

There is nothing  
more frightening than  
powerful women

'Compelling, urgent  
and highly original'

KATE HAMER

'Thought-provoking  
and powerful'

PAULA DALY

# COVEN

LIZZIE FRY

THE  
COVEN

LIZZIE FRY

  
sphere

S P H E R E

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*To Laura,  
You are The One.  
Aunty L x*

## The Proclamation of the Elementals

We are all kernels in the earth. We are baptised by fire; fed by the water of life; powered by air. To us, we call The One: connect us through the chain of being and bring us liberation from the ties that bind us.

# PART ONE

Friday, March 6th

# PROLOGUE

**G**reen light was leaking under the bedroom door. The sight of it made Li stop in her tracks and back up, dropping the washing basket she'd been holding. Her brain attempted to push the realisation away in sluggish disbelief. She had prayed to the triple goddesses she would never have to deal with this. Her heartbeat thundered in her ears as anxiety crashed through her body.

The day Li had been putting off had finally arrived.

Until that moment, it had been a completely ordinary Friday in March. Li had been stripping the beds, her usual end-of-the-week routine, when Chloe had returned from college around midday, her lectures finished for the weekend. As usual, Li had asked her daughter how her day had been; as usual, Chloe had rebuffed her with that sneering way of hers. Li tried to not let it bother her. Since puberty had struck around the age of fourteen, Chloe had made it clear she had no time for her parents. At nineteen, almost twenty, she should have grown out of such juvenile power-plays, but Li understood it wasn't entirely her only child's fault.

Seeing the green light now, pooling on the floor like liquid, Li knew it was all hers.

Fear gripped her, guilt rushing up behind it. As if in a nightmare, her bones felt as heavy as concrete. She hesitated, unable to raise her arm to push the door and go inside. Blinking back the tears pricking her eyelids, she took her phone from her jeans pocket and pulled up her call log; DANIEL was first on the list. Bar the odd errand in town, Li saw only two people most days: Daniel and Chloe. Apart from a dozen Facebook and Twitter followers she spoke with online regularly, she had few real-life friends and worked from home. Her love of travel and a degree from a British university twenty years ago had led her to make a life for herself on the other side of the world. Too late, she realised she was isolated and alone when it really counted.

Li finally managed to press the button to call her husband.

‘Hi.’ Daniel’s gravelly voice filtered down the line.

‘You need to—’

The voicemail kicked in. He hadn’t really answered at all. Keying off, Li swore in Mandarin, the sound of her native tongue discordant in her own ears. Her hands were shaking so much she almost dropped the phone. She redialled again with difficulty, irritation and fear clashing together. Daniel had to pick up this time. Had to. She couldn’t deal with this alone. Not any more. She would tell him everything.

Chloe was not the type to go drinking or take drugs; Li had never worried about her coming home one day, pregnant. Some days, she wished it could be as simple as that. At least that way, they would be forced to confront their issues as a family and find a solution together. But Chloe’s constant anger was seemingly without cause or purpose.

Through the years, Li had seen Chloe erupt over and over again. During these episodes, Chloe would scream in frustration, beating her fists against her head like she was trying to

pound her brains from her skull. She would turn her hands into weapons and scratch at her eyes, her face, her arms. Li would have to wrestle Chloe's hands away, pinning her daughter's arms to her sides until they both collapsed on the floor together in shocked silence, leaving Chloe staring at the wall, unable to speak. She'd stay like that for at least an hour, sometimes longer if the attack had been particularly ferocious.

Each time Chloe disappeared inside herself, Li wondered if she would be able to make her way back. Li could see the fear and confusion in her daughter's eyes, yet was totally unable to help her. She and Daniel had sent Chloe to psychiatrists, counsellors, neuroscientists. They'd gone for second, even third and fourth opinions – before the money had run out. All of the professionals had subjected Chloe to rigorous tests and examinations. All had given Chloe a clean bill of health, labelling her attacks as 'growing pains' or 'behavioural issues'.

