her hair cascaded down just slightly past her shoulders.

Yeah, I could go for that.

Rowina! I just met a girl named Rowina.

Feeling better then?

Every day, in every way, I get better and better.

Super.

The woman quickly went about the cramped space putting things into a bag, then went and put a wig on so she was a blond instead of a redhead. While she did this, Susan unzipped the bag, popped the book inside, and zipped it up again. The woman stuck her head back into the room, looked around suspiciously, then went back to fixing her makeup and calling a cab to come pick her up.

While she waited she checked the room over, impatiently stared at a clock that was hanging on the wall, and gave a jump when a horn sounded outside the door.

"Finally," she said to no one in particular, and grabbed the bags up to head out.

Cute accent. Fellows, if you're going to show up, you better do it soon. Of course I could help you out...

She followed the woman out and watched as she was loading her bags into the back seat. Meanwhile Susan was checking out the tires and about to take out one of her metal stabby implements when Dean came around the corner and surprised her. She threw him back with telekinesis and advanced on him with one finger outstretched. Susan frowned a bit, looked around, then took to the air to grab a purple sweatshirt that was hanging next to some

jeans and pair of shorts on the line. It was then a simple matter to woosh down and plop it over her head, making her shriek with surprise as Dean was let go from the telekinesis. He looked up in surprise as Rowina flailed about trying to get the sweatshirt off.

Susan was laughing at the scene, made more comical as the taxi driver, feeling maybe this wasn't the best place to be, took off down the parking lot at high speed.

"What... in the bloody-" She got cut off as Sam snapped a thick iron cuff on her wrist and pulled it off.

"That was unsportman like of you, Samuel," she said sweetly. "And you know these won't hold me for long."

"They'll be good enough," he told her. "You all right?"

"Yeah," said Dean, getting up. "What happened? How did that fall just then and land like that?"

"Our guardian angel again?"

"Oh, you've got one of those now?" asked Rowina. "Maybe he or she would like to show themselves so I can give them a *proper greeting*."

Maybe next time.

"Come on," Sam said, yanking her chain. "Let's go."

Figuring the boys could handle her now, Susan skipped ahead to the base where Cass was trying to look up license plate numbers or something, but got into a porn site instead. He closed the laptop in confusion.

"Hey, I was watching that!" Susan chided him. "This Dean character has good taste, if that's the kind of sites he likes."

"Good job with the sweatshirt, by the way," praised Sparkle, not trying to change the subject or anything.

"Wasn't it? This is actually kind of fun. Should have done this earlier."

"You probably could have gone more subtle though," she continued as if Susan hadn't spoken.

"I'm just getting the hang of it."

Shortly the boys were back, and secured Rowina with thicker chains and planted her in front of Cass.

"What do we need to do in order to undo your spell?" Dean demanded.

"Let's talk deal," replied Rowina with a smile. She looked quite confident, as though she was not completely helpless here.

Sam, meanwhile, was dumping out the bags, and Rowina gave a gasp of shock as two ugly looking books tumbled out.

"You want a deal?" he threatened. "How about you do it, and I don't toss this into a fire just yet."

"How.. no, that's impossible!"

"What is?" Dean asked. "Was there some kind of spell on the bag so we shouldn't have been able to open it?"

"I secured the book, it can't be here! This is some kind of trick! Let me see that!" She strained against the chains, and Sam held it up somewhere in the middle. "It is, it's the book of the damned. How in the world did it get there?"

"Maybe you just thought you stuck it someplace, but didn't?" asked Dean. "Don't care. Fix Cass!"

"You think I'm stupid, boy? I wouldn't travel with both the book and the codex together where any idiot, no offense, might stumble upon them."

"But yet here they are." Sam picked up the smaller of the two books. "So, shall I go get a wastebasket and some gasoline?"

"No, no! I'll do as you ask!"

"Now we're getting somewhere," Dean said, relieved. "Now then." He got out his gun. "I'm going to stand behind you and Sam is going to get your chains off. You make any move that is not curing Cass, and I blow your brains out, you hear me?"

Man, so violent. Are you sure you want to hang around here?

I've blustered and made threats before. Even before I left home. No big deal. I guess.

"And then you'll set me free, no?"

"I'll think about it." He cocked the gun and set it against the back of her skull. "Okay Sammy, let her out." Sam cautiously took the cuffs off, and Rowina rubbed her wrists. "Don't just stand there."

"Very well, don't get your panties in a twist." She looked over at Cass. "Alleviate your burden," she intoned.

That was it? Alleviate your burden?

He went into a spasm and the brothers stood in mute anticipation, Sam holding himself back from rushing to their friend's side. When she said nothing more he snapped the cuffs on and Dean shoved her back down in the chair. Sam ran to Cass and steadied him, causing him to look up at them with lucid eyes.

"Sam?" he asked hesitantly.

"How do you feel?"

"A lot better," he admitted. "And I don't want to stab you repeatedly anymore."

"That's an improvement. Come on, get up."

"I have done what you asked," Rowina announced. "Now, about letting me go..."

"You can go when we say you can go," Dean told her, putting his gun back. "But keep helping us and your chances go up considerably. Cass, how you doing?"

"I'm fine Dean. Thanks. Of course it's no thanks to you," he said angrily to Rowina.

"You'll get over it."

"Sam, you okay with watching her?"

"Yeah, what are you going to be doing?"

"Hiding this." He grabbed up the book, looking like he was scooping up raw sewage as he did so. "Then we can have a little chat."

He left the room, heading for one of the vaults no doubt, and Sam was asking Cass if he was really feeling better. Rowina just looked shocked and Susan couldn't resist. She stood on the opposite side of the room and suppressed her *unseen* power- for Rowina only. She was doing a funny laugh and wiggling the fingers on her left hand. Rowina's eyes snapped up and her mouth dropped open.

"There... there's someone here!" she sputtered.

"What do you mean, someone here?" Sam asked her. "I'm not falling for that old trick."

"No, right there you *bloody* fool! Look! There! Look!"

Both looked over where she was looking, and Susan put a finger to her lips with her right hand, never stopping her wiggling fingers and let her *unseen* take over again. The others didn't see a thing, but from her perspective Susan simply vanished without a sound.

"Whatever you're trying, it's not going to work," Sam informed her. "Just sit there, okay? Don't make me gag you."

"Really?" asked Sparkle.

"Oh come on, this is fun!"

"Messing with her is fun?"

"Yeah? She obviously cursed that guy. That's why we didn't feel magic on him, but something was done. No one does that who is a good person."

"I guess. And it would explain things. Just don't overdo it, okay?"

"Me? Overdo it? When have I ever done that?"

Sparkle just stared at her until she relented.

"Now we're going to talk about the darkness," Dean announced, coming back into the room with two beers. He took a swig of the one and passed the other to Sam. "So talk. Tell us what the book said."

"Wait, what did he say?" asked Susan.

"Did he say the darkness?" asked Sparkle. Both were alert and riveted on Dean.

"The darkness?" asked Rowina. "What's that, Dean?"

"Don't play coy. You took the mark off, you can put it back."

“Dean, no!” protested Sam.

“What are you on about?”

“That’s what I’d like to know,” agreed Susan.

“You know, the mark of Cain? That you took off my arm and that released the darkness? How do we bottle her up again?”

“Her? Oh of course it is,” grumped Susan.

“Dean, you should know as well as anyone that the mark was originally created by God Himself. Do I look like a goddess to you?” She shimmied a little in her chair.

“It must have said something!”

“Bring it back out here and I’ll have a look.”

“Oh no,” protested Sam. “You’re not getting anywhere near that book ever again.”

“Very well. But I’m telling you the truth, the book simply told how to remove powerful curses, which it was. The consequences of that are now on your shoulders.”

Both men looked over at Cass, who also shook his head. “Above my pay grade. Metatron might know, but unless you want me to go back to Heaven and start poking around, I won’t be of much use to you.”

“Well that’s... not what I hoped to hear,” Sam finished, trying to hide how upset he was.

“I’m sorry Sam.”

“It’s not your fault. And with Heaven the way it is at the moment, and your fellow angels probably not exactly happy to see you, best not to risk it.”

“I agree. I’m sorry, I can’t even help that much.”

“Don’t worry about it.”

The way Heaven is? And an angel that can’t go back there? What have these people been up to lately?

Suddenly the radio at the side of the room clicked to life and a song started playing out of it. Everyone turned to stare at it in surprise.

*Carry on my wayward son,
There’ll be peace when you are done.
Lay your weary head to rest,
don’t you cry no more!*

It started up with an instrumental track but Dean snapped it off in disgust. “Why is that always going on?” he asked no one in particular. “And why is that song always playing?”

“That aside, if our little chat is done,” Rowina said sweetly, “I have to use the lady’s room. And as I’m sure you don’t want to let me out of your sight, one of you strapping young boys is going to have to come with me, no?” She held her cuffed hands out to be released from the chain that was holding her to the floor.

Sam lost at rock-paper-scissors and so led her off, leaving Dean and Cass alone. Cass wasn’t in the mood to chat further, and Dean sat nursing his beer.

“So they know about The Darkness,” Susan muttered. “How is that possible?”

“How do we know their the darkness is your The Darkness? I mean isn’t that sort of your pet name for the being? Silverstreak calls him Darkvoid. Your dad called him Existence Ender. When he wasn’t calling it ‘that stupid thing that’s eating my world up.’”

“Still, that would be a pretty big coincidence, don’t you think?”

“True. Does it make a difference?”

“I suppose not. I just wonder why this time it would let itself be known in that way.”

“It always has a reason for stuff it does. A reason that’s never good for us.”

“True. They don’t seem to have gotten much though, so that’s a disappointment.”

“Only that it seems to have been released recently, like maybe in the last few days?”

“And these jokers are partly responsible. Guess they are the ones we should stick to. At least we have that going for us.”

“He’s coming back.”

“Where is she?” Dean demanded.

"I put her in the sealed chamber downstairs. She's still cuffed, don't worry, and I checked her for anything that could be used as a lock pick."

Oh, is this one of those worlds where anything can be used as a lock pick?

"We'll have to go check on her every hour or so."

"I agree. But I thought we might want to talk without her for a bit."

"Can you lead me to where she might be?" Susan asked Sparkle.

"I guess. Why?"

"I want to make her an offer she can't refuse."

"What are you going to do?"

"Watch and see. I think you'll like it. Come on, they might go back soon. We have to do this fast."

"Very well, I think it'll be this way."

The pair left the three men and walked down to the prison, letting themselves into the room. Susan opened the door and Rowina looked up, then tried to look past the door to see who had opened it.

"Sam?" she asked hesitantly.

"Not exactly," answered Susan, dropping *Powers Mode* and becoming visible.

"You! I saw you before. What are you?" she asked. "How are you doing all that appearing and disappearing?"

"All that 'appearing and disappearing' as you call it is your ticket out of here, actually," Susan replied with a grin.

"What are you doing?" muttered Sparkle.

"Oh really?"

"Yup. I'll get those chains off and see you safely away from here."

"So that you can deliver me to my son, who will probably succeed in killing me this time? No thanks. I'm better off here."

"Uh, no, I'll put you back inside your apartment. Unless your son is there?"

"As if you didn't know."

Susan and Sparkle looked at each other, baffled. "Well, whatever. Do you want out of here or not?"

"And you'll promise me safe passage?"

"That's right."

"What do you want?"

"Your signature. On a very special piece of paper." Susan grinned and got out the trunk, making Rowina look at what she was doing with curiosity.

Sparkle nodded. "I get where you're going with this."

"Where did that come from?"

"Never mind. Now let's see, the Cs. Here we are." She read the spell over quickly, making sure she still had it in mind. "*Contract.*"

"What kind of magic is that?" she asked, now fascinated. On the table that was there had appeared the standard blank sheet of paper and quill used in the spell, and Susan walked over to it.

"What are you willing to pay for the answer?" Susan asked shrewdly. "Now quiet, I need to think of what to write." She picked up the quill. "I, Rowina, in exchange for being set free from the bunker by Susan, do declare that I shall no longer use my witchcraft in any way detrimental to any person not putting my life or the lives of others in danger. That includes curses, telekinesis, fire, or any other subtle or blatant magical effect that could be construed by the other party as harm." She read it over again, nodded her satisfaction, and signed it. She handed the pen to the witch. "Sign. And we can be on our way."

"I can't even read this!" she protested.

"I can read it again if you would like, but I swear upon my life what I have said while writing is what I put down. You're just going to have to trust me."

"Trust? A creature like you? I think not."

“Creature? Odd way of putting it. Let me show you something.” She snapped her wings open, and Rowina scooted back in her chair. “No, that’s not possible. You can’t be... both. I mean, how-”

“You let me decide what is and is not possible. Now, before they get antsy and come check on you, am I taking you out of here or not?”

Rowina kept looking her up and down. “What in the name of God are you?”

Susan leaned forward. “Your God had nothing to do with my creation.” She proffered the quill again, and Rowina stared into her eyes. She hesitantly took the quill and put her name down. Both vanished after the final stroke was laid down.

“Excellent,” Susan chortled, rubbing her hands together and settling her wings again. “Now, let’s get you out of those chains.” She took a few steps back. “*Telesummon.*”

Rowina gave a little squeak as she found herself in Susan’s arms, and was carefully set down.

“Are you going to make us invisible, like you were before?”

“No, we’ll go there directly.” She turned to the side. “*Teleportal.*”

Rowina really gaped at that one, and Susan shoved her through, stepping through herself. Sparkle also hopped through.

“Your freedom, as promised,” Susan told her, spreading her arms. “And remember our deal, no more hurting people with magic. And don’t bother looking in the bus terminal, the book was the real thing. You’ve lost it, and gained instead a chance to do some good in the world instead of simply thinking of yourself. Don’t waste it.”

She snapped her wings open again and Sparkle jumped into her arms.

“Wait,” cried Rowina. “Do... do you have to go? I’d love to hear more about you. Where you came from, how you did all that. Don’t just leave me!”

Susan shook her head. “Rowina, you are very beautiful, I admit. I would take you in an instant if your heart was not as black as night. Do good- real good, in the world, and redeem your blackened soul. Perhaps in a few hundred years your taint will be lessened and I will be able to stand being around you. Until that time...” She activated the gravity system and took to the sky.

“Have to admit,” Sparkle told her, “the *contract* was a nice touch. She can’t ever hurt anyone again, not unless she just shoots them. I was wondering if you would let her stay locked up, this is a nice compromise.”

“I’m glad you approve. Think we’re far enough?”

“For what?”

“Going back, of course! We have to shift modes so the angel doesn’t see us.”

“What’s the rush though? I figured when she basically begged you to stay you would have her clothes off in less than ten minutes.”

“Don’t think I wasn’t tempted. Growl! But no, I have to see the looks on their faces when they find out she’s vanished into thin air. Their freak-out is going to be *epic!*”

Bums or Workaholics?

When: About a week later

Where: The bunker

As expected, the reaction to the spiriting away of Rowina was big and loud, with the brothers tearing the place apart to try and find her. Dean took off in the car to check the road, but later returned saying he had seen no sign of their previous captive. No one blamed anyone else, exactly, but somehow Dean knew it was Sam's fault. After all, hadn't he seen her last?

A week had now passed, with the brothers looking over the information given to them by Susan and scanning news stories for any hint of where she might have gone or what she might be doing. Cass was not getting better very quickly, leading Susan to think it was not physical but rather some kind of 'spiritual essence' that had been damaged. While he slept that first night back she hit him with the knife and he wasn't better the next day, so she didn't know really what else to do for him. She had no experience with actual celestial beings after all, in this world or any other.

As far as tracking down any hint of what The Darkness might want, well, she already knew. Not much was found in 'the lore' which didn't surprise her. From hearing them talk it seemed everything in 'the lore' was compiled over many years as normal people had encounters with the supernatural. It was told in stories, written down, passed on, and as more accounts were added it became more reliable. That didn't mean it was always right or even helpful, given that only the most desperate of creatures called attention to themselves and needed to be dealt with. With so few encounters but so many books on things that went bump in the night, Susan wondered how scattered bands of "hunters" kept the world safe. They didn't call anyone, or share any information. They didn't report to anyone, or have any other resources to draw on besides what they had at the bunker. With literal angels and demons stalking the Earth, and creatures of legend like ghosts being real, it was a wonder stuff like this wasn't taken more seriously by a wider segment of the population.

But I guess people can ignore a lot.

So she wandered the world, looking to see what sort of place this was. Turned out to be fairly close to her own world, minus the secret society of wanded magic users, of course. (She had looked into it) Checking back in the boys every so often she flew overhead, when needed swooping down to disable a car the police were chasing or help stabilize someone being loaded into the back of an ambulance. She did this completely *unseen*, and wondered if a few years of doing this on the sly would actually register with anyone and be investigated at all.

It might be nice to be this silent, hidden force that makes people's lives a little better. Regular super heroes are big and in people's faces. Could super hero ninjas be just as, if not more effective? Bad guys would have no one to lash out at because the existence of the 'heroes' would simply be speculation. How do you have a Lex Luthor or a Joker without someone to target with that animosity?

Finally she saw them on the road, and watched them talking and laughing as they drove. She wondered what had happened when she wasn't looking, and by watching them got the sense they were on a 'case.' Something involving an animal attack of some kind that they felt was suspicious and were going to investigate.

Seems like a decent thing to do.

It didn't take them long to arrive and change into suits, then start passing themselves off as FBI agents. Susan and Sparkle *teleported* to where they were in case they needed backup, then watched as Dean chopped the head off the town sheriff who had started attacking him while looking at the scene the attack supposedly happened.

What in the heck is his STRength that he can do that with such a crappy weapon? Plus the called shot to the neck, plus any wound penalties because he did get slammed around a bit. Maybe he's not strictly human himself?

Susan thought that would be the end of it, but oddly, the thing's head kept snarling and trying to bite Dean despite being completely severed from the body.

Okay? That and some high level regeneration please!

For the creature? Suppose I could find a body like that...why didn't I think of that instead of what I did go into. Live and learn.

No for me, of course!

Like you would let it get that far.

Dean then get a call from Sam, that he had been attacked as well, and after putting the head in a cooler, he tore down the street.

"Wait, so he's just leaving the body here?" Sparkle asked, watching him drive off.

"...A...parently?"

"That seems somewhat dangerous. What if it decides to get up and go looking for its head?"

"Good point. I was thinking what if it could actually be reattached somehow. He could have at least thrown some gas on it and lit a match."

"Hard to explain the abandoned police car and burnt up body of the former sheriff though."

"No harder to explain the car and headless body of the former sheriff. How *can* it even still be alive? There's no blood reaching the brain. Even if it wasn't dead, it should go dormant. But it still seemed pretty lively even detached. You think the body is still alive too?"

"Don't ask me, I only work here." She stepped up to the body and nudged it with a foot.

"Not much blood. Maybe it only looks human, and it doesn't actually need blood flow at all."

"Then why eat hearts and drink blood? That's why they came here, right?"

"I did hear them say that. I don't know."

"What are you going to do?"

"How about we test the theory that it's not actually alive? And how about we do it with some magic?"

"What did you have in mind?" Susan smiled at her. "Why did I even ask?"

"Why did you? Step back a bit. *Elemental Sniper: Fire!*" she called down, slamming it with fire damage from three places above. The body spasmed and burst into flames. (It couldn't make a LUCK check to avoid catching fire because it was technically a dead body)

"*Combust!*" Sparkle cast, making it explode once it was burning well.

"Takes care of that," Susan said lightly. "Let's go catch up and take care of the ones Sam was talking about."

"Right."

The pair took to the sky and watched as Dean and Sam loaded an unconscious woman into a car, then started driving back towards the more populated part of town. For some bizarre reason they stopped into a roadside convenience store, and Sam went inside. Susan landed next to the car and looked in through the blood soaked windows. The woman was waking up, and Susan went over to the window of the store to see what Sam was doing. He didn't go buy anything as she expected, but rather went over to the cashier and started asking her something.

Cute girl.

