# Chapter 7: A Deepening Bond and Resulting Pranks

Several days later, Angel, Evariste, and Emerys stood in the palace courtyard, Emerys attempting to help them figure out how to use their newly intertwined magic. And yet, despite his insistence that their magics had merged so similarly to the Elven marriage bond, none of his advice so far seemed to actually help.

“This isn’t working! How are we supposed to send magic back and forth between each other when our magics have *already* somehow merged together?” Angel growled.

“OK, OK.” Emerys held up his hands in defense. “Maybe this connection between you two isn’t as similar to the marriage bond as I thought.”

Evariste spoke up. “Perhaps we should just try using each other’s power. Afterall, it was your magic, Angel, that somehow responded when I tried to create a portal for Clovicus.”

Angel’s breath hitched at the thought. It was already so strange that their magics had bound themselves together somehow, as if they were two parts of a whole. To be connected to him in such a strange and oddly intimate way, and *so soon* after they’d only just confessed their feelings was…unsettling. To agree to have him purposely use her magic and use his in turn…that was a level of trust and intimacy she’d never even contemplated. And yet, the possibility of having such an unexpected weapon against the chosen was too valuable to refuse.

She sighed. “I guess. It just feels… intrusive…to try to use your magic. Like I’m venturing somewhere I don’t belong. And, well, I’m not exactly used to letting my own walls down either.”

Evariste walked over to her and took her hands, her breaths evening out at the familiar contact. He lowered his voice, presumably so Emerys wouldn’t hear.

“You already have my heart Angel, and I trust you with my life. So trust me -- you won’t be venturing somewhere you don’t belong by using my magic. I’m happy to share it, to share that part of myself with you. But still, we don’t have to do this if it makes you uncomfortable.”

She stared into his eyes, which sparkled with undeniable trust and affection. How had she ever been so blind as to not see that he loved her? She felt a warmth spread through her and, slowly, the walls around her heart started to crumble, bit by bit. She was surprised to realize she *wanted* this connection with him -- even if it *was* sort of terrifying.

“Umm…well…”

At the sound of a throat clearing, Angel turned to see Emerys smirking at them.

“I’m glad you two love-birds have finally stopped dancing around your feelings, but is now *really* the time for this?”

Angel flushed and scowled at him. She looked back at Evariste, who was completely ignoring Emerys, his eyes only for her. He smiled softly.

“It’s your decision,” he whispered.

That did it -- her doubts remained, but they seemed smaller somehow, dwarfed by the trust they shared and how gently he was treating her heart. This was *Evariste* -- for him, she could let her walls down. It wouldn’t be easy, but she would do it.

Gathering her resolve, she spoke at a normal volume. “OK. I think you’re right, Evariste. We should try using each other’s power and see what happens.”

Emerys looked relieved. “Good. Angel, why don’t you try building a portal, maybe just to inside the palace. And Evariste, here,” he pulled a dagger out of its scabbard from his belt, “see if you can control this.”

Taking a deep breath, Angel nodded, standing erect.She squeezed Evariste’s hand, and felt him squeeze back. *He’s* here*. He’s not going anywhere. As invasive as this might feel, we’ll do it together.*

“OK, let’s try it,” she said.

Pulling on strands of their bound magic, she tried to visualize a portal appearing in front of her, but she started at the feeling of Evariste tugging on their magic as well. It was an unsettling feeling, like unlocking a door so deep inside her she’d never known it was there, letting free tightly coiled strands of her magic.

Her heart raced and, for a moment, she wanted to shout for Evariste to stop, desperate to regain control of that part of her magic she’d apparently been hiding away. But then warmth radiated from the magic that was now flowing between them and it was as if the flowing magic was anchoring them together, whispering a promise that, wherever they were, this newfound connection would always let them find each other, that they would never again be forcibly separated.

Her muscles were still tense at the jarring loss of control. Her instincts screamed at her to pull back, to somehow separate her magic from his. And yet, the unexpected warmth and deepened connection made her pause. And then, strangely, she could sense the magic itself trying to reassure her, urging her to let go of her fear, to trust herself, her magic, and Evariste. She took a deep breath and let it out slowly.

*No pulling back,* she told herself, trying to focus on the reassuring warmth. *You know you* want *this connection with him, no matter how much it scares you to let go of control. Don’t focus on your fear, focus on the connection.*

The thought grounded her and as she focused on the flow of magic that was acting as a tether between them, she could feel the warmth spread through her. She relaxed her muscles and her heart rate slowed. As the warmth permeated her whole body, she felt her anxiety drain away.

“Angel, are you alright? I could feel you start to pull on our magic, but then you just…stopped.”

Startled, she looked up to see Emerys’ dagger hovering in front of Evariste. When she looked at him, he searched her face, as if trying to read her thoughts. She smiled. “Yes, I’m fine; that was just a bit…intense. But wow…you really can wield my power.”

Concern crossed his face. Lowering his voice, he asked, “And, are you OK with that? I didn’t expect doing this would…connect us like that.”

She hesitated, then spoke in a lowered voice as well. “It’s definitely going to take some getting used to. This…connection. But…yeah. It’s actually sort of comforting.”

He visibly relaxed, then smiled at her. Unconsciously, she leaned towards him. She *wanted* this closeness with him more than she’d ever have thought she’d want anything, even if she couldn’t bring herself to say that out loud in so many words.

Evariste’s smile widened, and he leaned forward in turn, no hesitation, kissing her for the second time.

After a moment, their kiss was interrupted by the sound of a throat clearing.

“Do I need to get you two a room or are we going to focus on training? I can’t believe *I’m* the one having to remind you two that there are more important things than romance at the moment.”

Angel and Evariste both glared at him.