Li had been relieved with these verdicts, but not because there was nothing wrong with her child. She'd always known there was something very different about Chloe, from the moment the midwife had placed her on her chest. She'd felt it moving within her tiny muscles, as obvious as the blood pumping through her veins.

The phone rang and rang. Even behind the wood of the door, Li could see the green light was getting stronger, could sense its growing power. Her panicked thoughts shimmered through her mind like multiple reflections in a hall of mirrors. Had she really thought this day would never come? That she could put it off for ever?

The voicemail cut in again. As she was forced to wait until the recording came to an end, Li became aware of a loud humming noise behind Chloe's bedroom door. It had the intensity of an aeroplane engine, and was growing exponentially with every second. She could feel it in her belly, in the marrow of her bones.

Finally, on the end of the line: *beep*.

‘... Daniel? Oh, Daniel. You have to come home, quick!’

With a sudden flush of bravery borne of fatalism, or perhaps bolstered by the distant comfort of being connected to Daniel’s voicemail, Li pushed the door inwards to confront whatever was on the other side. The phone fell from her hand as she took in the sight before her.

Chloe sat on her bed, her face turned upwards, her eyes glazed with concentration. She was cross-legged, palms out in front of her, as if poised to catch a ball. Green light spiralled up out of her hands in a column. As it hit the ceiling the light crawled out across the plaster like a living thing. The window-pane rattled in its frame; books on the shelves fell over; a glass on Chloe’s bedside cabinet exploded, sending water and shards of glass into the plaster of the wall beside it. Li could feel raw power swarm across the floor towards her, making her teeth chatter. As she looked on in horror, a realisation flowered in Li’s brain, nineteen years too late.

She’d completely and utterly failed to keep her precious child safe.

‘Chloe! Chloe, look at me!’

Li’s voice was snatched by the noise enveloping Chloe. The air felt like it was splitting apart, just like the onset of a storm. Even though the distance from the bedroom door to Chloe’s bed was just four or five feet, Li staggered as if she was walking against high winds, her daughter miles away. The smell of ozone, strong like chlorine, assaulted Li’s nostrils and throat as she spoke, making her gag and her eyes water. Still Li forced one foot in front of the other. She had to make it. She had to try and reach Chloe, not only literally but also the real girl, lost deep inside herself right now.

Li made it to the bed. She pushed her arm through the space between them, grabbing Chloe by the shoulder. ‘Chloe, lovely, don’t! I’ll explain ...’

Li's words died on her tongue as her daughter turned her head away from the vortex of green light. Repelled and in shock, Li let her hand drop away from Chloe's shoulder. Her daughter's eyes were black and shiny, like the carapace of a beetle. With no pupils, no whites at all, the look Chloe gave Li was devoid of all humanity.

'What have you done to me, *Mother*?' Chloe hissed.

The green light rushed in at Li like a tidal wave.

# ONE

Texas, USA

Consciousness came back to Adelita with the ferocity of an express train. She was out cold, then she was back. There was no in-between.

Her eyes snapped open and reality burst through her senses. Her surroundings took a little longer to come into focus. Polyester curtains fluttered in the windows as a silhouette passed by. She could hear the hum of a Coke machine outside and the sound of the ice dispenser as the silhouette collected ice in the bucket. She lay on a double bed with stained sheets, a cheap Formica cabinet beside it. She knew without looking there would be a Bible inside the top drawer. She was in a cheap back-road motel. How had she got here?

Adelita wasn't able to stand as fast as she'd come round. Fatigue was shot through her bones; her limbs were heavy with it. Ever the medic, she examined herself. Her arms and legs were scratched and bruised; several of her fingernails were bloodied. There was a tremor in her hands and shoulders. Her heart ricocheted around her ribcage.

She pinched the pulse point in her wrist: definitely more than

one hundred beats a minute. There were bright spots floating before her eyes, despite the gloom of the room around her. If she didn't know any better, she would have thought she had gone on a two-day bender; that she was hung-over. But even with blank spots in her memory, Adelita knew she hadn't drunk liquor in a very long time. What the hell had happened to her?

'Son of a bitch!'