A thumping from the car caused her to turn back, and Dean was struggling with the woman in the back seat. *What? And... he lost. Way to go, monster hunter.*

The woman climbed into the front seat and looked like she was going to drive off, so Susan shook her head and put all the energy and time she could into "*Telekinesis.*" *This one's for you, Yoda.* The car lifted ever so slightly off the ground as she stepped on the gas, and went nowhere.

The woman frantically looked around, then shifted into reverse to try and go that way. Naturally it didn't help. Finally Sam noticed, and charged out there expecting to be left in the dust. The drive wheel on the car was spinning madly as she slammed down on the gas, but

he was able to basically walk up to the driver's side as he pulled his gun out. He tapped on the window.

"Out!" he commanded, showing her the gun. She suddenly flung the door open, smacking into him and making him stumble, and she leapt out of the car past him.

Whatever she is, she can move pretty well.

Sam went to shoot her, but realized he was standing in public and about to discharge a firearm, so took off after her instead.

Susan casually reached into the open door and shifted the car into neutral as she let the spell go.

"Want to wake up our sleeping beauty?" she asked Sparkle.

"It'll break our *unseen* if I cast it on him."

"Oh, you're right. Well, I don't think this will... *Elemental Conjure: Water.*" A ball of water splashed down on Dean, soaking him but waking him up. He tried to figure out what was going on for a second and then realized what had happened. He flung the door open and went to help Sam to subdue the woman.

Susan looked over to see the cashier on the phone, quickly talking to someone, and realized the red stains all over the side of the car and them basically beating the crap out of some random woman on the street was probably going to get the cops here in a hurry.

"*Elemental Sniper: (Knockout),*" Susan cast, knowing that as the woman wasn't a "mundane" creature, it wouldn't end the spell. She did a called shot to the head, and even with that and her flailing around it beat her passive dodge, and she did six non-lethal damage to the head. She sighed. "See? I do freaking *magic* and do a pathetic amount of damage. These bozos swing around a -3 sized knife and still manage to decapitate someone in one blow. It's just not fair!"

"It does seem slightly out of proportion," Sparkle agreed.

The damage did surprise the woman, and cause her at least a slightly higher penalty, meaning the two finally got her knocked out again without too much trouble. Susan walked over to them.

"I don't suppose she had the penny?" Dean asked, winded.

"I didn't get to finish asking, I saw her in the driver seat and booked it back here."

"Yeah, she had me. How did she not just drive away?"

"Forget that, why are you soaking wet?"

"No idea. Come on, we've got to make ourselves scarce."

They hauled the lady up and threw her in the back seat. "Oh great, now what?" Dean was looking over at the horrified cashier, now frozen with fear by the window. "It's okay!" he shouted to her. "FBI!" He got out his fake badge and held it up, and she relaxed.

"I'll go back in," Sam said.

"The real cops will be here any minute!"

"If we can get a copper coin this will all be over. She can explain and- just wait here a second." He ran inside, showing his fake badge as well, and the confused cashier started going back through their change.

Dean, meanwhile, got in the driver's seat again so they could take off when he got back.

"It was in neutral," he remarked with a shake of his head. "No wonder. Moron."

Susan couldn't help feeling a bit smug.

He rushed back out. "No luck."

"Well that's just great!" He got the car started and pulled out of the parking lot. Susan followed by air.

"What are you doing?" Sparkle asked her, as she started casting with the arm not holding a cat.

"They seem to need a copper coin for some reason. I'm making them one."

The pair turned down a side street, then started back the way they had come which Susan thought was probably a good idea. The cashier had seen them going one way, and would tell the police they had gone that way. Meanwhile, they were going in the opposite direction.

Susan finished her *creation* spell and grabbed the circular copper disk engraved with her wings and initials, then wondered how to get it to them.

"I could take it," Sparkle offered.

"Now there's an idea!"

Sparkle dropped *unseen* on herself and Susan, then cast again only on Susan so she could remain seen. When the boys stopped again and Sam got out, Sparkle was by the door and meowed at him. That got his attention and she took her paw off the coin and ran around the side of the building, where she jumped back into Susan's arms. Sam didn't pursue her, simply picked up the coin and got back in the car. They seemed to be arguing for a moment, then Dean started back towards where he had fought the creature the first time.

Now where are they going?

They returned to the spot the body was left at and got out, looking around for it. All they found where the exploded remains. The area was heavily fire damaged, it was clear to anyone that looked that something had happened.

"Well now what?" grumped Dean. "Cass said we had to put the coin in and then cut the head off."

"Maybe it'll work in reverse?" Sam offered.

"I guess we'll have to see. It's in the trunk, I'll get it."

"Oops," Susan said.

"Indeed. In our haste to be helpful we ended up causing more problems."

"That does seem to happen with us."

"With you, you mean."

"You helped!"

Sparkle hung her head. "That time I did, yes. Well, maybe it will work in reverse."

It didn't.

They shoved the coin in and waited, but the head still tried to bite their kneecaps off.

"So now what?" asked Sam.

"Call Cass and see if he can find anything relating to one that already had the body lost. Really, why did that thing explode anyway?"

"I have no idea."

Sam went to dial Cass, and Susan turned to Sparkle. "Quick, cast *regeneration* on it!"

"What? We don't want it growing a *new* body... do we?"

"Either way- if this thing is undead, and it seems to be, that'll hurt it. If it's not, it'll grow a body and they can cut the head off it again. They won't know either isn't normal."

"I guess. *Regeneration.*"

The head burned away.

"I guess it just took a little longer," Dean remarked as the head seemed to rot in real time.

"I just hope the others have turned back."

"We'll see once she wakes up."

I guess you get the boss and everyone he turned becomes human again? What, so it's like a permanent spell or something? At least that much I understand.

But it turned out she had, and the pair went to deliver her back to her family, who had also been turned into the same kind of undead creatures. They drove away without waiting for thanks or even a dinner invitation.

"All worked out in the end," Susan merrily announced. "How about that?"

"We got lucky."

"Eh, we would have taken care of it, one way or the other. I bet throwing it into the sun would have worked, if all else failed. And I can do that, so... How fun was that?"

"You have a weird definition of the word, lately."

The boys went back to doing basically nothing for a few days until they caught wind of yet another strange occurrence that had Sam practically bouncing in his seat. Dean wasn't convinced, but Sam kept whining about it and he gave in. The pair were off to the site of a double murder at the Lizzy Borden Bread and Breakfast Museum.

They wasted no time poking around, though Dean had to hand over an extra forty bucks to the guy in charge to get the same room as the murders occurred in.

Wait, how do these people make money? They are obviously not getting paid for this, do they have some kind of resources background that they don't have to work? And that's why they can gallivant around the countryside doing this?

Susan followed the pair about the various rooms, the "bed and breakfast" part of the business having taken a nose dive because of the murders. Susan thought maybe business would be up, given the history of the place, but someone made their LUCK check or something because they moved about unimpeded.

I guess people have a romanticized version of murders that happened a long time ago, but if one happened recently, oh no, that's bad. Even though they're the same things.

Sparkle kept an eye on Sam, while Susan stuck with Dean as he dismantled the place and discovered that all the "trappings" of ghosts were caused by purely physical means. A hidden speaker for the odd noises, and timers for the lights that caused them to flicker. In other words, nothing supernatural at all.

Case closed, right?

What, you have somewhere to be?

I'm just messing. This may be boring but it's necessary. You'll see why soon.

But finally they both left the room, and Susan was fairly confident they wouldn't be back to sleep there. For one, there was only one bed, and for two, let's just say it didn't fit their personalities. Pink wallpaper, perfume on the nightstand, dollies everywhere. They were more cars and guns, to be sure.

"Time Area," she cast, targeting the time the murders happened. She got a clear image, a hooded person attacking both people with an ax after coming from hiding under the bed. Then she simply walked out, not looking disturbed in the least.

"That's not right," Sparkle remarked, watching the methodical way the attacker used the ax to cut both people down. "No screaming about getting revenge, or this is what you deserve, or anything. She just murders them, and moves on."

"I know. But we have our target now. Light of the multiverse, Make Up!"

Now in *powers mode* she used *view portal* to see where the girl was, and got a clear image. She was-

"Is she outside?" Sparkle asked.

"Yeah, I think so! Come on."

The pair left the building and went around the back where the *view portal* had opened, and there was the girl that had murdered two people within the last week. She had long black hair with blue highlights, several necklaces and a gray top on. One of them was emitting a cool blue light, and the girl, not more than 17, smiled.

"Hey, it's Susan, right?" she asked, looking right at the pair. "You really do have wings, I didn't believe it. Can I see them?"

"Uh, sure?" Susan did a quick *Power Sense* on her, but didn't get any result, and so did a *Dimension Sense*, getting a very weird result. Like an echo, not unlike what she had first sensed in Rev. *Someone touched by The Darkness?* She opened the wings and the girl smiled. "It's real, it's all real, what Amara said. I can't believe it."

"How can you even see me?" Susan demanded to know, closing the wings again.

"I have been granted that ability, by her," she replied, fingering the glowing necklace. "But that's not important. I'm to take you were you can speak to her."

"Lead on then."

The girl led them to a parking lot outside a pretty rough looking bar, and looked for an X spray painted on the ground. "Here," she said. "Use your time spell to look through time to this time and date." She handed Susan a piece of paper and she took it, getting a bad feeling about all of this. She dropped *Powers Mode* and now with *spirit sense* back, did a quick sensing of the area. There were some people around, but far away. Her eyes snapped to the girl again and she made another check.

Nothing. It's like she doesn't exist. But I see her health level, so she's not a robot or anything like that. She's here... what does that mean?

"Well, go ahead," she prompted. "You don't have to wait for the stars to align or anything, do you? I don't know much about magic, you see."

"No, nothing like that." She shared a look with Sparkle who seemed as much at a loss.

"She's alive, but I feel it too. Something very strange going on here."

"The answers are there," said the girl, pointing at the paper.

"May as well," Sparkle allowed. "We've got nothing else at the moment."

"Very well. *Time Area.*"

She got a scene of this girl leaving the area and a younger looking girl in a red dress and very long hair turning and looking right at her. She had to look up because she was shorter than Susan by a fair margin, this girl looked maybe twelve. But there was no mistaking that this girl knew she was there. Right at the X, right on time.

That's impossible! I'm looking at her in the past, was she really that confident I would show up here and do this?

"Ah, Susan," purred the girl. "How nice of you to come when I called."

Ghost in the Mask

When: No time has passed

Where: X marks the spot

Susan stared at the little girl Darkness, who started waving her hand over Susan's face. As she did, Susan noticed a red mark, almost a welt, right by her collarbone. But it was too stylized to be a wound, unless it was a brand of some kind.

"Hello? You there? Say something will you?"

"What?" Susan tore her eyes away from the mark and looked into the eyes of the girl in shock.

"Oh, you can speak. I was wondering. I mean I wouldn't want to stand here and look like I'm talking to myself, now do I?"

"How- how are you doing this?"

"Oh Susan, haven't I broken you of the confidence that you know everything? I'll just have to keep trying I guess. Anyway, reason I brought you here; first, wanted to see what you would do about her. She's a murderer, you know, and she'll kill again, make no mistake. At least three other people in the next twenty four hours, unless you do something. Second, as you can see, I'm not really ready to face you here just yet." She ran her hands down along the sides of her body. "Still kind of young, don't you think? Or would that make it harder for you? Ah well, I want to be at the height of my power when we meet face to face, so I'll take a little more time to grow up if that's okay with you. Don't worry, I was a baby like three weeks ago, so it won't be too long."

"And will you take hostages this time as well?"

She laughed. "Oh Susan, I'm taking the world hostage this time. Oh, just wait until you learn exactly what I've become in this reality. It's quite compatible with me, so I'll be able to use so many of my powers once this body can handle them properly. I notice you haven't put any energy into the crystal, are you that sure you'll never need it again?"

"I can fill it in a hurry, if I need to."

"I guess that's true. Well, just thought we should have a chat as we were both in the neighborhood. Don't let those two knuckleheads get killed by something lame like a vampire or anything. They'll be setting the world afire trying to find me, so we'll meet if you stick with them I'm sure."

"Wait a second, what did you do this girl? Stop involving innocents!"

She sighed. "I would, I really would, but do you know what the most compact form of energy is on this planet?"

Susan looked over at the girl, watching the conversation with at least a little interest. "You didn't."

"I did. Demons, humans, no angels as of yet. I'm sure I will before we meet though. A nice little sampler of what this world has to offer. Before they all become mine."

Susan's face hardened. "How many?"

"Oh, dozens at least. Who keeps track? Do you know how many grains of rice you ate at your last meal? I didn't think so. It's like that. Or chips- no one can eat just one."

Susan's hands clenched, but she had nothing to strike out at. Trying to hit the thing before her would be beyond stupid. She was long gone from this place. *But a technique to punch someone through time, that would be interesting.*

"Aw, you look upset. Poor thing. I do have to admit, it's crossed my mind. What would yours taste like?" She licked her lips and wiggled her eyebrows.

"Don't... don't do that."

She laughed. "Goodbye for now, Susan. I'll be looking forward to our meeting once I'm all grown up. See you then!"

She nodded to the other girl who nodded back and said "*Destroy Magic!*"

The *time area* spell broke and Susan felt heavier. The girl's status information above her head went away too.

"What did she make you do that for?" Susan demanded.

"Maybe to keep you from trying to track her from this location? I don't know, I just do what my goddess tells me." The girl took the necklace off and casually dropped it, and Susan noticed it wasn't glowing anymore. "I've done my part, so I'll be seeing you." She started to walk away.

"Hey, you're not going anywhere! You killed two people, and she said you would kill more."

"Will I?" she mused to herself. "I probably will. I have three more planned at least, so..."

"What?"

"Just some people that have wronged me. What's it to you, anyway?"

This girl really does have no soul.

"You can't just go around killing people!"

"Why not? Seems like the fastest way to solve my problems."

"And what if someone has a problem with you? Should they just kill you? If everyone took that philosophy, soon everyone would be dead."

"Whatever. I'm leaving, don't try to stop me."

Susan looked at her retreating back, thoughts awhirl.

"Are you letting her go?"

"I don't know!"

"You better decide fast."

"I know that." She ran after the girl, grabbing her arm. "You're not going anywhere until I have some assurances you're not going to kill again."

"You're not the boss of me."

"I kind of am, actually. I'm not just going to let you walk away and then murder a bunch of people tonight."

The girl rolled her eyes. "Fine, I promise not to, okay?"

"Like I can take the word of someone with no soul."

"That's your problem."

"No, it's yours. We're going inside so I can take care of this."

"Whatever. You're buying."

"We're not going in- fine. Whatever."

So Susan got out her book again and did another casting of *Contract*, and wrote up something similar to what she had before. The girl had no problem signing it, probably because she didn't believe in magic or think it would actually cause her problems. But Susan felt better about letting her go.

What is the magic actually attaching to?

What?

She has no soul, so it's not binding her soul.

I didn't think of that. But the spell didn't fail right out, so it targeted... her. Which I guess is just her body now?

Hope you're right, and she doesn't manage to kill those people she had planned to just because you got overconfident in your magic holding a person with no soul.

I'm pretty confident, actually. More so now, in fact.

Why's that?

Because you taunted me with it. If she could, she would, and you would have said after the fact "hey remember that girl you thought you locked down?" So she's safe.

Crap, you're getting too good at this.

"That one's solved, but you can't just *contract* everybody that The Darkness has attacked," noted Sparkle as they walked down the street.

"Yeah, tell me something I don't know. But would all of them turn into murder machines though?"

"Hard to say. Some might just turn to emo poetry or something. Goth clothing, black lipstick."

"That's fine, they can do whatever they want, long as they aren't hurting anybody."

"But what are we going to do about the source of the problem?"

"I really don't know. If she can talk to me, *through time* no less, there's no way I'll be able to scry on her with any accuracy. And did you see that necklace? She's been handing out magical items so who knows what else we'll run into around here."

"How did she know the time you would be there? She can't see all of time... can she?"

"We better hope not. She was seeing, and I suppose hearing, into the future. How would I defeat someone that can see me doing whatever I'm doing before I even know I need to be doing it?"

"Spend every waking moment invisible?" she joked.

"It... might come to that."

Sparkle was going to say something about "don't be ridiculous" but saw that Susan was serious, and simply nodded.

With no second (and third and forth as in the original timeline) murders in the area, the boys didn't have much more to go on. As there was no evidence of a supernatural agent in the area (from their perspective) they left the B&B two days later before their cover as "agents" got blown somehow. They rode in silence most of the way back, and Susan, *unseen* in the back seat, brooded too. *Just what am I facing in this reality, anyway? And with actual immortal creatures to choose from, and possibly stuff I haven't even seen yet, what will I have to do in order to end it?*

It was now two weeks later. As the other soulless people in the town were not discovered by Sam and Dean they were not led to where Crowley (current king of Hell) was hiding. (Amara, current body of The Darkness, had simply walked there that's how close she had been) As they were not there when Metatron was inadvertently shown on TV, Cass didn't spot him because he was with them, helping look through 'the lore.' So they didn't learn anything about what she was, and Susan simply kept doing her "hidden heroine" work.

But they did get the call about a strange goings on by a woman they had helped in the past, and the two men went to her aid. Turned out to be a guy in a weird mask that covered his entire head. He had stabbed someone (with a broken beer bottle of all things) the night before, and the police couldn't get the mask off to see who it was under there.

"What do you mean the mask won't come off?" Sam asked. They were all standing in a police station, talking to Donna, a blond woman probably in her mid-thirties. She had greeted Sam and Dean warmly, and introduced another member of the force, one Doug. He was taking the lead on the case and a very fine mustache he possessed indeed, along with slicked back, black hair. He was the sheriff around these parts but he was more a "hey nice to see you" type of fellow than a man that got the job done by following his own rules and bucking authority.

"I mean it won't come off," Donna reiterated. "We tried prying it, cutting it, yanking it-"

"We get the idea," Dean assured her.

"Didn't try fire, thought that might be going a bit too far, doncha know?"

"I agree," agreed Sam. "Well, let's go see this guy."

They moved to the cell area, and there he was. The mask was huge, easily the size of the man's body, and rested on his shoulders rather than being something out of Ocarina of Time. He had on a plaid, button up shirt and jeans, and was sitting quietly on the bed.

Dean and Sam made some rabbit puns at him after Donna was called away, then Dean stepped up to the bars and the man shot forward, grabbing him. Sam sprinkled some water on him, announced it wasn't a demon, and got Dean out of the hold. The two then did no other tests or tried anything else, just left.

Susan stared at their retreating backs and back to the rabbit.

"They're totally incompetent!" she said after they were gone. "They tried a total of one thing, and it's well, that didn't work so let's not try anything else at all, ever. Really fellows?"

"Be nice," chided Sparkle. "They may be good at what they do-"

"But they're no wolverine?" she finished in a gruff voice and a smile.

"Thought you weren't doing that kind of stuff anymore?"

Her smile vanished. "Sorry, it just slipped out. Go on."

“As I was saying, you take all your powers and magic and abilities for granted now. But they don’t have anything like that.”

“Yeah.” Susan looked at the bunny, who was still staring at her. “You can see me, can’t you?”

The rabbit answered with silence. And just to show who was boss around there, an extra strong, double stuffed helping of it, too.

“Fine. But I can sense two separate sources of spirit energy in that cell. I’m guessing one of them is whatever is controlling that body now, am I right?”

Again, the figure replied with a blank stare and crickets chirping in the distance.

“Neither one of you wants to chat, huh? Unluckily for you, unlike tweedle dumb and dee back there, I can actually do something about it. So go ahead, take your shot.” She stepped up to the bars and the man grabbed her as she expected. “There you go,” she praised him, grabbing his hand and forcing it off her. “Yeah, you’re strong, but it’s only regular human strength. You’re just making him spend energy that he normally wouldn’t, right? Pushing past the limits of his body. Anyway, I just needed you to touch me so I could do this-*Exorcise.*”

As neither was going anywhere, Susan put extra time into the spell and got a fifteen. The ghost put max energy into RESolve to shake it off but got a fourteen, and the mask shot off the kid like a rocket. It clattered to the ground with a dull thump, and the now freed boy staggered back, eyes wild.

