

Sample Cult of the Spider People This section leads to her transformation into a spider person.

A calmness came over Piper as she turned back to the wall. The pain seemed so far away, that all her worries faded for a second. Piper released a silky strand of spiderweb from her wrist without knowing what she was doing. She crawled up to the ceiling, then across the ceiling to the door. The guard hurried over and aimed his gun then hesitated. Piper hissed at him. He sounded the alarm again, the noise echoing around the room, alerting others. The guard stood dumbfounded. His jaw dropped in shock.

Piper kicked the doors open with her leg and escaped, the door slamming behind her. She crawled down the outside walls to the ground, straightened and ran from the police station. Several officers tripped over each other in their efforts to recapture her and chased after her. Piper turned down an unfamiliar street and ran, her heart pounding.

Where she ran to, she did not know. Her mind raced, and tears streamed down her cheeks. As she ran with police in pursuit, Piper cried. When she finally reached her house, a police car was parked in the driveway. She ducked behind a parked car and searched for any sign of more cops. The black bristles grew thicker on her skin. She panted hard from the exertion of running and was not sure what to do. Her dad stood in the doorway talking to several police officers who had been chasing her. His posture was tense, his expression angry. Piper realized she couldn't go home. She ran her tongue over her fangs. *I can't go home. I can never go home.*

She wiped away her tears, and texted Cory, creasing her brow. The police officers remained at her house. She wondered if her dad knew what was going on and peered in the windows. A family liaison officer walked around the living room. Piper sighed in frustration. *Now what the hell do I do? Where's Cory? What will happen to Jewels? Will I get that cure after all? I don't know what to do.*

The full moon shone high over the street. Cory knelt beside her. Piper leaned in and nibbled on his throat with her fangs. She treated him to a hot sexy kiss. Piper smiled and pulled back. She met his gaze then her expression changed. Tears stung her eyes even as the hunger stirred within her. "I don't want to harm you, but I feel so hungry."

Piper shook hard all over. She turned away for a second, forced herself to resist the hunger. "Okay, that was a hot kiss," Cory said and sighed reluctantly.

Piper stiffened in his embrace. They kissed again then pulled away. Cory put his finger to his lips and motioned for her to follow him. Piper scowled in pain as she followed him to a waiting car. "Jewels' dealer paid his bail to get him out. Jewels is going to drive us somewhere so we can help you. Get in."

Cory held the door open for her. She climbed into the backseat. He threw a blanket over her trembling body. Something caught his attention. Cory gazed at the roof of her house. "Seriously, those magpies? What is with them flying over your roof like that? Jewels, do you see them?"

"Okay, that's weird. There's something special about your house. They must sense an energy coming from it?" Jewels turned. The magpies squawked and flew over Piper's house. He nodded his head in agreement.

"The portal." Cory glanced at the roof, then back to Jewels. "It's the portal." The neighbors stared at Piper, Cory, and Jewels from the front windows of their houses. A few police officers began running toward them.

Piper sighed in frustration. "He's right. Oh shoot, let's go. Cory, do you remember where I went camping with my family? Let's go there. Now."

“Now, Cory, get in already. She was arrested and broke out of jail. Let’s go,” Jewels said as Cory climbed in.

Cory nodded. “I can give directions,” he said, as Jewels accelerated the engine. They raced down the highway with the police in pursuit. Piper trembled. The black bristles spread over her entire body. Her sharp nails tore the blanket apart. She shook and cried. Her lips curled back as her fangs pushed out. She shut her eyes and lay in the backseat. Piper shook all over and tossed and turned.

They arrived at the cabin which sat at the end of a rutted track, hidden from the road by a thick stand of oak trees. Cory opened the passenger door and stared at the shredded blanket. He helped her out and led her to the cabin. Jewels glanced around to see if there were any police cars. “Oh crap, Piper, what is coming over you?” Cory asked.

Jewels frowned. “No kidding. She looks like she’s going through something. I think I have an idea of what that could be.”

Once inside, Piper rested on the wooden floor. “What’s happening to me?”

“You’re transforming into something. I have an idea of something we could try to stop or slow down your transformation.” Jewels said.

Cory watched Jewels with interest. “What are you doing, dude?”