Who was *that*? Her heart made a pained, panicked thud in her chest. The voice was male, a low growl, and had come from the motel's en suite bathroom. From the bed, she couldn't see around the bathroom door to locate the voice's owner, nor could she even fathom whom the voice could belong to. Numerous faces, mostly female, flashed through her brain. Names swam up in her consciousness: *Elinor . . . Maddie . . . Claire . . . Yukio*. She'd been with these women, she'd known them. But how? Where? Thoughts clamoured through her brain as she tried to concentrate, but she was too exhausted to focus.

Adelita swung her bare feet over the side of the bed and took two or three tottering steps, like an hour-old foal. She looked around the room in search of something she could use as a weapon. She didn't have to look far; a Colt 1873 Single Action Army sat on the cheap-looking sideboard, its cold steel glinting in the lamplight. She snatched it up, feeling slightly better with the weight of it in her hands. Her father had favoured Colts, keeping one under the counter in his bodega, along with a shotgun. Ernesto Garcia had always told Adelita and her older twin sisters that guns should be outlawed in any civilised nation. As he also pointed out, the United States was very far from civilised. Ernesto insisted all his girls have shooting lessons.

Adelita checked it was loaded and staggered towards the bathroom to try and get a glimpse of the stranger in there before she revealed herself. Peering through the crack in the door, she could see another handgun, abandoned in the sink like a can of

shaving foam. Next to the tap, where the soap should go, was an open bottle of Jack Daniel's, half the liquor gone.

A white guy sat on the side of the bath.

His back was to her but, even sitting down, Adelita could tell he wasn't particularly tall, maybe five nine or ten, just an inch or two taller than her. He was shirtless, lean and broad-shouldered. She could count his ribs and the muscles undulating under his skin. Whatever he lacked in height, he was strong, and young. Barely thirty – a good decade younger than her. His black pants were pulled down as low as they could go without exposing his ass. A black shirt, replete with gold insignia on the shoulders, lay abandoned on the floor. His boots, kicked off next to the toilet, were polished and shiny; his blond hair was closely cropped. Even half-dressed, Blondie had the unmistakable air of military about him.

He was Sentinel.

He twisted around so he might tend to the injury on his side near his hip. It looked like a bullet wound, a through-and-through. He was attempting to sew it up himself, but its location was making it difficult. Adelita knew from all the time she'd spent tending gunshot victims in the ER that Blondie had been lucky, though he probably didn't feel it. Even minor bullet wounds hurt like hell. He growled again and grabbed the bottle of JD off the sink, slugging it back with a grimace.

Adelita kicked the door open with her bare foot. 'Who the fuck are you?'

She raised the gun, just as he turned towards her. At the sight of his face, Adelita's memory flooded back against her will, assaulting her senses.

*The blond Sentinel guard ran straight at her.*

She let the gun fall to her side as she lurched towards the motel door frame to steady herself.

*A feeling of being on fast-forward, like she was moving between two planes of existence, super-fast.*

In the motel room, Blondie stepped forwards.

‘Don’t!’

Adelita uttered the warning too late, though he made no attempt for the gun. His gnarled hands grabbed her around the waist, steadying her. Bursts of imagery seared through her brain:

*Her fist, glowing like a beacon.*

*Blondie, hit in the chest by a column of white light, going down as if by a battering ram.*

Adelita pushed him away from her and raised the gun again, finger on the trigger. She took in the rivulets of dried blood from Blondie’s ear, his split lip. She faltered as a realisation flowered in her brain.

‘I did that to you.’

Blondie nodded.

‘... I was in jail.’

‘S’right. Our Lady of Nazareth, Texas.’

Adelita laughed at herself as clarity came to her. ‘This is a prison break. I’m not your hostage, you’re mine!’

Blondie pulled a face. ‘Not really.’

‘What’s that supposed to mean?’

‘If I really was your hostage, don’t you think I could have left when you were asleep and brought back a bunch of Sentinel?’

Adelita’s weary mind connected the dots. He was right.

‘So, I escaped ... and you came with me.’

‘Yup.’

