

## INTERMEZZO

### A Charmed Fanfiction by AmandaK

"Cole, we did the best we could. We tried every way possible to make this work but it wasn't meant to be. And it wasn't because we didn't love each other, it's just love wasn't enough, so now we have to move on, okay, the both of us."

"I'm not giving up on us, Phoebe. Ever."

oOo

Going away, leaving Phoebe behind after he saved her life, that had been one of the hardest things he had done in his long existence, Cole decided. He sat on the low wall surrounding the Coyt Tower, looking out over the San Franciscan hills. It was still dark although the night was growing old. Already the sky toward the east seemed a bit less black than it had been when he arrived.

Even though the decision had been difficult, he knew it was the right one. Phoebe wasn't ready for him to come back. She wasn't ready to let him into her life again.

How many more times would he have to start over? To restore Phoebe's confidence in him? To earn her trust all over again? He never lost her love, so she told him in the wasteland. Those words had given him the strength to do what must be done and return to the land of the living. Still, she was right about one thing: love alone wasn't enough; her trust was equally as important as her love. Without trust, love was like a stillborn babe: perfect in form and shape, but devoid of life.

The first time Phoebe lost faith in him had been his own fault. Afterward, he spent long weeks regretting his hesitation. He should have told her the truth sooner, should have confessed that he was Belthazor, the demon sent to kill them, before she found out herself. The second time... The second time hurt the most. He had tried so hard to resist Raynor, to stay good, not to give in. But his former mentor knew him too well, knew his every weakness. So, at last, he caved under the pressure and killed Jenna--and lost Phoebe again.

Remarkably, it was she who had not given up on them then. When she came for him, in the underworld, she gave him hope. That spark of hope inspired Cole to try his hardest to deserve her. And he had done it. He won Phoebe's love as well as the respect of her

sisters. Despite becoming fully human after the demise of his demonic half, Cole felt that he was gradually gaining an appreciated and useful role in the Charmed Ones' lives. Until the blasted Seer with her ambitions for ruling the underworld started meddling in their affairs.

Damn her! In a sudden burst of anger, he slammed his fist onto the cement so hard he feared it had cracked. The wall, not his hand. Fortunately, the meager light of the waning moon revealed no fractures. Good. Destroying San Franciscan public property was not the way to go; this was not the wall he needed to breach.

But dammit! For a hundred years he had done the underworld's dirty work, done their bidding, no questions asked. He had paid his dues, for crying out loud! He deserved a life. A human life. A little bit of happiness, with a woman who loved him, and in time, perhaps, little ones that called him 'Daddy'.

Cole sighed. He felt as if he were back where he started. Go directly to Jail. Do not pass Go, do not collect two hundred dollars.

The look on Phoebe's face when she recognized her rescuer had told him he couldn't push the issue. She needed time. Time to sort out everything that had happened, time to forget he had resorted to evil, time to nurture her faith in him back to life. And Cole was prepared to give her such time. He just wasn't sure what to do with himself while he waited. One thing he knew for certain: he would never go back to living a life of evil -- he couldn't. Phoebe taught him that. She had shown him the truth of her words: saving an innocent was pretty damn satisfying. The sense of accomplishment it gave him was much more powerful than any demonic power ever could.

Talking of demonic powers--Cole held up his hands before his face and studied them. He collected quite a few interesting powers while in the wasteland. Some were familiar to him, others he hadn't even known existed until he scooped them up from the dirt floor and dusted off the demon residue. He wasn't sure what he could do with those. Perhaps it was time to find out.

He again gazed out over the glittering lights of the city beneath him. Down below, people lived their lives, unaware of the demonic world that existed parallel to theirs. They fought, made love, cooked dinner, watched reality shows on television. And sometimes they got in trouble and needed help.

It was simple, really. He needed to learn how to use his powers. And somewhere in the city, someone could use a hand.

His mind firmly made up, Cole started on the steep, winding road that led down from

the tower. He knew what he had to do.

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