Jewels withdrew a needle from a beaded purple pouch. He opened a small bottle and filled the syringe from it. “Cory, don’t get mad. I knew about the spider people. I told you that at the store. She is changing into one of them. Good thing she left the police station. They can’t fix her at the hospital. It might work, might not. I do know a lot about herbs and oils. The deadly nightshade might cure her transformation or slow it down. Cory, keep a watch for any cops and

close the curtains... I don't think you want her to die. She is transforming. If she lives, then she won't be the Piper you know."

Cory did what Jewels told him. Jewels looked at Cory knowingly. Cory stood for long moments in silence. Jewels gestured for him to come over and help. "Hold her tight. It's deadly nightshade, which is usually considered poisonous. Since she's changing, she might be immune to its effects." Cory marched up to Jewels. He held his arms up in defense. "Hold on, cowboy. I am not going to give her enough to kill her. All she gets is a tiny drop. Your girlfriend looks like she needs some help."

"How exactly is a poison going to help her?" Cory said and held his arm out to stop Jewels.

"I am only giving her the tiniest dose. It may slow down or stop her transformation." Jewels didn't budge until Cory sighed and took a step back. Piper panted and crouched down on the floor. She rocked back and forth, and her throbbing fangs ached. Jewels guided her into a sitting position. She groaned, and her face was contorted into an expression of discomfort. Cory looked scared but knelt beside Piper. They both held her tightly as Jewels injected her. She shut her eyes to the pain of the needle. A second later, it was over.

"Let's get her over to that bed. It looks clean enough." They both helped her lie down.

"Now what?" Cory peeked out the windows and then looked back at Jewels.

"We wait and see what happens."

Cory glanced out the window. Police sirens rang out and lights flashed. A few police cars pulled up to the cabin. "It's the cops," Cory said and closed the curtains.

"Dang, how did they find us? What do we do?" Cory said. His gaze widened. "Throw the needle away, quick." Jewels pocketed the syringe.

The police knocked on the front door of the cabin. Cory and Jewels glanced at each other in alarm. Piper gestured to a door at the back of the cabin. The pain ebbed and waned but she struggled to stand. Her ears pricked to every sound.

They escaped out the back door. Jewels carried Piper in his arms. They ran up the grassy bank. "Pull the hood up over your head," Cory whispered. Piper did what he asked.

"My father, my father tried to protect me, Cory. All this time, he kept the truth from me. I understand now. To the cave, Cory, the cave. I found it years ago when I vacationed here with my mom and dad," Piper mumbled.

The police circled the cabin. She glanced at Cory, but he shook his head. Jewels tapped her on the shoulder. "They haven't left. They're waiting for us. Piper, go to the cave. I will follow you, find you soon, okay?" Cory said in a hushed whisper.

Piper nodded, and hurried to the cave. Stalactites glistened, lit by faint rays of moonlight. She shivered and curled up in the fetal position on cold bare ground. Eerie Arachnas spiderlings swarmed over the cave walls, sending the rats scattering back to the darkness. Piper ripped off her hoodie and the rest of her clothing. She felt feverish in the frigid cave. Her entire body ached from an unknown and unbearable pain. She wove herself an ashen-colored spiderweb without realizing what she was doing. Strands of silk shot from her wrists. She nestled on the spiderweb then wove a chrysalis cocoon and climbed in. The ashen chrysalis rocked back and forth.

The fibers floated into her lungs, her ears and made her eyes water. Piper's trembling fingers ran down the length of her curved knobby horns. Her head pounded from unbearable pain and her muscles cracked as they stretched. The skin of her ears became pointed and more prominent. Eight spindly legs extended from her cephalothorax. Piper screamed in terror, repulsed by the agonizing changes. Her cephalothorax pushed out more from her waist. She

gasped in shock at the foreign ebony hide covering her lower body and muscled quivering legs, four on each side. She twisted and writhed in the chrysalis, screaming all the while. Piper stared down at a body she no longer recognized. Her razor-sharp black nails tore the limp chrysalis to shreds. The spiderlings crept over to Piper where she crouched on the ground, quaking and clammy. Her fangs hungered for blood. Razor-sharp claws snatched a rat which squealed in her grip.