Blondie moved away from her, staggering a little – from the bourbon or the pain, Adelita wasn’t sure. He leant over the sink with both hands, clearly exhausted. It still didn’t make any sense. Why would a Sentinel escape a super-max prison with a witch? He was free. He could have walked out of the prison at the end of his shift. He didn’t need to be here, with her.

‘Don’t move.’ Adelita forced threat into her voice.

But Blondie held her gaze in the reflection of the bathroom

mirror. ‘You and I both know you aren’t going to shoot me. Thanks, by the way.’

Adelita stared back, wrong-footed. ‘Er . . . don’t mention it?’

Adelita watched herself lower the gun in the mirror, catching sight of the fact that she was only in her underwear, practically naked. He didn’t seem concerned about being half-dressed himself, either. They might have been spouses on a last-minute, budget road trip. One in which she blacked out and he got shot. There was a familiar air between them she could not explain. Even so, she needed to know one thing.

‘Where the fuck are my clothes?’

The Sentinel raised both palms in mock surrender this time. ‘Nothing to do with me. You took your prison uniform off in the passenger seat and threw it out the car window.’

Adelita considered this and let it pass. It seemed like something she might do. She’d hated the scratchy material of her uniform; the fact its purple colour marked her out as a witch from the women in orange, the ‘Goodys’. Derived from the archaic ‘goodwife’ from colonial times, that label nowadays meant non-witches. Whatever the case, the word was a complete misnomer for the prisoners they had been locked up with. At Our Lady, she’d lived side by side with murderers and gang-bangers. Adelita’s only crime had been her strong magical bloodline, her existence.

‘What’s the last thing you remember?’

Blondie rebuckled his belt and sat back down on the side of the bath. Before Adelita could answer, her brain solved the puzzle for her. Disjointed fragments of sound and vision rolled through her mind’s eye. In the dust of the prison yard, under the punishing Texas sun: a pebble, a seam of quartz shot right through it. Adelita couldn’t believe what she’d been seeing; the prison was swept daily for crystals, just in case. She had snatched it up.

'*Para ti, Madre,*' Adelita had whispered into her closed hand.  
*For you, Mother.*

Then white light had burst from her fist with the power of lightning.

She met the Sentinel's gaze. 'You left the crystal in the prison yard on purpose for me to find?'

He nodded again. *Guilty as charged.*

'How did you know it would work?'

He shrugged. 'I didn't. I hoped.'

'I would have got out of there by myself, eventually. Somehow.'

'I know.' He grinned at her. 'I just wanted to speed up the process . . . Kinda like the spark to your flywheel.'

Adelita's brow knitted in suspicion. 'Why? What do you get out of this?'

Blondie took another slug of JD and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. 'I'm sick of living on the wrong side of history.'

Adelita picked over his words as she took in the Sentinel tattoo on his bare chest, depicting the Earth as the pupil in an eye surrounded by the Latin motto *Si vis pacem, para bellum*. If you want peace, prepare for war. That was how guys like him saw the world: as black and white; good and bad; winning and losing. He had been on the winning side. He must have changed his mind somewhere down the line.

'We should get our stuff together.'

'Where are we going?'

'Let me worry about that, for now.'

Adelita's mind flitted through everything that had happened, reaching for possibilities. What else could she do now? Where could she go? She came up with nothing. She had no money. No clothes. Her face would surely be circulated everywhere by now; there would almost certainly be a kill order on her. If she got taken back to Our Lady, her next destination

would be Yard B, where they barbecued the most troublesome witches. Just the thought sent her stomach into a spin cycle: she could not go back. She would never go back; something within her knew she'd die first. It was strange – and unnerving – that this guy seemed to want to help her; she couldn't think of a reason a Sentinel penal guard would purposely break a witch out of jail. She would have to take him at his word. For now, at least.

'You're doing a terrible job.' Adelita indicated the ragged stitches on his side. 'Let me. I'm a doctor – or, I was.'

Blondie grinned at her. 'Yeah?'

Adelita felt irritation crash through her. 'Why's that so surprising?'