“*Combust!*” cast Sparkle, targeting the mask. It burst into flames and the boy jumped back from it.

“Great teamwork,” she said, watching the thing burn.

“Oh crap. *Unseen!*”

The spell went off as fire alarms started going off and officers ran back to see what was going on. They found the kid incoherently babbling about being possessed and a smoldering rabbit mask.

“What in the world?” said one.

“Better go get Doug,” said another.

An hour later the group was standing outside the station, deciding their next move.

“And you have no idea what it could have been?” asked Donna.

“Could have been a lot of things,” answered Sam. “But why suddenly come off and burst into flames? That’s new.”

“Ha ha,” teased Susan. “This time you’re the one that was too hasty.”

“I didn’t want him, or someone else for that matter, picking it up and getting possessed again!”

“No, no, I hear you. Wonder if that’ll be the end of it.”

“He said he got it at some thrift shop in town,” Dean remarked. “We should go check that place out. If it’s selling cursed masks or something...”

“There could be more,” reasoned Donna. “We have the address, you boys want to follow me down there?”

“Sounds good,” agreed Sam.

But that was a dead end, as the person working there certainly didn’t know who donated what, why would they? The pair checked the place out, waving a sort of meter over everything and deciding to purchase, and burn, a few items the place had. Then they stood outside and decided their next-next move.

“We know it must be a ghost, right?” Sam asked.

Some more than others. Or at least something that can possess people through physical objects.

“That would be about right,” Dean agreed. “Someone using the costumes to possess people and finish what they couldn’t in life. But how do we know if there are any more out there, and where they’re going to show up next?”

You might not be able to know, but I can.

Susan left them to their speculation, moving upward and onto the roof where she wouldn't get disturbed. There, she cast *Question* a few times to get some more information.

"Will there be another attack by the same ghost that possessed the boy wearing the rabbit mask?"

Yes

"When will the next attack by the same ghost that possessed the boy wearing the rabbit mask take place?"

Tomorrow night

"How many miles north would I have to fly tomorrow night from this spot to stop the attack by the same ghost that possessed the boy wearing the rabbit mask?"

Zero

"How many miles south would I have to fly tomorrow night from this spot to stop the attack by the same ghost that possessed the boy wearing the rabbit mask?"

Four

"How many miles east would I have to fly tomorrow night from this spot to stop the attack by the same ghost that possessed the boy wearing the rabbit mask?"

Six

"And there we have it," Susan announced. "I love that spell. I love all my spells. So glad to have magic back, you have no idea. Say, you hooked into any local internet?" she asked her AI.

"Affirmative."

"If they have any mapping websites, what's four miles south and six miles east of this position?"

"Cottage Grove High School."

"Great. That's where we'll be tomorrow."

And so they were. Susan had cast a strong *Augment Skill* on herself for *Spirit Sense*, and was currently hovering over the school. With her eyes closed and reaching out with her senses, she could feel every source of spiritual energy in the school. It wasn't many, which helped, but she was "looking" for something specific. Two spots that moved as one.

They'll either be someone in the grip of passion and pressed against each other, or our local spirit. Either might be amusing to run into, I think, but one is a bit more pressing.

Oh, pressing, I see what you did there. Nice one.

I meant the other- I didn't... ugh.

Probably about an hour later she had one. *Dive, Dive!*

She burst into the school, coming up behind a person in a jester costume, and wearing a blank, white mask. They had just picked up a weight of some kind and in the gym were a high school boy working out and a coach in the office a scant meters away. The ghost turned to her.

"Want to put that down?" she asked sweetly.

The only sound of reply was the heavy weight whistling through the air to crunch against Susan's skull. Naturally it did only one damage to her, so she was hardly even bruised.

"Really?" The figure brought the weight back for another blow but Susan simply put her palm against the figure's chest and let the *exorcise* spell go that she had been holding onto.

It was seventeen to nineteen and not in her favor. *What?*

"What- what's going on?" asked a voice, and Susan looked past the figure. The boy could see her now, and was holding the weights at his side.

"Nothing to see here," she told him. Then she had to make a defensive action, catching the weight so she didn't get smashed in the head again. It was fifteen to seventeen, but this time she hadn't rolled max (and had put energy into COOrdination and so couldn't put any into STrength) so it bounced off.

"Oh come on," Susan complained. "I have a TEN rating in *ninjutsu* you shouldn't even be able to touch me. Energy or not, you can't have a rating in *weight swinging*."

"*Balk!*" cast Sparkle, figuring she should at least contribute something to all this.

“Thank you. *Exorcise!*” This time Susan put energy in, and rolled minimum. If it hadn’t been for Sparkle’s aid, it wouldn’t have worked, but this mask also popped off and the young girl behind it crumpled and fell.

“*Combust,*” cast Sparkle, not one to change a winning strategy.

Susan now felt only one spirit energy signature near the girl, the man, and the kid that was gaping at her.

“You saw nothing, you understand me?” she growled at him. “There was no girl with black eyes, no failing checks all over the place, nothing. You saw her come in, pick up the weight, and stopped her from bashing one or the other of you in the head. The mask came off and burst into flames all on its own. And that’s all. That. Happened. Got it?” She was now planted before him, and he was cowering back against the mirror and staring at her eyes.

“Got it!” he squeaked.

“Good man.” She whacked his shoulder (causing him to stagger slightly) and turned to walk out, looking down at the maskless girl as she went past. *Hey, a cutie. Anyway...* She nodded to Sparkle who cast *Unseen* on them again, and they faded from the mortal’s perception.

“What’s going on here?” demanded the coach, running out of the room.

“I- she- there was-” He stopped as his brain didn’t have enough resources and had to spin up a second hard drive for additional swap space.

Oh, way to step up you stupid jock. I told you the narrative, get it straight already.

Sparkle Returns From The Dead

When: Several days later

Where: Bunker

Events had proceeded quickly after we left our heroes in the last chapter. When the girl was interrogated they found out the costumes had been spread a bit wider than just one shop, but the school had a record of who donated the jester costume. With that, the original owner was tracked down and provided a list of where she had given the (somewhat enormous) trove of costumes to. The boys and the police tracked them down, and while they were doing that, Susan asked the universe if there were any they were going to miss.

Naturally, there were, but she got to them before anyone put them on and that was that. The two men, not knowing Susan was doing part of their job for them, considered the case closed, and it in fact was, even if it was only partially due to their efforts.

This morning, Susan found herself being woken up rather early by a frantic Sparkle. She was sleeping in one of the unused dorm rooms, far from the two men, and locked the door from the inside when she went in. A quick *question* of if she would be disturbed in the night was enough to make sure they wouldn't catch her there, and she slept soundly.

"There's something in the kitchen," she told her. "A rather pudgy guy I've never seen before."

"Huh?"

Sparkle sighed and waited 2d10 * 3 *segments* for her to fully be awake, then repeated herself.

"What's he doing?"

"Baking a cake, I think."

"He's... what?"

"Look, he's got a weird energy signature. Can you just go check it out?"

"Sure, why not? The others?"

"Still asleep. They won't be up for a while, given what we've seen of their routine."

"Don't bother with *unseen* then, for the moment."

Susan didn't bother with her armor or wings, just grabbed up her guns and stalked out. She almost took a wrong turn getting to the kitchen but Sparkle hissed "this way" and led her. She peeked in and Sparkle was right, there was a pudgy fellow, dressed in a yellow and white striped shirt, rainbow suspenders, and blue pants. And he seemed to be setting the table with all kinds of colorful foods. Huge lollipops, cheese snacks, marshmallow drizzled on tortilla chips, jellybeans, and a huge cake decorated with candy pieces and rainbow frosting.

"Obviously some sort of obesity deity," Susan remarked, not feeling threatened enough by this guy to be sneaky anymore. "I guess if you're gonna go, make it hard for Death for pick you up, right?"

"Heh, good one!" said the man, grinning. His face fell and his eyes darted over to where Susan was standing. "That's weird, I didn't know anyone but the guys were here. Did Sam or Dean bring a *lady* back to base?" He hummed something like "bow chika wow wow" and went back to his work.

"Oh, you're just going to ignore me, is that it?" she said, raising the gun in her left hand. "What's with the food? Poison?"

His eyes snapped to her again, and he looked down at himself, then back to her. Then back to himself, then her hand. Then his hand. He was holding a can of soda. "You can see me?" he sputtered, obviously out of sorts.

"Of course I can see you. There's a lot to see," she replied somewhat unkindly.

"No, no," he backed away. "That's not possible. Are... are you the one that killed Sparkle?"

"What?" Susan looked down at Sparkle. "Sparkle is right here, I haven't killed her."

"Hello," said Sparkle.

The man looked down at her. "Oh my gosh, a talking cat!"

"Now that we've established I'm not dead, perhaps you can let us know who you are?"

"No, I'm talking about Sparkle!"

"I am Sparkle. Sparkle Felton, and this is Susan Felton. Who are you?"

"You married a human?"

"No she didn't-" Susan face palmed. "It's a test, isn't it? This world is testing me somehow. Why me?"

"Okay, maybe we should both start at the beginning?" he suggested.

"What a fantastic idea! You start. Why are you here, and what are you doing?"

"I'm here to get Sam's help. I'm his imaginary friend from years ago. Someone killed my friend Sparkle which shouldn't even be possible and I'm worried more of us are going to die if they don't help me!"

"Oh." She paused. "Really?"

"Yes, really!"

"Oh, that's why you figured we wouldn't be able to see you," reasoned Sparkle.

"Exactly. How can you see me?"

"I'm a magical girl," Susan replied. "How about that, something actually *unseen* by default around here. Neat." *And it seems to be benign. I wonder how they got it and not actual monsters? Of course, I haven't seen all monsters so maybe some do have it.*

"Magical girl?"

Susan sighed. "Look, it's going to take too long to explain but I'm not from around here. I have various magic and powers at my command and I've been using them to help these two on their quest to find and defeat The Darkness. On the sly. Usually I just bust in and take over whatever operation people have going but this time I thought I would try it the other way. Just step in when needed. It's been fun. The Darkness is my enemy, not theirs, so the responsibility is mine too. If I can help you, keep more of... whatever you are... from being killed, great. That won't be a problem."

"Oh." He pondered this for a moment. "So really, you're actually even more imaginary than me!"

"I guess in a certain way, yes."

"Cool. Okay, I guess I can accept that. And I've heard rumors about this Darkness too, so if you're fighting that, you're good in my book. So don't tell them about you, is that right?"

"Right. You'll probably be able to see me, at least part of the time... I have two different ways of being- never mind. I'll be close by."

"Got it. Anyway, got to finish this up before Sam wakes up."

"Sure, sorry to interrupt."

Susan shook her head all the way back to her room, where she geared up again.

"You believe his story?" Sparkle asked.

"If Sam recognizes it, and accepts it, sure. All the weird stuff this world has going for it, why not real pretend friends?"

"I suppose..."

They waited for Sam to get up, and he had a fairly predictable reaction. Trying to beat the guy up before he realized what it was. After he calmed down and Dean appeared, the man told his story.

Turned out he called his "species" Zanna, and they were tasked with the protection of children. That was all he got out before they went to check the story, and Sam was talking about his visions of Lucifer, and a cage of some kind, and talking to Lucifer in a cage. And how it couldn't be one of "his visions" because they were both seeing it, and it had nothing to do with the visions he had been seeing.

Wait, what? I think I've missed some things when they've been driving around.

They found a reference to Zanna in the notes Susan had given them, and verified it by pulling the book off the shelf too. And so, despite Dean's insistence this wasn't their thing, the brothers took off in the car with him. Sully, that was his name in case it wasn't clear, guided them to a house conveniently not too far away. Inside, Sully said, was the scene of the murder and the traumatized child that had stumbled upon it.

"I'll see you inside," he said, and putting a hand on Susan's leg, teleported them both into the house.

Susan blinked, being teleported by someone else was an odd feeling at best, and as her vision cleared, her hands flew to her mouth.

"Oh my God," she breathed, eyes darting about the room.

"I know," he said. "I'm sorry to have to show you this."

There, in the big beanbag chair off to the side of the white rug was a man. The man had half a unicorn's horn sticking out of his forehead, and there was glittery blood everywhere. The other half of the horn looked like it had been tossed aside. And did I mention the blood everywhere?

Susan felt a bit ill, but with her bonus to CONstitution from her magic she felt she could handle it. The blood smelled like candy sprinkles.

"What could do this?" she asked him.

"I don't know. We're not mortal creatures, and can't really be harmed in the traditional sense."

"I don't know how much time I have, I better get to it."

"To what?"

"Seeing who did this, of course. I have to make sure they don't strike again!"

"You can do that?"

"Just watch. *Time Area*." Susan replayed the room from about 8:00 PM the night before, figuring that was a good time to start, but the same image was overlaid on the scene as it was currently. She rewound time, and yes, there was a woman creeping in and holding a knife. She mercilessly lashed out at Sparkle, who had been taken completely by surprise. In a few actions she had the man dead, and cut through the horn like it was made of air. Susan waved the playback away.

"Not The Darkness then," she remarked. "That girl looks totally different."

"The family can't see this? Only the girl?" asked Sparkle.

"That's right. I don't know how we're going to clean this up."

"We can handle that," Susan assured him. "Once the boys are gone-"

"No, leave this to me," Sparkle broke in. "You need to get after that woman. Make sure she isn't killing another Zanna right now for some reason."

"Are... are you sure? Can you handle it? Do you want the book?"

"I can get it out myself, it's not in the trunk right now, right?"

"Okay. I'll switch to powers mode, get to where she is, and back to magic made so you can use the book if you need it."

"Got it."

"What?" asked Sully, looking between them.

"Never mind. Just go!"

Susan did as she said, teleporting to where the woman was, and Sparkle felt magic return to her.

"What... what are you going to do?" asked Sully.

Sparkle regarded him silently a moment. "Once the two leave, I'll clean this up. You'll have to show it to them as you've brought them this far. Then we'll see what Susan has to say and figure out what to tell them. Maybe once there are no more of you killed, they can just drop the matter."

"You're that confident?"

"Believe me, yes."

"Okay. Oh, if I'm going to show them, you'll have to stay out of sight. I'll have to give them the ability to see us, which might let them see you, too."

"Good thinking. I'll just be under the bed then. Just don't forget to take it away again later."

The two came in with the mother and saw the carnage for themselves, then they hustled her out because she was getting sparkling blood everywhere without knowing.

"That was horrible," Sully said, coming back. "She had it on her face. All over her face!"

"I'll take care of that in a minute. For now, set the horn back on his head where it should be. It should be healed along with the rest of him. *Hygiene.*" *That takes care of the blood*

"Healed? What are you... talking about..."

"Look," Sparkle said angrily. "What I'm about to do, you can't tell Susan about. This is something, the only thing, I've ever kept from her. For good reason, I might add. Now I need your help to do this, and would like to get this done before the mom comes back. Pick up the horn, and put it in place."

He hesitantly picked up the severed horn and gently set it back where it should be. "Fine." She took a deep breath and touched Sparkle's leg, willing her *lifestreaming* into the body to heal it. She couldn't use *Regeneration* because he was already dead, which breaks *Regeneration* magic. But *lifestreaming* would work. The wounds knitted themselves, and when Sully took his hand away from the horn, it stayed. The pale green energy that had been playing around his body vanished, and Sparkle looked Sparkle over to see if there was any other area she should concentrate on.

"Good. Now for the hard part." Again the pale green surrounded him, and Sparkle made a check in *Life Energy Retaining*. It was within the window for this to work, (thanks to her high RESolve) and Sparkle gasped and started breathing again. Sully staggered back, tripping and landing in a heap.

Sparkle opened his eyes. "What in the world? Sully? What's going..." His hooves flew to his chest. "My wounds, the pain. All gone. I'm not dead?"

Sully was shaking his head rapidly. "You were dead. Now you're not. How, how are you not dead?"

"Like I said," Sparkle said to him. "Not. A. Word."

"Are you God?"

Sparkle shook her head. "An unintended consequence of something I picked up in my travels. I hesitate to do it to a human, but you aren't human, are you?" she asked Sparkle. "I figured you could handle it."

"You did this?" Sparkle asked Sparkle.

"Yes. You're alive, and you should be totally healed. My partner is tracking down the one who did this. She won't do it again."

"Sparkle!" Sully yelled, pulling him into a hug.

"Yeah, I'm fine," he assured him, patting his back. "I don't know what's going on, but I'm fine."

Sully broke it off and looked at Sparkle. "Not a word," he promised.

Meanwhile, Susan was standing behind someone who was standing behind someone in a pool. The one in the pool had long blond hair down to nearly the center of her back, and Susan saw a headpiece of some kind made of flowers and leaves atop her head. She couldn't see her lower half, and assumed it was a person like Sully. The one behind her was wearing mostly dark clothing and had a hood pulled up over her head. In her right hand she held a knife, and was raising it to stab the person in the pool.

Yeah, no, I don't think so. "Telekinesis." Given how the day was going, she spent ten energy on the skill but with her -6 penalty for casting it instantly she got an eleven. Her opponent got a thirteen. *You know, I give up, honestly. What is going- what cards do I have?*

Thinking about cards got her some, and she "saw" that she had *Disaster Strikes* which was really the opposite of what she wanted right now, and *Unfailing Resolve*, also totally useless. So she spent an XP to reroll it, and put fifteen in this time. As she knew she had to beat a thirteen, her minimum roll would almost do it and she got a fifteen.

The knife stopped, and then flew out of her hand and into Susan's. The girl whirled around, and saw Susan looking the knife over. It was somewhat thick, with a good edge and odd markings burned along the length of the blade. It was magical, not that Susan spent much time on *Magic Sense* to see exactly how.

"Hey," shouted the girl. "That's mine!"

"Funny, I don't see your name on it," Susan retorted.

"Give it back!"

"Oh, sure, okay." She thrust it forward, but not to return it, instead to put it in her *Pocket*. The knife vanished. "Whoops, lost it."

"I paid good money for that, give it back!"

"NO!" Susan shouted, unfurling her wings and clenching her fists. The girl finally really *looked* at Susan and staggered back, but she was at the edge of the pool and toppled backwards into the water. She splashed and struggled, trying to get away from the *mermaid* that was in it. The mermaid seemed to be trying to help her, but Susan couldn't be sure if she was trying to bring her up or struggling to hold her down. Susan just couldn't stop staring at that bright, golden tail of hers. That slender, beautiful tail, and her... why was she wearing a top? That was stupid, she was a mermaid only a child could see. So stupid. *Wait, what was I here for again?*

It was up, as finally the mermaid managed it and the girl, coughing and spitting up water was finally upright again. She was obviously choking, and the mermaid leaned forward and kissed her.

Uh, what? Why does she get it? She tried to... I am having the worst luck today.

The mermaid pulled back and the girl took a deep breath, not having any trouble anymore. She was obviously not sure if she should thank her or shove her, and it seemed shove her won out.

"Get away from me," she cried, struggling backwards.

"You're welcome," said the mermaid. "Now can someone please tell me what's going on here?"

"Oh, just saving your life. Not that I was looking for a thank you kiss or anything," suggested Susan.

"What?" The mermaid looked over at the girl. "She's the one who killed Sparkle?"

"Yes. I took her weapon away though, so it should be fine."

"But how can she even see me? How can *you* see me?"

"As for me, that's a long story. I don't know how she can."

"I guess it must be. What are you?" She looked at the wings, and Susan realized she still had them out. She settled them again. "Someone who is trying to protect this world, but I can't protect it from itself. Apparently."

"We all can only do what we can." She turned back to the girl. "Are you all right?"

"What do you care?"

"You're obviously hurt, here," she put a hand over her heart. "It isn't just children we try to help. They just accept us easier because they don't know we shouldn't exist."

"Your kind has helped me enough, thanks," she indicated, going to climb out of the pool. "So don't do me any favors. Uhgh, bet my phone is ruined now too, thanks for that."

"You fell on your- not the point," Susan stopped herself. "Look, why do you have it in for these Zanna? There are real monsters out there if you wanted to put some of your 'talent' to good use."