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Chapter Twenty

A strange feeling overcame Piper as she left her human form behind forever. Her raven tresses shone in the dim moonlight. Her crimson lips were full. Piper trembled all over as her body changed. She heard a sound, caught the scent of a man and whipped around. The police officer's jaw dropped open upon seeing her. She hissed ferally, her eyes widening in fury at his intrusion into her space. Her spidery legs carried her down the length of the spiderweb. He backed up to the cave wall, unable to tear his eyes from the horror catching up to him. Finally summoning his courage, he turned and ran to the entrance, looking all the while to see if she was following. His terrified yells echoed around the cave as he stumbled over the large stones littering its floor. Piper stared at him from the shelter of her web. When he reached the entrance, he met her gaze, its hypnotic effect freezing him in place.

He stared at the alabaster skin of her face. A deep red hourglass mark appeared on her lower abdomen. The police officer squinted harder at her as though he recognized her from somewhere. "It can't be... you can't possibly be the girl from the station... you can't... That had to be someone else. So, what the hell are you?" As he spoke, he backed away, hurrying further out of the cave, looking for an easy escape route.

Piper's fingers shook as she traced the symbol of the Arachnas on her forehead. A skein of silky spider web shot out from the palm of her hand. The web landed on a nearby rock. She blinked in shock and did it again. The strands were so strong. Then with an expert flick of her wrist she did it again. *It feels good.*

The sound of crickets filled the night air. She understood their songs and chirps and the spiderlings' sounds. The whole world flooded her senses. Piper's fangs throbbed for fresh blood. The crunch of rock drew her attention back to the officer who almost disappeared from view but

fell at the last moment. She smacked her jaws. Piper lurked high above him in her web in the quiet cave. The policeman struggled to his feet, stared around him and aimed his gun at anything that moved. The web caught on his body and he screamed.

Somehow, the officer managed to free himself and once more backed away, his hands held out at arm's length as if to ward her off. He swallowed hard and fixed an uncertain look on her. "Look... girl, I don't know what you are... I... The law is the law. I have to bring you in."

She shrugged and remained in her web.

"I... I'll be back... you'll see." He scurried out of the cave in fear and out of her sight, his words lost.

I'm a monster, Piper sniffed and cried. *I know what I am now. I can't go back.* She thought of her parents and Cory, wiped her tears away with the back of her hand. A while later, Piper heard footsteps. She crept out of hiding, hoping it was Cory and Jewels. Instead, a group of police officers marched into the cave. They stared around in amazement. The same police officer who was there earlier pointed his gun at the cave ceiling. He squinted at the roof of the cave. The spiderlings crawled away from them.

"If she comes at us, we have the right to shoot her. She isn't normal," the first officer said. His colleagues remained at the entrance, hesitant.

"Right, it looks like some type of wild animal was in here, Jackson. You sure you didn't just see some animal like a bear or a cougar?" one of his colleagues said, the disbelief evident in his voice. When the other officers saw Piper, there was a collective gasp as they bolted from the cave but remained at a safe distance.

Jackson stared at her where she perched in her web. "Get in here, you cowards. We can shoot her. No need to be scared." Jackson snapped.

Cory ran into the cave, gasping when he saw what was going on. “No. Don’t hurt Piper. It’s not her fault. Don’t harm her, please,” Cory cried as the officers restrained him. “No, no, let me go.”

Piper recognized Cory’s voice, hissed at the police officers and bared her fangs. Jackson grabbed Cory, and pushed him forward. “Here you are. Here’s a tasty meal. Come and get it,” he said and laughed.

Piper crept closer, and moved down from her web. Cory gaped at her as she propelled herself down until she was inches away from him. She gazed at him sadly and kissed his cheek. A strand of web stuck to her back. Her blackened eyes glared with unbridled fury at the police officers. Cory stared at her transformation in shock, unable to believe what he was seeing.

Jackson shook him. Cory angrily pulled himself out of the man’s grip. “What the hell? Can she go back to being human again? How do we... arrest a... whatever she is?” Jackson met his gaze evenly.