'You have a lot of street smarts for an educated lady. I watched you on the prison CCTV. You didn't let anyone push you around in there.'

'Because women can be only one thing, right?'

'I didn't say that.'

Blondie sat down on the side of the bath while Adelita knelt beside him. He winced each time she unpicked one of his crappy stitches. It had been a long time since she'd been a junior doctor working in one of New York's busiest hospitals – coming up to two years since she'd practised for real – yet it came back naturally to her. Without warning, she grabbed the bourbon bottle and sloshed some on the wound. He yelped like a chihuahua and brought his fist down on the sink, gritting his teeth.

'So much for being a tough guy.'

'I never said I was a tough guy.'

Adelita smirked as she rethreaded the needle. 'I do neat, small stitches so it's gonna take a while. You might want to bite down on a bit of wood or something for this, *debilucho*.'

His face was pale and drawn in the mirror. 'I don't think much of your bedside manner.'

‘I don’t think much of your first aid kit. You know iodine is much cheaper than bourbon, right?’

She grinned, catching his eye in the mirror over the sink, but the bonhomie between them abruptly evaporated as she remembered herself. This stranger was – or at least had been – Sentinel, one of the men responsible for the turn her life had taken.

As if detecting her sudden tension, Blondie gave a strained smile. ‘I’m Ethan, by the way.’

‘Adelita.’

She didn’t know what his game was. Her mother had always impressed on her and her sisters the need to act with caution around white men, and from experience she knew this to be true. Their favours rarely came without a price.

She returned to stitching.

## TWO

Exeter, Devon, UK

Daniel Su had to get home. Now.

He was on autopilot, his body a permanent flux of reactivity. When he'd received Li's voicemail, his stomach had plummeted into his shoes. Li would be livid with him when he finally turned up as back-up for dealing with their wayward child. Daniel's usual method was to try to stay out of the conflict between his wife and daughter, but it sounded now like it had exploded right in his face.

As he raced towards his car in the university car park, Daniel wondered what Chloe had said or done this time to make Li sound so beside herself on the phone. All he knew was that it must have been something awful. How much time had passed since Li had called him . . . Five minutes? Ten? Twenty? Daniel couldn't tell. Panic had corrupted his sense of time.

Daniel finally found himself beside his car. He tapped his pocket with his palm in that nervous way of his, feeling for his car keys through the fabric. They were there. *Thank God.* Even though he was a theology professor (of perhaps because of it), Daniel didn't believe in any deity; he never had. It was just something he said, though the Sentinel insisted only their

puritanical version of Jesus Christ was the one true God now. The triumvirate, or triple goddesses, were forbidden.

Daniel's gaze flicked towards the clock on the dashboard as he slid into his vehicle. It was almost quarter to six. Chloe only had lectures until midday on a Friday, and Li worked from home. They both had to be at the house. That was something, at least. Daniel was a very private man and found Chloe's public meltdowns the most difficult. He couldn't stand the judgemental stares of strangers, or, even worse, their pitying, averted gazes. Thankfully, it had only happened a few times over the years.

With both of his hands knuckle-white on the wheel, Daniel's small car careered down the hill that overlooked the city of Exeter. As he drove, passing the university's stock of conifers and hardwood trees, he barked a direction at his phone to 'call Li', before realising he didn't have the phone on him; he must have left it behind in his panic – along with his wallet and the notes he had been making for the non-fiction book he was writing. He pressed the brake as he approached the checkpoint, which blocked off the road up towards the Great Hall.

The barrier was never down, but everyone always slowed and stopped before receiving the go-ahead. It was the British way. Usually there was only one Sentinel guard on duty at Exeter University's checkpoint but today, on the way in, Daniel had noticed there had been two. The first one was in his fifties and clearly not a career soldier. His face was slack with age and disinterest; a rounded paunch hung over his black combat trousers. The other was much younger, barely into his thirties. He was thin and feral, with wide eyes that darted everywhere like a cat's. Daniel eyed the red band at the top of his arm: a trainee sergeant, eager to prove himself.