"You think they aren't monsters? That lardo Sully caused the death of my sister!"

"You're Reese?" asked the mermaid.

"Oh, good, you know who I am."

"We all do. What happened with your sister, it was just an accident," she insisted. "Sully was never the same after that happened. He never visited another child again, that's how much he punished himself for what happened."

"Like I can believe that."

"It's the truth."

"Ha! The knife you stole. Give it back. It's mine." Reese planted herself in front of Susan, looking up at her.

"Not a very quick learner, are you?" she asked. "I said no the first time and I'll say it again. I'm not giving you something that has the express purpose of killing Zanna."

Resse slapped her. It didn't even sting.

"A compelling argument, to be sure. But my answer is still no. The blade is out of your reach, forever. Look, I can prove it one way or the other. And I promise you, if Reese intentionally caused your sister to die, I'll kill him myself, with that blade. You have my word."

"How are you going to prove it?"

"Take me to where she died."

The two stared at each other for a moment, and Reese relented. "Fine. My car is parked over there."

Susan nodded to the golden tailed mermaid, wondering what that tail actually felt like, how it would be to be kissed under the water by those beautiful lips- She shook herself and followed Reese.

Her wings had to be extended and moved around the seat, but she managed it and Reese drove to her old house.

"We moved after the accident," she explained, the only thing she had said along the way. "No one in my family could stand to look out in the yard after it happened."

"I understand."

Once there, Susan cast *Time Window* from writings because it was less conspicuous than replaying the entire area, and Reese got to see her sister's death from a new perspective. It truly was an accident, and Sully looked horrified after it happened, and fled the scene.

"But if he hadn't been here, it wouldn't have happened!" she insisted. "Accident or not, the fact is he was playing with her and she got killed."

"And kids drown in pools all the time, should be ban all pools? Kids drink cleaning agents, should we not wash anything? Look, you know Zanna exist, you must also know that demons and angels exist too!"

"So?"

"So that means they come from somewhere. Heaven, maybe? Don't you think you'll see your sister again?"

"I guess. But how do I know she went there?"

"Oh my goodness you're getting on my nerves. Fine!" She got her book out and started paging through it.

"What's that?"

"I'm going to prove it to you, once and for all. Ah, here it is. After a page of warnings, but whatever. Let's see..." Susan read the spell over, getting a fifteen which beat the twelve she needed to cast it. "Okay, I can cast it. Do you have a picture of your sister?"

"Sure, I always carry one," she replied, confused. She rummaged in her purse and got it out. "Great. We need twenty minutes as I'm doing it from writings. Let's go someplace we won't be disturbed."

"Okay?"

So they drove to a park while Susan looked the spell over some more, wondering if she should break into a church for some holy water. *That might mess with the blessing though, better not chance it.*

Susan spread her book out on a table that was shaded by some trees and looked fairly quiet and began to read. Magical energies sprang up around her, and for the next twenty five minutes she added magical energy and symbols to the circles around her. At the end she got a twenty eight. (She put in a lot of energy and the five extra minutes helped.)

"Summon Celestial: Audrey, sister of Reese, I petition thee to Earth. Let the road between Heaven and Earth be opened and carry you from your place in the afterlife to appear before me!"

There was a flash of light, and a small girl appeared before them.

"Oh," she said, looking around. "Now that really shouldn't be happening..."

"Audrey?"

"Yes? Who are... you seem familiar."

"Audrey, it's me. Reese. Don't you recognize me?"

"No, not really. It's been that long? Time is weird where I am. Is it really you? How did I get here? *Why am I here?*"

"I wanted to see you," Reese explained, dropping to her knees in front of her sister. "I've missed you so much." She went to hug her sister, who seemed confused.

"I.. wait, it's coming back to me now. I died, didn't I? A car hit me, I guess?"

"Yes. You remember."

"Vaguely." She looked around. "Am I alive again?"

"My magic is keeping you here," Susan explained. "You'll go back soon."

"Oh good. I don't think the angels would like it very much if they found out."

"Not to put too fine a point on it, but if they don't like it they can come see me about it.

Personally."

"Are you okay? Are you in heaven?"

"I'm fine, Reese. I suppose I must be, it's nice there."

"You mean you don't know?"

"It's not something we think about, up there. We just exist. We don't worry, or fret about the future, or get cold, or hungry. Each moment is much like the other where I am. But I'm not tortured or anything. I'm not in pain."

"Will... will I see you again?"

"That's up to you. You have to be pretty bad to not get into heaven. I mean you haven't killed anybody, have you?"

"Oh no!"

"You did?"

"Not a person! A Zanna. You know, one of the imaginary friend people?"

"Oh. I don't know. I don't make the rules, and honestly I haven't really thought about it.

No need. So I don't know."

"Then I guess I better say goodbye," she said sadly. "And just that I hope to see you again... someday."

"I hope to see you too. I'm sure if you live a good life we'll be together again."

"I know. I will." She got up. "Send her back," she said to Susan, who stopped maintaining the spell.

With her sister gone, Reese broke down, putting her head down on the table and letting tears flow. Susan closed her book and put her arm around the weeping girl, trying to comfort her.

"I screwed up everything," she sobbed finally. "I wanted revenge, but I was stupid and killed and now I know she's okay and I could have seen her again if I hadn't. What am I going to do?"

"I don't know, Reese. I don't know." Then she brightened. "But I know what might!" She opened her book again, going to the Qs that she recently had been using so much.

"Question, will the death of the Zanna Sparkle count against Reese's soul for when she is judged worthy to enter heaven upon her death?"

Susan didn't quite get the answer she expected.

Sparkle is not dead

Can't We All Just Get Along?

When: A short moment of silence later

Where: Random secluded table in a park

"So, what's the answer?" Reese asked, finally breaking the silence.

"It's odd. My magic says Sparkle isn't dead."

"He looked pretty dead the last time I saw him!"

"Me too. Either there's more to them than meets the eye, or..."

"Or?"

"Are you going to try snatching the knife away from me?"

Reese hung her head. "No. I see now that murdering them was the wrong way to go about things."

Susan judged her words and nodded, then got the knife out again. She made some *magic sense* checks on it. "I would have to do a few spells I don't know to really tell exactly how, but this knife is magical. I can feel that much at least. Magical how, I don't know. I don't get the sense of Neptune from it, that would be illusion style magic."

"Like whoever you stab just appears dead but comes back twenty four hours later or something?"

"Exactly. Or it creates wounds that actually heal or Zanna, being not strictly alive in our sense of the word can't be killed with just a few knife wounds. No matter how magical the blade. Or maybe Sparkle, my Sparkle, found some spark of life in him and put *regeneration* on him, because Zanna go into a coma like state when their lives are in danger. There's just a lot we don't know here."

"But he's not dead?" She sounded relieved.

"It appears so, according to my *question* spell.

"Oh, thank goodness!" She threw her arms around Susan, and she put the knife away and hugged her back.

"I'm glad."

"Me too." She pulled away. "Susan, whoever you are, thank you. And I'm sorry about all this. I let my hatred grow until it consumed me. I basically forced a witch to make that weapon, and almost went on a killing spree with it, just because I believed I couldn't be caught. No one else would see the bodies, right? I'm glad you stopped me."

"I am too. Don't let this experience go to waste. Keep studying, and training. There are real terrors out there, and the world needs people who aren't afraid to deal with them. There can never be enough hunters."

"I guess it's a good a field as any at the moment. I really didn't think past getting my revenge. And now that those feelings are gone, I don't know what to do with myself."

"Perhaps going to apologize to that witch?"

She laughed. "Yes, that would be a good start, wouldn't it? She'll be happy to know that blade wasn't used as I intended. God. Heaven is real, who would have thought? How do you do it?"

"Do? What?"

"You've got all this power. Wings, a book of magic that can answer questions. And you ripped that blade out of my hand. How do you not go full on crazy like I did?"

"Believe me, I've had my share of stomping all over people. But then I met the darkness inside me. It tries to serve me tea every so often, if you can believe it. By knowing it, I can be on guard against it."

She nodded, not believing it for a second. "I see. Seems I know my darkness a little better now too. But you've been a spark of light. Thanks, for everything."

"Sure thing," she replied with a grin. The area lit up a little more, like the sun breaking through clouds, and Reese felt lighter, more at peace than she had in a very long while. They said their goodbyes and Reese nearly skipped back to her car, turning and waving before she was out of sight. Susan spread her wings and took to the sky, feeling as though she had done an angel's work that day.

She had to make do with *Invisibility* until she got back to the house, which of course she had to stop and ask directions to via *question* magic. But she finally made it back and found Sparkle sitting on the front steps.

"All done?" she asked.

"Yes, it's taken care of..." Sparkle hedged, looking away.

"I can't believe it though, how did you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Make him alive again. It's wonderful! Was he not completely dead?"

"What? Who said he was alive again?"

"My magic. I asked about it for Reese, I'll tell you the whole story later. He is alive, right?"

"Oh, yeah. He, uh, just sorta came back! Weird huh?"

"It sure is. Still, this has a happy ending. I prevented more murders, the person we thought was murdered wasn't, what's not to like?"

"It was a pretty good day wasn't it?"

"You okay? You don't sound too excited about it."

"Oh, I'm fine. Just still a little shaken up, that's all. It's been a hectic morning."

"I can imagine. Now, where did the boys end up?"

In the end, Susan wrote a short note and had Sparkle deliver it to them, (shape-shifted to look like a different cat) saying the "murderer" had been dealt with and apologizing for stealing their case. She again signed it SF with wings, and Sparkle ran off after dropping it at their feet. They were confused, but Sully told them he was back in contact with Sparkle so everything had actually worked out for the best. They had questions, but he said he couldn't answer them and the confused pair went back to the base.

The boys seemed to be getting desperate in the days that followed. Cass seemed to be as good as he was now ever going to get, and Sam was having visions of a cage and Lucifer more frequently. It was with great reluctance that Dean pulled out his phone and pressed some buttons.

"All right, I've got a meeting set up," he told Sam a moment later. "Apparently he captured Rowina recently," *oops*. "and lost track of Amara. So he's ready to if not help, at least hear what we have to say."

"Who was he talking to?" asked Sparkle.

"Some guy named Crowley? Doesn't sound very biblical, if you ask me. But if they're talking about Lucifer and seeing his prison cell, he must have something to do with Hell. I guess we'll just have to find out."

And so they did. He was somewhat shorter than Sam and sported a dark, full beard and short hair. Personally, Susan didn't think he looked like much, but the others were wary around him. They had driven for hours, Susan simply sitting on top of the car surrounded by a very minor *air* nature shield so she didn't get her feathers blown about too much.

They had entered an old asylum that had been shut down, having been met by a scrawny looking guy in a suit. They threaded their way through to where the cafeteria probably had been, which had been redecorated with a throne and suitably demonic touches like dead flowers and weird paintings. And lots of candles. *What, do demons not believe in electric lights or something?*

At one end of the table was Rowina, under guard by another man in a suit, and more thick iron chains. She had on a clingy green dress that showed off her figure very well, and it was covered in an elaborate darker pattern that was shimmery. It covered her arms and went down to her ankles, but yet still showed every curve. Susan tore her eyes away. Crowley came off the throne flanked by two more men in suits, and Susan wondered where the lady demons were. He waved the guide away.

"Sam, Dean... Angel boy," he greeted them. "Figured I would hear from you sooner or later. Are you finally going to get off your butts and do something about the thing you let loose?"

"Nice to see you too, Crowley," Sam said unconvincingly.

"Let's just stick to business," suggested Cass. "I know this is uncomfortable for all of us."

"Mother, what are you doing?" Crowley said to Rowina crossly. She had been craning her neck, looking behind them like she was trying to catch something in the corner of her eye.

"Oh, nothing Fergus, just wondered if another winged creature might be accompanying you, that's all."

"I'm not really in touch with any other angels," Cass admitted, somewhat petulantly. "So for the moment, one is all you get."

"Humm... still, they do sometimes show up when you least expect them, don't they?"

"Not really, no."

"This is all very interesting," Dean lied. "Can we get down to business here?"

"Of course Dean," Crowley said smoothly. "What did you have in mind?"

"It's not me, it's what Sam has in mind," he grumped. "It's your show, you tell them."

"For some time now I think I've been getting messages from God," he began. The men in suits snorted, but Crowley silenced them with a look. "The visions relate to Lucifer, and the cage."

"Oh, I know where this is going," Rowina purred, putting her chin on her hands and leaning forward.

"So do I," agreed Crowley. "Nowhere."

"Hey, I don't like it either," admitted Dean. "But hear him out at least."

"Look, we're short on options, and power. Crowley, you had Amara here, or at least in your power. How did that work out for you?"

"She did eat most of my staff here," he admitted. "And then she walked out on me. So I suppose not well would describe it."

"And what do you think your chances against her are?"

"Not good."

"And you must realize that when she's done with us, that is to say humans, she'll come for you too. Wait, did you say she ate them?"

"Yes, sucked them right out of their meat suits. How did you think she was getting older so fast?"

"And you just let her?" demanded Dean.

"I cut her off. Eventually. That's when she walked out on me. I wanted to get her on my side."

"And she played you. Well done."

"I wouldn't put it- all right maybe I would."

"But my point stands," Sam continued. "We need to work together on this. But none of us has the power to oppose her. Not alone, anyway."

"And you think Lucifer does?"

"That's what my visions seem to indicate. I see Lucifer and God and other archangels sealing her up the first time. And he's the only one left."

"Exactly. What do you think just he's going to do about her?"

"Maybe he knows the locations of some weapons we could use. Leftovers from that time. Maybe she's weaker from being locked away all those years. I don't know. I won't until I go talk to him, that's the point."

"I'm not letting him out!" Crowley insisted. "You think I want him running around up here again?"

"Maybe we won't have to?" hedged Cass.

"Don't be an idiot," dismissed Crowley. "He's going to want something for helping us. And that's the key to his cage. We can't trade one ruthless entity for another!"

The bickering continued. Rowina, somewhat forgotten, crooked a finger back and forth as if beaconing something. Susan rolled her eyes and went over to her.

"Are you here?" she asked softly.

Susan put a hand on her shoulder and dropped *unseen*, for her only. She was now at a -2 penalty for concentrating on that, but she didn't expect to get into a fight here.

"I thought you might be."

"How've you been?"

"Miserable, if you must know. That contract I signed was the real deal! Didn't expect that, but it really does make harmful magic impossible for me to do. I was rather bitter about that for a while. I'm... better now."

"Glad to hear it. I'm the real deal all right. You people sit around this table and bicker about minor powers in the world. I could slaughter you all where you sit and you would be none the wiser about what was happening."

"Why don't you? With that kind of power couldn't you beat The Darkness alone? Why hang around here at all? Do we amuse you?"

"I don't use my power like that because that's not what it's *for*. Look, I don't know what happened in your life, how you became the person you are today. But for me, magic was always about honoring the memory and sacrifice of my father. His world was imperiled by The Darkness too, but all he could do was leave it and search for answers elsewhere. I was born, and he kept fighting. Now I've followed in his footsteps. That's where my power comes from—the love of my father, and my friends, and wanting to protect them."

"No," she shook her head. "Love is weakness."

Susan hopped up on the table next to her. "You're wrong. It's the love I have for my friends that keeps my own darkness in check." She tapped her eyes. "If I stopped loving, even for an instant, gave in to despair and that voice that whispers in my ear... I wouldn't be here trying to save all of you. I would be helping The Darkness suck this planet dry. Because it's part of me, too. It thought it could take me over, but instead I chose to fight. Across realities you would consider stories, there you will find me. Protecting life, all life. Even his." She indicated Crowley.

"Wait... the darkness, it isn't what we think it is, is it?"

"No." Susan shook her head sadly. "And the way it's been talking, it has something big planned for this world. It did something... talked to me *through time*, something it's never done before. Oh it's always been confident. Sassy. Boastful. But this time was different, somehow. You asked why I stay here? Because I need your help. Those boys know this world in a way I don't. What can kill certain types of creatures. Where to go to find sources of power that can help, like this Lucifer fellow. Usually I throw my weight around, get everyone riled up. This time I wanted to try something different. Stay in the shadows, strike only when needed. I honestly don't know which way is best."

"So why show yourself to me?"

Susan colored. "Would you believe I have a weakness for beautiful redheads?"

"Oh, is that so? But your own hair... you're remembering someone, aren't you? Honoring them, maybe?"

She looked away.

"It's true. Do... I remind you of her?"

Susan nodded. "Even down to the accent. She was a fierce warrior, and became a person like me, a walker of worlds. But you..." she trailed a hand along the chain binding Rowena's arms. "You're the only one in chains here. Because you can't be trusted? Become a person that *can* be trusted. Not because of a *contract* with me, but because you keep your word and use your powers in the right way."

"I wonder if I can," she said sadly. She looked at Susan out of the corner of her eyes. "I'll want to know *everything*. About you, The Darkness, your powers, all of it. If I'm going to fight, I want to know who I'm fighting beside."

"Want to become my acolyte?" she asked with a chuckle.

"If that's what it takes." Susan stared at her. "Look at me. I've lived for hundreds of years because of my magic. And what's it gotten me? No coven, no friends, and I sit here in chains. I held the most powerful book of magic in my hands and all it could tell me how to do was kill. To destroy. But now I'm facing the ultimate expression of that desire, aren't I? Is that

really the road I want to go down? Will it one day be a group like this one, plotting my demise because they're scared of me like we are of The Darkness? That isn't how I want it to end."

"So change."

"Yes, I think I will," she decided. She took a deep breath as if steeling herself and banged her chain on the table, causing the argument to cease around the table. "Please," she said, "can we stop fighting amongst ourselves for one *bloody* minute? We all want the same thing here. To stop the darkness. Isn't that right?" She looked each of them in the eyes, and they all dropped theirs. "We're scared, I know that. I'm scared. You, are you scared?" She looked up at the demon that was tasked with guarding her. He nodded. "He's scared. All right, fine, but let's not give in to that. We have powerful allies, *if we let them help us.*"

"But why would Lucifer help us?" Crowley asked.

"We won't know until we ask him," she said sweetly. "I say we go with Sam's plan. Go talk to the man. Angel. Whatever. At least hear what he has to say. But even before that, beyond it- know what I think? I think we're being tested."

"By God?" asked Dean.

Her eyes flicked to Susan. "Maybe. Maybe we've got everything we need, right here in this very room. All we have to do is let go of our petty concerns, our little fears, and have a little faith that the answer will show itself at the time we need it most. Maybe the reason we're here, scared and alone now, is because we don't yet *deserve* to be saved."

"Are you feeling all right mother?" asked Crowley.

"Yes. Crowley." He seemed surprised, looking at her quizzically. "Son. Don't you see? This isn't working. None of this is. Demons and souls, and angels and humans. Do you think things are going according to plan?" she asked Cass.

"I admit they could be going better," he reluctantly admitted.

"Everyone scrambling for their little piece of the pie. But the pie, it's infinite, isn't it? You only need to look up at the night sky to tell that. There's no end to what we can achieve by working together instead of against each other all the time."

"Have you been into my medicine cabinet?" Crowley asked. He turned to her guard. "Did you get her my good scotch?"

"I'm fine Fer- Crowley. But I'm tired. So tired of all of this. And maybe I'm looking for a new way, a better way. Is that so hard to believe?"

"A little. What am I saying, it's very hard to believe."

"Look, is what Sam is proposing even possible?" asked Dean. "Or are we arguing about nothing?"

Crowley sighed. "Yes, probably. There's a point above the pit where he could be brought up and possibly controlled long enough to get some answers. But you know this plan is insane, right?"

"Maybe that's just what we need right now," Sam suggested with a smile.

"Very well. You two have already nearly brought us to ruin, might as well add a little more fuel to the fire. Mother, we'll need your expertise of course."

"I'm at your disposal," she said.

"Go and prepare the way," he told the demon at her side.

"Yes sir," he replied and scurried off.

"I hate going down there, you know," he said bitterly. "The things I do for you boys."