Cory sighed reluctantly and shook his head. “Why not just leave her alone?” He stared at her in shock. Piper sniffed the air. She closed her eyes and inhaled the scent of their fear. She ran her tongue over her fangs and hissed. “That seems familiar,” Cory said.

Piper barely made a sound as she crept across her web.

“You,” Jackson said, pointing his gun at Cory. “You bring her in nice and quiet like so we can secure her –”

“No! You can’t do that! Something’s happened to her. Some sort of mutation... she needs help... doctors... not police...”

“If you don’t bring her in, then I’ve no choice.” The officer turned his gun back on Piper.

“No,” Cory cried.

Just then, Piper's dad rushed into the cave. He looked shocked when he saw Piper's new form. "Don't harm Piper, don't harm her," he said, his voice shaking in anguish.

Distraught at her father's unexpected appearance and not wanting him to see her like this, Piper looked for somewhere to hide. Jackson aimed his gun and fired a shot, barely missing her. She ducked to a far corner of her web. Her dad followed his gaze and jumped in fear when he saw her. He yelled and tried to restrain the cop. "Oh, please, lower your weapons!"

Jackson ignored him, fired another shot, which caused the web strands to land on him. Piper crept farther into the cave. "No, don't. You don't understand," her dad said. His words were lost on the cop.

"No, don't harm her," Cory cried, echoing Piper's father. "Piper, run."

"Damn. I can't get close enough," Jackson said. He fired another shot that ricocheted off the wall, then aimed his gun at Cory, who ducked as the shots fired.

"Cory, run. Go get help." Cory gaped at Roger, who could help them? "Go. I will remain inside." Cory shook his head, reluctant to leave, but at another shout from Piper's father, he ran from the cave and into the night... Jewels... Jewels would be able to help.

"You monster," Jackson yelled, his eyes wild, all apparent professionalism gone. Piper crept back to the cave's entrance.

"That is my daughter," her dad said and glared at the cop.

"What's your name, sir?" Jackson asked Piper's father.

"Roger Marshall, and that's my daughter Piper, Piper Marshall," he replied, his voice shaking. "If I had been informed, I could perhaps have done more for her. If you guys had just done your job and called me when she was arrested earlier."

Jackson turned to him. "Sir, you are crazy. If that was your daughter we took into custody, she's not your daughter anymore."

Her dad's expression shifted to pure rage at his words. Piper fumed. She landed on the ground. A shot of silky spider web caught Jackson's gun, knocking it to the ground. Somehow, he retrieved the gun and fired a shot. "What is wrong with you, you freak?" he yelled and scrambled back from her.

"Leave me alone," she said and hissed.

"Keep away from me, you monster," Jackson snarled. He swallowed hard and fired a shot. Piper released silk from her wrist and propelled herself upward, dodging the bullet. Her dad grappled with the cop for the gun, an angry expression on his face. Piper climbed higher into the cave. The police officer fired at her again. The bullet found its target. Piper's father screamed.

Hissing, Piper pulled the bullet out of her cephalothorax's tough hide and crushed it in her hands. Piper shot strands of silk from her wrists and snared Jackson in a deadly cocoon. The viscous cocoon muffled his screams and the gun landed on the floor. Jewels and Cory returned and they both stared at Piper. Beneath her, the cocoon shook. She climbed down to where they stood.

"I never meant for this to happen." Her dad choked up and gazed at her as if seeing her for the first time. Cory laid a hand on his shoulder, looking up at her with a sad smile. Jewels looked at Cory and Piper, then back at Cory. "She won't hurt me, will she?"

Cory shook his head, misty-eyed. "No."

"I'm sorry, Piper," Jewels said. "I'm sorry that the deadly nightshade didn't work." His voice faded away to a whisper. Piper hovered a few feet above their heads and gazed sadly at

Cory. Tears coursed down her face. She crouched near her freshly woven web, her breathing haggard and her body trembling. “Don’t see me like this,” she whispered.

Cory extended his hand. The black bristles covering her body from head to toe quivered at his touch. He stroked her hair and her arched ears. She jumped as if she’d been electrocuted, then drew in a shaky breath. She closed her eyes to savor the sensation of him stroking her hair and transformed body. As he gazed at her body clad in fine black bristles, she wondered what was going through his mind. Did he hate her? Did she sicken him? She wanted and didn’t want to know. Her ears twitched with fear.