Daniel wound down his window, ready to flash his lanyard so he could get out of there and get home. He had managed to still some of the panic quivering in his chest. But from their high

vantage point, both Sentinel were staring at something in the distance, across the city. Now irritated and exasperated as well as afraid, Daniel swivelled in his seat and stretched so he could see out the passenger window, towards Exeter below.

A column of black smoke rose vertically towards the middle of the city. A bomb? Surely not in sleepy Exeter. But there it was, larger than life, spiralling into the sky.

Right where Daniel and his girls lived.

'Oh no,' he breathed.

Daniel had spent his entire life in academia; he'd never been even close to a survival situation. Yet he knew in that moment, via animal instinct, his precious family was in mortal danger. He jammed his foot on the accelerator.

The shriek of tyres and the pulse pounding in his head obliterated everything else. Daniel was unaware of the shouts of the Sentinel after him, or the younger one calling in his transgression over the radio. He was laser-focused. The driver's window was still open. He could hear no sirens yet. Whatever had happened couldn't have taken place too long ago. Or maybe those budget cuts in the provinces meant the emergency services were taking an age to get there. He willed the first option to be true.

Daniel raced through Exeter, taking corners and back roads to try and avoid the gridlock of rush hour. As he got closer and closer to the source of the black smoke, increasing traffic and growing groups of gawking people slowed his advance. He narrowly avoided pedestrians near Exeter prison, then again outside the mosque. A group of older men dressed in their long thobes waved their fists at Daniel as he was forced to slow down. Daniel waved no apology, but merely turned onto the next road, out towards the Odeon.

Time had become an elastic concept, stretching then snapping back without warning. Despite every second feeling like an hour, Daniel blinked and he was at his destination. His brain reeled as he turned onto the small cul-de-sac where he, Li and Chloe had

lived since Chloe was two. Their home was the end property, the most sought-after in a half-circle of new-build toy-town red-brick houses with sandstone surrounds on the windows.

The scene was not so idyllic now. Rounding the corner, the first thing Daniel noticed was that every single window in the vicinity was broken. Houses, car windows and windscreens. There was glass strewn on every surface: the tarmac of the roadside; the concrete pavements; grass in the gardens. It twinkled like deadly confetti in the late afternoon sunlight. Had a bomb gone off? *Oh no. Oh God no.* Daniel could hear the ringing of multiple car alarms. It was a deafening din, but none of their owners came running.

Instead they stood frozen outside their homes in the middle of the road, their eyes fixed in front of them.

There were no broken bricks or rubble. Nor was there any of the ominous white dust of Ground Zero that he'd seen on the news when the Twin Towers fell. The sight in front of him was clear, easy to pick out. Still Daniel's brain refused to process what he was seeing, just as no one standing either side of him could believe, either.

A vortex of black cloud spewed from the spot where Daniel's detached home had stood. It whirled around and around like a corkscrew yet stayed where it was; it didn't make sense. Underneath it, Daniel's house was reduced to rubble. No, scrub that.

His house was simply . . . *gone*.

Daniel's nostrils flared as he detected the powerful stink of magic. Green light enveloped his home like a deadly sphere. He could feel, rather than hear, its power; it thrummed through his body like a jet engine. Its power poured upwards, ripping the blue sky in two. Near where the kitchen had been, the tarmac bubbled, boiling tar sending off jets of steam. An incongruous image of Li at the sink surfaced in Daniel's mind. She'd watch cows and sheep grazing behind the house in the verdant English fields through the window, enjoying the green and pleasant land

and how it stood in stark contrast to the urban sprawl of hot, humid Beijing, where she'd grown up.

Daniel's body threatened to give up, to fall to its knees, yet his mind continued to catalogue his catastrophic loss. Where was Chloe? Had she been in her room, as usual? The driveway was cracked open, like an earthquake had hit it. Had she disappeared into it? In its middle, deep in the crack, rock liquefied, white-hot like lava. Daniel whimpered at the thought of his girl burning; pain speared through his solar plexus like electricity.

Another rumble came from the smoky whirlwind, prompting everyone to stagger backwards, raised from their reverie at last. 'Get back!' someone yelled.