And so the group descended into Hell. It was more a narrow path lit by torches in between two massive cliffs of stone and rolling clouds overhead than the traditionally thought of "lake of sulphur."

(Fun fact: Heaven shines "*sevenfold as the light of seven days*" meaning 49 times the solar energy that we experience here on plain old Earth. That calculates to 525 degrees C. Hell can't be more than 444.6 degrees C because there could be no lake of sulfur. Sulfur at that temperature turns into a gas. TL;dr- Heaven is actually hotter than hell. At least according to teh interwebz.)

It wasn't particularly hot, or cold, though it was quite dark. The trip took quite a while, and Susan was impressed that Cass, angelic being that he was, seemed no worse for wear. Though how one would gauge improvement or detriment might be hard to measure as he seemed so lethargic most of the time. In any case, the group finally managed to reach a large iron gate that led to an open space containing an iron cage, a dais with a table one could place say the book of the damned on, and not much else. A few torches provided light. And the lighting however briefly.

Wait, has he already escaped? Susan was somewhat concerned but the others weren't, so she stood over to the side to get a good view of the proceedings. Rowina got to work using the book which the boys had thoughtfully brought with them given the nature of the request. She started painting symbols on the bottom of the cage and explaining what was going to happen.

"I will summon him here. The wards will hold back his power and the holy fire will make sure he can't escape the area. You can then talk to him and see if you can get him to agree to help us."

"Good luck with that," Crowley encouraged somewhat unkindly.

Once the entire bottom part of the cage had been painted with symbols, Rowina started lighting candles, throwing ingredients into a bowl, and looking serious. She said a few words and the symbols started glowing, then a fire sprang from nowhere around the square perimeter of the place.

Was she just activating them, or doing magic? Though really, I only say one word for most of my stuff. Wish I could tell, but I'm stuck in powers mode for the moment or half the beings here could see me. Ah well. She activated a *time* technique, pleased with herself for remembering, so she could reset if things really went badly.

Rowina went on, chanting and igniting things in the bowl that was before her.

Is this really how cumbersome magic is around here? Seems more like simply ritual magic not the sort of stuff I do. Of course given what I've seen I already knew I had it pretty good.

The flames suddenly shot up higher, then subsided. When they did, a man stood in the cage. *Oh good, it's not a cute girl with purple skin and a tail. That would have been awkward.* He was dressed casually in modern clothes, and was clean shaven. His hair was fairly short as well, and it almost seemed his one ear that was turned towards her had two holes in the lobe. He casually leaned on the bars and greeted Crowley, who politely greeted him back.

Rowina looked tense, her mouth set in a line, as the brothers stepped up to the cage to begin presenting their case. Crowley stepped back and went behind the table.

"Thought you would be more doe eyed," he remarked.

"I've seen a taste of real power," she explained. "This man is just an imitator."

"What's gotten into you lately?"

"Not now son."

The banter went back and forth between the two parties, and by banter it was more like recriminations, posturing, false humility, and the finely tuned pitch of the used car salesman.

He wanted a body, said he needed it because he wouldn't have form if he left Hell. Cass agreed that was probably true, there wouldn't have *been* men around for him to possess at the time he was thrown into the cage. Thus it wasn't some poor person kept alive all this time they were looking at, but a toned down version of what Lucifer really was.

Sam almost seemed willing, but Dean was arguing against it.

"What did we come down here for?" Sam asked. "We need his help, and there's only one thing he could possibly want. Freedom. What did you think he was going to ask for? Internet access? I'm not happy about it but if it's the only way—"

"I'm not losing you to him!" Dean insisted.

"Can I say something?" Lucifer interrupted. "This has been a blast, but technically I've just been stalling."

"Stalling?" everyone asked at once.

They watched in horror as the fire around the cage went out, and the glowing symbols painted on the base started to fade out. Lucifer smiled, and suddenly Dean, Sam, and Cass were in the cage with him.

"Put him back!" shouted Crowley to Rowina.

"I can't," she declared, holding her head. "He made me do it. He's in my head!"

"Oh marvelous!"

He watched in mute horror as Lucifer started beating up... everybody... inside the cage. Susan had to admit for a being locked away for so long he knew how to fight. They couldn't really touch him, and seemed to be losing.

"Should we get them out of there?" Sparkle asked.

"He might just bring them back in. We need to help the person that can actually put him back for good." She started towards Rowina, who was trying (it seemed) to throw off Lucifer's influence. As she did she swapped out her *force* power out for *mind* and threw a "*Psychic Barrier*," around Rowina. She seemed to improve immediately.

"Angel?" she asked, looking around. "Was that you?"

"I'm here," Susan said, knowing she couldn't hear her. But she could *feel* her, and Susan put a hand on her shoulder.

"Okay then. Let's put him back and maybe we can start again with that in place this time, eh?"

She gave a squeeze and Rowina started mixing more ingredients.

The fight was going badly for the heroes' side, with Lucifer having moved on to Cass, punching him in the face like it was going out of style. But Rowina finished whatever it was she needed to do and clapped her hands together. There was a burst of light and the three were once again the only things in the cage.

"So how do we get out?" Sam asked, once he had recovered enough to stand up. He helped the others and they looked around, searching for a way out.

They somehow got out, wasn't important and it happened off screen or something, so we'll never know how they managed it. But there the group was again; one angel, two human males, one witch (female), and one demon. And one super hero/mage from another dimension and her cat.

"So now what?" Sam asked.

"He's not coming back up," Dean insisted. "That went about as well as I expected."

"Perhaps if our esteemed witch had done her job," Crowley started.

"Oh lay off Fer—" Rowina took a deep breath and steadied herself. "Perhaps in the confusion you missed it, but I did mention that Lucifer was in my mind? Has been for a bit actually."

"How long?"

"Does that really matter now?"

"What about now?" asked Dean.

"Not right at the moment," she assured them. "And I doubt ever again, given he had his chance and now it's gone."

"Cass, are you okay?" asked Sam, looking him over. "You took the brunt of that."

"I'm fine Sam. Thank you for asking."

"Then let's get out of here."

"I expected you to want to try again," Dean said, surprised. "This whole 'mission from God' thing you've been on."

He shook his head. "Lucifer was in my head too," he explained. "Showed me things from my past, tried to get me to say yes to him. He admitted it was him that was calling out to me, not God. Apparently The Darkness getting free weakened all kinds of seals, not just that one."

"Great! So can he get out on his own, then?"

"Sending visions is a far cry from being out, Dean."

"But with nothing better to do, he's going to just do that. How many people will he drive crazy or whatever before he's done? Can we patch the seal around his cage somehow?"

"One thing at a time, Dean," Crowley told him. "If we don't do something about the darkness, the cage will be the least of our worries."

"Let's regroup tomorrow, figure out our next move," suggested Cass.

"Fine, let's go."

Susan hesitantly dropped the barrier around Rowina, and she didn't seem to go crazy or anything so she figured it would be fine. She followed the group back up to the surface and back out through the asylum. She also canceled out the *time* technique, it looked like nobody had died so she didn't need it anymore.

"Cass, you coming?" Dean asked as they walked to the car.

"No, I need to clear my head. Being down there... I'll be along."

"Okay. Call if you need anything."

"I will."

And the boys were gone, roaring off in their muscle car.

Susan stayed back with Rowina, as she owed her an explanation. Crowley dismissed the demons and sank into a chair, shaking his head. Rowina sort of stood there, not sure what to do with herself at the moment.

"You really pulled it together back there," Crowley said to her, pouring himself a drink.

"I can't really take all the credit."

"No?"

She looked like maybe she had said too much for a moment, then rallied. "I'm sure fighting the boys and trying to get Sam to say yes at the same time divided his attention enough to let me be clearheaded long enough to finish the spell."

"Yeah, that must be it." He took a pull from the drink. "Well, sit down, don't hover over me, mother."

"What do you plan to do with me?" she asked as she sat.

"Oh, I wouldn't worry too much about your future," said a new voice. Everyone looked over at Cass, who wasn't standing like Cass usually did. His voice sounded different too. "You don't really have much of one."

"What are you talking about, angel?" he demanded, setting his drink down and standing up.

"Oh, sit down," he said, gesturing. Crowley sank back into his chair, quite beyond his will by the look of him.

"What the- oh no."

"Oh yes!" Cass said brightly. "Guess who got a yes at the last second?"

"That's... that's wonderful news!" Crowley blurted. "Congratulations!"

"We're going to have to work on that," Cass tisked. "I wasn't convinced at all. But right now, my business is with her."

"Mmmme?" stammered Rowina.

"Yes," he agreed. "You somehow got free of my control, didn't you? And nearly put me back there. You could maybe still put me back there, somehow."

"Don't you dare lay a finger on me," she said, suddenly confident and standing before him.

“What’s this? You think you can do anything to *me*?”

“I can’t, no. But I’m protected. By something even grander than you.”

Cass’ face contorted in rage. “There is nothing as grand as me. Nothing as splendid, nothing as perfect.”

He was advancing on her, and Susan had been trying to get closer, but she found she couldn’t. Power was physically radiating from Cass now, and she seemed stuck. Her magically enhanced body seeming do to her no good as she tried to push against something and make progress.

What’s he doing? Susan desperately made a *power sense* check and sensed something.

Time.

She hastily swapped out a power for *Immunity: Time* as Lucifer grabbed Rowina’s neck. “Where is your so called protection now?” he asked, snapping it like a twig.

Susan’s anger flared white hot, and as her limp body started to fall he looked around, wondering why the room was suddenly becoming brighter.

“Dad?” he asked, unbelieving.

Twenty energy, right now.

It’s yours. Show this bozo what real power is.

With pleasure.

Susan simply stepped up behind him and, spending all the energy of her own that she could, plus twenty more *Darkness Energy*, made a fist and slammed it into the side of his head. Backhand. She did an amount of damage that was literally off the chart (found on page 57) which we’re rounding to 14d10. This worked out to be 81 damage to his head.

He made a STStrength check to not go flying, and to be fair to him (he is Lucifer, after all) we’ll give him a STStrength of 20 and 30 energy to spend. He managed a 72.

Thus he went flying. There were multiple crashes as he went through the wall and probably the next one too, given by how much he had failed his check by.

Oh, that guy looks like he just got run over by a freight train!

Not now.

Susan wasted no time, yanking the knife and holding it to Rowina, who recovered immediately.

Crowley gaped at Rowina as Susan (who was still *unseen* by him don’t forget) helped her to get up.

“What just happened?” he managed.

“I told you. I’m protected. Thank you,” she said sincerely. “More for avenging me than the healing, I would have been fine in a moment. But I appreciate the thought.”

“Are you thanking me? I didn’t do that. I couldn’t do any of that! I couldn’t move at all, actually, how in the Hell-”

“I wasn’t talking to you,” she snapped.

“Who else is here?” he yelled, looking around.

“I’m still here,” said an unsteady voice. A hand appeared through the hole in the wall and Cass’ bloody face swam into view. “You hurt me somehow.”

Oh crap! Who is this guy, Doomsday?

“How did you do that?”

“Haven’t you ever heard of a guardian angel?” Rowina asked sweetly. “Now run along before she gets really angry.”

She’s putting a lot of faith in me. It’s not undeserved, but still. Or is it just bluster to make him think twice about trying again?

“This isn’t over,” Lucifer promised. “When I’m healed I will find you, and I will make you pay for this humiliation.”

And he was gone.

Susan waited a moment, just to make sure he wasn't planning a surprise attack, but it seemed he was going to nurse his wounds. *I don't understand how he's still alive, anyway. I did massive damage to him. Oh well. Thanks for the energy.*

No problem. You're finally up on points again.

Yes, I know the cost.

Aren't you going after him? You should finish him off while he's still weak.

But we do need him. Maybe this will shake his confidence a bit, make him a bit more willing to play ball. I can always smack him again if he doesn't get the message.

True, and forty points is halfway to your 'danger point' as you called it. I'm more than happy to help you get there.

Yes, I'm sure that wouldn't be any burden for you.

Rowina sank into a nearby chair. "I don't suppose you could pour your mother a drop of that?" she asked, pointing to the decanter.

Suddenly, other demons showed up, armed with strange knives. "My lord, is everything all right?" one asked.

"Oh, just peachy," Crowley snarled. "Thanks for running to my aid *before* Lucifer was frightened off."

"Lucifer?" The demon paled, looking through the hole in the wall. "My lord, did you do that?"

"What do you think, lackey? Now get someone to fix that hole!"

"Of course, my lord!" he said, looking fearful. They moved again.

He shook his head and went to pour another drink, this time for both himself and his mother.

"What are you going to do?" asked Sparkle.

"I don't know. I can't be in both places at once. But I now have two separate groups to protect. Maybe I should go after him, come to think about it."

"Are you going to tell Rowina about the real Darkness?"

She nodded. "I said I would. So much for sneaking around."

"You can still do that. Dean and Sam don't know about you, maybe we can keep it that way."

"I guess we'll see."

Susan made her way to behind Rowina's chair and waited until Crowley was bringing the glass to his lips before turning off her *unseen* for everybody. "Hey."

He jumped and sloshed it all over himself, and Susan couldn't help laughing.

"Really?" asked Sparkle, disapprovingly, as she jumped up on the table.

"Don't do that!" Crowley snapped, looking over at her. "Wait a second, you're not one of mine."

"One of your what?" Susan asked.

"What do you think?" His eyes went as black as hers. *Oh, that explains a few things.*

"Honestly, this day keeps getting better and better. What do you want?" His eyes went back to normal.

Rowina looked up at her, then at her son. "One would think you would be a bit nicer to the person who did that," she suggested, pointing to the hole.

"What?" He fumbled the glass and dropped it, so it smashed to the ground.

Susan *tisk*ed and held a hand out, using a minor *time* technique to rewind time and repair it.

"How did you do that?" he asked. "Who are you? Did you really throw Lucifer like that or was it some kind of trick?"

"This is my guardian angel," Rowina told him. "But I don't actually know her name or I would introduce you."

"Wait, this? Her? How is she an angel?" Susan flicked her wings out. "Oh. But your eyes... This makes no sense. And that still doesn't explain how she threw Lucifer across the room! He's supposed to be the first and most powerful angel."

“Eh, I took him by surprise,” she allowed. “And I only felt that *time* ability of his when he was using it. His abilities are supernatural in nature, I have no way to feel them out like I can with powers. So if it was a straight up fight, I don’t know who would win.”

“You tossed him like he was a rag doll!”

“But he got back up, didn’t he?”

“True. But none of this answers my question!”

Susan held up a hand. “Peace. I owe your daughter an explanation too. It’s time you learned who you’re really fighting here. And what losing means for you, and this entire reality.”

So she told them.

Finally Putting Her Talents To Use

When: Twenty minutes later

Where: Crowley's base of operations (more specifically the dining area)

Naturally the pair was skeptical as Susan sat and told them what was really going on with their world, but Susan offered to smack Crowley in the head as further proof and he politely declined.

"Say for the moment I believe this story," he mused. "Why reveal yourself to us?"

"I was thinking about that, actually, while I was talking," Susan replied. "And I think I may know the answer." She paused. "You're the ones with the power."

"I can't fault you there in a certain sense," he agreed. "But Amara walked out of here and there was nothing I could do to stop her. What makes you think I or any demon-

"Or any witch," put in Rowina.

"Yes, mother, or any witch, can do about it?"

"Alone? Probably nothing. But if you've spent time with her you should know a little what she's capable of. And what she might be weak to. We have the time, start consolidating power while you can. What sort of weapons can you bring to bear? Can witches enchant them to be better?"

"Aye, we can."

"There you go. You have contacts in this world, use them. Spread the word about what you're facing and start getting people to think about what they can do to help. Who knows what secret treasures are scattered about the world, ready to be unleashed? Heck, maybe some were put here for us to find in case this very thing happened. We just have to look for them!"

"I've been around a long time," Crowley told her. "Not much like that left that will fit the bill."

"That's why you have to work together. To compensate, and use what power or abilities you do have. How many witches are on Earth? How many demons? How many other creatures we could convince to help us?"

"Ha! Us? Not many. We're the bad guys around here, remember? In fact, are you sure you want to be working with demons?"

Susan shrugged. "If angels like Cass want to show up and be some use to me, I'll take the help. But right now you're the ones here on Earth, and so have the most to lose in the short term. I won't say I'm thrilled by it, but you have your purpose here and you're carrying it out. Besides, your main goal is soul collection, right?"

"That's right."

"Well, wicked souls need someplace to go. Seems to me that around here, the rules were made pretty plain. You go around pledging your soul to a demon or whatever, you deserve what you get. I mean how stupid to do you have to be to have a demon walk up to you, offer a few years of the high life on Earth but you forgo an eternity in heaven? It's simple math."

"You'd be surprised."

"Maybe. Point is, if you want to help save your own existence, and I figure you do, the smart thing is to help me. Hopefully the angels will see that on their own and come to help at some point."

"Don't count on it."

"We'll see. If they haven't made contact with me in a few days we can always go see them directly. For now, do I have your support?"

"Seems I have no choice. You did keep me from becoming Lucifer's plaything and taking over my kingdom." He grumbled "and saved my mother."

"What was that?"

"Nothing. I'll see what we can dig up."

"Don't be coy! Isn't there supposed to be a big war between angels and demons once God has enough of the place and hits the start button so he can then shut down the world? You're going to sit there and tell me you haven't been stockpiling stuff for that?"

"I said I'll see."

"Very well. As far as witches go, how many can I count on?"

"Uh, apart from me?"

"Yes..." she answered hesitantly.

"None?"

"Wonderful."

"I'll put out some feelers. Maybe get back in touch with any old coven members. Who are still alive. Perhaps if I debase myself they'll agree to help. I've..." she looked down in shame, "burned my share of bridges over the years. Quest for power and all that."

"I can come, maybe help convince them."

"Would you? Oh that would be wonderful."

"And what else are you contributing to this little party?" Crowley wanted to know.

Susan looked pointedly at the hole in the wall and back to him. "You really have to ask?"

"I just hate to think I'm going to be doing all the work around here."

"What? You're a king aren't you? Delegate. But honestly, if you can get me the ingredients and some weapons, I can help with enchanting them. And no offense but I can probably do it faster and better than witches here can."

"Like what?"

"Make armor or shields unbreakable, weapons able to cut anything? How about a knife that sets the target on fire, or a shield that reflects magic back onto the caster? Armor that can turn you into wind, or a ring that can call forth a squad of magical warriors?" She held her own ring of *legion*.

"All intriguing possibilities to be sure," he agreed. "But what if Lucifer comes back?"

"Now that's a problem," she admitted. "With your permission, I'll put a spell on you, both of you. I'll have to do it to Sam and Dean too later tonight. Basically it'll alert me if you are ever in danger. That way I won't have to be by your side 24/7, or hang out with them at the base. Don't get me wrong, I love the fact they are out there fighting the good fight. But they're awfully lazy the rest of the time, and they have no real allies, and no real power to speak of. That they're alive at all at this point is a minor miracle." *Probably due to the ratings or whatever... I mean their personal spirit.*

"Believe me, I know. Can you beat him is what I'm asking. Like you said, he got up after that hit."

"I don't want to kill him. Not yet. For one thing I can probably save Cass, I know a spell to force out someone possessing a body. I'm hoping he'll come to our side. Maybe being free he'll track down The Darkness and see what he's up against, and come asking for help."

"Lucifer? Ask for help? You're delusional."

"Maybe. But that's how it is. If he comes back and doesn't want to play ball, I'll deal with him. One way or the other." *I do have a plan to make him more useful, if he wants to or not.* "When he went after Rowina I sort of lost it a little, I wasn't thinking clearly when I hit him. I'd deal with him differently in the future."

"I see." He stood up. "Cast your spell and I'll see what I can start digging up. With Lucifer out, and you can be Amara knows it, she may accelerate her plans."

So Susan got out her book and read over the spell. "Crap," she spat. "It's maintained. Of course it is. Why wouldn't it be? Why would I ever want a spell to permanently know if someone was in danger?"

"It seems like you would want that," Rowina suggested.