“Oh for heaven’s sake Emerys!” Angel exclaimed. “*You’re* the one who pushed us into admitting our feelings, what with your love letter prank. You know perfectly well that if it hadn’t been for that stupid prank, I’d never have asked Evariste about the…well never mind the details! The point is, you started this, so you don’t get to complain about the results.”

Evariste’s glare changed to an amused grin, and he turned back to her. “You’re adorable when you’re angry, you know that?”

Angel blushed. “Uh…what?”

Ignoring her question, Evariste laughed, then sighed. “But I suppose Emerys is right. We should try to focus. Why don’t you try again to make a portal?”

“No, wait. What exactly do you mean by my being ‘adorable’ when angry?”

He smirked. “Perhaps that was the wrong word. What I meant was that seeing you put Emerys in his place was incredibly *attractive*.”

She felt her cheeks heat again and rolled her eyes, trying to look annoyed, but ended up grinning. Despite all the craziness that had happened recently and the looming war with the chosen, she couldn’t remember the last time she’d felt this *happy.* Without even realizing it, she started leaning towards him yet again, and he leaned in as well, about to kiss her once more, when Emerys interrupted for the third time.

“Seriously! Look, I’m happy you two are finally together, really I am. Goodness knows you certainly deserve some happiness after everything you’ve both been through. But is now *really* a good time for kissing? We need to be ready for…well you know.”

They sobered and glanced at each other.

Evariste sighed. “Emerys is right. Angel, why don’t you try again to make a portal to inside the palace?”

“Alright, fine.”

She shut her eyes again and focused. She sensed the connection between Evariste and the still hovering dagger and felt a slight urge to break it off, to try to keep her magic to herself, but resisted. The slight emotional discomfort was worth it to have this connection with him.

She pulled on strands of their bound magic and was about to visualize a portal to just inside the palace entrance when an idea hit her. She grinned, then visualized the portal and opened her eyes. Sure enough, in front of her stood a portal that looked just like any of Evariste’s. Her breath caught and a wave of satisfaction washed over her. *But is this* really *OK that I’m using his power?*

She turned to face him, seeing a wide grin on his face, and her apprehension melted away.

“OK, great! We’re making progress here,” Emerys encouraged. “Now, let’s try something else. Angel, where in the palace did you make the portal to?”

Her smile turned mischievous. “Why, to your and Quinn’s bedroom, of course.”

Shock briefly crossed Emerys face, followed by amusement. “I suppose I should have expected something like that. But you do realize Quinn will kill all of us if it stays there?”

Angel shrugged, trying very hard not to laugh. “You did interrupt a rather important moment. You had to know there’d be consequences for that.”

Evariste chuckled. “She’s right. You did bring this on yourself Emerys.”

“Fine, fine, I brought it on myself. But unless you want Quinn to kill all of us, would one of you kindly close it now, before she finds out?”

Angel couldn’t hold back her laughter any longer. “Oh please!” she choked out. “Quinn wouldn’t care half as much as you do. If anything, she’d be laughing with me.”

After a minute of Emerys glaring at her, her laughter finally subsided, though a smirk remained on her face. “Fine, fine. The look on your face was payback enough anyway.”

She focused again on their shared pool of magic and the portal disappeared.

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Emerys let out a sigh of relief when the portal closed.

“Thank you. Now, let’s move on. Now that you can both use each other’s powers, let’s see if you can combine them. How about --”

“Nope, I’m picking the exercise this time,” Angel cut in, still smirking.

Emerys glanced at her warily, while Evariste raised a questioning eyebrow, clearly amused.

“Oh? What did you have in mind?” Evariste prompted.

She turned and whispered something to him that Emerys couldn’t make out, but the mischievous looks on their faces didn’t bode well for him.

Emerys shifted his weight. “What, *precisely,* are you two scheming?”

Angel’s eyes danced with humor. “You’ll see.”

Evariste was visibly struggling to hold back a laugh. “Ready, Angel?”

“Yep.”

Evariste dropped the hovering dagger and a portal appeared in front of Angel.

Suddenly, a cloud of pointy sticks and various other pointy forest debris came flying up from behind them and through the portal, which then snapped shut.

“Alright, where did you two send that giant mess?” Emerys demanded.

They burst into laughter. “Your bedroom,” Angel finally choked out.

He groaned. “Really? My bedroom? *Again*? Are you *trying* to get Quinn to bring down her wrath on all of us?”

“Oh please,” she retorted. “Quit using Quinn as a threat. You’re the Elf King! You can afford a cleaning service.”

He tried to glare at them, but couldn’t resist grinning, barely holding back a laugh of his own. “Remind me, *why* did I ever push you two to admit your feelings? I’m pretty sure I’ve created an unstoppable foe by helping you two get together.”

Evariste chuckled. “No idea. But you *have* just doubled your chances of getting pranked.”

“Yep,” Angel added, looking far too pleased with herself. “He’s basically given us a license to team up against him. Tell me Emerys, how does it feel to be the architect of your own doom?”

Emerys couldn’t hold in his laughter any longer. They had all needed these few moments of levity, but Angel and Evariste especially. If a mess in his bedroom was the cost for giving his traumatized friends some joy in the moments before the coming storm, it was a small price to pay.

“Alright, alright, I surrender, *for now*,” he said, still chuckling. “I think we’ve done enough training for today anyway. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I need to do something about the giant mess *you two* created before my wife sees it.”

“Good luck with that,” Angel quipped. “And remember, as far as Quinn is concerned, we had nothing to do with it.”

Evariste laughed. “Yep, it was all because of your expert training skills, Emerys.”

“Yeah, yeah. You two had just better remember that I have *decades* of pranking experience on you both, so you’d best not get cocky.”

Grinning at their laughter behind him, he walked off to deal with the mess they’d made.