As the others retreated, he found himself rushing towards the house. It was a pointless endeavour; he was no fireproof superhero. His precious family inside were dust. He felt an intense blast of heat against his face, threatening to take his eyebrows, and his treacherous feet arrested his body's movements, seemingly against his will. He couldn't get any closer.

Then, without warning, the thunderous cyclone of heat and smoke stopped. It did not blow itself out. Instead it seemed to race backwards, like an old VHS tape rewound. The space where Daniel's home had been became clearer as the tumult of smoke and power grew smaller and smaller. Finally, it disappeared altogether.

Straight *into* the body of a young girl.

The crowd craned their necks: suspended in mid-air, a silhouette. The phenomenon defied physics, but no more so than what they'd already witnessed. She was shadowed against the setting sun, but Daniel knew her right away. He'd known her since he had placed his hand on his wife's bulging stomach and felt the tiny movements of limbs within.

'Chloe!'

Disbelief burst out of Daniel like the cyclone of destruction had moments earlier. He raced towards her, dodging the crack

in the driveway which had abruptly cooled.

If Chloe heard her father, she gave no indication. She did not look like his daughter. Like many teen girls, Chloe prided herself on her appearance; she watched make-up and hair tutorials online daily. Now her hair was in disarray, her face smudged with soot. But most of all, it was her eyes: she stared at Daniel as if he were a stranger. She looked so threatening, her face dark with fury. Daniel slowed down, intimidated, as he reached her.

‘... Chloe?’

His daughter floated downwards like a soap bubble. As her feet hit solid pavement, Chloe’s expression changed. Her visage slackened; her eyes rolled back in her head. Her body went limp and she swooned like a Victorian lady with an attack of the vapours. Daniel caught her just in time, following her to the ground on his knees. A memory of seeing Li breaking their daughter’s fall when Chloe had fainted after one of her previous attacks surfaced in his brain. Self-preservation kicked in and arrested the thought. He couldn’t think about Li.

Not yet.

Instead, Daniel gathered Chloe to his chest, rocking her like she was a baby. He could barely speak, nor process what had happened. His shocked brain marvelled at the cold ground beneath them that moments earlier had been boiling. He was not ready to make the connection of what this meant.

But the watching crowd was way ahead of him, the realisation racing around the huddle surrounding Daniel and Chloe. Even if the forbidden word itself had been uttered, language was not necessary. Daniel could discern the truth reflected in their eyes as they looked to one another, then back at the catatonic girl in his arms. They had all seen his house, a dome of green light around it: earth magic.

*Witch.*

Chloe was Elemental.



# DITCH THE WITCH

This Public Service Announcement is brought to you by Sentinel HQ

**THINK:**

**HAT**  
**JEWELRY**



**SPELLS**  
**KIDS**

## THINK: HAT

Elementals are the most dangerous of all magical women. Accounting for less than 1% of witches, their magical flares are brightly colored. They access their magic via one of the four elements – air (yellow); water (blue); fire (red); or earth (green). When not using their flares, their magic colors can sometimes be seen in their hair or on their scalp. **BEWARE OF WOMEN WEARING HATS.**

## THINK: JEWELRY

Crystal witches can only access their magic via crystals. Their flares are always white. They are approximately 5% of witches. They may hide their crystals or wear them in plain sight. **BEWARE OF WOMEN WITH LOTS OF NECKLACES, BRACELETS OR RINGS.**

## THINK: SPELLS

Kitchen witches do not have innate magic. They need natural ingredients for their low-grade spells. Watch out for your neighbor women leaving the house at midnight on full moons, or on witchcraft holidays such as solstices or Samhain. When visiting another woman's home, look out for cauldrons, Books of Shadows and jars of dried goods or anything else that seems suspicious. **BE VIGILANT.**

## THINK: KIDS

'Legacies' are girls without innate magic who are born to witches. NEVER harbor a Legacy in your home or help her escape the Sentinel. Penalty: ten years in prison. **REPORT ALL SUSPECTED LEGACIES TO SENTINEL HQ.**

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