"No kidding. It's only grade three, it could be scaled up. It's just a bother about the delay." She closed her book. "Dad, I want you to scale up *Danger Watch* okay? Make a permanent version." *And then when you go back to your world and you can ask the people that gave you the "ultimate book of magical knowledge" why there are so few permanent spells.*

Probably to make you waste XP turning maintained ones into permanent ones. You can do that, you know, apart from imbuing.

Yeah, Sparkle did it with that magical acceleration spell of hers.

Oh yeah! Silly of me to forget.

The book sat there and did nothing, but Susan knew the message had been received and started to put it back.

“Did you just call that book your father?” Crowley asked.

“I did. It’s a long story.” She changed her mind and opened it again. “Look, I’ll cast this version on you both now and hang at the bunker tonight. In the morning I’ll have the permanent version and take care of casting it on the boys. Then I’ll head back here and get to work. Maybe we can start tracking down some of your old contacts then?” she asked Rowina.

“We can try,” she hedged. “History has not been kind to us witches. There are just so few of us now. But let’s come back to this book for a second. You can simply ask it for a spell and it’ll give you one?”

“Within reason. Don’t think of trying to get it away from me,” she said with a grin. “Our two types of magic will be too different. It won’t benefit you.”

“I’d like to look it over anyway. Maybe it’ll give me some ideas, and you can tell me how you came by it while I do.”

“Sure, no harm in that. I’ll just have to remind you how much it would cause me harm if you didn’t give it back to me.”

“I wouldn’t steal it!”

Susan stared into her eyes for a moment. “I believe you.”

So Susan read the spell over with intent to cast, making the checks to cast it from writings. Crowley happened to have the eye of a bird of prey and so she used it for the bonus and Rowina looked amazed as the magical energies swirled around them.

“Now that’s real magic,” she breathed as the energies faded. “Throwing things into a bowl and dripping blood on them? That’s third rate ‘magic’ at best, now that I’ve seen the real thing.”

“Yes, in my travels I haven’t really found a magic to equal mine. Twilight Sparkle probably would come close, with what I saw her doing to rebuild Ponyville. But she never shows off like I do so I don’t really know what she can do or how strong her magic really is.”

“Who? And why does that name sound vaguely familiar?”

Susan waved it off. “Never mind.”

After that Susan went back to the bunker, relying on magical *unseen* by Sparkle to stay out of the way. She read over *tireless*, having asked the magic to stick around until she was back at the “palace.” *Coming here and back, that’s a scene right?*

She stayed up to maintain the magic but Sparkle snoozed (as was her right and privilege as a cat) and in the morning she went back to see Crowley. Naturally she had put the new permanent version of the spell on the boys and was ready to get to work.

Crowley had found a few things so Susan put her cheating hat on and with the help of Sparkle did the usual *energetic accumulation, augment skill* combo. She was happy to improve armor or weapons for the owner, but any *imbuing* she did used the hated “charge” mechanism instead of being permanent. She was quite clear about that aspect, and of course Crowley tried to talk her out of it. She would have none of it, not about to let a bunch of infinite use magical items out into the world. Especially not in the hands of demons.

That took a few days, as even cheating by getting her energy back with powers, the items had to be cleaned, in some cases repaired, and then the owner had to choose what they wanted put into the thing. Naturally she didn’t put the same thing into more than one weapon, saying that it was better to try all elements in case she turned out to be weak to something than everybody having fire swords she turned out to be immune to.

The place was now a hotbed of activity, with demons training, gathering ingredients for their own magical purposes, bringing souls up from Hell, and more. Crowley, it seemed, could be a natural leader when it suited him, and more than one demon had cornered her and thanked her for giving them something *to do*. And for bringing back a Crowley that actually seemed to care about something. *Anything*. (Apart from Dean, who he apparently had a ‘fling’

with one summer) Susan wasn't sure how to take all that, but said it was her pleasure. *Is he gay? Wouldn't have pegged Dean to be, but why not?*

Susan wondered what the point of all the souls was, but Crowley was happy to explain.

"These are the 'weapons' you spoke of earlier. Souls are just power in this form. I could use them to put more oomph into something. But they're not something you can just carry around."

"And as a last resort I could make them into a bomb," explained Rowina. "It would kill the person carrying them of course, but I could do it."

"Great. Let's leave that as a real last resort."

For her part, Rowina was interested in the process of *fabrication* and *imbuing*, and of course looked over Susan's shoulder as she paged through the book and offered suggestions for spells to put into weapons or armor.

"And I thought the Book of the Damned was potent," she said at the end of a few days. "This really puts my book to shame."

"So start your own," Susan suggested. "For the right reasons this time. To share with others, and keep magical knowledge from being lost."

"We tried that," she insisted. "The men of letters had a few things to say about that, let me tell you."

"Perhaps because it was full of 'turn people inside out' magic instead of 'here's how to heal a broken bone' type of magic. Would they have been threatened by a book full of healing spells? Spells to find things? To protect houses from fire? To take some frog's legs and eyes of a newt, and conjure up a potion to get someone's face back? Or perhaps make them one mere ounce less pathetic than they truly are?!"

"Uh, what was that last one?"

"Er, I'm not sure. Something about thumbs, I think? In space?"

"She sometimes says things like that, ignore it. Consequence of having a little Darkness inside her."

"Oh."

"The point is, try to see how much good you can do in the world instead of how much personal power you can achieve and yes Sparkle I see you looking at me like that. You know all of this wasn't completely my doing."

"I know," she sighed. "But she has a point. Though she's reverted back to her preachy self for the moment, there's a lot you can do with magic. Any fool with a gun can destroy."

Crowley said he couldn't get his hands on much else at the moment so Susan decided it was time to go see the other guys.

"You mean Heaven?" he asked, looking doubtful.

"I'm sure they're reasonable beings," Susan explained. "And we'll need their help too. They were the ones that sealed her up in the first place, right?"

"Exactly, but most of the ones that did that are dead now. What are a bunch of lesser angels going to do for us?"

"We won't know until we ask, right? And I won't offer demons the chance to use my 'services' and ignore other potential allies. That would be dumb."

"Have fun, let me know when you get back."

"Actually, I was hoping you would come with me. Both you and Rowina."

"Are you crazy?"

"No. I just want to show a unified front in all this. We all put our cards on the table and agree to stop any fighting between us until this situation is resolved. Having both you and Rowina with me shows you're dedicated to doing this and may sway them. You never know."

He thought about it for a bit. "I'm bringing some of the stuff you made."

"Good idea!" she praised. "Let them see what I can offer them."

"I meant for my own protection," he grumbled.

"I know what you meant. I was choosing to see it in a more positive light."

"Very funny. Let me go get ready."

Susan reviewed the *dimension gate* spell while he did.

"You can really get us to Heaven?" Rowina asked, thus far not committing to go.

"Would I have offered if I couldn't?"

"It's just so farfetched, but I suppose you're right. You really are shaking things up here, aren't you?"

"Something I was trying to avoid," she promised. "But seeing what The Darkness is up to here, I have no choice. Maybe the next one..."

"Or the one after that," added Sparkle.

"Or the one after that," Susan added.

"Or the one after that," Sparkle said, resigned.

"Yeah."

With the two ready, Susan opened the portal and found herself in a very strange place.

"It's a hallway with an infinite series of doors?"

The hallway was done in white, the doors were white and had what looked like nameplates on them. Light permeated the air without any visible source, and even the carpet was a white shag. *They really like white up here, huh? What, were other colors not invented when this place was made? How can there be so many different shades of white? I suppose if there are fifty shades of gray-*

"There looks to be side passages there too," Rowina told them, looking down one way. "So it's not just doors."

"Not what I expected. One way is as good as another, may as well."

"Are you glowing?" Crowley asked her.

"What?" Susan looked down at herself and found she was faintly glowing, at least part of her was. "Now what in the world..." She spun around and found the glow stayed where it was, simply traveling around her body as she turned. She held a hand out and in that one direction it got brighter than in other directions.

"What's that all about?"

"Not sure. Must be a side effect of whatever the Lucifers in the last reality did to me. No relation," she assured them. "Come on."

They followed Susan's glow which led them to a meeting room of some kind, where it looked like regular looking people in nice clothes were arguing about something. There were men and women, all seemingly different ages. They had different skin tones, and were as diverse as humans. *Weird. These are angels?* They stopped and turned when they saw who it was.

"Greetings," Susan said formally. "I guess now we know what the glow was about, the nearest concentration of... you are angels, are you not?"

"Yes?" said one man who was standing behind the table that was in the center of the room. The room itself was basically white walls with rectangular sections cut out that let light into the room. The tables looked to be white marble, the floors were white- it's a sort of theme is what I'm getting at. The suits the people/angels were wearing predominantly were gray, and there was very little color to be seen.

"Weird. Where are your... these?" She stuck one wing out and they looked at her, the wing, Crowley, Rowina, back to her.

"How did demons get here?" he asked, face hardening. From his sleeve dropped a strange silver knife, which he gripped tightly.

"Oh, don't even bother," she chided him. "I threw Lucifer across a room with one punch, you're not going to do anything to me. And for the record, it's one demon, one native magic user, one extra-dimensional cat, and one extra-dimensional girl." She pointed to everyone as she said this. "And by what power? Mine."

"Impossible!" he claimed. "You, go check the heaven portal. I don't know how they found it but we better move it again."

"Really," she said as the woman got up. "I got here under my own power. I'm here to offer you my assistance against The Darkness. We all are." She put her wing back and indicated the others. "Put that tiny thing away and work with me. I can make you some real weapons, and together we can save your entire reality. What do you say, are you with me?"

Everybody started talking at once.

The pandemonium continued a moment longer, with the angels present all trying to talk at once. Finally the one that had stood up earlier banged the hilt of his knife on the table and called out for silence. They sullenly complied.

"I believe the general sentiment here," he indicated the room, "is that you claim to be able to do what all the forces of Heaven cannot?"

"I do claim that," she agreed. "And why not? You thought a human like me couldn't get into Heaven, but here I am."

A woman at the corner of the table looked her up and down. "No way are you human."

"Human-ish, then. The point is, I'm uniting every powerful race on Earth against The Darkness and figured I would give you a chance to get in on the action."

"I'm going to have to see evidence that you're more powerful than Heaven's spirit cannon before I do anything with you," said another at the other end of the table.

"Spirit cannon?" Susan looked to Crowley.

"Basically, a high energy beam that seems to come from the sky. God used to use it to smite cities and whatnot. Are you saying you actually dusted off that old thing? Surprised it still fired, honestly."

"We did-"

"Don't tell them anything!" said another. "That's the king of Hell there!"

"Is it?" asked another.

"Can't be."

"I'm telling you it is."

"Is that really what he looks like?"

"I thought he was taller?"

"Enough!" shouted the one, banging his knife again. "Look, who do you all claim to be anyway?"

"Claim? I am Susan Felton, wanderer of worlds and protector of the Great Tree of Existence."

"I am the king of Hell," announced Crowley.

"Told you,"

"Quiet! You?"

"Rowina, a simple witch."

"Rowina? I've heard of you. You've sent many up here in your time if I recall correctly."

"That was true in the past, but it's not who I am anymore."

"Ha!"

"It's true."

"I doubt it. But it's good you're with the king of Hell, as that's who you'll be spending time with when you die."

"Really?" asked Susan. "Because I thought a person was judged at the end of their days. And I doubt Rowina is planning on dying anytime soon. Or are you presuming to judge her right now?"

"Yeah, she's got a point," said one angel.

"Oh, be quiet. You always go against me, it's no surprise *you* would say that."

"Not always."

"You just did it again!"

"I did not!"

"Aarg! Not the time. And if I'm understanding this correctly you're here to ask us to work alongside demons and humans to deal with The Darkness."

"Correct! Stand together in this, your darkest hour. Or not, and know you did nothing to save the world. Or worse, watch us lose and know you might have helped and live a few days more knowing The Darkness is coming for you. So what's your answer?"

"Forget it. Do you mind letting us get back to our meeting now?"

"That's it? He speaks for all of you?" Susan's gaze swept over the assembled angels.

"Unlike humans, we have a clearly defined hierarchy of rank," he said smugly. "Right now, I'm highest so what I say goes."

"Isn't that just a way of insultingly saying the rest of you are unable able to think for yourselves?" Susan asked the group.

"But we tried the spirit cannon," insisted a female looking angel. "What more can we do than that?"

"I don't know. All you found was one thing that didn't work. Is that really the extent of your will? Your desire to protect the souls in your care?"

"Will?" snorted Crowley. "Angels weren't created with willpower. They were made to do one thing only- what their father told them to. I mean look at them, with God gone they're barely keeping it together up here." He ran a finger over the table as if he was checking for dust, and rubbed it with a thumb distastefully.

The angels avoided Susan's gaze, leading her to believe he was right. *Shoot, how can I get them on my side? With the ponies it was easy, I knew them and knew how to talk to them to make them feel comfortable and accept me. But a room full of angels is a different thing.*

"We sent a couple of angels down too," the one still holding the knife told him. "She killed them without even half trying."

"You sent 'a couple' of angels?" Susan asked, not believing this. "I'm talking about a major strike force here. We're at war! In a war you don't send a couple of grunts and then surrender when they get run over by a tank. You send a greater number of tanks than the enemy is supposed to have. And you don't stop sending tanks until you're out of resources to make more tanks."

"We can't make more angels."

"So stop losing them by joining together with us. If everybody hits her at once I think even she'll be hard pressed to shake that off."

"We could stab her in the back from behind," suggested one. "One of us is bound to get through any protections she has, right?"

"It's not going to happen," said the head angel. "We are setting up our defenses here and that's that. Don't make me ask you to leave again."

Or you'll what, threaten me with your tiny knife? Please.

"And all of you think that way?" Susan asked. "None of you will stand with me and actually have a chance at protecting this place? Because if we fall, there really will be nothing standing in her way."

"I'll come with you," said one, standing up. It was the one that had spoken out against the leader. "As will I," said another, a female angel. "I might," ventured a third, "but you'll have to prove to me you have a plan, and the power to actually pull this off."

"Gladly," Susan promised him. "As for the rest of you, think about what I'm offering and spread the word. I don't know when our attack will begin, but I'll take all the help I can get. But the sooner you come see me, the sooner I can make you some weapons that actually have a chance of working. I've beaten this force of evil many times, and I'll do it again here."

"I hope you're right, for your sake."

The three angels left with Susan and the others, walking back to where they had come in before so Susan could deposit them back to the same place with *dimension gate*. The angels seemed interested in the magic, and once back at Crowley's place she defended herself against all three, proving she knew how to fight. Crowley ordered his demons not to give them too much grief, and she showed them the weapons and armor she had been making them. They gladly accepted some better equipment than their tiny knives, they didn't even wear armor. Susan was interested in them, (as a collector of interesting items from across realities) as they were an odd design with no real guard or edge. It was obviously a thrusting weapon, extremely simple in design. It was made from a solid piece of metal, (probably silver) with an unadorned handle that flared out at the top and held the blade part. This was a triangular affair that tapered into an almost needle like point. The one woman

angel traded hers for a sword Susan made that was much longer, DTR/OTR 10 and had a very strong casting of *damage reflection* put onto it.

Meanwhile, Rowina had convinced some witches to show up and they arrived, and Susan made her pitch to them. They didn't believe Rowina couldn't cause harm with magic anymore, but she allowed herself to be compelled by magic. Susan was cautious about mixing the two magics, but the witch agreed to stop the spell if it looked like it was going wrong. Susan allowed herself to be "attacked" by Rowina who of course could not be made to harm her.

This convinced the others and while they weren't exactly thrilled to be working with her, she still knew a lot about magic, could read the Book of the Damned, and was really their best chance at coming out of all this alive.

During all this Susan had gotten a warning that the boys were in danger and rushed over there. They were fighting some weird floating woman and Dean was bashing his head on the wall saying "get her out of my head." She seemed to be screaming though Susan couldn't hear anything, so she just put a *sound* canceling effect on the area and Dean stopped bashing his head against the wall. *Guess that was the right choice. Would have been mind next but guess that's not needed.* By holding her arms (*unseen* of course) she couldn't attack, and the boys quickly finished her off with some blades that glittered gold.

She also healed a deaf lady working there, figuring why not, and then hit everybody in the place (it was a retirement home) for good measure. With the healing knife, not her fists. Why would you even think that? What kind of monster are you?

It was a few days later that she got another hit from her spell, and again went to the boy's rescue. She found them fighting a man and a high school boy, so it was easy enough to provide them a little assistance. Apparently they were vampires, but they didn't make them like in the stories (that Dracula had been pulled from) as a somewhat cute blond girl chopped the heads off of both of them in one swing. Apiece. One swing apiece. Her face was bruised and bloody, but after taking the head off the second one she sort of looked at the boys like "see, I can do that too."

I should recruit her! I couldn't slice a man's head off without my giant's soul item going. Are these people just naturally stronger than me? But wouldn't a vampire be a little more dangerous too? Or does this world just have different rules about vulnerabilities? Like a vampire is only vulnerable to that, but in exchange it's really vulnerable to it? I wonder...

It seemed the older woman had been hit pretty badly in the leg so Susan did a quick *healing* technique to at least get her on the road to recovery a little easier. Then she got back to work at Crowley's place.

But she didn't get much done as just a day later, the boys were in trouble again. She found them in a small motel room, where a man in a business suit was being shot repeatedly by Dean.

He didn't fall down.

My goodness you've been getting into a lot of scrapes lately. Is The Darkness somehow influencing things around here? Softening people up, making the bad guys stronger so the good guys get weaker?

Dean kissed some lady that was there, which Susan thought was somewhat inappropriate given the situation, and Sam chucked a chair at the guy. He fell over and that allowed them time to rush out the door and drive away.

The man got up and before Susan's eyes turned into a woman in a black, ankle length, V neck dress. It started for the door.

So what are you then? Susan asked herself, as the bullet wounds seemed to be gone from this woman's body. Shrugging she pulled out both knives she had gotten in this dimension and shoved them into the body of the woman, driving her back from the force of the blows. But again she didn't go down.

So much for angel killing knives. Thought these things were supposed to take care of just about everything around here.

She looked around, not seeing anything of course, and shimmered, the knife wounds now going away. Then she started for the door again.

"Tenacious, isn't she?" asked Sparkle.

"Sure is. But look, it's trying to walk after them." She opened the door and looked out, then started out in a certain direction as though a moth to a light. "Not much seems to be able to teleport around here."

"Thankfully for them!"

"I guess. They could use magic though, from what Rowina was saying. Anyone can, by performing the right ritual. They could have made themselves better weapons or armor. I think they don't get any better because this is the level of thing they're used to dealing with. They think they can handle it just by shooting or knifing it. This thing proved them wrong though. Kind of stupid not to learn at least a little magic..."

"You're not letting her get away, are you?"

"What? No." Susan sped over to her, grabbing her by the neck. The woman struggled, but of course couldn't break free. "Doesn't seem that strong. Let's head back."

"Back?"

"Of course." Susan opened up a *teleportal* and dragged the woman through. "Hey Crowley!" she called, dropping her *unseen* for everyone. "You!" She pointed to a demon that was walking past. "Go find me the king, uh huh!"

"The king is out," he said. "Are you bringing him a sacrifice or something?"

"This is some weird unkillable shapeshifter lady," Susan explained. The woman was now shouting to let go, and trying to wiggle away from Susan's grasp. "Thought maybe a demon could take over the body, get that power for themselves. At the very least I want it locked up. You have a dungeon around here, right?"

"Prisoner storage is this way, follow me please."

Susan secured the woman, who was still whining about being let go so she could go kill that man she had kissed.

"Uh, no?" Susan told her. "You're staying right here."

"But that is my task!"

"Don't care."

"But my master-"

"Oh, now what?" Susan looked over as she had just gotten an image of Sam in danger. Again. *How in the heck did these two not die before I started hanging around? Do they just always escape death at the last second?* "Hang on." She shifted her *teleportal* power for *telesummon* and held a hand out. Into the cell popped a woman a bit older looking than Rowina, with short dark hair and a light purple eye shadow. "Hello!" she called, grabbing the woman and slamming her into the cell wall next to the other woman. The demon helping her looked rather surprised, looking around as if wondering what the heck was going on. The woman's eyes were wide with fear, and darted this way and that around the cell.