He gently traced the symbol of the Arachnas she bore on her forehead, the etching on the cave walls in Arachnall; the symbol of an Arachnas bound in a circle. Instead of revolting him, she saw concern and love for her in his eyes. Her crimson-stained lips added to her sense of mystery and made her eyes appear darker, livelier. Piper gently held his hand, her claws grazed his palm, and she caressed his hair. Cory kissed her. They pulled away, and she sniffed, choked up. They held each other’s gaze, neither seeming to want to be the first one to break away. Eventually, Piper kissed him on the forehead. She turned to retreat to the shelter of her web. Her ears twitched as the silence was suddenly broken. It was her father. Cory gently guided his hand to her side.

“Oh Piper, sweetheart. You changed. This is all my fault. I am so sorry. But I need to know one thing-”

She cut off his next words. “They forced me to drink it, Daddy. I love you ...I ... I’m so scared ...I ... I want to go back to normal. I can’t do that now.” Piper sobbed and hugged her father. Muffled cries emanated from the cocoon jerking back and forth, disturbing them.

Reluctantly, Piper released her father and turned to the cocoon, kicking it with her powerful foreleg, causing it to jerk and twitch.

“What will she do with him?” Jewels asked. The other two looked at him but neither seemed to want to answer.

“She’s still Piper. I’m sure she will release him when it’s safe to do so,” said Cory.

Cory’s eyes misted over as he gazed at Piper. “I’m exhausted, Jewels.” She panted and sniffed at the tiny wound on his arm from where the police officer restrained him. Jewels gently held her arm and put his hand over her face. He closed his eyes, whispered something, causing her to draw back and smack her jaws. “What did you do to her?” Cory asked.

“I imprinted you, me and her father on her. Now she will never hurt you. She doesn’t want to but her instincts are different now.” Jewels pulled his hand away and stood back, staring at her in a mixture of disbelief and amazement.

It was Cory’s turn to be skeptical. “How did you do that though?”

“I’m a conjuror, a brujo,” he said.

“You never told me that.” Cory gazed at Piper who was also confused. Cory’s expression shifted to anger. “You said you could help her. I counted on you. And if you could do that, then you knew about the spider people.”

“Heavens. What happened to you? Trust me. I told you I knew.”

“Poor Piper. First her mother, now her.” Her dad struggled to remain calm.

“Leaving her like this doesn’t feel right,” Cory said, looking back at the cave.

“What do you suggest we do?” Jewels asked, patting her dad on the back in an attempt to comfort the heartbroken man. “I’m sorry, Cory. The potion failed. I will keep trying.”

“We will *all* keep trying... find a cure... if there is a cure.” Cory’s voice trailed off, the sadness evident in his voice. They turned to leave when something caught Cory’s attention. He gave a sudden gasp. A fresh web hung in the air. Its silvery strands shone in the moonlight. His eyes misted with tears as he read the words, *I love you*, woven into the web.

He ran back inside the cave. “Piper, I saw it. I saw it. Oh, Piper, please, come back. I love you too.”

She crept almost shyly towards him. “I love you.” Then she gave him a final kiss.

“If you ever need me, you know where to find me... I will always be here...” Piper sobbed.

Cory blinked through his tears. “My queen, queen of the Arachnas.” He gazed at her for a long time before he left.

“You are my king,” Piper sobbed, as she lost sight of him.

Jewels, Roger and Cory walked down the slope to the cabin. “Let’s sleep in the cabin. I still say not to go near her at night. She needs to feed, you know,” Jewels said.

“There’s one problem,” Cory said. “She sustained the change, and that’s what the Spider King wanted. If he ever finds out, he will come looking for her if he can escape the trap the Spider Queen set for him.”

“Sh, Cory, she might be able to hear you,” Jewels said. Cory followed his gaze and his breath caught. They all turned in surprise.

Piper climbed outside the cave and perched on a grassy rock that jutted out above the entrance. The moonlight glowed on her spidery form. She preened her hide and legs as she gazed

at the luminous moon. Cory glanced back at her lair and strode into the waiting night. *We'll never give up.*

The End?