

## MONDAY MORNING STAFF MEETING

### A Charmed Fanfiction by AmandaK

"He needs someone to aid him," the redheaded woman stated while she surveyed the others seated around the table. She leaned forward, folding her hands before her. The main issue of today's staff meeting should have been the introduction of Elder Kevin, the Council's latest and youngest member, who joined their ranks upon Elder Ramus' death. But instead they found themselves discussing once again the case of one Cole Turner.

"We can't get involved, Rhiannon." An elderly gentleman, his thinning gray hair cropped close to his skull, shook his head. "We only observe, we do not partake in worldly matters."

"Elder Rainer, beg pardon but you're wrong. In our own way, we do get involved," Rhiannon countered. "We assign Whitelighters, don't we?"

"What?!" A small, stocky man in a seat opposite to Rhiannon jumped to his feet. His round face flushed with indignation. "Assign a Whitelighter? Preposterous! The man is a demon."

"Former demon, to be exact," muttered someone a couple of seats to Rhiannon's left.

"Exactly! Thank you, Elder Sinclair." She gave the speaker a grateful smile. "Cole Turner is no longer a demon. He is a human being. He needs help."

"He is evil!" Elder Janus' face turned more crimson as he spluttered in anger. "He has more demonic powers than any demon in history. Evil is in his blood."

Rhiannon glanced around the table. Several of the Elders nodded in agreement with Janus. Many Council Elders believed that Cole Turner, formerly known as Belthazor, and as the Source, was the embodiment of everything they were sworn to fight.

Rhiannon gave a wave with her hand. "That's what Phoebe Halliwell keeps telling him. I don't think she's quite managed to convince herself yet. Have you?"

"The witch has a point, though," spoke Elder Hillary, a stern-looking woman with dark brown hair and fierce black eyes. "See how many times he has betrayed her."

Elder Rhiannon bit the inside of her cheek to keep the bitter retort from getting out. It wouldn't help her case if this discussion ended in another shouting match so she tried to

think of a more modest reply.

Before she could form the words, however, Elder Sinclair spoke up. "I can't blame the Halliwell girl," he said in his soft voice.

Rhiannon's head whipped around and she stared at the scholarly Elder. The candle light reflected in tiny sparkles off his glasses. Elder Sinclair preferred studying the books and ancient scrolls of the past to discussing matters of the present. He rarely spoke so when he did, all eyes turned in his direction.

"Perhaps she has been burned one too many times," Sinclair continued, wilting beneath his peers' scrutiny. "Perhaps he betrayed her trust once too often. But it isn't fair to lay all blame at the Turner boy's feet. He was a mere human when the Source Of All Evil possessed him. Can we expect any human to resist that much power?"

Elder Janus snorted. "Did you forget he tried to strangle his wife the other day?"

Elder Sinclair shrank even further into his seat. "No, I have not."

"He was under the influence of the Siren's song," Rhiannon interrupted.

Elder Rainer quirked a brow at her. "And that makes it all right?"

Rhiannon shook her head. "No, it doesn't. The remorse he showed afterward does."

"Oh, please!" Janus threw up his hands.

Rhiannon whirled in his direction. Her green eyes flashed. "You're such a hypocrite, Janus! How many times have we forgiven the Charmed Ones for evil deeds?" She pushed back her chair and got up to lean across the table. Her intent gaze traveled around the circle of cloaked figures. "Need I remind you of the time when Piper Halliwell turned her fiancé, and our Whitelighter, into a stick in the mud? Or when Phoebe Halliwell conspired with the Woogy to kick her sisters out of the manor? Or when Paige Matthews was a vampire and went after the blood of her sisters to celebrate her initiation? Do I need to go on?"

Three or four of the Elders shifted in their seats and averted their gaze while Rhiannon reminded them of some of the many instances when the Charmed Ones had turned evil. If not for the fact that they were so powerful, and therefore so important, the Council of Elders might have stripped them of their powers a long time ago. But instead, they forgave the three witches time and again.

"The examples are countless," the female Elder continued. "We forgave them, because they had no control over their actions and they were repentant afterwards. What makes Cole Turner's case so different?"

"Doesn't matter!" shouted Elder Janus. He again sprang to his feet and slammed his fist on the table so cups jumped and coffee sloshed onto the gleaming wood. "The guy is evil! Can't you see that, Rhiannon?"

"Having evil powers does not evil make!" she yelled back, growing frustrated with her stubborn colleagues. "I can't believe you are so narrow-minded as to believe that. It is still a matter of choice, of free will. And Cole Turner is trying his damndest to do the right thing. If Phoebe Halliwell doesn't yet see it, I won't blame her, seeing their history together. But we are bigger than that. We are the Council. We should know better. And I'm telling you: we need to give him some support! Before it's too late."

She ran out of breath and slumped back onto her seat. That blasted Janus always got under her skin! She had tried to discuss the matter calmly and maturely. But the intolerant, bigoted views of some of her colleagues really fired up her Welsh blood.

"What we need to do," Janus said, "is order the Charmed Ones to vanquish him. Again. Before it's too late." He smirked at Rhiannon.

"I'm not sure they can," Sinclair muttered into his coffee. His voice was a near whisper but the Elders closest to him heard him and they directed their gaze at the scholar.

"What do you mean?" Rhiannon asked, struggling to keep her tone calm although she was still burning with fury.

"The last time it took the Power of Three to do it," Sinclair explained. "Elder Janus already said so: the boy has more powers than any creature in history. I'm not convinced he is vanquishable."

"All the more reason to try," Janus stated firmly. "As soon as possible, before he can wreak any more havoc."

"All the more reason not to," Rhiannon disagreed. "If he is so powerful, what will he do when someone tries to kill him? You've seen what he did with that slumlord who threatened to expose his wife."

"My point exactly," murmured Janus.

Elder Rainer motioned for him to be quiet and nodded at Rhiannon to continue.

"Vanquishing Miller was a mistake on Turner's part, I grant you that. But he felt threatened. What do you think will happen when his life is in danger? Or that of Phoebe's? If he's left alone and isolated, he will have no other choice but to use his powers to defend himself. Once again," her head slowly swiveled to meet everyone's eyes one by one, "I urge you to assign him a Whitelighter. Let's not abandon him. Give him someone to help channel those powers for good, to help him make the right decisions. He could be a powerful ally to our cause. And with the proper guidance, we won't see any more of these slumlord fiasco's."

She looked at her colleagues. Most faces were blank, their owners undecided. A few were straight out hostile and clearly telegraphing their thoughts: she was a troublemaker who should listen to her peers. And another few, far too few to her liking, seemed ready to yield to her point of view.

"It is obvious we are not going to agree on the matter today," Elder Rainer said after several minutes during which nobody spoke. "Therefore we shall suspend the decision and discuss the case again next week, after we have all had some time to think and calm down. And now on to the next issue on today's agenda..."

Rhiannon tuned out Rainer until his voice was a distant buzz. She met Janus' gaze. He gave her a triumphant grin and she gritted her teeth. She hoped that next week's meeting wouldn't come too late for Cole Turner. If everyone continued to ostracize him and tell him he was evil, sooner or later he would start to believe it himself. And Phoebe Halliwell's fears would turn into a self-fulfilling prophecy.

**Disclaimer:** this story based on the Spelling Television/WB Television Network series '*Charmed*'. All characters belong to their original owners. The story is meant for entertainment purposes only and no copyright infringement was intended.