"Where am I? What's going on?"

Better take precautions, she thought. This person was threatening Sam somehow after all. But she's not holding a weapon. Is this the "master" this shape-shifter was talking about? "Negation," she said, using her right hand to touch the *materia* that would keep all magic but hers in check. "No, no," she said to the demon that was standing there. "You don't have to help me chain her up or anything. I'll just do everything myself."

"Oh, of course, sorry."

"Get your hands off me! *Back!*" shouted the witch, but Susan wasn't impressed. She was impressed as the Demon started putting the cuffs on her that the other woman screamed and suddenly imploded in a puff of smoke and a small burst of light.

"That was different," Susan remarked, wondering if the woman had just *teleported* somehow, and braced herself for another round of one of the boys being in danger. It didn't come, and the Demon helped put the second cuff on the witch's other hand. She was somewhat incoherent, screaming what were probably cures or spells or simply insults but of course they had no power here. Susan was just standing there, watching her with her arms crossed over her chest. Finally she calmed down.

“Where am I?” she demanded to know, in a demanding tone of voice. “I demand to know!”

“In the lair of the king of Hell,” Susan informed her. “This is a demon.” She indicated the man beside her, and he flicked his eyes to being as black as hers and then back again. “Could you do Moore’s code with those eyes?” she asked him, curious.

“Do what?”

“Never mind. Now, you were threatening the lives of some friends of mine, and they only go after people making trouble for others. So here’s the deal. I’m going to give you a choice. You can stay here and entertain the king of Hell, see what little games he might want to play with you, or, and let me be clear here that this is my preferred option, you can join me. I’m gathering forces to take on The Darkness, and you can be part of that. If you hadn’t heard, she wants to destroy your world. She’s evil like that. You’ll have to sign a minor *contract* saying you won’t cause people harm with your magic anymore, but I think that’s a small price to pay.”

“I’ll escape from here somehow!”

“Er, no, you won’t. I will either open a doorway to Hell and shove you through or you will sign my *contract*. It’s as simple as that. I suggest signing. I need all the help I can get saving your entire world from being consumed, so I don’t want to waste resources. That means you. I’ve got other witches here, you won’t be lonely.”

“I would do what she says,” said Crowley, coming in from behind. “She turned my mother into a kitten, so she means business. Not literally a kitten, that would just be a shape-shift spell any witch could- you know what I mean. She’s more a demon than I am.”

“I am not.”

“No?”

“I’m a bomb squad. I defuse dangerous people like this and turn them into forces of good, instead.”

“You’re taking away someone’s free will. Even God wouldn’t do that.”

“She gets a resistance check against the spell if she isn’t signing of her own free will. The contract is just for my peace of mind.”

“Keep telling yourself that.”

“Whose side are you on, anyway? And FYI; I already have my own personal Darkness, I don’t need your input.”

He raised his hands in surrender. “Force of habit. Anyway, which is it going to be, doll? You and me for an eternity in Hell, or helping to save the entire freaking world? Imagine it, the king of Hell, a true hero!”

“Does someone have a pen?” she asked quietly.

Susan smiled.

And so another witch was added to the ranks, and of course she knew another couple of witches and soon Susan had tracked them down and made them the offer of helping to save their world in exchange for joining her growing “coven.” They too joined, and Rowina was practically glowing now as she had *underlings*.

“Do you have to call them that?” Susan asked with a bit of concern.

“What would you call them? I’m senior witch, aren’t I?”

“I suppose. Is the data I gave you coming in handy?”

Rowina nodded. “I can’t believe it. All the spells the men of letters stole from us, now back and in digital form. You’re sure they didn’t notice it was gone that one night?”

“They were asleep, don’t worry. And it was given to me, I’m just letting them borrow it. I could rightly take it back at any time. Teach them to make backups, no matter how much storage it takes. Just make sure that you destroy the ones that can do the most harm. After we use them on The Darkness.”

“I don’t need them,” she insisted. Then she grinned. “This darkness will either kill us, or be the cause of a new age of learning and sharing for us witches.” Her face fell. “Sort of ironic that’s what it took. What was I doing with my life before this?”

The next day, Susan was unsurprised to get another image of Sam in danger, and her blood ran cold. It was Lucifer, and he had Sam backed up against a wall and was holding him there. She swiftly changed powers and called Sparkle to her, wanting her as an energy source for what she was about to do.

“Lucifer is back, and about to harm Sam,” she told her. “We’re going.”

“Are you fighting him?”

“No, I’m making him more useful to us. Just come on!”

“Okay.”

The two synchronized, and Susan *teleported* to the base. Lucifer was sticking his hand inside Sam and Susan wasted no time. She put her hand on his back and he sort of turned.

“Is someone there?”

You’ve been given a few days to think about things, and you’re here threatening Sam? Forget you then, you can’t be trusted. So you’re going down.

She gathered energy for a single action and put that power and whatever Sparkle could feed her into “*Orb Seal*.”

Susan got a 72 on the check, but Lucifer, realizing something was going on, made his RESolve check to try and will it away. As one does. So Susan simply declared the use of card number 7, *success*, and Lucifer cried out in anguish as he was crushed down to the size of a large marble. Sam fell to the ground with the orb plinking down next to him, dazed but hopefully unhurt. Susan picked it up so he didn’t actually brush against it before he was ready, and Sam looked around in confusion.

“Now what?” Sparkle asked. “Kind of hard to explain that one with just a note delivered by a cat.”

Susan shook her head. “No, it’s time to show myself to them too. May as well, we’re going to need them.” She looked the orb over. “You too, buddy! Get comfy in there.” *Wait, can he actually hear me like this?*

She dropped the *unseen* and Sam scrambled back, looking around for a weapon. “Peace, Sam,” she said, holding up the hand that didn’t have an archangel clutched in it. “I saved you from Lucifer, and it’s time you were brought into the fold, so to speak. I’m Susan, Susan Felton. Ring any bells?”

“That note?” he croaked.

“That’s right. I’ve been protecting you since then. Hope that digitized lore has been helpful. Get Dean here and I’ll give you the whole story, then you can come meet everyone. I’ve been busy.”

“I can’t.”

“Why not? I’m not going to hurt you, I want The Darkness destroyed just as much as you do. You have nothing to fear from me, I swear it.”

“No, I can’t because Dean is trapped in the past now. Lucifer was my only chance to get him back.”

Susan stared at him, trying to process this new information. *In the past? What the heck were they doing there?* “Not to worry,” she assured him, holding up the orb between her finger and thumb. “You’re in luck, I’ve got just what you need right here!”

“What do you mean, you have what I need right there?” demanded Sam, rising. “Who are you, what are you doing here?”

Susan rolled her eyes. “I’m the one that’s been looking after you since you picked up the flash drive. I’m the one that delivered it. Right this minute I’m the one that saved your life when Lucifer was going to kill you. This,” she indicated the orb in her hand, “is Lucifer. We allow it to bond to someone say, oh you for instance? That person can access his powers. Thus you can go and get your brother. What made you consider *time travel* anyway? Even I don’t like to mess around with that sort of thing.”

Sam held his head. “This is crazy! Why would a demon help me like this? Who are you?”

“Demon? Oh, the eyes, right, demons have those here. No. I’m telling you, I’m your guardian angel. You hit your head or something? Look, you want answers?” She created a *teleportal* behind her. “Come with me, and you’ll get them.” She stepped through it and waited.

Sam saw it shrinking and knew he had to decide quickly. Dean was gone, Lucifer had vanished, and then this strange woman had appeared. He really had no choice.

He stepped through.

“Wait, I’ve been here before,” he said as the portal vanished.

“Welcome to the home of the resistance,” Susan welcomed him. “I’ll go get everybody together. Maybe you’ll listen to them as I don’t seem to be getting through. Have a seat. And don’t worry, you can get your brother back.”

She walked off, gathering up a few witches and demons, along with their respective leaders. When she returned she found Sam talking to one of the three angels who must have wandered in.

“Great, we can use your help too,” she told him.

“Wait, Rowina? Crowley? What’s going on here?”

“What is going on here?” asked Crowley. “Why’s Sam here, and where’s his brother?”

“Wait, brother?” Susan spun on him. “I thought they were, you know, together.”

“What?” Sam burst out. “Why do people keep trying to ship us? We’re brothers. How could you watch us like you claim and not know that?”

“You never said while I was there! How can I watch you and think otherwise- did you say ship you?”

He rolled his eyes. “Ever since Chuck started writing our story and publishing it, there’s been a lot of fanfic that puts us together. You know, together-together. Like we aren’t brothers, they either ignore it or... you know... we work through it or whatever.”

“Oh, been reading it have you?” Rowina asked with a knowing wink.

“No!”

“Hold on,” Susan stopped them. “Do you mean to tell me your *storyteller* lives here? In the same reality you do? That’s not supposed to happen, they’re supposed to be elsewhere so others can experience your story.”

Crowley snapped his fingers. “I’ve seen those! Complete garbage. Who did the writing for those books anyway?”

“Can we get back to the main issue here?” Sam pleaded. “Lucifer attacks me, suddenly he’s gone and now I’m here? Angels are working with demons? Rowina is free and wandering around but she’s still here? What’s going on?”

“Quite a lot, actually,” Crowley replied. “But what’s this about Lucifer?”

“Right here,” Susan said, holding the orb aloft again. “He won’t bother you again. Not if we do this right, anyway.”

“Do what right?”

“Bond him to Sam, like mine.” She touched the orb at her chest, which was visible as she was still in *powers mode*.

“That’s the source of your powers?” Rowina asked, her fingers curling as though she wanted to grasp it for herself. “I thought it was just a decoration.”

“No, it’s my chaos orb. It allows me to choose powers when I transform like this. The Lucifer one will allow you to choose his powers when you transform. You just have to beat him in a contest of wills when the orb bonds. Simple.”

“Contest of wills, it’s Lucifer!” Crowley almost shouted. “Sam here doesn’t stand a chance!”

Susan looked pityingly at him. “Poor soul, still don’t know what I’m capable of, do you? Why do you think I brought you all here? You’re going to help shore his will up so he can win.”

“What if I don’t want to be bonded to Lucifer,” asked Sam.

“You don’t want his powers?” Susan asked, unbelieving. “I’ve seen you get thrown around, beaten up, always in the dark- I’m offering you a chance to actually have a fighting chance now. Against The Darkness and anything you come across in the future. How would you not want that?”

“Explain this properly, would you?”

“Fine.” Susan started at the beginning, how she was from another world and had gotten hold of *metapower* with all her other abilities. With that she made an orb out of Doomsday and stopped him, and now Lucifer to stop him. She explained how she had been watching them, but had originally wanted to stay out of the way. “But small chance of that given everyone seems to be terrified of The Darkness here. I don’t know what it took over or what powers it can bring that it can’t usually access, but I’m preparing for the worst. That means doing what I can to make sure I have lots of backup this time. You can be a part of that, if you have powers. If you’re just your human self, well, I don’t think I can risk it.”

“So what happened to Cass?”

“He’s in there too, sorry to say. Couldn’t get one without the other. He should be able to help in your battle with Lucifer should you choose to bond with him. But Sam, if you don’t, choose someone else in this room to do it. We can’t just throw this power in a hole someplace. Can you trust anyone else in this room to get access to those powers?” He looked around and shook his head. “I thought so. This is the only chance you’ll have of getting your brother back, and in exchange you get access to an archangel’s powers. Is it really so bad? Plus you safeguard it, putting a being that can’t be out running around back on ice.”

“I suppose I have to. What do I have to do?”

“You just have to sit there. I’m going to cast a spell to transfer a portion of the will from every person in this room to you. Then I’ll save and hand you the orb. All goes well you beat Lucifer, cage him up inside your soul, and get access to his powers. All doesn’t go well I reload from the save, give you more willpower, and repeat until you win.”

“This is reversible, right?” asked Crowley. “I’m not giving anything up permanently?”

Susan nodded. “I’ll undo it once he’s won. He only has to make the check once.”

“How do you know?” asked Sparkle, looking up at her.

“What?”

“How do you know? Doesn’t your knowledge of powers come from The Darkness? And its withheld information before, like only taking 5 points in *Energy Well* when it later said you can put in more than that.”

“Ah. Good point.” She thought a second. “I’ll call the Hub and ask.”

“I’ll call the Hub and ask. You start reading through the spell.”

“Good call.”

And so Susan put that plan into action. She used the spell of *Attribute Transfer* that she had learned from the bloodmetal to lift a glowing portion of RESolve from each person in the room and transfer it to Sam. She was putting them on his arms, and he would have eleven symbols in all. Four demons, Crowley, four witches, Rowina, and one angel. She took more from Crowley and the Rowina, figuring they had a higher RESolve to start with. From the regular witches and demons she just took four, in case they only had five. After she did Rowina, she looked up at her.

"I'm just attracted to your power," Rowina admitted. "I was terrified of you finding out and hating me for it. You would have sent me away, because I'm such a shallow person. I'd sleep with you, if you asked, but only to see what it was like, being with someone so powerful and forceful. To feel you."

"Ah ah ah," Susan put a finger to her lips before she could say more. "Just sit quietly before you start saying other things you'll regret. You have less willpower now so every thought that pops into your head will probably want to come out." *Maybe I did take her down to zero. Ah well.*

"Okay." With less RESolve she could hardly disobey a direct order, and sat looking down at her hands.

Sam was now brimming with energy, as his RESolve was now permanently higher. He sat with a forceful expression, no longer distraught but calmly certain he could handle anything life threw at him. He was ready.

Sparkle had reported back that the Hub said yes, typically only one RESolve check ever took place with bonded individuals, unless there was some extreme circumstance later. That was good enough for Susan.

She activated *time anchor* from a *spell paper* and held the orb out. "Ready?" she asked him.

"Ready," he said, utterly sure of himself, and took it.

There was a flash of light and while Susan couldn't see his inner soul's struggle with Lucifer, she was aware of his result. 66 to 44 in his favor, which she knew because she could spend cards or XP for him to succeed. When the light faded Sam was standing there somewhat changed. He had six pairs of ghostly wings at his back, and radiated perfection and grandeur in physical form unseen upon the Earth ever before.

"Oh my," breathed Rowina. She looked back and forth between him and Susan. "It's hard for me to choose now..."

Susan rolled her eyes. "Sam? How do you feel?"

"Better than I ever have," he replied, smiling. "What was I worried about?" He touched his chest where the orb must be. "I can feel it, a part of me."

"Now and forever," Susan agreed. "Let me break that spell so everyone gets their will back, and you can go retrieve your brother."

"Agreed. You were right, Cass helped. He advised me what powers to take, counseling to not take all of them yet. He thinks once my body is used to it I can take more, but for now not to be greedy."

In other words, once you spend some XP to pay for the other powers he offers beyond the initial ones you get. Makes sense in the context of a non-Paragon. So she read over Sever Link and he purposefully failed the resistance check, so the symbols on his arms faded.

"I hope you'll forget what I said to you," Rowina pleaded, scarlet and unable to look at Susan.

"Perhaps..." Susan replied with a smile. "I reserve the right ask though..."

Rowena's red deepened.

"I still don't know how I'm going to get my brother back," Sam told Susan after they practiced about an hour in using the various powers he had gotten. "I think I'm ready to try it, but Lucifer told me the ship was warded. He wasn't lying. Cass said the same thing, they got bounced off."

"Warded against *angels*," Susan surmised. "You're still just human. It just happens that you have an angel bonded to you. An angel's power, but still human. I doubt they could have warded against that, it's an ability that comes from outside this world."

"I guess I'll just have to chance it. Wish me luck."

With a sound of distant wings, Sam was gone to get his brother and whatever object they had been after, and seconds later had returned. He had his brother and another woman who was clutching a box.

"You brought someone back with you?" she asked, not believing her eyes.

"The ship was going down. History records it and I didn't feel confident enough to change that fate. I couldn't risk bringing them all, but at least I could save her. She's a woman of letters after all. She risked her life bringing this 'hand of God' out of Germany so I couldn't just leave her there."

"That was seventy years ago!" Susan persisted. "Do you know what kind of culture shock she's going to go through?"

"Still better than death," Dean said. "Who are you again?"

"Great, now I get to tell the whole story over again," grumbled Susan. "I so need a pamphlet."

"Probably up to a booklet by now," Sparkle muttered.

So she sat the woman, named Delphine, down at the table and welcomed her into the future. She explained the current situation, both to her and Dean, who looked a bit like he had a sour candy in his mouth.

"So Cass is just gone?" he asked at last. "And Sam is stuck like this from now on? With these wings and stuff?"

"Not gone, just... internalized," Susan hedged. "As for looking like this—"

"Wait a second," Sam interrupted, raising a hand. He closed his eyes and concentrated for a second, and the ghostly form of Cass appeared in the room.

"Cass!" greeted Dean.

"Hello Dean," he said. "See? I'm not gone. And this is all my fault anyway. I said yes to Lucifer. Let him in because I believed he could beat The Darkness. I should have known that was just his pride talking. I'll pay for my mistake here inside Sam."

"There no way to separate you two?"

"It's all right, Dean, honestly. It's better this way. I can help from in here just as well as I could have before. Keep Sam on the straight and narrow, tell him how to use his new powers. It's better for all of us this way."

"I'm gonna miss you."

"And I you. But Dean, I'll always be nearby. We can talk whenever, just ask Sam to project me."

"I guess. This is just so crazy, even for us."

"I know. But what can we do? I think it turned out this way for a reason, let's see where it leads."

"And Lucifer isn't making your, well not life at this point, your existence hell?"

Cass shook his head. "He's caged up again, someplace he knows well. It's just more spiritual this time than physical. Sam's inner landscape is very interesting, it'll be fascinating to explore once I get the time."

"Don't you be rearranging the furniture up there, you hear me?" Dean joked.

"See you, Dean." He was gone.

There was a few moments of silence as Dean absorbed all this.

"So you're Lucifer now?" he finally asked.

"His power, yes. But also I'm thinking more clearly, seeing things the way an angel sees the world. Dean it's amazing. I wish I could share it with you somehow."

"You could," Crowley put in. "Just find another angel that doesn't mind becoming an orb. Have Dean bond to it."

"I'm not sure any angel would agree to that," said the angel in the room.

"But a demon might work too, right?" Dean asked, suddenly animated.

"Not one of my demons," Crowley insisted. "And don't even think about sealing me up like that, you need me!"

"Not you. Sam, remember a couple of years back, our fight with Azazel?"

"The yellow eyed demon? Sure. In fact clearer than ever, now."

"The gate opened, right? You ran to close it, and I had the colt in my hand. I spun, and there he was."

"That's right," Sam said, slowly nodding. "You always said you saw something weird at just that instant."

"I saw you, Sam. I'm sure of that now. Looking just like you look right now. Wings and all. Just for a second, but now that I think back it had to be you. This you, just like this."

"What's this?" asked Crowley.

"I hardly recognized him." He barked a laugh. "How could I? He was ten years older and... well look at him."

"Oh, I have been," Rowina agreed.

Dean shot her a dirty look and went on. "He was only there a second. Put his hand on Azazel's shoulder and he was gone. But I remember that look he gave me, like everything was going to be all right. That look you gave me..." He stared at Sam.

"You think I go back now and bring him here?"

"Why not? He's powerful, isn't he? Crush him down and let that power work for us for a change. What could be a more fitting revenge for what he put us through? Him being there, I would have shot him with the colt, killed him if I could. Instead we in the future grab him up and use his power to help save the world. Oh, he'd be furious..."

"I don't know, Dean."

"It happened, okay? Where did he go otherwise? It was his moment of triumph, he wouldn't have just left. The process is safe, you went through it. And that was with Lucifer. One powerful demon still can't match him, right? So why not?"

"I could do it," agreed Sam. "I have the power."

"I don't mind using *orb seal* again," Susan agreed. "Give me a minute to charge up, get him here, and I'll hit him with it. Bam!"

"But what if you miss?" Crowley asked.

"I'll have another *time anchor* going. A powered version, but it does the same thing. If it doesn't work I'll just rewind time and we can try again."

"Let's do it," Dean said, seeming excited.

"Why are you so hot for this?" Sam asked. "Are you jealous or something?"

"No," he answered quickly. "Look, I was turning into a demon with that mark on me, remember? I wouldn't mind the powers of a demon while still being myself. Think about the crap we go through, Sam. How many times have we been thrown across a room by telekinesis? More times than I can count. It's like every freaking creature of the world gets it and I'm tired of it. Isn't it time we had the upper hand, for once?"

"As long as you're doing it for the right reason."

"Course I am. Come on, get going."

"Let me get charged up again," Susan told him, rising. "Be right back."

So back in powers mode and changed up, Susan waited for Sam to return. She didn't have to wait more than a second, and he popped back into the room with another man in tow. "What the?" he managed before Susan's "*Orb Seal*" went off, trapping him too. Another application of borrowed will, and Dean now stood before them. He too had ghostly wings of a type, but black and foreboding in contrast to Sam's wings of light. His eyes were now yellow too, but he was in control and was nodding excitedly. "Finally," he said. "No more getting slammed around for us, Sammy."

"Are you both stuck like that now?" Crowley asked again.

"I don't think so." Sam closed his eyes a second and the power and glamor fell away from him. He stood there looking like himself again. "See? We can turn it on and off."

"So you're vulnerable when you're not transformed? Interesting to know."

"We are on the same side here, if you recall."

"For now, of course. Yes."

"And if I do get killed, and someone else gets this orb, they won't have Susan's spell to help them out. Lucifer *will* return."

"Oh, right. Always a catch. So, what now?"

"Now we get Delphine a tour of the future," Susan told them, "and try to find her a place in the world of her grandchildren."

"We need to secure this somewhere," she insisted, holding up the box. "If angels and demons and people from other worlds are all working together the world really has changed in only seventy years."

Susan laughed. "I bet you can't even imagine. We'll head back to the base, secure the 'hand' and start your tour. Thanks for your help everyone!"
"I just hope we don't come to regret all this," Crowley muttered.

Another Day, Another Battle for The Earth

When: Two weeks later

Where: Crowley's base

With the two brothers now powered by the best supernatural beings this world had to offer, (at least in terms of past adversaries) Susan didn't need to watch over them like she had been. They explored how to use their powers and kept their ears to the ground for "cases" to use as practice. Both found they could access memories as well as abilities so "hunting" was much easier, and with teleportation they could be someplace and back in an instant.

Delphine went to work at the bunker, as it hadn't changed much in the years since she had seen it last. (It had been abandoned for many years.) Susan used magic to give her ratings in skills like *computer use* and let her loose on the internet so she could catch up on recent, and not so recent, history. She was rather shocked that basically Sam and Dean were all that was left of the men of letters (at least around the US) and started reaching out to decedents of people she had known to maybe rebuild the organization. She wanted to start actively recruiting people too, which Susan had no problem with. It seemed not only witchcraft was going to have a revival because of this incident, and with two new "hero units" on the field she thought the regular old scary things the world had faced since time began might be getting a run for their money. Finally.

Crowley had unveiled another two "hands of god" in the form of a staff, the Rod of Aaron and a horn, the Horn of Joshua. With three powerful people to use them, Susan figured they were well armed for the coming battle.

The group was now at Crowley's base, discussing how to draw The Darkness out now that they were about as ready as they were going to be. A demon approached the table.

"My lord, there's a man outside that says he has a message for you all," he said after being acknowledged.

"Let him in."

Everyone turned to see a bearded man coming towards them, and both Sam and Dean said "Chuck?" at the same time.

"Hey, fellows. Wow, look at you two. So that happened huh? Wild. Did not expect that."

"What are you doing here?" asked Sam while Dean was asking "How did you even get here?"

They looked at each other and both indicated the other should go first. Chuck held up a hand. "I'm here to deliver a message, and getting here, well, The Darkness sent me."

"You've seen The Darkness?" Crowley asked.

"We've talked. She's not who I thought, honestly. But I guess you already knew that. Said she had no real interest in me apart from trying to take the energy of this reality. Man, other realities too. Did not expect that. So I guess you may as well try to kill her..." He trailed off.

"So what's the message?" asked Dean after a moment.

"Tomorrow, she'll be here waiting for you." He brought a map out of his pocket and threw it to the table. On it was a circled location, a field out in the middle of nowhere. "Said she was as strong as she was going to get, so why hide anymore?"

"So what, she's just standing out there like in the cell games?" Susan asked, making a Dragon Ball Z reference.

"I don't know that reference," admitted Chuck. "Probably from another world, right? Anyway, just wanted to wish you luck as I was here. Would really hate to see all this be destroyed. And to say thanks to Susan and Sparkle for sticking it out once they found Luna wasn't around."

"Sure." *The Darkness told him about that? Odd.*

"Good luck." He held out a hand to Susan, who shook it, and patted Sparkle's head. He inclined his head to the others and spun, walking out rather sadly.

"Who was that?" Susan asked when he was gone. She was looking at her hand, which felt a little tingly.

"That's the guy who was writing our stories," Sam explained. "Something odd about him though. Cass said he felt something."

"I did too," admitted Dean. "Like I was hating the guy, but really had no reason to."

"Weird. Well, the waiting is finally over, eh?"

"Seems like," Susan agreed. "We'd better make sure we're prepared. We'll have to post guards in case this is a ruse of some kind, she obviously knew where to send that guy. I'm heading back to Heaven for a bit, if anyone wants anything from up there."

"You think they'll be more open to helping now?" the female angel said. "I wouldn't count on it."

"No. I just want them to fire their cannon again right before we attack. I mean if she's just going to stand there in an empty field, they'd be fools not to."

"It didn't help the last time."

"But it won't hurt this time. Even if it simply breaks her concentration for an instant as we arrive, allowing us to get into position, it's enough."

"You don't have to go," she said, holding up a hand. "I can contact them from here and tell them. What time are we arriving there?"

They looked at the map. "Says sunrise," Dean pointed out.

"Find out exactly when sunrise is," Susan commanded. "We'll hit her with the canon one second before, then teleport there weapons at the ready and hit her with everything we've got."

"Do you think that'll work?" asked Crowley.

"No. Because The Darkness now knows that plan, through me. But it's all we've got."

"True. What happens after that, if it's not enough?"

"Hopefully she'll be wounded enough for me to get in close and shoot her repeatedly."

"That could work," he admitted. "I once made angel killing bullets by melting down some angel blades. I could do that again tonight."

"Good. Everybody get a gun, and maybe a hand to hand weapon if it comes down to that too. We'll hit her with as many different types of power as we can."

"Wish we had the colt back," mused Dean. "Where did that thing ever end up, anyway?"

"I remember where I last saw it," Sam said.

"Say, you don't think?"

Sam smiled nodding. "You better believe I do." He called on his angel power and was gone for a second, then was back holding an old style looking firearm. From his other hand spilled a shower of bullets. "I went back to when Ruby helped Bobby make more bullets for it, so I watched and now I know how too," he announced. "I stayed and made some. Man, it was good seeing Bobby again."

"You're part angel now," Dean said, taking the gun and looking it over. "You could probably go up and see him under your own power."

"Yeah, maybe."

"Nice to have this back, things are looking up all around here." He started loading it.

"Ah, one problem with the canon plan," said the angel. "Once it's fired, there's a lot of radiation in the area. Those without protection," she looked over at Rowina, "won't be able to stay in the area for long."

"That was basically the plan anyway," Susan told her. "I'll make you an item that will teleport you back here at the press of a button. You channel the witch's power and get out of there."

"Very well. They've agreed to fire it five seconds before official sunrise time in that area of the world."

"Then we have our plan."

It was a tense night, with the guards at the gate on high alert and everyone finishing their preparations. Bullets were made and distributed, and the witches gathered more power

to send to Rowina in the morning. Susan thought about going to her, but figured it was best not to. She probably had enough to think about at the moment.

Finally it was nearing sunrise. Everyone gathered in the parking lot in a circle so they could be teleported by Sam, Dean, and Crowley, while the angels maintained a countdown.

“Sixty seconds. Spirit canon charging.”

“Thirty seconds. Fifty percent charged.”

“Ten seconds.”

Susan was fairly excited. In a few turns this would be over and she could move on to the next world. One more step in her search to find Luna and her father. Her energy was shining, though she didn't notice it herself. Sparkle did, and the others felt more positive about things as well given what they were about to face. Colors nearby seemed brighter, despite the gloom of the pre-dawn. The plan was to not stop moving until The Darkness was dead. With everyone in a circle no one should be in each other's way, and everyone could attack as they desired. Those with close weapons, like the angels, were to dash in, do a strike, and get out again so as to let those with long range weapons have a clear shot. Susan hoped it would work.

“Five seconds, pre-firing sequence complete.”

“Firing!”

“Blast is cleared, let's go!”

The group teleported.

Susan's Current Powers

Armor	(2)
Energy Well	(4)
Immunity (time)	(2)
Immunity (darkness)	(2)
Immunity (force)	(2)
Immunity (mind)	(2)
Nature (metapower)	(2)
Nature (protection)	(2)
Speed	(2)
Stat Adjustment (REF)	(5)
Sudden Step	(1)

As expected, The Darkness was rising from the attack and didn't look very hurt. Her dress was gone, she was dressed for battle. Still all in black, but with sensible pants and top, both which looked to be leather. Her hair was also cut short and she wore no jewelry that Susan could see. She pointed a finger at Susan and a bolt of darkness shot out of it. Susan winced but it harmlessly splashed off her *immunity*.

Whew. But you would think it would know what powers I took. Odd.

She was up next, and held up her ring. “For sacrifices made,” she called, hoping they might at least distract her for a brief second. They appeared around her in a circle. “Attack that woman,” she shouted.

Wait a second, I didn't lose energy doing that? What the heck?

“Please,” dismissed The Darkness, and the clouds overhead started to pour rain down on the group.

As she said this, Dean fired off his bolt of heavenly energy via the “hand of god” and it slammed into The Darkness, making her cry out. Sam and Susan were then up, and Sam fired off his bolt. This too hit The Darkness, making her cry out again but more this time in frustration than pain. Susan went with “*Chaos Unleashment*,” and fired a blast of raw

metapower at her. It was something she had come with the night before, that she could attack with *metapower* just as easily as with other “elements” like acid or time. That way she could hopefully negate anything The Darkness tried to do, while still attacking and only using up one two point power. The attack was a random burst of energy and color, in effect all powers and none at once. Susan also figured it would be hard to be immune to, at least in this reality, as there really wasn’t anything like it here.

The Darkness and Crowley were now up, so she was once again blasted with holy energy while The Darkness sent a bolt of lightning down from the sky at Sam. Sam dodged, while The Darkness finally took enough damage to be at her first penalty.

Both our heroines were up now, so Sparkle shot life energy at her while Susan did another “*Chaos Unleashment*,” figuring why change a winning strategy? The Darkness threw up her hands and the ground rose in a ring around her, shielding her.

Angel 2 was now up and darted in, swinging the sword Susan had made for her, and the ring of earth now around The Darkness now worked against her, giving her a slight penalty to dodge. Dean and Demon 2 were also up, Demon 2 trying to pin her in place with telekinesis, while Dean tried to draw more energy from the “Hand of God.”

All failed, The Darkness busting out of the earth and not seeming to care about the demon trying to hold her in place.

Oh yeah, she’s fast. She’s at a two delay for sure given the number of actions she’s taken, so her REFlexes must be pretty high. We’ll have to get her while she attacks us in order to hit I bet.

Angel 3 and Susan were now up, and as Susan knew the angels were more into physical combat than the demons, she tried to distract The Darkness by moving into close combat range. “*Metapower Strike*,” she called, and swirling energy covered her hands and feet. Now, any close combat strike she did would also have *metapower* behind it to do additional damage. The Darkness saw her coming and turned towards her, still trying to dodge the angel coming from behind to strike her. The angel missed horribly as her opponent’s dodge was just too much for her.

Demon 4 now activated his telekinesis to try and pin her down, which added to the power Demon 2 was using. The Darkness went to punch Susan, beating the STREngth check she needed to do it by only three, so that was her effective STREngth at the moment. Susan didn’t know that, so she tried to parry. Ties go to the defender, and again, Susan lost no energy despite putting in maximum.

Angel 1 and Crowley were now up, and as Crowley had seen Dean try and fail to use the “hand” again he tossed his aside and drew his pistol. He put several shots into her, because of course he has *quick draw*, he’s thousands of years old. The Darkness was focused on Susan, and didn’t notice as both he and Angel 1 attacked, so she was hit by everything.

By one, in the case of the pistol damage as Crowley got a twenty five against her twenty four passive dodge. (He had done a called shot and gotten a twenty five, but he was at a plus one because of Susan’s positive aura giving him a boost.)

Rowina *finally* got a turn, honestly the supernatural creatures just had REFlexes that were out of sight, and unleashed her lighting attack. This was boosted by all the witches back at the compound and The Darkness couldn’t dodge because at the same instant she was being attacked with telekinesis from Demon 3 and being shot at by Sam and trying to attack Susan who was busy attacking her.

As the lightning subsided Rowina hit the button on the device she had in her off hand and left the battlefield before she got radiation poisoning. More radiation poisoning, that is.

The Darkness now had three telekinesis checks to try and break through plus was getting shot and electrocuted by the witch’s power. Susan’s attack was hardly an afterthought in all that, and she was looking pretty beat up.

Demon 1 now joined his brethren in trying to hold her, and added another twenty three to the check she should have to make just to move. Angel 2 attacked again, along with Sparkle, but it seemed The Darkness had been taking enough damage for her liking and teleported rather than dodging. Both hit empty air, and the demon’s hold was broken.

Everyone looked to see where she had gone. She was behind the group, probably ten or so meters back, and looking enraged.

The Darkness, angel 3 and Susan were now up, but Susan wanted to see what she would do rather than start chasing her down. The Darkness raised a hand and lighting flashed above, so Susan cried "*Lighting Rod!*" as a protection technique, and the energy was harmlessly channeled into the ground.

Dean fired the colt again, but with her REFlexes The Darkness just waved a hand and the bullets bent around her.

Susan, Sam, Crowley, and The Darkness now went, so the two with telekinesis tried simply driving her to the ground while Susan shouted "*Metapower Hammer,*" and jumped in the air. Her normal jump could take her pretty far into the air, and as she swung down with her hands a column of energy slammed into The Darkness. But she hadn't been idle, spears of darkness from her side rained down on the battlefield. Those not attacking got a dodge at least, but Angel 1 took 15 to the head, Crowley 12 to the right arm, Dean there also for 17, and Sam took 13 to the left arm. Not that anyone cared, but demon 2 took 11 to the left arm as well.

The Darkness took damage to the legs, big deal, but both woman were up again. The Darkness easily made the STRength check to negate the telekinesis she was under, and closed her hand into a fist after throwing it high. Susan threw "*Metapower Hammer*" at her again, at this time luckily hit the body and left arm. But The darkness was still up.

Angel 1 was up but couldn't get near in time so it was Demon 1, Sparkle, Susan, The Darkness and Angel 2. Susan actually got higher on her *perception check* than Sparkle, and looked up to see the clouds had been compressed and were now a huge block of ice directly overhead and falling fast. She swapped out her powers, her *energy well* unneeded for some reason, and took something that might be a little more useful. The Darkness healed itself, the others held their action.

Susan's Current Powers

Armor (arms and legs)	(2)
Immunity (darkness)	(2)
Nature (metapower)	(2)
Nature (protection)	(2)
Speed	(4)
Stat Adjustment (REF)	(5)
Stat Adjustment (COO)	(4)
Sudden Step	(1)
Teleportal	(4)

"I don't think even I can hold up that much ice," Sam shouted to the others.

"Dealing with it!" Susan shouted back.

The Darkness went to heal again leaving her with nine damage as Susan made a huge *teleportal* overhead, redirecting the falling ice from around them. The other end? Where did you think but over The Darkness who couldn't get away because she was healing. There was as huge crash as tons of ice fell in a ring around the group and double that amount fell on The Darkness.

"Did that do it?" Sam asked.

"I wouldn't count on it!" Susan replied.

The ice exploded apart, sending shards flying in all directions. This revealed The Darkness struggling to rise.

"Told you!" she said, booking it over there. With her higher *speed* she made it easily and jumped into the air. Why didn't she just *sudden step* over there was shown as she targeted The Darkness with a strike as she landed, something she wouldn't have been able to do while *sudden stepping*. The Darkness threw herself to the side, so Susan missed and slammed into the ground.

All the people that could teleport were now next to Susan, leveling their guns at The Darkness. Susan simply rose up and tried slamming her foot into The Darkness, who again tried rolling to the side. Again Susan missed.

The three gun users now started a barrage of hot whatever their bullets were made of, but she simply pushed herself off the ground with her arms, flying over them and landing in a ready stance.

Susan followed, forcing her to spin so the gun users would have a good shot, and struck out with both hands. She wasn't even close, and went to counter attack but the demons were finally close enough again and struck out, invisible tendrils of power wrapping around her.

She actually didn't make her STRength check that time, and struggled to move.

Susan saw her chance and did a called shot to the body, putting energy into STRength this time instead of COOrdination.

This put The Darkness thirteen past gone and her body simply burned away with a scream.

And then there was silence on the battlefield.

Everyone was alert to some trick, looking around expecting the attack to resume at any moment.

"She's gone," said Chuck sadly, standing near Susan suddenly. "You won."

"What the..." Susan almost struck out at Him, but stopped herself. "You did something to me!" she accused.

"I did," he agreed. "You won't be able to take it with you, I'm afraid. That power came from me."

"No, no, it's okay. Who are you?"

"I wonder," he said thoughtfully. "My sister wasn't who I thought, does that make me something different too? At least now I know why she was so against my creating the universe. If I hadn't the energy of creation could have been taken by her much more easily."

"Are you saying you're-"

"Please don't use the G word," he interrupted. "It'll just cause no end of trouble."

"Well the others are going to want to know how you suddenly got here. What do I tell them?"

"Will they?" Chuck looked over to the others, who seemed to be frozen in time. "Of course, I could only do this because you took off that immunity to time. So thanks for that."

"Sure. Thank you for the energy."

"She was spending maximum amounts and could draw from all the souls she had eaten. I had to make the odds a little fairer, even as powerful as you are."

"I appreciate it, believe me."

"Guess I'll be on my way. Thanks again. Other realities. Wow!" He was gone.

The others made their way over to Susan. "Is it over?" asked Dean.

"I think so," she agreed. "And thus it's time for me to go. Can I give you all a lift back to the base? Rowina might want to know the world isn't ending any time soon."

They agreed, and Susan at least got a hug from that corner.

The group said goodbye, and Susan wished them all well.

Not long after that she stepped back through to the Hub, and went to make her report and look over the list to see what the next reality was she wanted to visit.

Make it the world of the Shinigami, suggested The Darkness.

Why?

Luna's there.

What?! Is she dead?

Dead? No, why would you think that?

Because you're telling me where she is!

I'm telling you because I'm getting tired of you.

What?

Look, my only hope at this point is to slow you down. Maybe if I let you have your girlfriend back, and then you go rescue your father, you'll head home for a while and leave me alone. Maybe... you'll never go wandering again.

Why the sudden change of heart?

You beat me. That body had the best stats I could give it, and a whole bunch of powers. But you put a group together and beat me. At this point I'm not sure what else to throw at you. All the stuff I've tried you just got through. Oh, you felt bad about a lot of it but maybe with Luna back you'll feel the pain I put you through just isn't worth it anymore. Then you'll stop, and I won't have to put up with you ruining my plans anymore.

Even I'm not sure if I'd stop at this point, Luna or not. I mean the multiverse needs me.

But so does Luna. So does your world. It's a long shot, I admit, but it's all I've got at the moment.

Shinigami, huh?

I'll give you the coordinates when you're ready to go. There are lots of worlds that have them, after all.

I'll think about it. I am immortal, so I could spend hundreds of years wandering and still be home in time for supper.

Please don't.